

ISSUES, ALLEGATIONS THAT MUST BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE RFL SAFEGUARDING TEAM

In order for the Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG) to carry out its responsibilities under the Safeguarding Policy the Group needs to be informed of the following issues or related allegations. In appropriate instances the Group will log the issue/allegation and refer it to the appropriate League or Club to deal with and report back to the SCMG, alternatively the SCMG will deal with the issue/allegation itself or refer it to the appropriate statutory agencies.

The following is a general list of issues/allegations which should be referred to the SCMG.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Assault or inappropriate contact on a child by an adult in the junior or youth game.
- Allegations or suspicions that a child is being physically abused at home.

VERBAL ABUSE

Threatening and/or abusive language that causes (or that a reasonable adult would expect to cause) emotional distress to a child in the junior or youth game should be reported

NB just because a child does not appear to be emotionally distressed does not mean that they are not, when verbal abuse is regular children learn to hide their feelings

RACIST, HOMOPHOBIC OR OTHER DISCRIMINATORY ABUSE

- Racist, homophobic or other discriminatory abuse or allegations of abuse which have not resulted in a dismissal.

NB if the Match Official has heard the abuse and dismissed the player then the report should be forwarded to the appropriate disciplinary committee

NEGLECT

- Allegations or suspicions that a child is being neglected at home

SEXUAL ABUSE/BREACH OF RELATIONSHIPS OF TRUST

- Allegations or suspicions that a child is being sexually abused either in the game or in any other place eg school, church, by other children.
- Allegations of an adult sharing a room with a child, showering with children, making sexually suggestive comments to a child, inappropriate touching, taking or inviting a child to their home on their own
- Allegations or suspicions that a volunteer or employee is entering into a sexual relationship with a child under 18 involved in the game

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS

- Information and/or rumours about participants in the game which if true would lead a reasonable person to believe that the participant (regardless of age) may be a threat to the safety of children

BULLYING

- Bullying of children by adults

Child on child bullying should usually be dealt with by the CWO at the club who may contact the Safeguarding Manager for advice.

POOR PRACTICE

Poor practice should initially be reported to the Safeguarding team who may choose to deal with it (particularly if either the adult concerned is already known to the Safeguarding team or if there have been a number of incidents of poor practice raised at a particular club which the club does not appear to be capable of dealing with) or refer back to the club/league to deal with internally. In these situations the club/league must report back on their findings.

Definitions

Child – Player, match official, volunteer or spectator aged under 18

Adult – As above aged 18 or over

Poor Practice

Poor practice is the term used to describe practice which falls below the standards expected to such an extent that a child's welfare is compromised and is where an adult's or another child's behaviour is inappropriate and may be causing concern to a child. Some examples are:

- Insufficient care is taken to avoid injuries e.g. by excessive training or inappropriate training for the age or maturity, experience and ability of players;
- Giving continued and unnecessary preferential treatment to individuals and regularly or unfairly rejecting others e.g. singling out and focusing on the talented players or the coach's own children or not having a fair team selection policy; winning should not be the over-riding factor.
- Placing children in potentially compromising and uncomfortable situations with adults
- Allowing abusive or concerning practices to go unchallenged and unreported e.g. failing to deal with or report a coach who ridicules or swears at players who make a mistake during a match
- Ignoring health and safety rules
- Failing to adhere to the game's RESPECT or other codes of conduct
- Failing to act to prevent one child harming or abusing another
- Issuing disciplinary sanctions which are not proportionate to age and/or involve violent or physical punishment or humiliation

GUIDE TO CLUB PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING CASES OF POOR PRACTICE

If a Club Welfare Officer becomes aware of a disclosure of abuse or received concerns or allegations about coaches or volunteers the CWO should report this to the RFL Lead Safeguarding Officer. The RFL Lead SO will report the issue to the Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG). If the concern or allegation needs to be reported to any statutory agencies, then the RFL will do this.

The SCMG will consider the initial report and decide whether this is a case which can be dealt with by the Club or whether it should be dealt with centrally. If it has been decided that it can be dealt with at club level, then the following procedures should be adopted.

The results of any disciplinary action must be reported to the RFL Safeguarding Case Management Group.

A Disciplinary Panel should be convened which should consist of:

- Three club members
- None of whom should have been involved in reporting the case or have a conflict of interests (eg a close friend of the individual who is subject to allegations)
- At least one of whom should be a senior management member from the club
- If the complaint relates to a coaching matter one member should have coaching experience
- The person against whom the complaint has been made must be:
- Informed of the nature of the complaint in writing

- Provided with a copy of any report or other information which will be considered by the Panel
- Be invited to attend the meeting which should be held at a convenient time for them;
- Advised that they can bring someone along with them for support but not to make any contribution
- Receive sufficient notice of the hearing;
- Be given the opportunity to put their side of the story and call witnesses
- Be allowed to hear or see evidence supporting the complaint; however, minors should not be required to give evidence in person and can provide evidence in writing. There may also be information which is confidential to the complainant or where the source has requested anonymity for fear of retribution.

Temporary Suspension

It may be in the best interests of all parties and of resolving the issue if the individual concerned is temporarily suspended pending the conclusion of the matter. Temporary suspension is a neutral act and should not be used punitively.

When the Panel has reached a decision it must:

- Inform the accused and put the decision in writing
- Inform the RFL in writing
- Make sure that its decision is carried out
- Powers of a Club Disciplinary Committee
- Warning as to future conduct
- Temporary suspension
- Coaching under supervision
- Order the defendant to undertake the sports coach UK Safeguarding & Protecting Children workshop
- Order to defendant to attend a relevant RFL coaching course