

British Athletics & The Home Country Athletics Federations

CHILD SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

Responding to and Managing a Concern about a Child

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CHILD SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

British Athletics (BA), the four Home Country Athletics Federations (HCAFs) and all affiliated clubs and organisations have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people participating in athletics from harm, abuse and exploitation, and to always promote their welfare.

This includes ensuring that clear, consistent and effective procedures are in place for managing safeguarding concerns and allegations.

These procedures apply to:

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

Any reference to “British Athletics” includes the above organisations.

For these procedures, a child is anyone under the age of 18.

These procedures set out the actions to be taken when a concern is raised that a child or young person involved in athletics may be experiencing, or is at risk of, harm.

They should be used alongside:

- British Athletics Child Safeguarding Policy
- Safeguarding Regulations
- Supporting guidance documents.

RECOGNISING A CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON

Concerns about a child's welfare will not always require immediate statutory intervention. However, all concerns must be taken seriously and responded to appropriately.

Concerns may arise from:

- Something you have seen or heard
- Information shared by another person or organisation
- A disclosure made directly by a child or young person
- Changes in behaviour, presentation or engagement.

It is not your responsibility to determine whether abuse has occurred. Your responsibility is to recognise, respond, record, report and refer concerns.

Abuse and neglect are not always visible, and children may not always disclose what is happening to them. Some may not recognise that they are being harmed.

Further detail on abuse types and indicators is available in the Child Safeguarding Policy (Appendix 2).

Key indicators may include:

- Significant changes in behaviour or mood
- Withdrawal, anxiety or loss of confidence
- Aggressive or bullying behaviour
- Sexualised language or behaviour inappropriate for age
- Poor hygiene, fatigue or signs of neglect
- Unexplained injuries (bruises, cuts, bite marks)
- Reluctance to change or participate in certain activities
- Self-harm or disordered eating indicators
- Fear of parents/carers or reluctance to go home
- Sudden unexplained absence from training or competition.

If there is an immediate risk to life or serious injury, call 999 immediately.

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE OR CONCERN

Concerns may be raised through:

- A direct disclosure from a child
- Observations of behaviour or physical indicators
- Information shared by a third party.

If a child discloses abuse or you become concerned you should:

- Take the concern seriously
- Stay calm and avoid showing shock or disbelief
- Listen carefully and allow them to speak freely
- Reassure them they have done the right thing in speaking out
- Write down notes of any disclosure once you have finished
- Use open questions only where clarification is needed
- Explain that you cannot keep the information confidential
- Act promptly in line with reporting procedures.

You must not:

- Investigate or question extensively
- Make assumptions or offer opinions
- Promise confidentiality
- Contact the alleged perpetrator
- Discuss the matter with anyone who does not need to know
- Delay reporting the concern
- Confront parents/carers or alleged perpetrators.

If urgent medical attention is required, call 999. If a child is in immediate danger or a crime is in progress, call 999.

RECORDING THE CONCERN

As soon as possible, make a clear written record including:

- Child's name and date of birth (if known)
- How and when the concern arose
- Where the concern was raised
- Exact words used by the child (where applicable)
- Description of behaviour or visible injuries (do not examine)
- Names of any witnesses
- Any other relevant contextual information.
- Records must be factual, clear, and avoid interpretation or opinion.

REPORTING THE CONCERN

All safeguarding concerns must be reported without delay. Information must remain strictly confidential and only shared with those who need to know.

You must:

- Submit a report via the "Submit a Safeguarding Concern" portal, or via email to safeguarding@uka.org.uk
- Attach any written communication received (e.g. emails, messages)
- Inform the Club Welfare Officer, or HCAF Welfare Contact, immediately.

Concerns About a Coach or Volunteer Conduct

Any concern regarding the behaviour or practice of a coach, official, volunteer or staff member that may place a child at risk must be reported immediately on the same day where possible to BA via the safeguarding reporting route above.

CASE MANAGEMENT

a. Role of the Club Welfare Officer

Upon receiving a concern, the Club Welfare Officer (CWO) will:

- Ensure the concern is reported to BA without delay
- Assess immediate risks and act within their remit
- Consider whether interim steps (e.g. temporary suspension or supervised activity) are required
- Ensure all relevant information has been recorded accurately
- Support and advise the person reporting the concern
- Always maintain confidentiality
- Determine whether parents/carers should be informed (seeking advice where necessary)
- The CWO must not delay referral on the assumption that another party will report it.

b. Role of the British Athletics / HCAF Welfare

On receipt of a concern, the BA Safeguarding Team will:

- Assess and triage the concern in consultation with HCAF and relevant parties
- Identify immediate safeguarding actions for the child, reporter, and any person of concern
- Determine what information must be shared, with whom, and record all decisions
- Refer to statutory agencies (Police, Local Authority Designated officer (LADO) and/or Children's Social Care) where appropriate
- Ensure any criminal concerns are reported immediately to Police where not already involved
- Implement safeguarding measures within athletics (e.g. suspension, licence action, codes of conduct enforcement)
- Liaise with statutory agencies throughout any investigation or case process
- Ensure appropriate communication and support for the child and their family is maintained
- Oversee case progression through the Safeguarding Case Management process once statutory involvement concludes.

NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING LEADS 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

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

