



# **NAVIGATING ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING COACHES, EMPLOYEES, OR VOLUNTEERS**

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This protocol delineates the appropriate course of action in the event of a child protection accusation levied against an adult affiliated with your group or institution. It aims to furnish precise guidance to staff and trustees tasked with addressing such allegations and overseeing any ensuing investigations.

**The aims for this procedure are:**

To uphold the safety and well-being of children attending IGA-affiliated clubs, centres, and similar establishments, as well as those whose situations may come to our attention, following any allegation of abuse by an adult associated with an IGA-affiliated entity.

To implement a fair, consistent, and robust response to allegations, effectively managing the risk posed by an abusive individual to other children.

To facilitate thorough investigations into allegations, whether recent or pertaining to any period during the individual's association with IGA or its affiliates.

To ensure continued support and adherence to responsibilities towards staff, volunteers, or trustees subject to investigations.

To maintain individuals' roles if allegations are found to be unfounded or malicious in nature.

**This procedure applies to:**

- Any staff member, volunteer, or trustee who receives an allegation of abuse involving another staff member, volunteer, or trustee.
- Individuals in managerial roles (including the designated safeguarding officer for children, supervisors, line managers, and trustees) who may need to address such allegations and oversee ensuing investigations.



IGA has meticulously outlined various types of abuse to ensure comprehensive awareness and understanding among its members.

## PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse encompasses a range of harmful actions directed towards a child, including hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise inflicting physical injury. Additionally, it may involve instances where a parent or caregiver fabricates or induces illness in a child, resulting in harm.

## EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is defined as the persistent maltreatment of a child, resulting in significant and enduring negative effects on the child's emotional development. This form of abuse encompasses various actions aimed at undermining a child's self-worth and emotional well-being. Examples include conveying messages of worthlessness or lack of love, imposing unrealistic expectations, and limiting opportunities for expression and social interaction. Emotional abuse may also involve witnessing or experiencing mistreatment, such as serious bullying or exploitation. It is important to note that emotional abuse often coexists with other forms of child maltreatment, although it can occur independently.

## SEXUAL ABUSE

Involves forcing or enticing a child or children to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts, such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

## NEGLECT

Neglect is the consistent failure to fulfill a child's fundamental physical and/or psychological requirements, potentially leading to significant harm to the child's health or development. This form of mistreatment may commence during pregnancy due to maternal substance abuse. Post-birth, it can manifest as a caregiver's inability to provide sufficient nourishment, clothing, shelter, which may involve abandoning or excluding the child from the home, or failing to shield them from physical harm or hazards. Neglect also encompasses inadequate supervision, including the employment of suitable caregivers, and the absence of proper access to medical care or treatment. Emotional neglect, such as disregarding or being unresponsive to a child's basic emotional needs, also falls under this category.

## **Responding to Allegations or Received Information**

Immediate action is crucial when dealing with allegations or received information, with two primary concerns to address:

### **Ensuring the Safety and Well-being of the Child:**

- If a child is in immediate danger or requires emergency medical attention, prompt action is necessary:
  - If the child is present, stay with them and contact the police.
  - If the child is elsewhere, inform the police and provide details of the situation.
  - In case of medical emergency, call for an ambulance and provide assistance until help arrives, involving the first aider if available.
  - Notify your supervisor/manager or designated person for child protection promptly.
- If emergency medical attention is needed, inform the child's family, arranging to meet them at the medical facility. The family should be briefed on the incident, the child's injuries, and the immediate actions taken.

### **Addressing Allegations Involving Staff:**

- If the individual implicated in the allegation works with children presently, it's essential to discuss the concern immediately with the group/organization's manager and the designated safeguarding officer for children.
- One of these authorities should delicately remove the staff member from direct contact with children.
- In a private setting, inform the individual of the complaint without disclosing specific details. Emphasize that further information will be provided after consultation with relevant agencies and within the organization.
- It may be advisable for the person to leave the premises until further communication.
- Limited information should be provided at this stage, as discussions with other agencies (e.g., local authority children's social care or police) need to occur first.
- If the individual is affiliated with a union or professional organization, encourage them to contact those entities.
- Ensure ongoing support for the staff or volunteer in line with the organization's welfare responsibilities.





## **Conducting an investigation**

Following the implementation of any immediate measures, thorough attention must be directed towards addressing the broader implications of the allegations.

### ***Upon receipt of an allegation, there may be up to three distinct lines of inquiry:***

- A potential criminal offence may prompt a police investigation.
- The local authority children's social care department may conduct inquiries and assessments to ascertain whether a child requires protection.
- The employer may initiate an internal investigation, which could result in disciplinary proceedings against the implicated individual. This process includes devising a strategy to mitigate any potential risks posed by the individual to children and young people within the workplace until the conclusions of external investigations and inquiries are determined. While volunteers are less likely to be subjected to formal disciplinary measures, the organization must still evaluate whether they can continue in their capacity and implement appropriate measures to manage any perceived risks they may present.

## **Reporting an allegation or concern.**

In the event that an allegation arises from a child or family member, or if a staff member witnesses concerning behaviour exhibited by a colleague firsthand, immediate reporting is imperative. Such incidents should be promptly communicated to the staff member's supervisor/manager and the designated safeguarding officer for children, who serves as the lead authority in addressing the allegation within IGA. Should a staff member receive an allegation or observe concerning behaviour regarding their own manager, it is incumbent upon them to report the matter to a superior individual within the organisational hierarchy.

In cases where the individual under scrutiny holds the position of designated safeguarding officer for children, the concern should be brought to the attention of the officer's immediate manager. Several factors must be considered in these circumstances

- The expressed wishes and sentiments of the child.
- The parental right to be informed (except in cases where this action would jeopardise the safety of the child or others, or impede a criminal investigation).
- The potential ramifications of disclosing or withholding information from the parent.
- The current risk assessment pertaining to the child and the origin of said risk.
- Any existing risk management protocols.

## WHEN TO INVOLVE LOCAL AUTHORITIES [LADO]

The organisation's designated safeguarding officer for children should report the allegation to their internal senior lead for safeguarding and to the local authority designated officer or team (formerly known as the LADO) within one working day if the alleged behaviour suggests that the person in question:

- May have behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child.
- Has possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Has behaved towards a child in a way that suggests that he/she may be unsuitable to work with children.
- This should also happen if the individual has volunteered the information him/herself.

The local authority designated officer or team may be told of the allegation from another source. If this is the case, then the first information received by IGA may be when the local authority makes contact in order to explain the situation.

Whoever initiates the contact, there will be discussion between the local authority designated officer or team and IGA designated officer for children to share information about the nature and circumstances of the allegation, and to consider whether there is any evidence to suggest that it may be false or unfounded.

If there is any reason to suspect that a child has suffered, or be likely to suffer, significant harm and there are no obvious indications that the allegation is false, the local authority designated officer or team, in cooperation with IGA, will initiate a strategy discussion within the local authority children's social care department.

The local authority designated officer or team and the organisation's designated safeguarding officer for children will take part in the strategy discussion. The designated safeguarding officer and any other representative from IGA should cooperate fully with this and any subsequent discussion with the children's social care department.

It should be asked from the outset that the children's social care department shares any information obtained during the course of their enquiries with IGA if it has any relevance to the person's employment.

## NAVIGATING A CRIMINAL OFFENCE

If there is reason to suspect that a criminal offence may have been committed (whether or not the threshold of 'significant harm' is reached), the local authority designated officer or team will contact the police and involve them in a similar strategy discussion, which will include the organisation's designated safeguarding officer children.

The designated safeguarding officer for children and any other representative from IGA should cooperate fully with any discussion involving the police and should ask for similar cooperation from the police in terms of the sharing of information relevant to the person's employment.

Discussions with the police should also explore whether there are matters that can be acted on in a disciplinary process while the criminal investigation takes place, or whether disciplinary action must wait until the criminal process is completed.

## COMMUNICATION REGARDING THE ALLEGATION

### **Talking to parents about the allegation or concern:**

If the child's parents/carers do not already know about the allegation, the designated safeguarding officer for children and the local authority designated officer or team need to discuss how they should be informed and by whom.

### **Talking to the person who is the subject of the allegation**

The person at the centre of the allegation should be informed as soon as possible after the initial consultation with the local authority designated officer or team. However, if a strategy discussion within the local authority children's social care team or the police is needed, this might have to take place before the person concerned can be spoken to in full. The police and children's social care department may have views on what information can be disclosed to the person.

Only limited information should be given to the person in question, unless the investigating authorities have indicated that they are happy for all information to be disclosed or unless there is no need for involvement from these statutory agencies.

The designated safeguarding officer for children will need to keep in close communication with the local authority designated officer or team and the other agencies involved in order to manage the disclosure of information appropriately.

## TAKING DISCIPLINARY ACTION - NO CRIMINAL INVOLVMENT

If the initial allegation does not involve a possible criminal offence, the designated safeguarding officer for children and manager of the person at the centre of the allegation should still consider whether formal disciplinary action is needed.

If the local authority children's social care department has undertaken any enquiries to determine whether a child or children are in need of protection, the designated safeguarding officer for children should take account of any relevant information from these enquiries when considering whether disciplinary action should be brought against the person at the centre of the allegations.

The following timings should be kept to wherever possible, depending on the nature of the investigation:

- If formal disciplinary action is not needed, other appropriate action should be taken within three working days.
- If disciplinary action is required, and can be progressed without further investigation, this should take place within 15 days.
- If IGA decides that further investigation is needed in order to make a decision about formal disciplinary action, the designated safeguarding officer for children should discuss with the local authority designated officer or team the possibility of this investigation being done by an independent person to ensure that the process is objective. Whether or not the investigation is handled internally or independently, the report should be presented to the designated safeguarding officer for children within 10 working days.
- Having received the report of the disciplinary investigation, the designated safeguarding officer for children should decide within two working days whether a disciplinary hearing is needed.
- If a hearing is needed, it should be held within 15 working days.
- The designated safeguarding officer for children should continue to liaise with the local authority designated officer or team during the course of any investigation or disciplinary proceedings and should continue to use the local Authority designated officer or team as a source of advice and support.



## TAKING DISCIPLINARY ACTION - CRIMINAL INVOLVMENT

If a criminal investigation is required, it may not have been possible to make decisions about initiating disciplinary proceedings or about the person's future work arrangements until this is concluded. The police are required to complete their work as soon as reasonably possible and to set review dates, so the designated safeguarding officer for children should either liaise with the police directly or via the local authority designated officer or team to check on the progress of the investigation and criminal process.

The police are also required to inform the employer straight away if the person is either convicted of an offence or acquitted or, alternatively, if a decision is made not to charge him/her with an offence or to administer a caution. In any eventuality, once the outcome is known, the designated safeguarding officer for children should contact the local authority designated officer or team to discuss the issue of disciplinary proceedings.

If the allegation is substantiated and if, once the case is concluded, IGA dismisses the person or ceases to use their services, or the person ceases to provide his/her services, the designated safeguarding officer for children should consult with the local authority designated officer or team about referral of the incident to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This should take place within a month.

### **Keeping a record of the investigation**

All those involved in dealing with the allegation should keep clear notes of the allegations made, how they were followed up, and any actions and decisions taken, together with the reasons for these.

These notes should be compiled gradually as the situation unfolds, with each entry being made as soon as possible after the event it describes. The notes should be signed and dated by the person making them, and the person's name should be printed alongside.

The notes should be kept confidentially on the file of the person who is the subject of the allegation. Discussion should take place with the local authority designated officer or team to determine whether any aspects of the notes may not be shared with the person concerned.

If there are no reasons not to do so, a copy of the records should be given to the individual. The notes should be held on file for a 10-year period, whether or not the person remains with IGA for this period. During the period of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), chaired by the Hon Dame Lowell Goddard DNZM, it is advisable to keep such notes indefinitely.



### **Helpful contact information:**

IGA Safeguarding Team: [safeguarding@igauk.com](mailto:safeguarding@igauk.com)

Chief Safeguarding IGA Officer: [Malcom.bridges@igauk.com](mailto:Malcom.bridges@igauk.com)

### **Helpful club checklist:**

- ✓ NSPCC Child line poster clearly displayed within the centre.
- ✓ Develop comprehensive anti-bullying policies and procedures.
- ✓ Educate coaches, staff and volunteers by attending a Safeguarding Course.
- ✓ Create channels for open communication where participants feel comfortable reporting concerns or incidents of bullying