

Guidance for Responding to a Concern from a Young Person

Overview

The Government's "Every Child Matters: Change for Children" strategy is supported by legislation, plans and guidance entitled 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', which sets out how individuals and organisations should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Weightlifting Wales have developed policies, procedures and systems to manage concerns or allegations of poor practice and abuse against young people. Weightlifting Wales will always work in accordance with procedures as set out in the above guidance.

Our primary responsibility is to ensure that concerns any relevant information is passed on to the police and Children's Social Care without delay. These organisations have the statutory responsibility to make enquiries to establish if a young person is at risk of harm.

It is not the club's or individuals within Weightlifting Wales's responsibility to decide if a child is being abused or poor practice has occurred. Any concerns or allegations will be managed by Weightlifting Wales, with the club's cooperation and assistance. However, all adults working within the sport have a duty of care to be vigilant and respond appropriately to suspicions of poor practice, abuse or bullying. It is your responsibility to report your concerns.

If a young person or adult has concerns, it is important that they are able to report them to someone at the club. It is therefore important that the club knows how to respond, and who will do this.

Taking Appropriate Action

Once a concern has been reported, it is important that appropriate action is taken. It will not be the club's/individual's responsibility to decide if action needs to be taken, unless a child is at immediate risk of harm. It is, however, the club's/ individual's responsibility to report the concerns appropriately in accordance with Weightlifting Wales's policies, procedures and systems.

Responding to concerns

There are a number of reasons a person might need to report a concern:

- in response to something a young person has said to you – a disclosure
- in response to signs or suspicions of abuse
- in response to allegations made against a member of staff or a volunteer
- in response to allegations made about a parent, carer or someone not working within the sport
- in response to bullying
- in response to a breach of the Code of Conduct

- observation of inappropriate behaviour
- in response to anything which makes a young person uncomfortable based on inappropriate behaviour of an adult or changes in behaviour of a young person
- In response to behaviour being contrary to Weightlifting Wales's Safeguarding Policy.

It is important to note that even if an incident occurs outside the sport environment, it should still be reported to Weightlifting Wales if the adult or young person concerned is involved in the sport. This is in accordance with standard practice in sport.

Actions to Take

If a young person informs you directly that he/she, or another young person is concerned about someone's behaviour towards them (this is termed disclosure), the person receiving the information should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the young person
- Tell the young person that he/she is not to blame and that he/she was right to tell
- Take what the person says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a young person who has a speech and/or hearing impairment, and/ or differences in language.
- Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer. To help you to do this, try to ask questions starting with what, how, where, when, who
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
- Reassure the young person but DO NOT make promises of confidentiality which might not be possible in the light of subsequent developments.
- Record in writing exactly what has been said using the young person's words as soon as possible. Use Weightlifting Wales's Referral Report Form. Forward a copy to Children's Social Care and Police as directed) and to the WW Lead Safeguarding Officer.
- Seek advice immediately from WW Lead Safeguarding Officer. If they are unavailable the Children's Social Care or Police should be contacted immediately, they will advise on the action to be taken, including advice on contacting the parents. Expert advice can also be provided by the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or Childline on 0800 1111.

Actions to Avoid

The person receiving the disclosure should not:

- Panic
- Allow their shock or distaste to show
- Ask questions other than to clarify that you have enough information to act
- Speculate or make assumptions
- Make negative comments about the alleged abuser
- Approach the alleged abuser
- Make promises or agree to keep secrets

- Take sole responsibility.

It is acknowledged that taking appropriate action is never easy. The discovery that a member of a club or colleague may be acting inappropriately, bullying or abusing a child will raise concerns and emotional feelings both for the person receiving the concern, and amongst other colleagues. These emotions may evolve around feelings of:

- Doubt: Is it true?
- Guilt: Should I have known
- Did I miss something?
- Did I have any suspicions?
- Should I have said something?
- Fear: Will others or I be suspected?
- What actions should be taken?
- Confusion: What will happen?
- What will be the effect?
- Concerns: What can I do to support all those people who may need support?
- How will it affect further relationships or contact with children?
- Are there systems in place to expose future situations?

These are natural responses but remember that the safety and welfare of young people is paramount.

Weightlifting Wales has clear procedures for reporting concerns. It is important that you follow the procedure detailed and fulfill YOUR role in the process. It is not your responsibility to decide if a situation is poor practice, abuse or bullying, but it is your responsibility to report your concerns.

It may not be that all young people are able to express themselves verbally. Communication difficulties may mean that it is hard for them to complain or to be understood. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the signs of abuse from the symptoms of some disabilities or conditions, in relation to the nature of the individual's impairment. However, where there are concerns about a young person's safety, record exactly what has been observed in detail and follow the procedures to report these concerns.

Responding to concerns about possible abuse from within the sport

If a young person informs you directly that he/she is being abused within the sport environment OR through your own observations or through a third party you become aware of possible abuse or poor practice within the sport you must REACT IMMEDIATELY.

Poor Practice Reporting Procedures

Contact the Club Welfare Officer (CWO) immediately. If, following consideration, the allegation is about poor practice then the Club Welfare Officer will report it to WW Lead Safeguarding Officer.

If the CWO is unavailable or is the subject of the allegation, then the matter should be reported directly to the WW Lead Safeguarding Officer. Make a full and factual record of events utilizing the

Incident report Form and forward a copy of the recorded information to the WW Lead Safeguarding Officer who will take the appropriate action.

Action

WW's Lead Safeguarding Officer will who will decide on the most appropriate course of action decision about how the allegation is to be dealt with, e.g. internally by WW Safeguarding Case Management Group, externally as a matter for Children's Social Care and/or the Police or referral back to the CWO.

Alleged minor poor practice will be referred back to the Club with advice on the process to be followed:

- Complaints procedure
- Disciplinary procedure
- No further action

The possible outcomes:

- No case to answer
- Complaint resolved with agreement between parties
- Training/mentoring agreed
- More significant concerns emerged - refer back to WW Safeguarding Case Management Group

Serious poor practice, poor practice with wider implications or alleged child abuse will follow one of the processes below:

- Child protection investigation
- Criminal investigation/proceedings
- Investigation upon disciplinary proceedings including possible temporary suspension of person accused
- The WW investigation will be pending the outcome of the Children's Social Care or Police Investigation.

The possible outcomes being:

- No case to answer
- Less serious-referred to complaints procedures
- Disciplinary hearing-sanctions
- Civil Proceedings

There is no time limit to the submissions of allegations or incidents of a child protection nature. Possible outcomes of the WW Child Protection Disciplinary Hearing:

- No case to answer

- Warrants advise/warning as to future conduct/sanctions
- Further training and support needed
- Expulsion from the membership of WW

WW and all affiliated clubs, regions and organisations will respect and enforce the sanctions imposed by other sporting governing bodies for similar misconduct.

Appeals

The appeals procedures is available to anyone under investigation as part of natural justice. The WW Safeguarding Appeals Panel will exclude anyone sitting on the initial panel (SCMG). The panel should comprise of a chair and two other members. Every organisation and individual wishing to appeal the decisions made by WW's SCMG must do so in writing, to be received by WW within fourteen days of the decision being made.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To be conducted at the close of each case by the WW SCMG to see if any changes need to be made to policies/procedures or lessons that can be learnt.

Possible Abuse Situation

If a young person says or indicates that he/she is being abused, or information is obtained or observations are made which gives concern that a young person is being abused, you must REACT IMMEDIATELY.

Ensure the safety of the young person, if the young person needs immediate medical treatment, call an ambulance or take the young person to hospital inform the doctors of your concerns and ensure that they are aware it is a child protection issue.

If available contact the Club Welfare Officer immediately who will follow the reporting procedures. If the Club Welfare Officer cannot be contacted or is the subject of the allegation, then the person that has the concerns about the young person's welfare should follow the reporting procedures.

Reporting Procedures

Seek advice immediately from the WW Lead Safeguarding Officer. If he/she is unavailable the local Children's Social Care or Police should be contacted immediately, they will advise on the action to be taken, including advice on contacting parents. Expert advice can also be provided by the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or Childline on 0800 1111– this number is a dedicated line for children.

Make a full and factual record of events utilising the Incident Report Form and forward a copy of the recorded information, as directed to the Children's Social Care and /or Police and to BWL Lead Child Protection Officer who will take the appropriate action. Contact the Club Welfare Officer as soon as possible.

Possible Outcomes:

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer, investigations may include:

- Police enquiry
- Criminal proceedings
- Referral back to the WW SCMG

The result of the Police and /or Children's Social Care investigation may help inform the WW SCMG investigation.

Responding to concerns about possible abuse from Outside the Sport

Ensure the safety of the young person, if the young person needs immediate medical treatment, call an ambulance or take the young person to hospital inform the doctors of your concerns and ensure that they are aware it is a child protection issue.

If available contact the Club Welfare Officer immediately who will follow the appropriate reporting procedures. If the Club Welfare Officer cannot be contacted, then the person that has the concerns about the young person's welfare should follow the reporting procedures below.

Reporting Procedures

Seek advice immediately from the WW Lead Safeguarding Officer. If he/she is unavailable the Children's Social Care or Police should be contacted immediately, they will advise on the action to be taken, including advice on contacting the parents. Expert advice can also be provided by the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000 or Childline on 0800 1111(as above).

Make a full and factual record of events utilising the Incident Report Form and forward a copy of the recorded information as directed to the Children's Social Care and or Police and to the WW Lead Safeguarding Officer who will take the appropriate action. Contact the Club Welfare Officer as soon as possible.

If the individual being accused is from within the sport environment, then the relevant reporting process should be followed.

For other situations, where a child is not at immediate risk or danger:

Working in an affiliated club

You must report your concerns or any information received to the Club Welfare Officer, who will refer the matter to WW Safeguarding Lead Officer.

Working in a school

You must inform the designated safeguarding officer within the school, who will follow their reporting procedures, also inform the WW Lead Safeguarding Officer for their information, who will liaise with the school safeguarding officer and will work to safeguarding protocols and procedures.

If your concern is regarding the Welfare Officer, report directly to the WW Lead Safeguarding Officer.

What happens next?

Where a concern is reported to WW and further action is required, WW's Lead Safeguarding Officer and the SCMG will follow the appropriate procedures. At all times WW will support and communicate with the Club Welfare Officer where required in the management of the situation.

In some circumstances it may be most appropriate for the matter to be handled at local level e.g. on matters relating to minor poor practice or bullying. If this is appropriate, suitable guidance will be given by the WW's Lead Safeguarding Officer.

It is never easy to respond to a young person who tells you that they are being abused and you may feel upset and worried yourself. Make sure that you are offered adequate support by discussing the matter with WW's Lead Safeguarding Officer.

Remember to Listen, Respond, Report and Record, not acting is NOT an option

Children's Social Care

Children's Social Care have a statutory duty under The Children Act 2004 to ensure the welfare of children and work with the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) to comply with its procedures.

If action needs to be taken urgently out of office hours, then the Police and Children's Social Care have teams to deal with the enquiry.

All police forces have dedicated Child Abuse Investigation Units (CAIU's) which investigate allegations of abuse within the family and also allegations of abuse against people who are acting in 'positions of trust, e.e. WW staff and volunteers.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

There are many statutory bodies responsible for working with families and offenders as well. Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB's) have been set up to co-ordinate local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure the effectiveness of that work

The key agencies involved within the LSCB that we may link with are:

- Children's Social Care

- The Local Police - Child Abuse Investigation Units
- The Education Department
- The Health Services (Hospitals and GPs)

The Children's Services and Police receive referrals relating to child protection concerns, the Health Services will treat children where their health has been impaired. It is important that local clubs and welfare officers are familiar with the contact/referral details within their LSCB and know which local inter-agency procedures they are working to. The local authority children's services will be pleased to advise and provide contacts.

Some LSCB's have been developing 'Safeguarding through Sport' sub-groups managed by the local authority and with representation across the sports and recreation sector. Divisional/Club welfare officers should be aware of these arrangements and mechanisms for communication with them. The LSCB's are a useful resource for support and local training you are not expected to sit on the board. but you should know how to use them effectively within your area.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The role of the LADO is set out in the HM Government guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2020)'. The LADO is located within Children's Services and should be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child,
- behaves towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

The LADO role applies to paid, unpaid, volunteers, casual, agency or anyone self-employed and they capture concerns, allegations or offences emanating from outside of work. The LADO is involved from the initial phase of the allegation through to the conclusion of the case. They will provide advice and guidance and help determine that the allegation sits within the scope of the procedures. Within the role the LADO helps co-ordinate information sharing with the right people. They will also monitor and track any investigation with the expectation that it is resolved as quickly as possible.

Reinstatement and Aftermath

Reinstatement

Irrespective of the findings of Children's Social Care and/or Police investigations, the WW SCMG will assess all cases individually to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled.

Where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the Police, the WW SCMG will reach a decision based upon the information available which could suggest that on a balance of probability; it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of young people should always remain paramount.

WW and the Children's Social Care adopt a policy that anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences relating to abuse will be automatically excluded from working with children. It is a requirement that all coaches or coach candidates must declare any previous convictions on coaching course / examination application forms.

Support to deal with the Aftermath

Consideration should be given to what support may be appropriate for the young people, parents and staff members involved. The use of help lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association of Counselling Directory may be a useful resource.

Thought should be given about what support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

Allegations of Previous Abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a young person or by a member of staff who is still currently working with young people). Where such an allegation is made, the Club should still follow the procedures. This is because other young people, either within or outside the sport, may still be at risk from this person.

Dealing with Bullying

The same procedures should be followed as detailed in responding to concerns about possible abuse from outside the sport if bullying is suspected. All settings in which young people are provided with services or are living away from home should have rigorously enforced anti-bullying strategies in place.

Action to Prevent Bullying and Help those Being Bullied

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously
- Encourage all young people to speak and share their concerns
- Create an open environment and help the young person to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- Investigate all allegations of bullying and take action to ensure that the young person is safe. Speak to both the victim and the bully/ bullies separately.
- Reassure the young person that you can be trusted and will help them, DO NOT make promises of confidentiality.
- Record in writing exactly what has been said using the young persons' words as soon as possible. Use the BWL Referral Report Form.

- Report any concerns to the Club Welfare Officer or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

Actions to take Towards the bully or bullies

- Talk with the Bully /bullies, explain the situation, and try to get the bully to understand the consequences of their behaviour.
- Seek an apology to the victim
- Inform the bully's parents.
- Insist that '*borrowed items*' are returned and that the bully / bullies compensate the victim.
- Provide support for the coach of the victim.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully/bullies to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all club / regional members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

In the case of adults reported to be bullying anyone within the club or affiliated organisations under 18:

- The LSGO should always be informed and will advise on the action to be taken where appropriate
- In most cases where the allegation is made against, coach, team manager, official safeguarding and Protecting Young People in Sport training will be recommended
- More serious cases may be referred to statutory agencies

Records and Information

Information passed to the Police or/and Children's Social Care must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record at the time of the disclosure/concern. This information should be compiled utilising the WW Incident report Form. The information needs to include the following:

- The young person's age, and date of birth, name, address, race, gender and ethnic origin
- Details of the facts of allegations or observations
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries
- The young person's account, if it can be given, of what happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred
- Witnesses to the incident/s
- Any times, dates or other relevant information
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay
- A signature, time and date on the report

Please note that when a disclosure is made, it is the person to whom the disclosure is made the Police and/or Children's Social Care will come to for an account of what was said. This first-hand account is very important.

Reporting the matter to the police or Children's Social Care department should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the Children's Social Care department must be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record must be made of the name and designation of the Children's Social Care member of staff or Police Officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed. A copy of this information should be sent direct to the WW Lead Safeguarding Officer.

Confidentiality and Information sharing

The legal principle that, 'the welfare of the child is paramount' means that considerations that might apply to other situations in the organisation should not be allowed to over-ride the rights of young people to be protected from harm.

However, every effort must be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained when an allegation has been made and is being investigated. Impact if confidentiality is breached:

- If confidentiality is breached the following can happen:
- The child is put in danger either by
- Further inappropriate action of any adult involved
- Other individuals who hear about any concern through rumours
- Through lack of action
- Any investigation by either WW or the statutory agencies may be invalidated by misinformation or rumours
- Individuals with a complaint against them may be victims of inappropriate behaviour from club members
- The policies, procedures and systems in place will not support or uphold any complaint or concern

Information sharing

There has been confusion and uncertainty on the part of many professionals and volunteers working with young people about when, how and with who concerns about the welfare of children may be shared. Information must be shared on a need to know basis. This includes sharing the information with the welfare officer, the police or Children's Social Care and relevant people within the National Governing Body. If the matter is one concerning an allegation of abuse, the police or Children's Social Care will take the lead in advising if others (including parents) can be informed. Remember there is a difference between information sharing and gossip. The latter should be avoided at all costs and could be unlawful (Data Protection Act). There is advice on information sharing on www.everychildmatters.gov.uk. Including the publication "What to Do If you are worried a Child is Being Abused". Information will be stored in a secure.

If an allegation is made against you

Any concerns involving the inappropriate behaviour of an adult towards a young person will be taken seriously and investigated. If you are the person who is the centre of an allegation, the situation will be explained to you and you may be asked to stop working with young people in the sport, you will be informed as soon as possible based on advice from the Statutory Agencies. This may result in suspension from activities within the sport whilst a full investigation is being carried out. This is to protect all parties involved.

WW will assess, on a case by case, any support needed for the person who has had the allegations made against them. They may choose to appoint an independent officer to provide support to the accused.

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