



Keeping Safe

Adult Safeguarding in Sport Guidance

June 2026



Protecting Adults. Strengthening Sport.



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Introduction

All adults involved in sport should feel safe and be kept free from harm. This includes the organisation's staff and volunteers, and all those who participate in its activities, such as referees, coaches, players, spectators and grounds staff. Organisations must actively promote the rights of adults, treat everyone with dignity and respect, and create an inclusive and supportive environment, where all adults feel valued. Organisations should also put measures in place to prevent harm to adults, and should respond promptly and appropriately where harm has occurred, or is likely to occur.

Adult safeguarding is everyone's business and sporting organisations have a duty of care to all adults involved in their programmes and activities. They should create a positive adult safeguarding culture by raising awareness of adult abuse and encouraging those who have experienced harm to speak up. They must listen when a disclosure of abuse has been made, or where safeguarding concerns have been reported, and act, adopting a person centred approach. Organisations must develop good working relationships within their team and build trust and confidence in respect of adult safeguarding.

This publication provides information and guidance on the adult safeguarding standards sporting organisations should be adhering to. The publication has an accompanying Resource Pack which outlines the 7 standards in the form of a checklist, alongside sample policy text. The Adult Safeguarding in Sport Resource Pack should be used in conjunction with this publication.



Standard 1: A written Adult Safeguarding Policy



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Standard 1:

A written Adult Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding Policy Statement

All sporting organisations involving adults should have a written Adult Safeguarding Policy supported by robust procedures and guidance. Organisations have a duty of care to all adults who take part in their programmes and activities and must take appropriate steps to safeguard their welfare and wellbeing.

The policy should be developed in line with relevant legislation and regulatory frameworks, including, but not limited to the Human Rights Act, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order, the Equality (NI) Order and the Public Interest Disclosure (NI) Order. It should provide a clear framework for preventing, identifying, and responding to concerns about abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

An Adult Safeguarding Statement should be included at the beginning of the policy. This statement should outline the organisation's commitment to safeguarding adults within sport and clearly define the responsibilities of everyone involved in creating and maintaining a safe environment. It should affirm the organisation's commitment to providing a safe, respectful, inclusive, and supportive environment for all adults and confirm that staff and volunteers will follow best practice to prevent harm, abuse, and exploitation.

The policy must clearly state that the organisation has zero tolerance for abuse in any form, regardless of where it occurs or who is responsible. It should also make clear that the policy applies to all individuals associated with the organisation, including trustees, employees, volunteers, participants, carers, advocates, spectators, and visitors.

Values and Principles

All organisations have their own values and principles that guide their work. These should underpin the Adult Safeguarding Policy - they are fundamental to how it is applied in practice. These principles should promote adults' rights, including dignity and safety, ensuring they are free from harm, discrimination, and coercion, as outlined in the regional [Adult Safeguarding Policy](#).

They should also promote the empowerment of adults to make informed choices, make their own decisions and understand personal safeguarding risks. Safeguarding practice must be person centred, consent driven, and respectful of everyone's right to choose, with additional support provided where capacity is affected.

Working in Collaboration

Effective safeguarding relies on strong collaboration across statutory, voluntary, community, independent, and faith sectors, with clear roles and shared responsibility. Where a safeguarding concern arises, sporting organisations should work closely with statutory agencies such as the Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs) and the Police Service (PSNI), and other agencies offering specialist support. Volunteer Now's Adult Safeguarding in Sport Service can also provide support.

Communication of Adult Safeguarding Policy

All staff, volunteers, participants, and relevant stakeholders involved with the organisation must be made aware of the organisation's Adult Safeguarding Policy, procedures and guidelines, and understand how to access and apply them.

The safeguarding policy statement should be clearly displayed and communicated across all organisational settings wherever possible. This includes club facilities, temporary or pop-up venues, events, activities, and any other locations where programmes or activities are delivered. The policy should also be published on the website and other relevant digital platforms.

Where an organisation does not operate from a regular venue, alternative methods should be used to ensure the policy statement remains visible and accessible. This may include the policy statement within event information packs, registration forms, induction materials, training, team briefings, emails, and other digital communications. All staff and volunteers working within the organisation should be informed about the policy during induction and provided with easy access to the full policy document at all times.

Review of Adult Safeguarding Policy

The Adult Safeguarding Policy should be reviewed every three years. It must also be reviewed sooner if there are changes in legislation or significant changes to organisational practice, such as starting a new sports programme, or a change in the named Safeguarding Lead. Volunteer Now's Adult Safeguarding in Sport Service can assist with the development/review of the policy and procedures.

Role of the Trustees

The trustees hold overall responsibility for the actions of the organisation. It is therefore essential that trustees ensure an Adult Safeguarding Policy, with robust procedures, and guidelines are in place and followed at all levels of the organisation. All trustees should receive appropriate training to help them understand the safeguarding policy and their associated responsibilities.

Lead Trustee for Safeguarding

A member of the Board of Trustees should be appointed as Lead Trustee for Safeguarding. While safeguarding is the shared responsibility of all Trustees, this role provides support and guidance to the Board, Head of the organisation, and Leadership/Management Team on this priority, to ensure that appropriate and effective governance is in place. This role has additional responsibilities such as ensuring the organisation's strategic plans reflect safeguarding legislation, statutory and best practice guidance; working with the Head of the organisation and Adult Safeguarding Lead regularly to review whether the measures the organisation has put in place are creating a safer culture and keeping people safe; checking that the organisation's risk register reflects safeguarding risks properly and plans appropriate measures to address these; and ensuring that safeguarding is regularly on the agenda for Board meetings, presenting safeguarding reports as required and helping trustees to understand and challenge as appropriate.

Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC)

The Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC) role and responsibilities are outlined in the regional Adult Safeguarding Policy. The ASC is responsible in providing strategic and operational leadership and oversight in relation to adult safeguarding. They should ensure that, at a minimum, the organisation safeguards adults by:

- recognising that adult harm is wrong and that it should not be tolerated
- being aware of the signs of harm from abuse, exploitation and neglect
- reducing opportunities for harm from abuse, exploitation and neglect to occur; and
- knowing how and when to report safeguarding concerns to HSC Trust and/or the PSNI

In small organisations the ASC may be responsible for all actions related to adult safeguarding. In larger or more complex organisations the ASC may delegate some of the operational tasks or activities to an appointed person(s) within their organisation. They will then report to the ASC on adult safeguarding matters on a regular basis and assist in the compilation of reports, training needs analyses and data analysis. Sporting organisations need to consider how they implement all elements of the role.

Organisations should consider appointing a Deputy to cover when the Lead is unavailable.



Legal framework

If a person commits a crime against an adult they should be dealt with through the criminal justice system. Where there is a reasonable suspicion that a criminal offence may have occurred, it is the responsibility of the police to investigate and make a decision about any subsequent action. The police should always be consulted about criminal matters. There are a number of pieces of legislation relating to safeguarding adults at risk which can be accessed through www.opsi.gov.uk

Some of the relevant legislation is as follows:

The Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967

This creates an obligation on citizens, if they suspect an offence has been committed, to provide the police with any information they may have.

The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998

This came into effect in March 1999 with the aim of consolidating the law relating to domestic violence and occupation of the family home. It offers protection from harm, vexing, harassment and other distressing behaviours in family settings. It gives the court the power to make an exclusion order if there is reasonable cause to believe that removing the perpetrator from the home would prevent the risk of significant harm occurring.

The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998

This protects most workers who report wrongdoing in their place of work (“whistleblowing”) from suffering unfair treatment by their employer. Detriment may take the form of denial of promotion or training or dismissal as a consequence of whistleblowing. The Order identifies specific situations that can be disclosed without penalty, including criminal offences, and risks to the health and safety of individuals.

The Human Rights Act 1998

This came into effect in 2000 and makes the European Convention on Human Rights part of the law of Northern Ireland. It allows individuals and organisations to go to court or tribunal to seek redress if they believe that the rights conferred on them by the European Convention have been violated by a public authority. The Human Rights Act says that persons carrying out certain functions of a public nature will fall within the definition of a public authority. There are 16 basic rights in the Human Rights Act, all taken from the European Convention on Human Rights. Some of those rights relevant to safeguarding are:-

- Article 2 Right to Life
- Article 3 Prohibition of Torture
- Article 4 Prohibition of Slavery and Forced Labour

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 (as ammended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012)

This establishes safeguarding requirements when organisations are recruiting staff and volunteers to certain positions. Under the Order it is an offence for employers to knowingly recruit barred individuals into 'regulated activity' with adults. Organisations can ensure that they are complying by requesting an Access NI Enhanced Disclosure with barred list check, before confirming an appointment in regulated activity.

There is also a requirement for organisations to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), any individual who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to adults, and who has been permanently removed from regulated activity (or would have been had they not left the organisation).

The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008

This provides a legislative framework for sexual offences, including offences against people with a mental disorder, as defined in the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986. Articles 43 – 46 relate to offences against people who are unable to legally consent to sexual activity because of a mental disorder. Articles 47 - 50 provide added protection for those who have capacity to consent but might be at risk of exploitation through inducement, threats or deception. The Order also sets out clear parameters for people working with adults and sets strong penalties for offenders. Articles 51 – 57 contain new offences for people who are engaged in providing care, assistance or services to adults.

The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021

This aims to provide further protections to victims of domestic abuse. Key provisions include establishing a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to oversee the response to domestic abuse; expanding the definition of domestic abuse to include not just physical violence but also emotional, coercive, or controlling behaviour; and introducing new duties for local authorities to provide support and accommodation for victims.

The Online Safety Act (Northern Ireland) 2023

The aim of this Act is to make the internet a safer place for its users, including adults. It aims to do this by regulating internet services such as social media platforms and search engines. Ofcom have been appointed as the regulatory body and have published codes of practice and guidance that services must adhere to. This applies to all who provide services to a significant number of users in the UK, and those who specifically target the UK market.

The Protection from Stalking Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

This aims to provide a legal framework to protect individuals from stalking and related behaviours. It creates a specific offence of stalking, which involves a course of conduct that causes fear, alarm, or substantial distress to another person. The Act also introduces an offence of threatening and abusive behaviour, which can be triggered by a single incident. Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs) are introduced to prohibit certain acts associated with stalking and can impose requirements on perpetrators. The Act is designed to enhance the legal protection available to individuals affected by stalking and to provide a clear legal basis for prosecuting such offences.

Standard 2:

Clear recruitment and selection procedures that comply with legislative requirements and best practice



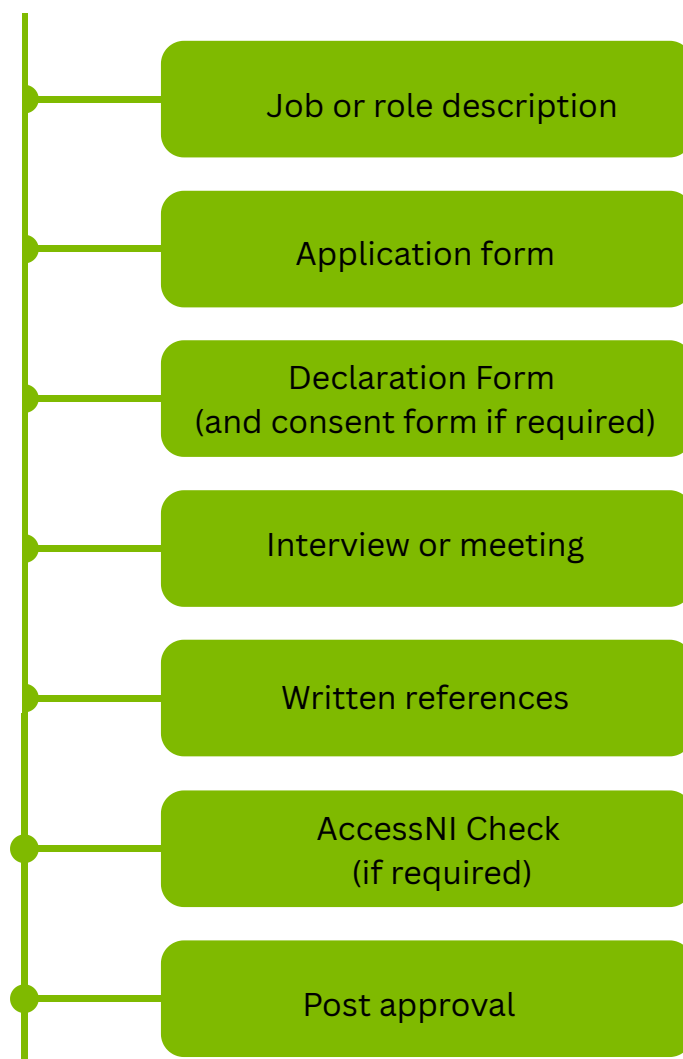
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Standard 2: Clear recruitment and selection procedures that comply with legislative requirements and best practice

Strong recruitment and selection procedures help minimise the likelihood of unsuitable individuals working or volunteering with adults. These procedures must be applied consistently to all applicants, including paid staff, volunteers, individuals already known to the organisation, and new applicants.

The flowchart below summarises the recommended procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers.



Job or Role Description

The first step is to have a clearly defined job or volunteer role description. This should include and outline the tasks and responsibilities involved. The skills and qualities needed for the position should be outlined in a personnel/volunteer specification. The job/role description must also state whether an Access NI Check is required (and if the post is considered regulated activity).

Application Form

Applicants should complete an application form detailing their relevant experience and provide two referees. This should apply to all applicants, including volunteers.

Declaration (and Consent Form if required)

If an Access NI check is required, applicants must also complete and sign a declaration and consent form. This form requires the applicant to declare any criminal history in line with legal requirements. Where an Enhanced check is being processed, the applicant must also be asked to declare any previous investigations into adult abuse where they were identified as the alleged perpetrator, and, where the post is regulated activity, if they are on the Adults Barred List. Where a Basic check is being undertaken (or where no check is being undertaken), the applicant can be asked to declare any unspent convictions.

Interview or Meeting

An interview for paid employment, or a meeting for volunteers, should be conducted by representatives of the organisation. The purpose of the interview or meeting is to review the information provided in the application form and assess whether the applicant has the skills, values, and suitability required for the role. Following a successful interview/meeting the applicant should be offered the post on a conditional basis requiring two suitable references and satisfactory Access NI check.

Written References

Organisations must have a clear process for requesting, recording and following up references. At least two written references should be obtained, and referees must not be family members. Ideally, one referee should have direct knowledge of the applicant's previous work with adults. Reference forms should include specific safeguarding questions, including whether the referee has any concerns about the applicant working with adults. Any unclear or concerning information must be followed up by the recruiting organisation.

AccessNI Checks (if required)

Where a role is 'regulated activity', an Enhanced Disclosure with Barred List Check must be processed.

If a role meets the former definition of regulated activity (pre-2012), an Enhanced Disclosure without a Barred List Check should be requested. This definition includes instructing, caring for, supervising and/or transporting "vulnerable" adults frequently. A "vulnerable" adult is someone who takes part in an activity provided to specified persons (with any form of disability, age specific needs, prescribed physical or mental health problem). 'Frequently' means once a week or more, or four or more days within a 30-day period, or overnight.

Under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) order 2007 (as amended 2012), it is an offence for an organisation to knowingly involve a Barred individual in regulated activity. It is also an offence for a Barred person to apply for, or undertake, such work.

Post Approval

Once the applicant receives their Disclosure Certificate and shares it with the organisation, it should be cross referenced with their self-declaration form. The organisation can then make a final recruitment decision. If satisfied the offer of employment or volunteering can be confirmed. All appointments must be approved by the relevant manager or person in charge of the sport or activity.



Standard 3:
Procedures in place for the support,
training and management of staff
and volunteers



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Standard 3:

Procedures in place for the support, training and management of staff and volunteers

It is essential that everyone working within the organisation, whether staff or volunteers, understands the organisational aims as well as their own roles and responsibilities. This can be actioned by having a clear induction process for new volunteers and employees, regular safeguarding training, and an annual check-in to review practice and performance and ensure ongoing confidence in their role.

The diagram below summarises the recommended procedures for all staff and volunteers.

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT



Induction Process

Organisations should have a structured induction process for all new staff and volunteers. Induction should take place as soon as someone joins the organisation, and should include:

- Information about the organisation, it's ethos and policies, including the Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and Code of Behaviour.
- Clear expectations of their role and responsibilities.
- Training to increase knowledge on recognising, recording, and reporting adult abuse, including how to contact the organisation's Adult Safeguarding Lead.

Probationary / Trial Period

All appointments should be conditional on the completion of a satisfactory period of work. A minimum period should be established at the time of employment or involvement e.g. 3 - 6 months. At the end of the probationary/trial period it is good practice to have a review of the individuals progress in the job or role. Where there are performance concerns it may be necessary to extend this probationary/trial period or end their involvement in the organisation.

Adult Safeguarding Training

In addition to general induction, all staff and volunteers (including the Adult Safeguarding Lead and Trustees) should receive Adult Safeguarding training appropriate to their role, level of contact, and level of responsibility. Best practice would suggest that all organisations provide details of their training within their Adult Safeguarding Policy.

This training should be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect changes in legislation and best practice, with refresher training recommended at least every three years, and training for the Adult Safeguarding Lead should be refreshed every two years.

Other training may be required in line with the individual's role e.g. disability awareness.

Staff and volunteers must be trained to take all concerns about adult abuse seriously, to manage information sensitively and appropriately, and to avoid making promises to keep secrets. They should understand that their role is not to investigate concerns about abuse, but to report concerns in line with the organisation's safeguarding procedures.

Support and Supervision

Regular support and supervision should be undertaken with staff and volunteers to provide an opportunity to review any training needs, clarify expectations, and ensure staff and volunteers feel confident in their responsibilities. It allows the organisation to identify any issues early, offer additional guidance where needed, and reinforce good safeguarding practice across the team.

Annual Appraisal / Review

An annual appraisal (for staff) or annual review (for volunteers) should be undertaken, to assess and give feedback to individuals on their general performance, give recognition for the good work they are doing and to help develop their skills further.

Standard 4:

Clearly defined procedures for raising awareness of, responding to, recording and reporting concerns about adult abuse



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Standard 4:

Clearly defined procedures for raising awareness of, responding to, recording and reporting concerns about abuse

All staff and volunteers must know how to recognise possible abuse and how to pass concerns to the right person in the organisation. They are not responsible for deciding if abuse has happened, but they should be aware of possible indicators that may suggest something is wrong.

Who is an adult at risk of harm?

An 'adult at risk of harm' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their personal characteristics and/or life circumstances.

Some examples of personal characteristics are age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.

Life circumstances refer to the conditions, events, and situations in which a person lives that influence their health, wellbeing, and overall life experience.

The adult's personal characteristics and life circumstances may make it more challenging for them to protect themselves from harm, or their situation may create opportunities for others to harm them.

An 'Adult in need of protection' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their personal characteristics and/or life circumstances; and who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests; and where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.

Many individuals participating in sport will be at risk, whether as a staff member or volunteer, a coach, an athlete, a participant, or a spectator. In most cases, statutory authorities will decide if someone is 'at risk' or 'in need of protection'. However, sporting organisations need to consider these thresholds when dealing with an adult safeguarding concern.

What is abuse?

Abuse is a single or repeated act, or a failure to act appropriately, within a relationship where there is an expectation of trust, care, or responsibility. It results in harm or distress to an individual or a breach of their human or civil rights. At its core, abuse involves the misuse of power and control by one person over another. It can take many forms and may involve direct contact, indirect contact, or online communication, including social media, messaging apps, and other digital platforms.

Abuse can happen in any setting, including sport and physical activity environments, workplaces, community settings, or in the home. It may be carried out by anyone who has contact with the adult. This can include a person who is known to the adult, such as a family member, friend, carer, coach, team mate, volunteer or staff member within an organisation.

In many cases, it may involve someone who is in a position of trust or responsibility. However it can also be carried out by someone with no prior relationship to the individual. Within sport abuse may occur during training, competition, travel, online communication, or during any other activity linked to the organisation.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is the use of physical force or mistreatment by one person towards another, which may or may not result in physical injury. In a sporting context, physical abuse can include physical assault, such as hitting, pushing, or inappropriate physical contact. It may also include forcing an adult to train or compete when they are injured or unwell or requiring them to continue training at a level of intensity that is unsafe or beyond their physical capacity. Physical abuse can also include the use of excessive or inappropriate physical punishment or discipline as part of coaching or training practices. All training should be safe and appropriate and must never exceed what is reasonable for an individual's ability, health, and overall wellbeing.

Indicators of physical abuse may include:

Unexplained or repeated injuries (such as sprains or fractures) that are inconsistent with the explanation given, or a pattern of injuries which can often increase in severity over time. Physical marks such as cuts and bruises, including marks to the face. An adult may also show fear or reluctance to train with a particular coach or attend certain sessions, or appear withdrawn or anxious around physical training environments. The continuation of involvement in sport despite ongoing injuries can also be a potential indicator. Adults experiencing this type of abuse may tell you that their physical injuries are sports related when in fact they are not.

Sexual abuse

Sexual violence and abuse is any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful, or unwanted, and which is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any form of disability). It can take place in person and online.

Some examples of sexual abuse include unwanted touching, sexual comments, or inappropriate physical contact; sending unwanted sexually explicit messages or images; upskirting or downblousing; sextortion; pressuring or manipulating an athlete into sexual acts in exchange for selection, playing time, or career advancement; or invading privacy in changing rooms or showers. It also includes engaging in sexual activity with someone who lacks the capacity to consent.

Indicators of sexual abuse may include:

An adult may show signs of discomfort, fear, or avoidance around a specific person, or in particular situations such as changing rooms, travel, or online communication. They may appear distressed after interactions, receive unexplained gifts, or become secretive about phone or online use. Sudden changes in mood, confidence, attendance, or performance may also be indicators, particularly if there is no clear explanation. They may be in pain, have bruising, bleeding, STI's and/or be pregnant as a result of sexual abuse.

Psychological/emotional abuse

Psychological/emotional abuse is behaviour that is psychologically harmful or causes mental distress through threats, humiliation, or other verbal or non-verbal conduct. It can happen in person and online.

In a sporting context, this can include a volunteer or coach constantly shouting at, belittling, or humiliating an adult; threatening to remove funding, selection, or playing time unless the athlete complies with demands; bullying, name-calling, or mocking an athlete's appearance, ability, or personal life; or requiring forced initiation rituals or other degrading acts and monitoring how the adult spend their free time and lives their daily life e.g. insisting they sacrifice personal/family time to undertake further training.

Indicators of psychological / emotional may include:

An adult may appear withdrawn, anxious, or lacking confidence, particularly around certain coaches, volunteers, or training environments. They may show signs of fear of making mistakes, reluctance to attend training or competition, or a noticeable drop in performance or motivation without a clear physical cause. Changes in mood, increased stress, or signs of low self-esteem may also be indicators, especially if linked to specific individuals or situations within the sporting environment.

Financial abuse

Financial abuse is the actual or attempted theft, fraud, or misuse of money, property, benefits, material goods, or other assets. It involves the improper or illegal use of an individual's finances or possessions, or where consent to do so has been obtained through intimidation, coercion, or deception. This can happen in person and online.

In a sporting context, examples may include pressuring an athlete to pay excessive or hidden training fees; misusing team or club funds intended for athlete support; a coach, agent, or other individual taking an unfair or disproportionate share of winnings or earnings; fraud linked to sporting activity; restricting an individual's access to their own money, accounts, or financial resources; or forcing them to take out loans on behalf of the club or a colleague. Adults can also be tricked into scams online or on their doorstep.

Indicators of financial abuse may include:

An adult may show signs of unexplained financial difficulty, such as the struggle to afford travel, equipment, or participation costs despite being actively involved in sport. They may appear confused or uncertain about fees, payments, or money owed; or mention being in debt or being pressured to pay unexpected or excessive costs to coaches, clubs, or other individuals within the sporting environment. There may also be indications that they lack control over their own finances or are not able to make independent financial decisions.

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a person deliberately withholds, or fails to provide, appropriate and adequate care and support that another adult requires. It may result from a lack of knowledge or awareness, or from a failure to take reasonable action based on the information and circumstances available at the time.

In a sporting context, neglect may include not providing adequate medical attention after an injury; ignoring safety regulations or requirements for protective equipment; forcing athletes to compete or train when injured; exposing a person to a dangerous situation, such as leaving them unsupervised when supervision is required; or failing to meet an individual's personal or intimate care needs.

Indicators of neglect may include:

An adult may continue to train or compete despite being injured, unwell, or clearly unfit to participate, particularly where this appears to be expected or encouraged. There may be repeated failure to seek or provide appropriate medical attention following injury, or signs that injuries are not being properly assessed or managed. Concerns may also arise where safety procedures are not followed, protective equipment is not provided or used. In some cases, there may be evidence that an adult's basic care, medical, or support needs are not being met within the sporting environment.

Institutional abuse

Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult by individuals within an organisation tasked to safeguard them such as a sporting organisation. It involves the collective failure of an organisation to provide safe activities and programmes, and includes a failure to ensure that necessary preventative and/or protective measures are in place. In a sporting context, examples may include an organisation ignoring or dismissing concerns or reports of adult abuse; covering up concerns or incidents; failing to act on safeguarding concerns; prioritising success, performance, or reputation over athlete welfare; allowing power imbalances between coaches, officials, and athletes to go unchallenged; poor practice or inappropriate behaviour by staff or volunteers; or a culture of silence, fear, or reluctance to raise concerns.

Indicators of institutional abuse may include:

A culture where poor practice and inappropriate behaviour, is normalised, ignored, or not challenged. There may be reluctance to report concerns due to fear of consequences, lack of confidence in reporting procedures, or belief that concerns will not be taken seriously. Repeated safeguarding issues may be dismissed, poorly handled, or not acted upon in a timely way. Concerns may also arise where there is an overemphasis on performance, results, or reputation.

Exploitation

Exploitation is the deliberate maltreatment, manipulation, or abuse of power and control over another person in order to take advantage of them or a situation, usually, but not always, for personal gain. This may involve treating a person as a commodity. It can take many forms, including slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, domestic abuse, sexual violence and abuse, or human trafficking.

In a sporting context, exploitation occurs when someone in a position of power takes unfair advantage of another person for personal, financial, or performance gain. For example, a coach or other individual may exploit an athlete to improve performance outcomes or for personal benefit. Exploitation can be financial, sexual, emotional, or physical in nature and may include behaviours and indicators outlined in other categories of abuse, such as coercion, manipulation, or abuse of authority.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking and modern slavery involves the movement or control of people through force, threats, or deception for the purpose of exploitation. This can include forced labour, criminal activity, or sexual exploitation.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse refers to threatening, controlling or coercive behaviour, violence or abuse of any kind conducted by a current or former partner or family member. It is usually a pattern of behaviour where one person uses power and control over another, and it can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, background, or circumstance. It is usually frequent and persistent. It occurs right across society, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability, or geography.

Hate Crime

Hate crime is any criminal offence that the victim, or anyone else, believes was motivated by prejudice or hostility towards a person's actual or perceived race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, or gender identity.

Stalking

Stalking is a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, intrusive and causes fear of violence or alarm or distress in the victim. Behaviours may amount to stalking depending on the context of the behaviour; the motivations driving the behaviour; and the impact on the victim. Stalkers may use a variety of different behaviours to stalk the individual. In some cases, a stalker may try to appear endearing and loving, as well as threatening or violent. The key to understanding the behaviours as stalking are that they are Fixated, Obsessive, Unwanted by the victim and Repetitive (F.O.U.R) Examples of stalking behaviour include following the individual and contacting the individual's children, partner, other family members, friends, co-workers or another.

Honor based violence

Honor based violence is the term used to refer to a range of violent practices used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to sustain or promote perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence may occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative or another has shamed, or may shame, the family and/or community by breaking their 'honour code'.

Forced Marriage

Forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. The individual(s) being forced to marry may be taken abroad and then forced to marry or brought to the UK, as a result of forced marriage to someone living in the UK.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful, and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. Often women will not disclose/this will not be discovered until adulthood.

Many any of the indicators already noted in the publication may present in the circumstances above, and staff and volunteers must report their concerns following the organisation's reporting procedures. However, the Adult Safeguarding Lead must also consult with specialist agencies e.g. in the case of domestic abuse of a female, Women's Aid or the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline. Useful numbers and websites are included at the end of this section.

Responding to concerns of abuse

Concerns about adult abuse may come to the attention of the organisation in a variety of ways. For example, a participant may disclose abuse they have experienced; a coach, volunteer, or staff member may recognise indicators of abuse and become concerned about an individual's welfare; or a manager may receive reports of abusive behaviour involving spectators, staff, volunteers, or participants at an event. Regardless of how concerns arise, or who raises them, it is important that the organisation responds appropriately, promptly, and in line with safeguarding procedures.

If an adult discloses abuse, the staff member or volunteer who has received the disclosure, must respond calmly and appropriately. They should listen carefully, show concern, and acknowledge what is being said. The individual should be reassured that they were right to speak up and that the information will be taken seriously. Staff and volunteers should explain what will happen next, including the boundaries and limitations of confidentiality, and the need to share information with appropriate people.

Immediate safety should always be considered, and emergency services contacted if urgent medical attention or police assistance is required. Where a crime may have been committed, staff and volunteers should be aware that medical or forensic evidence may need to be preserved. Each organisation should have a clear procedure for reporting and recording concerns of abuse. The organisation's safeguarding policy should clearly outline how concerns should be reported, recorded, and responded to (See Chart 1, page 27).

It is important to understand that the person who first becomes aware of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. That responsibility lies with the statutory authorities. The main responsibility of the person who is first alerted to possible/actual abuse to report their concerns immediately to the organisation's Adult Safeguarding Lead.

If the adult safeguarding concern relates to an adult involved in a club or activity affiliated to a National Governing Body, it should be reported to the club welfare officer. If the club or activity is not affiliated to an NGB, concerns should be reported to the person responsible for adult safeguarding within the club, such as an organiser, coach, or safeguarding lead. They may also seek advice from the Volunteer Now's Adult Safeguarding in Sport Service and/or the relevant statutory agencies.

If the sporting organisation has appointed a lead trustee for Adult Safeguarding their role may include being a point of contact for staff and volunteers who feel their concerns are not being taken seriously or acted upon.

Role and Responsibilities of the Adult Safeguarding Lead:

When an alert is raised within an organisation in relation to an adult safeguarding concern or disclosure, the Adult Safeguarding Lead should take the following actions:

- Consider whether the concern is a safeguarding issue or not. This may involve some 'checking out' of information provided whilst being careful not to stray into the realm of investigation;
- Where immediate danger exists or the situation warrants immediate action, ensure any medical assistance has been sought and refer to the HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service or PSNI;
- Ensure that any actions take account of the adult's wishes;
- Where it has been deemed that it is not a safeguarding issue, other alternative responses should be considered such as monitoring, support or advice to staff and volunteers or support from another organisation. A record should be made of the concern and the details kept on file, including any action taken; the reasons for not referring; and the situation monitored on an ongoing basis;
- If it is decided that it is a safeguarding issue, report to the HSC Trust. If the adult has an HSC Key Worker (and their contact details are known), contact them in the first instance. If the adult does not have an HSC Key Worker (or their contact details are not known), contact the HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service. The HSC Trust will then conduct a risk assessment and decide what response is appropriate;
- If a crime is suspected or alleged, contact the HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service directly;
- Act as the liaison point for any investigative activity which is required and will ensure easy access to relevant case records or staff;
- Ensure accurate and timely records and the relevant adult safeguarding forms have been completed.

Where there is any doubt or uncertainty about whether there is a safeguarding issue, this should be discussed with the HSC Key Worker (if known) or HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service.

Consent and Capacity:

Adults should be central to decisions regarding any actions to prevent or protect them from harm; their wishes are of paramount importance in all cases of alleged or suspected abuse. If an adult does not want a referral made to the HSC Trust or PSNI, the Adult Safeguarding Lead must consider the

following:

- Do they have capacity to make this decision?*
- Have they been given full and accurate information in a way which they understand?
- Are they experiencing undue influence or coercion?
- Is the person causing harm a member of staff, a volunteer?
- Is anyone else at risk from the person causing harm?
- Is a crime suspected or alleged?

*There should be no assumptions made regarding an individual's capacity or incapacity and in the first instance, unless there is contrary information, every individual should be viewed as having the capacity to make decisions about their own situation. However, if an issue is raised in relation to any individual's cognitive ability to make an informed decision about their safety, the HSC Trust Designated Adult Protection Officer (DAPO) should ensure a capacity assessment is completed.

The above factors will influence whether or not a referral without consent needs to be made. If in doubt, the ASC or appointed person should contact the HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service for advice and guidance.

If it is determined that the concerns do not meet the definition of an adult at risk or an adult in need of protection, the concerns raised must be recorded; including any action taken; and the reasons for not referring to the HSC Trust.

The Adult Safeguarding Lead will ensure that records of reported concerns are compiled and analysed to determine whether a number of low-level concerns are accumulating to become significant.

What if the Adult Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy) cannot be reached?

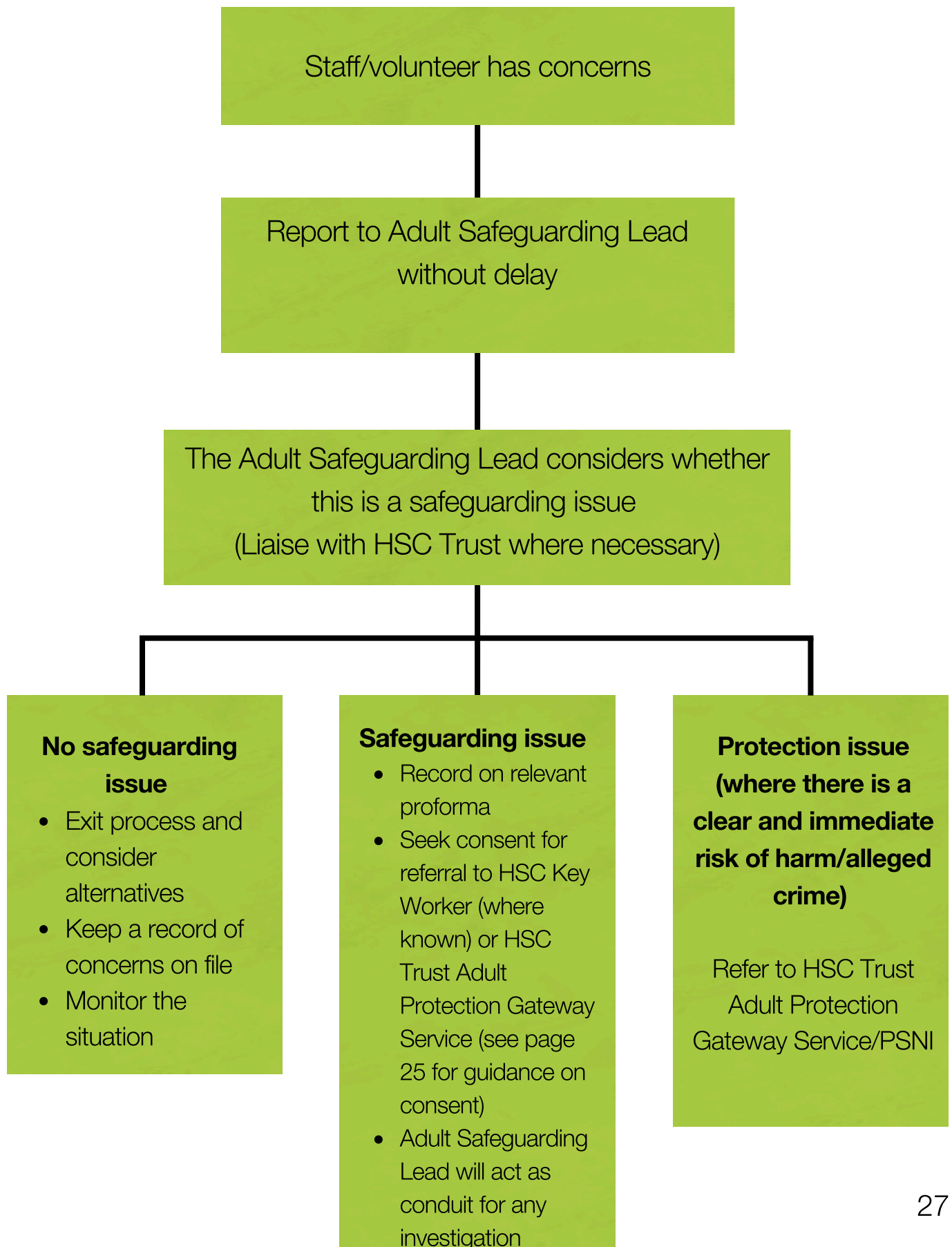
Where the Adult Safeguarding Lead, Deputy, or any other person included within the reporting structures cannot be reached, this should not prevent action being taken or contact being made with the HSC Trust/PSNI in respect of the safeguarding concern. The staff or volunteer with the concerns should contact the relevant agency directly. In this circumstance, the name of the person contacted within the statutory agency must be recorded, as well as the date and time, and any information shared or action taken e.g. a copy of the referral form sent and advice received. The Adult Safeguarding Lead must be informed as soon as possible that contact was made. The staff member or volunteer can also contact Volunteer Now's Adult Safeguarding in Sport Service for guidance.

What if a staff member's/volunteers concerns are not taken seriously?

If a staff member or volunteer feels like their adult safeguarding concern has not been taken seriously, they should discuss the concern with the Deputy (if there is one appointed), or the Head of the organisation. If they still feel that their concerns are being dismissed, they should contact the HSC Trust or Adult Protection Gateway Team and/or the PSNI. The organisation can also raise the matter with Volunteer Now's Adult Safeguarding in Sport Service, or the relevant funding body.

If the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding is another point of contact in the reporting procedures, that should be made clear to staff and volunteers.

Chart 1 - Dealing with an adult safeguarding concern



Dealing with an allegation of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer

Organisations must have a clear written procedure explaining how staff and volunteers should respond if an allegation of abuse is made against a colleague. Allegations must always be managed consistently and fairly, with the safety and wellbeing of adults as the priority. When an allegation is made, the organisation has two responsibilities: to protect the adult who has made the allegation of harm, and to ensure the staff member or volunteer (who is alleged to have caused the harm) is treated appropriately. The process for managing allegations should run alongside the organisation's procedure for reporting adult safeguarding concerns (See Chart 2, page 29).

The Adult Safeguarding Lead should record the details of the allegation and pass this information to the individual's Line Manager or the Head of the organisation.

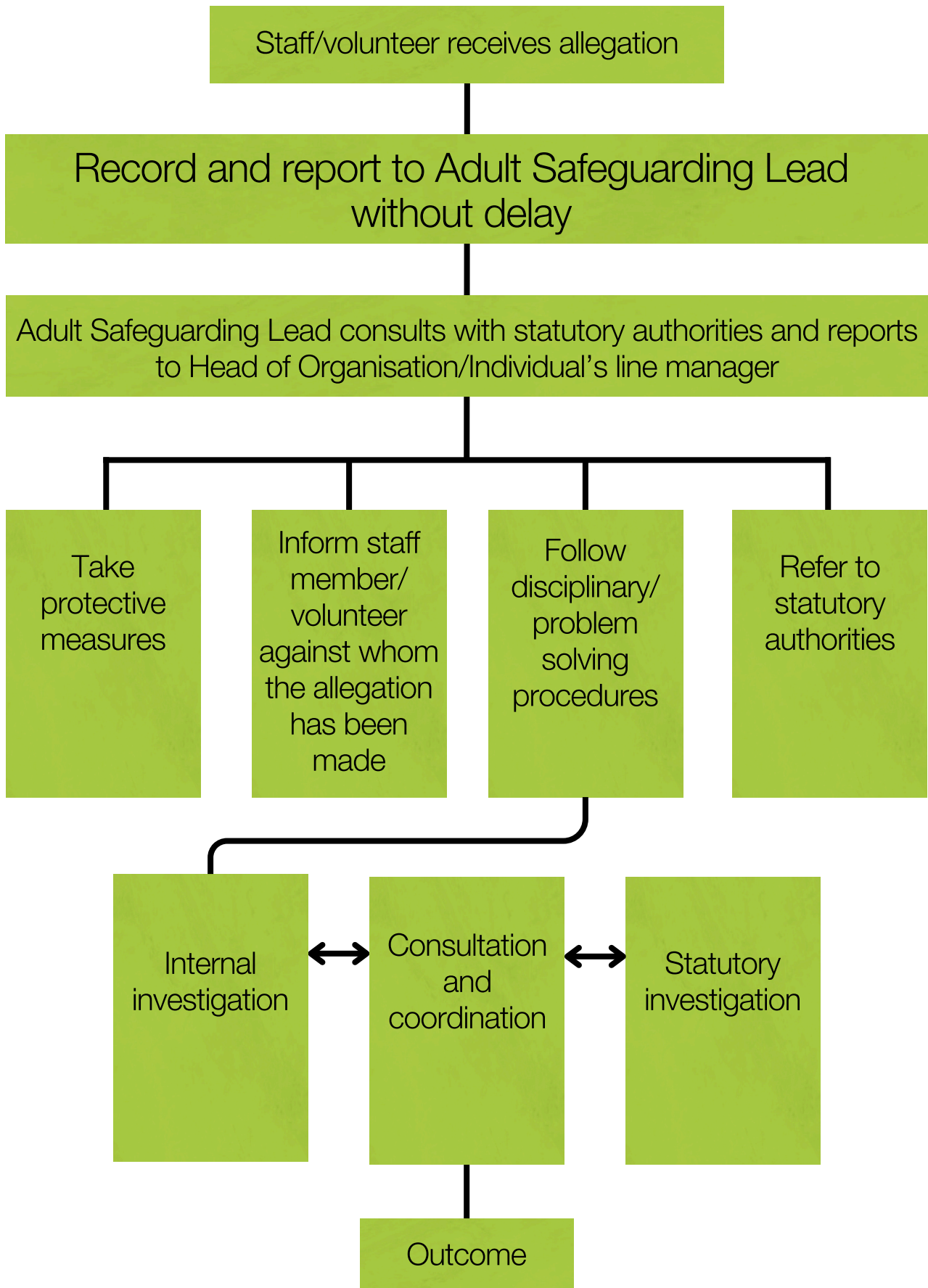
The Line Manager or Head of the organisation must:

- Through the organisation's Adult Safeguarding Lead, consult with the HSC Trust Key worker (where relevant) or Adult Protection Gateway Team and/or PSNI to make sure the organisation's actions do not interfere with any investigation.
- Inform the staff member/volunteer that the allegation has been made and give them the opportunity to respond. Their response should be fully recorded.
- Through the organisation's Adult Safeguarding Lead, consult again with statutory authorities to agree the next steps.
- Put protective measures in place if needed. This may include moving the person to a role without contact with adults, or suspending them (or if the individual is a volunteer, asking them to step down). This is a neutral act to allow the investigation to proceed.
- If the allegation is substantiated and the staff member/volunteer has been found to have harmed an adult or put them at risk of harm, the sports organisation must implement disciplinary procedures (problem solving procedures for a volunteer), and consult with the Disclosure and Barring Service to establish if a referral also needs made to them.
- Where the threshold has not been met for statutory involvement, appropriate action must still be taken by the organisation.

What if the concern is in relation to the Adult Safeguarding Lead?

If a safeguarding concern relates to the behaviour or conduct of the Adult Safeguarding Lead, the staff member or volunteer should report the concern directly to the Head of the Organisation.

Chart 2 - Dealing with an allegation against a staff member/volunteer



Recording concerns, disclosures and allegations

All concerns, disclosures and allegations must be written down using the organisation's recording forms. Staff and volunteers should record the date and time they became aware of the concern, who was involved, what happened, and any action taken. If an adult discloses abuse, their words should be written down as soon as possible and recorded exactly as they were said. Records must be clear, factual, and accurate, as they may be needed by professionals investigating the concern and could be used as evidence in the future. All information must be stored securely, whether on paper or electronically, and shared only with those who need to know. Staff and volunteers should also record that they made a report, including the date and to whom they reported it.

Confidentiality

Information relating to a safeguarding concern should be confidential and shared on a need-to-know basis only. It should not be shared inside or outside of the organisation, other than with those who need to know, such as those identified in the reporting procedures.

Serious incident reporting

The trustees have a duty to report serious incidents to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI), even where the incident has already been reported to HSC Trust and/or the PSNI.

Any report submitted to the CCNI should provide details of the incident, including what occurred, the impact of the incident, and the actions being taken to manage and address the situation. All concerns, disclosures, and allegations should be appropriately recorded.

The Charity Commission defines a serious incident as an adverse event, whether actual or alleged, that has resulted in, or could result in, significant harm to the charity's work, beneficiaries, staff, volunteers, or reputation - this includes safeguarding incidents.

Further information is available from the [Charity Commission](#) for Northern Ireland.

Specialist & Emergency Support Contacts

PSNI

- In an emergency: 999
- Non emergency: 101

Health and Social Care Trust Adult Protection Gateway Teams (office hours)

- Belfast Trust: 028 905041744 - adultsguarddutydesk@belfasttrust.hscni.net
- South Eastern Trust: 028 92501227 - adultprotectiongatewayteam@setrust.hscni.net
- Southern Trust: 028 37564423 - adultsafeguard.team@southerntrust.hscni.net
- Northern Trust: 028 9441 3659 - adultsafeguarding@northerntrust.hscni.net
- Western Trust: 028 7161 1366- duty.team@westerntrust.hscni.net

Regional Emergency Social Work Service (RESWS)

- 0800 197 9995.
- Weekdays: 5:00 PM to 9:00 AM
- Weekends: 24 hours (from 5:00 PM Friday to 9:00 AM Monday)
- Public Holidays: 24-hour cover

If you believe an adult is at immediate risk of harm, contact the emergency services without delay.

Domestic and sexual abuse helpline

24/7 helpline. Phone 0808 802 1414
Email info@dsahelpline.org

Rape Crisis Centre

Phone 0800 024 6991
Email emailsupport@rapecrisisni.org.uk

Hourglass Northern Ireland

24/7 helpline. Phone 0808 808 8141
Email helpline@wearehourglass.org / nireland@wearehourglass.org

NI Women's Aid Federation

Phone 028 9024 9041

Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid

Phone 028 9066 6049

North Down & Ards Women's Aid

Phone 028 9127 3196

Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid

Phone 0300 373 1055

Fermanagh and Omagh Women's Aid

Phone 028 8244 41555

Foyle Women's Aid

Phone 028 7141 6800

Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne and Newtownabbey Women's Aid

Phone 028 2563 2136

Armagh Down Women's Aid

Phone 028 3025 0765

Men's Advisory Project

Phone (Foyle) 0287 116 0001

Phone (Belfast) 0289 024 1929

Access NI

Phone 0300 200 7888

Email ani@accessni.gov.uk

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Phone 0300 200 190

Email customerservices@dbs.gov.uk

The Rowan – Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

Phone (24-hour helpline) 0800 389 4424

Email therowan@northerntrust.hscni.net

Karma Nirvana (UK-wide Honour-Based Abuse support)

Phone 0800 5999 247

Email helpline@karmanirvana.org.uk

Forced Marriage Unit

Phone (0)20 7008 0151

Email fmufcdo.gov.uk

NSPCC FGM Helpline (UK-wide – 24/7 support for children & adults)

24/7 helpline. Phone 0800 028 3550

Email fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

National Stalking Helpline

Phone 0808 802 0300

The Laurence Trust (support for men with eating disorders)

Phone 07510 371 335

Beat Eating Disorders (UK – Adult support for NI)

Phone 0808 801 0434

Email NIhelp@beateatingdisorders.org.uk

Samaritans (NI)

24/7 helpline. Phone 116 123

Email jo@samaritans.org

Gamblers Anonymous NI

Phone 028 7135 1329

Email info@gamblersanonymous.org.uk

Alcoholics Anonymous NI

Phone 028 9035 1222, UK & Ireland 24/7 Helpline 0800 917 7650

Email help@aamail.org

AWARE NI (Depression, anxiety, bipolar – adults 18+)

Phone 028 9035 7820 (Belfast) / 028 7126 0602 (L/Derry)

Email: info@aware-ni.org

PIPS Suicide Prevention NI (crisis & counselling support)

Phone 0800 088 6042

Email info@pipscharity.com

WAVE Trauma Centre – Belfast

Phone 028 9077 9922

Email: info@wavetrauma.org

Lifeline NI

24/7 helpline. Phone 0808 808 8000

Addiction NI

Phone 028 9066 44 34

Standard 5:

A written code of behaviour which outlines the expectations of everyone involved in the organisation



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Standard 5:

A written code of behaviour which outlines the expectations of everyone involved in the organisation

A Code of Behaviour sets out the standards expected from staff, volunteers, and participants. It helps keep adults safe, protects staff and volunteers, and ensures everyone understands what good practice looks like. It should be explained during induction for new staff and volunteers and reviewed regularly. The code of behaviour can also be used to address concerns about the behaviour of staff or volunteers and to clarify the boundaries expected in their roles.

While many parts of a Code of Behaviour apply to everyone, some sections are particularly relevant to staff and volunteers who are supporting adults who are at an increased risk of harm.

The code of behaviour may include guidance on handling money, physical contact, levels of supervision, and one-to-one situations.

Positive Behaviours

The Code should focus on promoting behaviours which are aligned to the organisations values and principles such as respect, dignity, choice, patience, fairness and support.

Behaviours to Avoid

Some behaviours are not intentionally harmful but could be misunderstood or create unintentional risk. Examples include spending too much time alone with an adult or giving lifts without safeguards in place. Organisations should carefully think through their activities and put protections in place.

Unacceptable Behaviours

Some behaviours must never happen. These should be clearly listed for everyone to read and access, examples include any inappropriate physical and sexual contact. Anyone who engages in unacceptable behaviour should face disciplinary action. Adults should be supported to recognise unsafe behaviour and know how to seek help.

Physical Contact, Intimate Care & Restraint

Physical contact must always be consensual, appropriate, person-centred, and respectful of cultural and personal boundaries. Intimate care should protect dignity and privacy, and any concerns must be reported. Physical restraint should only be used to prevent harm, undertaken by trained staff, and must always be recorded and reported.

Diversity and Inclusion

The code of behaviour must reflect and respect cultural differences and avoid discrimination. Staff and volunteers should ask about cultural or communication needs and be aware of any potential barriers.

Inclusion must be built into policies, with clear procedures for supporting people with extra support.

Handling Money

When staff or volunteers oversee participants' money, they must keep accurate records and receipts. They must never borrow, lend, or personally benefit from someone else's money.

Any concerns about financial abuse must be reported.

Online Communication

Organisations must set clear rules for safe online communication, including social media, messaging, and email. Staff and volunteers should know what is and is not appropriate online to avoid misunderstandings and reduce risk.

Anti bullying guidelines

Organisations should also develop anti-bullying guidelines, outlining what bullying is, possible signs and indicators, and how staff and volunteers should respond.

Sanctions for Breaches

Breaching the Code of Behaviour is serious and should be reported. Outcomes of the investigation may include extra training, closer supervision, disciplinary action, dismissal, or a volunteer being asked to leave. If the breach involves harm or risk of harm, the organisation must refer the matter to the HSC Trust and/or PSNI, and consult with the Disclosure and Barring Service to establish if a referral needs to be made.

Standard 6:
Written guidelines on the
management of records, confidentiality
and sharing of information



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Standard 6: Written guidelines on the management of records, confidentiality and information sharing

Personal Information

All organisations should have clear procedures for how information is collected, shared, stored, and accessed in line with data protection and confidentiality requirements.

It is important that staff and volunteers understand that personal and sensitive information/data about adults who are involved with the organisation (and where relevant their families, carers, or advocates) must be treated confidentially and with care.

Gathering information

The organisation should ensure that essential information is obtained for all adults involved.

Essential registration information should include:

- The adult's name, address, contact details and emergency contacts.
- Where appropriate, the contact details of carers, advocates, next of kin.
- Relevant medical information, health conditions, support needs, or reasonable adjustments required.
- Details of involvement with other relevant professionals or agencies, where appropriate.

It is good practice to use a standard registration form to collect this information. Registration should be completed before the adult joins so that appropriate support and reasonable adjustments can be put in place where needed.

Sharing information with adults

Adults should be able to access their personal information if they request it. With the adult's consent, information may also be shared with a person acting on their behalf, such as a carer, advocate, or legal representative. Wherever possible, requests for access should be made in writing.

A record should be kept of all requests for information and the outcome of those requests, including any decision to limit access.

In some circumstances, access to information may need to be restricted where a relevant professional believes that sharing the information could cause serious harm to the physical or mental wellbeing of the adult or another person.

Sharing information with others - within and outside of the organisation

Information should only be shared on a “need to know” basis and in line with the organisation’s confidentiality, safeguarding, and data protection procedures.

Adults, and where appropriate their carers or advocates, should be informed about how their information will be used before it is collected and should have the opportunity to ask questions or discuss this.

Staff and volunteers must also understand that confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed. If there are concerns about an adult’s safety, welfare, or the safety of others, relevant information must be shared in line with the organisation’s safeguarding and reporting procedures (see Standard 4).

Comments, suggestions and complaints

Organisations should provide clear information to adults, carers, and advocates about how to raise concerns or make complaints. Encouraging people to speak up about concerns helps create a culture of openness, respect, and accountability. To ensure activities and programmes meet people’s needs, organisations should actively involve adults, carers, and advocates in decision-making and service development. This can be achieved through suggestion boxes, consultation groups, feedback records, satisfaction surveys, and participation in recruitment processes. Regular feedback and effective management helps organisations learn from experiences, improve services, and ensure adults are treated with dignity, respect, and protected from harm.

Where an individual has a complaint about some aspect of the organisation, they should have access to the organisation’s complaints procedure. The aim of a complaints procedure is to provide a clear and fair process. The Complaints Procedure sets out the stages to be followed, including who a complaint should be directed to, the appeals process, and the expected timescales for response and resolution. Where necessary, the procedure should be provided in alternative formats to ensure accessibility. Accurate and clear records will be kept at each stage of the Procedure, including details of discussions and any information shared. All information relating to complaints will be treated as confidential and stored securely, accessible only on a need-to-know basis. Everyone involved, the complainant and the subject(s) of the complaint, should be given the opportunity to represent their side of the case. In the case of a complaint from an adult, representation might include input from a carer or an advocate. In the case of a complaint made by a carer, representation might include input from a friend or family member.

Where a staff member/volunteer wishes to raise a complaint, they should follow the organisation’s Grievance Procedure (or Problem Solving Procedure for volunteers).

Where a complaint relates to a concern about potential abuse, the safeguarding reporting procedures of (insert organisation name) will take precedence over the Complaints Procedure.

Storing information

All written records should be stored securely and only accessed by authorised staff or volunteers. Electronic records should also be stored securely, with appropriate safeguards such as password protection, restricted access, and secure electronic storage systems in place to protect personal and sensitive information, in line with confidentiality guidelines.

Standard 7:

Written guidelines to ensure the general safety and management of activities



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Standard 7:

Written guidelines to ensure the general safety and management of activities

Good management and well-organised daily routines help ensure that an organisation is ran safely and smoothly. All activities should be planned in advance and managed appropriately, taking into account the nature of the activity and the abilities, needs, and support requirements of the adults taking part.

First Aiders

As part of safe practice, each activity should have at least one nominated first aider. Staff and volunteers must know who the first aiders are, and first aiders must have appropriate and up-to-date training. This includes having access to/knowledge of the nearest available defibrillator.

Recording Accidents

The organisation must have clear procedures for recording and reporting accidents, incidents and near misses. An accident/incident form or book should be used to document any event involving adults during organisational activities, ensuring relevant people are informed and the incident is acknowledged.

Emergencies

When conducting any activity within the organisation, it is good practice to have written procedures for dealing with emergencies. Staff and volunteers need to be aware of emergency procedures, including knowledge of the location of emergency exits and provisions for evacuating those who have mobility difficulties or other additional needs. Emergency alerts should also have provision for those who have sensory needs, such as flashing lights to alert those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Organisations must provide manual handling training for staff and volunteers where relevant. Emergency contact numbers should be easily accessible.

Fire Safety

Regular fire drills should be carried out for all sports activities and sessions to ensure that staff, volunteers, participants and visitors are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures and designated assembly points.

Fire drills help ensure that everyone knows how to leave the building or facility safely, quickly, and calmly in the event of an emergency. They also allow the organisation to check that evacuation routes remain clear and accessible, and that staff and volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities during an evacuation.

Competent staff and volunteers

Staff and volunteers should be competent to undertake the activities they are involved in. Careful recruitment and selection, induction, and training will assist in ensuring this. Where activities have to be led by qualified leaders, such as specialist activities e.g. instructors or coaches, qualifications should be up to date and verifiable.

Safety of equipment

Equipment should be safe and only used for the purpose it was intended. It should be checked regularly by someone with the relevant competency. Everyone using equipment should be made aware of how to use it safely to minimise misuse where harm could occur.

Supervision ratios

Having clearly defined supervision arrangements will not only minimise the occurrence of accidents and incidents but will also contribute to the protection of adults from intentional harm. There must be sufficient numbers of staff/volunteers to meet the needs of all adults taking part. Higher ratios may be required in order to meet specific needs. Higher ratios may also be required for activities outside of the normal day to day routine, and for trips away. For each activity, there should be a person in charge.

Transport

Where transport is required for sports activities, appropriate checks must be carried out to ensure that the company is adhering to safeguarding requirements. Drivers must hold the correct and valid driving licence, and vehicles must be roadworthy, properly maintained, and fitted with appropriate seat belts.

When using an external transport provider, the organisation must ensure the provider is reputable and holds appropriate up-to-date insurance and licensing.

The same standards apply where staff, volunteers, or parents/carers provide transport on behalf of the organisation, and appropriate insurance cover must be in place.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment involves identifying anything that could cause harm to adults, staff, or volunteers involved in the organisation's activities and services. From a safeguarding perspective, risk assessment and risk management aim to prevent harm or abuse, reduce the likelihood of it occurring, and ensure an effective response where concerns do arise. Risk assessment forms must be completed for all sports activities and programmes, including training sessions, matches, competitions, day trips, and residential events. Risk assessment involves identifying potential hazards, considering who may be at risk, assessing the level of risk, and putting appropriate control measures in place to reduce or manage that risk. This should also include consideration of the safe and inclusive participation of adults with additional support needs.

LIKELIHOOD of the Identified risk	Determining the levels of risk		
	Likely	Medium	Medium
Possible	Low	Medium	High
Unlikely	Low	Medium	High
	Minor	Moderate	Major
	IMPACT of the identified risk		

Note that the level of risk, assessed as high, medium or low, is a combination of the likelihood of an identified risk occurring and the impact it would have if it did occur. So where a risk is:

- Likely to occur and of major impact the level of risk is high;
- Possible and of moderate impact the level of risk is medium; and
- Unlikely and of minor impact the level of risk is low.

All staff and volunteers should be familiar with relevant risk assessments before activities take place. Risk assessments should be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if there are significant changes to activities, environments, or participation levels within the organisation.

Risk assessments must be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if circumstances change. Risks may arise from a range of factors, including challenging behaviour, injury, abuse, neglect, accidents or incidents, environmental or venue-related hazards, insufficient training or supervision, or inappropriate staffing ratios. Additional consideration must also be given to individuals with disabilities, medical conditions, or other support needs to ensure safe and inclusive participation. When assessing and managing risk in relation to adults, staff and volunteers should ensure that:

- Risk management supports independence, choice and inclusion.
- Risks are reviewed regularly, as they may change over time.
- Risks can be reduced but not completely eliminated.
- Adults, carers, advocates and relevant professionals are involved where appropriate to improve decision-making and outcomes.
- A partnership approach is taken to support positive outcomes.
- Good practice, clear communication, and adherence to organisational procedures (such as the Code of Behaviour) are used to minimise risk.

Additional considerations for planning and managing residentials

Planning and briefing

Participants should be fully briefed about the activities and given the opportunity to contribute to the planning of the programme where possible. Participants should be provided with all relevant information in advance and given the opportunity to ask questions or raise any concerns. Where appropriate, carers or support persons should also be involved in these discussions or briefing sessions, to support the participant's needs and participation.

Consent

Participants must give their consent to take part in the residential. Where a participant is unable to provide informed consent independently, appropriate arrangements should be made in line with legal and organisational requirements, including involving carers, advocates, or those with relevant decision-making authority.

Health/Medical needs

Essential information will have already been obtained for participants, where they are regularly involved in the organisation's activities (including medical and health details such as allergies, dietary requirements, emergency contacts and any other relevant support needs). However, during the residential further information and support may be required, and it is important to clarify needs in advance of the trip. All personal information must be stored securely but remain accessible to relevant staff and volunteers during the residential where necessary.

Code of Behaviour

Staff, volunteers and participants should understand the expected standards of behaviour for the residential (additions may need to be added to the Code). They should be involved in agreeing the group ground rules, and be made aware of any consequences where these are not followed. Participants must also be made aware of and adhere to the organisation's anti-bullying guidelines.

Risk assessment and management

A new risk assessment must be completed for all residential activities, and individual participants (where that is required). Participants should be informed of any identified risks and the measures in place to help ensure their safety and wellbeing throughout the programme. e.g. where medication is required during the residential, the first approach should always be for the adult participant to self-administer and manage their own medication wherever possible. Where the participant is unable to do this independently, arrangements should be agreed in advance with the participant and, where appropriate, their carer or support person. In these circumstances, medication may only be managed or administered by a designated and appropriately trained member of staff.

Sleeping arrangements

Sleeping arrangements must be planned in a way that promotes the safety and wellbeing of all participants. Sleeping arrangements must be approved by management in advance. Consideration must also be given to safe and accessible arrangements for using bathroom facilities during the night.

Dealing with Disclosure

Residential environments may increase the likelihood of an adult making a disclosure. Staff and volunteers must therefore be familiar with the organisation's safeguarding and reporting procedures.

Where there is an immediate risk to an adult, information must be passed to the relevant statutory authorities without delay. In these circumstances, the staff member or volunteer must record the name of the agency contacted, along with the date and time of the report, and inform their Adult Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible afterwards.

Staff and volunteers supporting the residential must also be informed of how to contact the venue or provider's Adult Safeguarding Lead, and ensure that safeguarding procedures are aligned where necessary.

Venue or provider's arrangements

Staff and volunteers must be familiar with the venue/provider arrangements for health and safety, emergencies and accidents/incidents/near misses. They must also be familiar with the venue's Code of Behaviour, where relevant.

Where can I find more information?

The **Adult Safeguarding in Sport page** contains further information on adult safeguarding in sport.

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T: 028 9023 2020



Keeping Safe