

British Athletics & The Home Country Athletics Federations

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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If you have an immediate and serious concern about the safety or health of a child, contact the emergency services on 999.

SECTION 1: CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Definition of a Child

For the purposes of this policy, a child means a person who has not attained the age of 18 years:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

Policy Objectives

This policy and related documents apply to the following governing bodies in athletics:

- British Athletics (BA)
- England Athletics (EA)
- Athletics Northern Ireland (ANI)
- Welsh Athletics (WA)
- Scottish Athletics (SA).

In this document, any reference to British Athletics means British Athletics and the above listed Home Country Athletics Federations (HCAFs).

Athletics is one of the most accessible and successful sports in the UK. All children who take part in athletics are entitled to participate in a fun and safe environment, and we believe that everyone involved in our sport can play a part to safeguard and protect children from harm.

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the commitment of British Athletics and the four HCAFs to build a safer future in athletics for children, and our responsibility to:

- Keep children and young people safe by valuing, listening to and respecting them;
- Promote the wellbeing of children through opportunities to take part in athletics safely;
- Put in place policies and procedures to promote the wellbeing and protection of children;
- Recruit, train, and support all our staff and volunteers to prioritise the safety of children who take part in our activities.

Policy Statement

All children and young people have the right to be safe, protected from harm, abuse, exploitation, and to participate in an environment where their rights are respected, their welfare is promoted, and their needs are met. Additionally, their safety, wellbeing, and best interests are paramount, and they should receive the right support at the right time.

British Athletics and the four Home Country Athletics Federations (HCAFs) recognise and accept the legal and moral responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people involved in athletics.

This policy, together with its associated procedures and guidance, sets out our collective commitment to preventing poor practice and protecting children and young people from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

This policy operates alongside relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and safeguarding frameworks across the four HCAFs.

We will work in partnership with statutory agencies and other relevant organisations to ensure that effective safeguarding practices are implemented, maintained, and continuously reviewed.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Adult Safeguarding Policy to ensure a seamless approach to safeguarding and wellbeing as young people transition into adulthood, enabling their safety, welfare, and rights to remain protected throughout their involvement in athletics.

Application

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is everyone's responsibility. Everyone involved in athletics has a duty not only to protect children and young people from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation, but also to actively promote their welfare, wellbeing, and rights.

Creating and maintaining a safe, positive, and inclusive environment requires the commitment, vigilance, and cooperation of all those involved in our sport.

This policy applies to all individuals, clubs, associations, affiliated bodies, and other organisations involved in athletics in any capacity, whether they are members of British Athletics or a HCAF. This includes, but is not limited to, board members, trustees, senior leaders, employees, volunteers, coaches, officials, athletes, event participants, contractors, consultants, service providers, and any individual or organisation engaged to deliver activities, programmes, events, or services on behalf of British Athletics or a HCAF.

All individuals and organisations within the scope of this policy are required to comply with its provisions and to take appropriate action where they have concerns about a child's welfare or safety. This includes recognising, responding to, recording, and reporting concerns in accordance with the relevant safeguarding procedures.

British Athletics is committed to responding promptly and appropriately to all safeguarding concerns. Where concerns arise, action may include the implementation of immediate safeguarding and risk management measures to protect children and young people, referral to statutory agencies and other relevant authorities, and/or disciplinary action in accordance with the relevant procedures and regulations.

The welfare and best interests of the child or young person will be the primary consideration in all safeguarding decisions.

Key Principles

This policy is based on the following key principles:

- The welfare, wellbeing, and best interests of children and young people are paramount and must be the primary consideration in all decisions and actions.
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is everyone's responsibility. All those involved in athletics have a duty to help create and maintain a safe, positive, and inclusive environment.
- Every child and young person has the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm, regardless of their age, disability, sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion or belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, or any other characteristic.
- Children and young people have the right to participate in athletics in a safe environment where they are listened to, treated with dignity and respect, and supported to achieve their full potential.
- Children and young people have the right to express their views on matters that affect them, and for those views to be heard, considered, and given due weight in accordance with their age, maturity, and understanding.
- The rights, views, needs, and experiences of children and young people should be respected, promoted, and placed at the center of safeguarding practice.
- Effective safeguarding is achieved through partnership-based working. The promotion of children's welfare, wellbeing, health, and development is best supported through collaborative working with children and young people, parents and carers, clubs, schools, statutory agencies, and other relevant organisations.
- Safeguarding responses should be timely, proportionate, and focused on reducing risk, preventing harm, and securing the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

Implementation

To implement this policy and safeguard children and young people, British Athletics and the HCAFs will:

- Promote the welfare, wellbeing, health, development, and rights of children and young people by providing opportunities to participate in athletics in a safe, positive, inclusive, and supportive environment.
- Foster a culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and where the welfare and best interests of children and young people are at the heart of decision-making, planning, and practice.
- Create and maintain safe systems, practices, and environments that help prevent abuse, neglect, exploitation, bullying, discrimination, and poor practice.
- Develop, implement, and regularly review safeguarding policies, procedures, guidance, and risk management arrangements to support the protection and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Take proactive steps to prevent, identify, and address concerns relating to abuse, harm, bullying, discrimination, harassment, and poor practice, and to promote positive behaviours and standards across the sport.
- Appoint suitably trained and supported Lead Officers and other welfare personnel to provide leadership, oversight, advice, and support.
- Set the standards for recruitment, selection, training, supervision and support of staff, volunteers, coaches, officials, and other members of the athletics workforce. Equipping them with the knowledge and understanding to fulfil their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.
- Require clubs, affiliated organisations, staff, volunteers, coaches, officials, and others involved in athletics to comply with this policy and all associated safeguarding procedures, codes of conduct, standards, and regulations.
- Ensure that children and young people are listened to, respected, and supported to participate in decisions that affect them, in accordance with their age, maturity, and understanding.
- Work in partnership with children and young people, parents and carers, clubs, statutory agencies, and other relevant organisations to promote welfare, manage risk, and safeguard children and young people.
- Respond promptly, appropriately, and proportionately to concerns about a child's welfare or safety, including implementing protective measures, managing risk, making referrals to statutory agencies where necessary, and taking disciplinary action where appropriate.
- Monitor, review, and evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements regularly to ensure continuous improvement and the ongoing development of a safe and child-centred culture within athletics.

Equality

British Athletics and the Home Country Athletics Federations (HCAFs) endorse the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion. They are committed to ensuring that everyone who wishes to participate in athletics in any discipline or form:

- Has a genuine and equal opportunity to participate to the full extent of their ambition and ability, without discrimination based on age, sex, gender identity, disability, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, or any other protected or relevant characteristic.
- Is supported to participate in a safe, inclusive, and accessible environment in which their welfare, wellbeing, rights, dignity, and individual worth are actively promoted and respected.
- Can be confident that they will be able to enjoy their involvement in athletics free from intimidation, victimisation, bullying, harassment, abuse, or neglect.
- Benefits from safeguarding systems, culture, and leadership that actively promote inclusion, prevent discrimination and poor practice, and ensure that any concerns are responded to promptly, appropriately, and in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

SECTION 2: SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This policy addresses a range of safeguarding concerns and forms of harm, including but not limited to:

- Practice concerns
- Wellbeing concerns
- Abuse and exploitation.

Practice Concerns

A practice concern is behaviour, action, or omission that falls below expected standards, may breach this policy or associated procedures, and/or may place a child or young person at risk of harm or adversely affect their welfare and wellbeing.

Practice concerns include any behaviour by staff, coaches, volunteers, officials, clubs, or other individuals involved in athletics that may contravene this policy, safeguarding procedures, codes of conduct, or licensing requirements.

This policy, together with safeguarding procedures, codes of conduct, and relevant regulations, promotes safe, positive, and appropriate relationships between those in positions of trust and the children and young people they support.

In athletics, there is a recognised power imbalance in coach–athlete and other supervisory relationships. British Athletics and the Home Country Athletics Federations (HCAFs) therefore adopt a broad interpretation of “position of trust” to reflect the potential for relationships of power to become exploitative and to impact a child or young person’s welfare, even where no criminal threshold is met.

In England and Wales, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (as amended) extends the legal position of trust provisions to include roles such as coaching, teaching, training, supervising, or instructing children in non-statutory settings, including sport. This means it is a criminal offence for an adult in such a position to engage in sexual activity with a young person aged 16 or 17 under their care.

In addition, British Athletics recognises that abuse of a position of trust can occur in broader contexts, including where an adult:

- Exerts undue influence over a child or young person’s training, behaviours, or decision-making
- Coerces or normalises harmful attitudes towards training, weight, performance enhancement, doping, or cheating
- Promotes or imposes extreme or harmful beliefs, including extremist, discriminatory, or radicalising ideologies
- Uses their position to manipulate, intimidate, isolate, or control a child or young person.

Further examples of practice concerns include, but are not limited to:

- Coaches or others repeatedly fail to follow safeguarding procedures, codes of conduct, or licence conditions
- Engaging in unsafe, inappropriate, or unqualified practice
- Continuing activities where there is a known or foreseeable risk to the welfare or safety of participants
- Inadequate supervision, planning, or risk assessment of activities
- Failure by clubs or organisations to respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns or disclosures
- Individuals engaging in behaviours identified as known risk factors for abuse or poor practice.

Wellbeing Concerns

While most children's needs are met by their parents and carers, participation in athletics can play an important role in supporting and promoting children and young people's welfare, resilience, and development.

Coaches, volunteers, and others involved in the sport may therefore be well placed to notice when a child or young person's wellbeing is being affected.

A wellbeing concern may arise where:

- A child or young person discloses worries, anxiety, distress, or difficulties, whether related to athletics or external factors
- There is a noticeable change in behaviours, mood, performance, or development
- There are concerns about the impact of circumstances or experiences on the child or young person's emotional or physical wellbeing
- There are concerns relating to mental health, social isolation, or reduced engagement
- Eating related concerns and over training concerns
- Wellbeing concerns should always be taken seriously and responded to in line with safeguarding procedures, recognising that they may be early indicators of more serious harm
- Where appropriate, wellbeing concerns should be managed in partnership with parents and carers, and where necessary escalated to safeguarding leads or statutory agencies in accordance with the relevant procedures and guidance.

Abuse and Exploitation

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child or young person. It may involve a single incident or occur as a pattern of behavior over time. Abuse can be perpetrated by adults or other children and may occur in person or online.

In addition to the four main categories of abuse—physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect—British Athletics recognises that children and young people may also be at risk of other forms of harm, including but not limited to:

- Bullying, harassment, and peer-on-peer abuse;
- Grooming and sexual exploitation;
- Criminal exploitation (including county lines and other forms of coercion into criminal activity);
- Financial or material exploitation;
- Online harm, including online grooming, abuse, and coercion;
- Discriminatory abuse based on protected characteristics or other differences;
- Radicalisation and exposure to extremist ideologies;
- Neglect in sporting contexts, including failure to meet safeguarding, supervision, or welfare needs within sport environments.

Detailed descriptions of the four main categories of abuse, together with additional vulnerabilities and risk factors affecting children and young people, are provided in Appendix 2.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner in the event of legislative changes or revisions to related policies and guidelines.

Associated Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents, policies and procedures.

- Child Safeguarding Procedures (Responding to and managing a concern about a child)
- Club Safeguarding Toolkit
- Codes of Conduct
- Safeguarding Regulations
- Adult Safeguarding Policy
- Adult Safeguarding Procedures (Responding to and managing a concern about an adult).

British Athletics and HCAF Safeguarding Contact Details

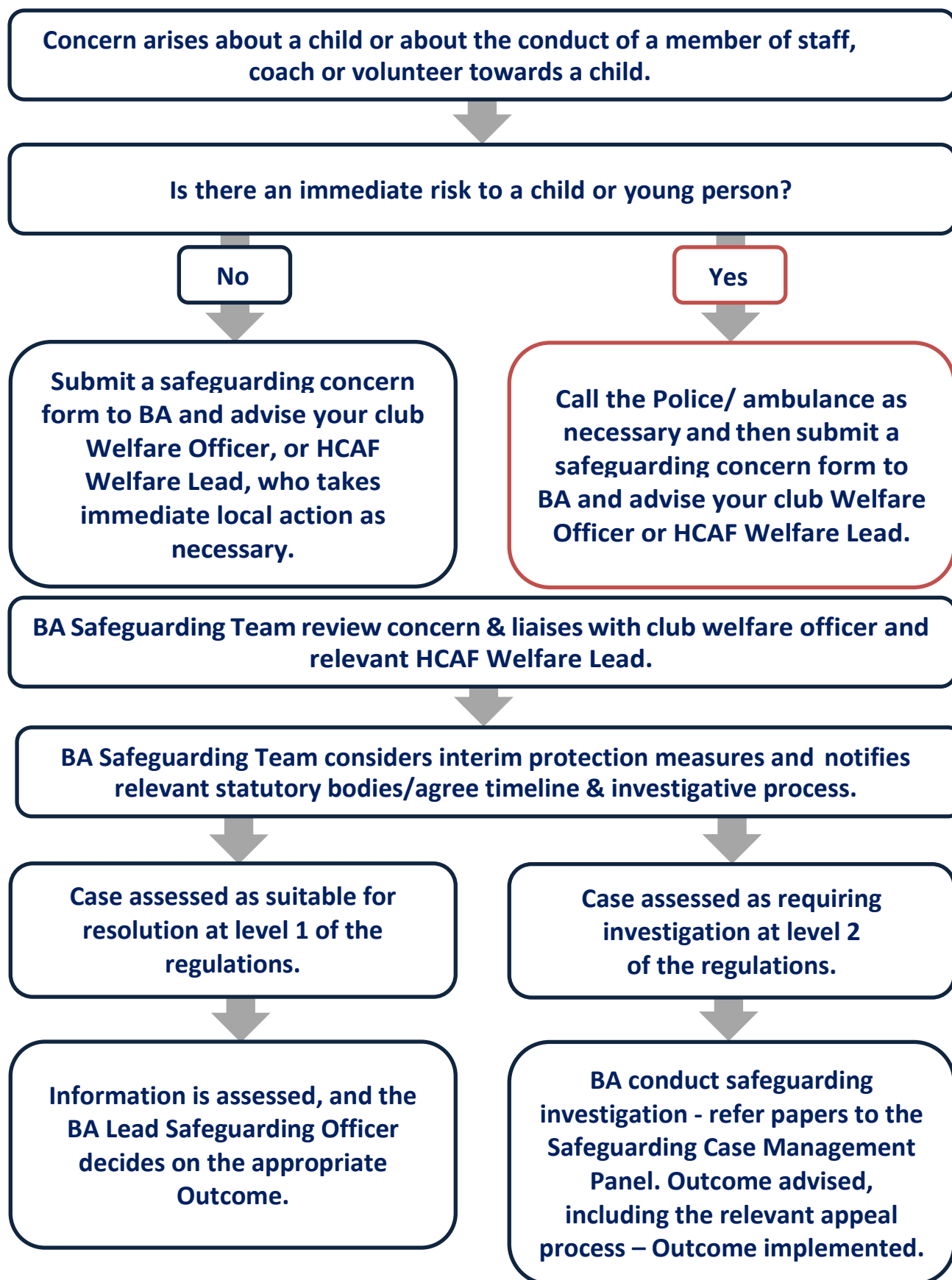
GOVERNING BODY	EMAIL	NAME
British Athletics	safeguarding@uka.org.uk	Kim Pearce
England Athletics	welfare@englandathletics.org	Sarah Harrison
Welsh Athletics	safeguardingandwelfare@welshathletics.org	Carl Williams
Athletics Northern Ireland	welfare@athleticsni.org	Declan Leung
Scottish Athletics	welfare@scottishathletics.org.uk	Ian Macfarlane

Glossary

- HOS – Head of Safeguarding British Athletics
- CWO – Club Welfare Officer
- LSCB – Local Safeguarding Children Board
- DBS – Disclosure and Barring Service in England and Wales
- PVG – The Protection of Vulnerable Groups scheme operated by Disclosure Scotland
- Access NI – Protection of Vulnerable Groups system operating in Northern Ireland
- CPSU – Child Protection in Sport Unit (NSPCC)
- Children First – Child Protection in Sport Service in Scotland
- Affiliated club – Means any voluntary club, non-voluntary organisation or virtual club affiliated to BA or the Home Country Athletics Federations
- Child – Anyone who has not attained the age of 18 years
- Young person – somebody over compulsory school age but under 18
- HCAF – Home Country Athletics Federation.

SECTION 3: APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PROCESS MAP – REPORTING A CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD



APPENDIX 2: CHILD ABUSE, EXPLOITATION AND RELATED SAFEGUARDING RISKS

DEFINITIONS AND INDICATORS

1. Introduction

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child or young person. A child may be abused or neglected by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can occur in any setting, including the home, community, sport, online environments, or institutional contexts. It may be perpetrated by adults or by other children and young people.

Safeguarding concerns should always be considered in context, recognising that abuse and harm may be a single incident, a pattern of behaviour, or the result of cumulative experiences over time.

2. Core categories of abuse

There are four main categories of abuse:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect.

These categories are not mutually exclusive and often overlap. A child experiencing one form of abuse is likely to be experiencing emotional harm as well.

3. Physical abuse

Physical abuse is any deliberate act that causes, or has the potential to cause, physical harm. It may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing injury.

In a sporting context, physical abuse may also include unsafe or coercive training practices, such as:

- excessive or inappropriate training loads
- failure to manage injury or medical needs
- forcing participation when injured or unwell
- unsafe equipment or environments
- failure to intervene in harmful practices, including doping or substance misuse.

Indicators may include unexplained or inconsistent injuries, repeated injuries, fear of explanation, or avoidance of certain activities.

4. Sexual abuse and exploitation

Sexual abuse involves forcing, coercing, manipulating, or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activity. It includes both contact and non-contact abuse, such as grooming, exploitation, exposure to sexual content, and inappropriate sexual communication.

Sexual abuse can occur online or in person and may involve individuals in positions of trust, peers, or strangers.

Indicators may include changes in behaviour, withdrawal, sexualised behaviour inappropriate to age, sleep disturbance, self-harm, or sudden changes in relationships or school performance.

5. Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is persistent emotional maltreatment that has a harmful effect on a child or young person's emotional development, wellbeing, or sense of identity.

It may include humiliation, intimidation, coercion, rejection, isolation, unrealistic expectations, or manipulation. In sport, it may also include:

- persistent criticism or belittling
- threats linked to selection, performance, or participation
- controlling behaviour by adults in positions of trust
- exposure to harmful beliefs, extremist ideology, or discriminatory attitudes.

Indicators may include low self-esteem, withdrawal, anxiety, aggression, self-harm, or sudden behavioural change.

6. Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child or young person's basic physical, emotional, medical, or developmental needs.

In sport, neglect may include:

- failure to provide safe supervision
- failure to respond appropriately to injury or illness
- inadequate nutrition, hydration, or rest during activity
- exposure to avoidable risk without appropriate safeguards.

Indicators may include poor hygiene, fatigue, frequent absence, untreated injuries, or signs of unmet basic needs.

7. Additional forms of harm and exploitation

Children and young people may also experience other forms of harm that do not always fit neatly into the four categories of abuse. These include:

- Peer-on-peer abuse, including bullying, harassment, and harmful sexual behaviour
- Grooming in person or online
- Sexual and criminal exploitation
- Online abuse, including cyberbullying and coercion
- Discriminatory abuse linked to protected or other characteristics
- Radicalisation and exposure to extremist influences
- Financial or material exploitation
- Contextual safeguarding risks arising in peer groups, communities, or digital environments
- Unsafe sporting practices, including excessive training demands or coercive coaching behaviours.

8. Vulnerability factors

Some children and young people may be more vulnerable to harm. This may include those who:

- have a disability or additional learning needs
- Experience mental health difficulties
- are socially isolated or lack stable support networks
- have experienced previous abuse or neglect
- are in high-performance or elite sport pathways
- face barriers to communication or disclosure

Vulnerability does not mean abuse will occur, but it may increase risk or reduce protective factors.

9. Recognising indicators of abuse

There is no single indicator of abuse. Signs may be physical, emotional, behavioural, or a combination of factors. Many indicators may also have alternative explanations.

It is not the role of staff or volunteers to decide whether abuse has occurred. However, it is everyone's responsibility to recognise concerns, respond appropriately, and report them in line with safeguarding procedures.

10. Key principle

All concerns relating to abuse, exploitation, neglect, or poor practice must be taken seriously and responded to in line with safeguarding procedures. The welfare and best interests of the child or young person are the primary considerations in all cases.

Further Information

Further information on abuse and neglect is available from [NSPCC](#) and Children First.

Further information on the relevant legislation in each Home Nation can be found below; these lists are not exhaustive.

Legislation Scotland

- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007
- Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024
- Getting it Right for Every Child ([GIRFEC](#)) and [SHANARRI](#) wellbeing indicators
- Information on the [PVG Scheme](#) in Scotland can be found on the Scottish Athletics website.

Legislation Wales

- Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014
- Children Act 1989
- Working Together to Safeguard People.

Legislation England

- Children Act 1989
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Legislation Northern Ireland

- The Children Order 1995
- Children Services Cooperation Act 2015
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order 2017
- Children and Young People Strategy 2019-2029
- Access NI.

All Nations

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018.