

Dealing with Child Protection Concerns

Everyone must be aware of the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be suffering from abuse or neglect. This is an important responsibility for staff and volunteers involved in sports clubs, community activities, youth clubs, religious/faith sector and other organisations catering for children.

The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:

- the safety and well-being of the child must take priority;
- reports should be made without delay to the appropriate Agency

The agencies (Tusla/HSCT) should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected.

Child protection concerns should be supported by information that indicates the possibility of abuse or neglect. A concern about a potential risk to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are unidentifiable, should also be communicated to the statutory agency.

If, after normal office hours, you have an immediate and serious concern about the safety of a child, contact the Gardai/PSNI.

Dealing with Concerns

- Complaints or suspicions of abuse relating to a child wherever and whenever arising must be reported to the relevant Designated Liaison Person without delay; who must take immediate steps to safeguard the child and to refer the complaint or suspicion of abuse to the Statutory Authorities and to the PUDLP who must inform the CI NSO
- Procedures for making, investigating and determining complaints about abuse (including confidentiality conditions) should be agreed formally by the club committee and promoted so that they are readily available and acted upon as soon as possible on receipt of a complaint
- The person against whom a complaint relating to abuse of a child is made to one of the Statutory Authorities will be asked to step aside as a Sports Leader until after the relevant determination has been made. This is not an implication of guilt, rather a Safeguarding precaution for the child and Sports leader after consultation with statutory agencies about informing the person. All reasonable steps will be taken to protect the child
- The Cricket Ireland Safeguarding Officer must be notified by the relevant Designated Liaison Person of all allegations of abuse relating to a Sports Leader, Employee or Volunteer and all questions from the National Safeguarding Officer must be answered without delay (Within seventy-two hours from Safeguarding Officer being notified)
- It is not the role of the person who conveys a complaint or suspicion about abuse of a child to determine the guilt or innocence of the accused, but every complaint must be made and acted upon without delay

Reasonable Grounds for Concern

A concern should be passed to Statutory Authorities if any of the following criteria are in place:

- Specific indication from a child that they have been abused
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused
- Consistent indication, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way
- Corroborative indicators supporting a concern, e.g. pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indicators of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour

Response to a child

- Do not make any promises that cannot be met
- Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive manner through listening to and facilitating the child to talk about the issue(s)
- Stay calm and listen carefully to what the child is saying and take it seriously
- Permit the child to speak without interruption, accepting what is said
- Reassure the child that they were right to speak up and that they will be helped
- Attempt to alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement on the person against whom the allegation is being made
- Indicate what will happen next, such as informing parents/guardians or Statutory Authorities, etc
- All consultations with others should be entirely confidential and should not involve investigative procedures
- Write a detailed account of any discussion regarding alleged or suspected abuse, as soon as possible after the discussion has taken place. (Recording Concerns template)
- Send the details to the Club Safeguarding Officer
- Do not trivialise nor exaggerate what the child has told you

Reporting Concerns/Child Abuse

- Remember that reporting suspected child abuse in good faith is not the same as making an accusation of abuse, i.e., reporting does not mean accusing
- Responsibility for the investigation of child abuse cases suspected or otherwise lies with the Statutory Authorities
- Clubs or Provincial Unions should not carry out their own internal investigations into cases where child abuse is suspected. Contact duty social workers in your local area,
<http://bit.ly/ROIChild> (ROI)
<http://bit.ly/NIChild> (NI)
- Please note Tusla will only accept reports on the Tusla report form or through the secured web portal (<https://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/publications-and-forms/>)
- Any person who knows or suspects that a child is being harmed or is at risk of being harmed has a duty to convey their concern to Statutory Authorities and/or Cricket Ireland
- It may be appropriate for a person to discuss concerns they have with another person in the club, e.g. Children's Officer, or should the concern relate to the Children's Officer then the concern is to be relayed to the PU DLP, then Cricket Ireland Safeguarding Officer
- In cases where an allegation has been made, the matter should be reported immediately to the relevant personnel (Statutory agencies and Cricket Ireland Safeguarding Officer)

- Should there be an allegation against a club member – the Children’s Officer must be informed so that the person against whom the allegation has been made, can be asked to step aside from activities which involve children, until the conclusion of the investigation has been finalised. This should be done only after advice from statutory authorities so that investigations are not compromised
- All concerns and allegations made should be carefully recorded and ensure confidentiality is maintained at all stages

Allegations Against Sports Leaders

Cricket Ireland has procedures to be followed in cases of alleged child abuse against Sports Leaders or volunteers. If such an allegation is made against Sports Leaders working in Cricket, two procedures should be followed:

- The reporting procedure in respect of the young person (reported by the Designated Liaison Person)
- The procedure for dealing with the Sports Leader (carried out by the club chair or chair of the disciplinary committee, or a person not already involved with the child protection concern)

In respect of the young person

The safety of the child making the allegation should be the first and paramount consideration and the safety of any other children who may be at risk. Cricket Ireland will take any necessary steps to protect children in its care. The protection should be in proportion to the level of risk. The issue of confidentiality is important. Information is shared on a need-to-know basis and the Sports Leader should be treated with respect and fairness, as they have a right to natural justice.

Parents/guardians should be informed, unless to do so would place the child at further risk.

The reporting procedure if the Designated Liaison Person has reasonable grounds for concern, the matter should be reported to the relevant statutory agency, following the standard reporting procedure and the parents should be informed.

In respect of the Sports Leader

Cricket Ireland may seek legal advice. The Designated Liaison Person may consult with the relevant statutory agency informally to seek confirmation that there is reason for concern. The Sports Leader will be asked to step aside pending the investigation.

This request is only made following advice from statutory authorities and implies no presumption of guilt.

If there is cause for concern, the Sports Leader will be informed after the Designated Liaison Person refers the report to the local HSE/Social Services, the chair of the Management Board of CI should deal with the Leader in question. Unless there is an immediate risk to the child and/or other young people, in which case the Leader in question will be informed at the earliest opportunity which may still be after the concern has been reported to the Statutory Authorities.

- When the concern is connected to the actions of a Sports Leader/Volunteer in the Club/Union or representing Cricket Ireland, the person should be asked to stand aside pending the outcome of any investigation by the Statutory Authorities
- When the Sports Leader/Volunteer is being privately informed by the chairperson of the Club/Management Committee of:
 - The fact that an allegation has been made against them, and
 - The nature of the allegation. They should be afforded an opportunity to respond. Their response should be noted and passed on to the Statutory Authorities
 - When a person is asked to step aside it should be made clear that it is only a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings
 - The Sports Leader/Volunteer is entitled to natural justice

Investigation

While the statutory agency is carrying out the investigation, the club will not investigate internally. If the statutory agency considers no further investigation on their part is necessary, then the matter may be deemed poor practice as distinct from abuse. This issue may then be referred to a club's management committee or referred to Cricket Ireland's National Safeguarding Panel.

No further action by statutory authorities simply means that the issue has not met their intervention threshold, which is higher than CI's threshold.

For reporting forms please see section 7.