

IGA Procedure for reporting

Overview

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on the necessary steps to be taken in the event of a concern regarding potential abuse or neglect involving a child/young person or adult affiliated with an IGA club.

Concerns may arise through various means, including:

- Disclosure made by a child or adult.
- Direct or reported observations of possible abuse, suspicious behaviour, or inadequate practices, including those involving IGA members.
- Significant changes in behaviour, appearance, attitude, or relationships with others.
- Reports received from external agencies, organizations, or individuals.

Safeguarding allegations will fall into two main categories:

1. Internal Gymnastics Environment:
 - a. Allegations involving individuals within our sport or those in positions of trust.
2. External Gymnastics Environment:
 - a. Concerns of abuse by individuals external to our sport who are not connected with us.

These concerns may pertain to current or past events or situations and may involve allegations or disclosures of abuse and/or inadequate practices by an individual.

It is essential to follow the procedures outlined in this document when handling any safeguarding concerns.

Safeguarding responsibilities

It is crucial for all IGA staff, affiliated clubs, and coaches to understand their responsibilities in ensuring the safety of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. They should be aware of the appropriate procedures for reporting any concerns and know who to contact.

IGA Safeguarding Team: We have a dedicated team of individuals who are responsible for responding to safeguarding concerns. They are available to provide advice and support as needed.

Club Welfare Officer: Each club should have a designated Club Welfare Officer who serves as the initial point of contact for any concerns related to club members. They play a crucial role in safeguarding and can provide guidance on how to address and report concerns effectively.

Recognising signs or suspicions of abuse

It is vital for everyone to be vigilant and aware of the signs and triggers of abuse and neglect. While some individuals may disclose information, often the indicators may not be obvious and may only become apparent over time. It is important to be attentive to any changes in behaviour that may indicate abuse and to accurately record any unexplained indicators promptly.

Reporting any safeguarding concerns is a shared responsibility, and it is crucial that everyone understands that when a concern is disclosed to a staff member or volunteer in their role within the organization, the responsibility for that information lies with the organization itself, not the individual. The person who becomes aware of a safeguarding concern should promptly communicate their

concerns to the designated safeguarding lead without delay.

There may be situations where sharing concerns could place a young person at greater risk, such as when a parent or caregiver is responsible for the abuse or unable to respond appropriately. In these cases, or when concerns persist, any suspicion, allegation, or incident of abuse must be reported to the safeguarding lead as soon as possible and documented. If the concern involves sexual abuse, parents should not be contacted at that stage, as appropriate action will be taken by social care and/or the police when the time is right.

When dealing with concerns involving adults, it is essential to approach the situation with a commitment to working with them. In most cases, it is important to seek clarification of initial concerns from the adult involved. For instance, if a person appears withdrawn, there may be a reasonable explanation, such as a family upset, separation, divorce, or bereavement.

In case of an emergency, always dial 999. If an individual is at risk of significant harm, immediate contact with the police should be made.

Responding and reporting concerns

When an individual discloses a concern, it is crucial to provide them with appropriate support and guidance while ensuring that any potential investigations are not jeopardized. It is not our role to conduct investigations but rather to share the information with the appropriate individuals and, if necessary, the relevant statutory authorities.

If a member of staff or volunteer receives information about a safeguarding concern, they should explain to the individual involved that they have a responsibility to share the concern with the appropriate safeguarding lead or manager. It is important to reassure the individual, who may fear potential repercussions, and provide support to help them understand why sharing this information is necessary.

If an individual states or indicates that they are being abused, or if information is obtained that raises concern about abuse, it is crucial to respond immediately and take the allegation seriously. Please refer to the reporting flowchart to understand how to report any incidents or concerns.

In situations where there is uncertainty about whether the allegation constitutes abuse or not, and there is doubt about the appropriate action to take, the safeguarding lead should be informed. There may be instances where the allegations involve poor practice rather than abuse, but it is always advisable to consult the safeguarding lead or seek advice from social care, the police, or the NSPCC to address any doubts. Sometimes, it may be a series of incidents that, when considered together, raise concerns.

The following steps must be taken:

1. Make a full record of what has been said, heard, and/or seen as soon as possible. The information should include:
 - a. Name and age of the individual at risk, along with their date of birth.
 - b. Home address and telephone number.
 - c. Clarify whether the person making the report is expressing their concerns or those of someone else. If it's someone else's concerns, include the other person's details.
 - d. Provide a clear description of the nature of the allegation, including dates, times, special factors, and any other relevant information.

- e. Distinguish between facts, opinions, and hearsay.
- f. Document any visible bruising or other injuries.
- g. Identify witnesses to the incidents.
- h. If possible, include the account of the individual at risk regarding what has happened and how any injuries or bruising occurred.
- i. Note if anyone has been contacted, such as a family member, and record what has been said.
- j. Record any consultations with other individuals regarding the concern.
- k. If the report is not made by the individual at risk, note if they have been spoken to and record what was said.
- l. Record any details about individuals alleged to be the abuser.

It is important to be aware that a child may not always be ready to disclose information or may not be able to talk about it, even if signs of abuse are recognized. Some children may not even realize that they are being subjected to abuse.

Speaking to the individual

When engaging in a conversation with an individual who has disclosed alleged abuse, it is important to adhere to the following guidelines:

Do:

- Allow the individual sufficient time to express themselves.
- Remain calm and composed, creating a safe and non-threatening environment.
- Take the information shared by the individual seriously, understanding the potential challenges in interpreting their communication, particularly if they have speech impairments or speak a different language.
- Limit the number of questions asked, focusing on understanding the details accurately.
- Provide reassurance to the individual, assuring them that their allegations will be treated seriously. However, avoid making promises of absolute confidentiality, as subsequent developments may require disclosure.

Do Not:

- Display negative emotions like anger, disgust, or disbelief towards the individual, as this can discourage further disclosure due to fear of upsetting or facing negativity.
- Interrupt, suggest, prompt, or lead the conversation with the individual. Avoid speculating or making assumptions.
- Make derogatory comments about the alleged abuser or approach them directly.
- Promise the individual to keep secrets, as the situation may require disclosure for their safety and well-being.

Safeguarding Step-by-Step guide

1. Identify Concern or Allegation

- Recognize signs, disclosures, or observations of potential safeguarding issues involving a child, young person, or vulnerable adult.

2. Immediate Response

- Ensure the safety and well-being of the individual(s) involved.
- If there is an emergency or immediate risk of harm, contact emergency services (dial 999).
- Provide any necessary medical or emotional support.

3. Report Concern or Allegation

- Inform the designated Safeguarding Lead Officer (SLO) or Club Welfare Officer (CWO) about the concern or allegation as soon as possible.
4. Record Incident
 - The SLO or CWO completes a safeguarding incident report form, documenting all relevant details of the concern or allegation.
 5. Assess the Risk and Route for Action
 - The SLO, in consultation with the Case Management Group, Children's Social Care, Police, or Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), determines the appropriate route for further action based on the severity and nature of the concern or allegation.
 - Determine if the matter involves poor practice, breach of the Code of Conduct, or potential abuse.
 6. Action for Poor Practice or Breach of Code of Conduct
 - Address the issue directly with the individual involved.
 - Provide guidance, training, or support as necessary.
 - Consider implementing disciplinary measures, following organizational policies and procedures.
 - Maintain records of actions taken to address the poor practice or breach of the Code of Conduct.
 7. Action for Potential Abuse
 - If there are indications of possible abuse, follow statutory procedures and safeguarding guidelines.
 - Involve appropriate authorities such as Children's Social Care, Police, or LADO, as required.
 - Cooperate fully with any investigations or inquiries conducted by the relevant authorities.
 8. Support and Communication
 - Provide support to the individual(s) affected by the concern or allegation.
 - Communicate with relevant parties involved, including parents/carers, if appropriate and in line with safeguarding protocols.
 - Ensure confidentiality is maintained while sharing information on a need-to-know basis.
 9. Review and Learn
 - Conduct a thorough review of the safeguarding incident, actions taken, and lessons learned.
 - Identify any areas for improvement in safeguarding policies, procedures, or training.
 - Implement necessary changes to prevent future incidents and enhance safeguarding practices.

Remember: Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Stay vigilant, report concerns promptly, and prioritize the safety and well-being of all individuals involved.

Informing the clubs safeguarding lead

Once the designated Safeguarding Lead Officer has been informed, it becomes their responsibility to promptly contact the social care department by telephone and subsequently provide written confirmation within one day. The designated Safeguarding Lead Officer should report allegations and/or suspicions of abuse to the social care department. In cases of poor practice, it is necessary to report to the appropriate organization or governing body.

It is important not to delay reporting to the police or social care department while attempting to gather additional information. Referrals made over the phone to the social care department should be followed up with written confirmation by the safeguarding lead within 24 hours. To ensure proper documentation, record the name, designation of the social care staff member or police officer receiving the concerns, as well as the date and time of the call, in case further communication is



needed. Relevant information may also be shared with the IGA and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), as deemed necessary.

Remember, in case of an emergency, always dial 999.

Dealing with allegations against a coach within IGA

The procedure for addressing allegations made against staff or gymnastics coaches will be followed when the individual in question has:

- Behaved in a manner that has caused harm or potential harm to a child.
- Potentially committed a criminal offense related to or against a child.
- Behaved in a way towards an adult that suggests they will pose a risk if they work closely with adults.

Any allegation or concern regarding the behavior of an employee, delivery team member, or volunteer that has caused or may have caused harm to a child will be treated seriously, handled with sensitivity, and addressed promptly, regardless of where the alleged incident occurred. This applies even if the individuals involved are not directly employed by IGA.

The appropriate response to the situation may include:

- IGA following the relevant procedures in dealing with the individuals involved.
- Local child protection services conducting inquiries and/or assessing the need for support for the child.
- Police conducting an investigation into a potential criminal offense.

The reporting procedure for such disclosures or concerns is the same as for any other safeguarding matter. If the disclosure or concern involves the safeguarding lead, it should be reported to the deputy safeguarding lead or a senior manager. All individuals involved will be provided with appropriate support throughout the process.

Interim Measures

As part of any investigation and with the aim of ensuring the safety of all individuals involved, IGA reserves the right to implement interim protective measures. These measures may include temporary suspension of individuals pending the outcome of the investigation. Decisions regarding such measures will be made in consultation with the clubs lead safeguarding officer, taking into consideration the circumstances and information available. The primary focus is to protect the well-being and welfare of all parties concerned.

Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality is an important aspect of safeguarding work. While information should not be divulged without due consideration, it is crucial to share relevant information with the appropriate agencies to ensure the protection of a child. The safeguarding lead, in consultation with social care, is responsible for making decisions regarding who needs to be informed.

It is important to note that the Data Protection Act should not be seen as a barrier to sharing information when it is necessary for safeguarding purposes. In dealing with sensitive information, it is crucial to be open and honest, seeking advice when needed. Sharing information with the consent of the relevant individuals, where appropriate, is encouraged.

When sharing information, factors such as safety and well-being should be taken into account, ensuring that the sharing is necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely, and secure. It is also important to maintain a record of the information shared for future reference and accountability.

Sharing Information

- Sharing information between practitioners and organizations is vital for effective identification, assessment, risk management, and service provision. Concerns about sharing information should not hinder the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of individuals at risk of abuse or neglect.
- While the focus is on sharing information regarding abuse or neglect concerns, sharing information may also be appropriate in other situations to promote the welfare and well-being of an individual.
- Personal information held by BTG is subject to a duty of confidentiality and typically requires the consent of the individual for disclosure. However, the right to confidentiality and respect for private and family life is not absolute under Article 8 of the Human Rights Act, 1998.
- IGA acknowledges that information sharing between key organizations is crucial for safeguarding individuals at risk of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Many serious case reviews have highlighted failures to record and share information, understand its significance, and take appropriate action regarding known or suspected abuse or neglect.
- Third-party organizations, such as statutory authorities (police/social care) and other sports organizations or community clubs, may need to be involved in sharing safeguarding concerns when the risks posed by an individual cannot be managed without disclosing information.
- IGA will ensure that confidential information is shared only when it is lawful and ethical to do so.
- In cases where a safeguarding concern involves external parties and an individual is uncertain about whether to share information, advice can be sought from the police or local authority without initially disclosing the person's identity.
- If sharing the information is necessary due to safeguarding concerns for the individual or others at risk, consent may not be required. However, it is best practice to be transparent and explain the reason for sharing and with whom the information will be shared, seeking agreement where appropriate and safe, especially if the individual may not anticipate information being shared.
- Regarding safeguarding children or young people, the principles of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 prioritize the welfare of children, making their needs the primary consideration.
- Individuals who make decisions about disclosing confidential information to third-party organizations are accountable under data protection laws. Decisions regarding who needs to be informed and what information should be shared should be made on a case-by-case basis, and the justifications for these decisions should be documented.

Retention of records

All information pertaining to safeguarding concerns must be stored in a secure manner. Any concerns reported to IGA will be retained for as long as necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the individuals involved. Specifically, in the case of safeguarding concerns related to children, a record will be maintained until the child or young person reaches the age of 25.