



WEIGHTLIFTING WALES
CODI PWYSAU CYMRU

Affiliated club

Club Responsibilities

All Weightlifting Wales registered clubs that provide activities and opportunities for children have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Weightlifting Wales requires all registered clubs to:

- Formally sign up to the NGB policy and procedures or adopt a club policy that complies with LSCB and NGB requirements.
- Ensure a senior official within the club has the overall responsibility for safeguarding.
- Identify at least one individual designated person (Welfare Officer) within the club to take the lead responsibility for safeguarding. This role should include:
 - Responding to child protection and poor practice concerns in partnership with the NGB Lead Officer and local statutory agencies if required;
 - Promoting the welfare of children and importance of safeguarding;
 - Involving young people in the safeguarding process;
 - Supporting club staff and volunteers to understand their safeguarding role and responsibilities;
 - Carrying out regular reviews of safeguarding within the club and ensuring any identified risks are appropriately managed;
 - Promoting safe recruitment and selection practices.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers who are working directly or indirectly with children receive appropriate training and have access to advice on child protection and safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children through the club welfare officer.
- Ensure safe recruitment and selection practices are in operation for all new staff and volunteers working with children
- Ensure that any concerns about poor practice by existing staff and volunteers are addressed
- Engage with young people and their parents/carers to encourage them to feel able to raise concerns and support them to understand how they can contribute to safeguarding.

It is not the role of anyone within the sport to investigate suspected or alleged abuse. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that all concerns are reported without delay, in line with Weightlifting Wales' procedures, to Social Services and/or the Police.

Abuse and poor practice

I. Recognising Abuse

Children and young people can be abused either through someone inflicting harm, or failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can be carried out by someone known to the child or (more rarely) by a complete stranger, and by men, women or other young people. It is not always easy to recognise abuse, especially as many of the indicators can have other reasonable explanations.

Abuse in all of its forms can affect a child at any age and its impact can be so damaging that, if not treated, it may follow the individual into adulthood. It is important that everyone understands what constitutes abuse, indicators of abuse, what to do, and where to seek advice if abuse is suspected or alleged.

Working Together to Safeguard Children under the Children Act 2004 provides the following definitions of abuse:

Abuse: emotional

The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional and behavioural development.

Within sport examples of emotional abuse may include:

- continually diminishing a child's efforts;
- placing intolerable pressure on a child to train and/or win;
- imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations on a child.

Abuse: neglect

The persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold, starvation or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

Neglect in a sport may occur if the responsible adult failed to adequately look after children in their care, leading them to be placed at risk of harm for example by consistently failing to ensure the use of appropriate protective equipment or clothing suitable to adverse weather conditions.

Abuse: physical

This includes hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates or induces illness in a child whom they are looking after.

In sport an example of physical abuse could include:

- provision of performance enhancing drugs;
- forcing a child into a physically exhausting and painful training regime;
- designing an intensity of training that fails to consider the capacity of the child's immature and growing body;
- hitting or slapping a child as a form of punishment.

Abuse: sexual

Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening, including:

- physical contact, including penetrative or non penetrative acts;
- 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.

In sport, activities which might involve physical contact with children could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over young athletes, if misused, may lead to sexually abusive situations developing. There have been a significant number of sexual abuse cases in sport, many of which have involved coaches, both male and female, who have manipulated the child and abused their position of trust.

2 Abuse of a Position of Trust

A relationship of trust exists where an adult, by virtue of their role, is in a position of power or influence over a young person. The Sexual Offences Act (2003) states that it is a criminal offence for a person in a position of trust defined within the scope of the Act, to engage in any sexual activity with a person over sixteen but under the age of 18 with whom they have a relationship of trust, irrespective of whether the young person has ostensibly consented to the relationship. Although the law does not currently apply to coaches and others involved in sports clubs, Weightlifting Wales considers that it is completely unacceptable for anyone to engage in sexual activity within a relationship of trust.

It must be stressed that it is always the responsibility of the adult to ensure that his or her conduct is acceptable. Appropriate boundaries in all relationships of trust must be maintained and adults must not behave in a manner that would encourage any attraction to develop. However, in the event that a young person displays signs of attraction to the adult within the relationship of trust, this must be reported to the club Welfare Officer. If appropriate, the adult may need to remove themselves from the relationship of trust.

3 Indicators of Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries;
- an injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent;
- the child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them;
- another child or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a child;
- unexplained changes in a child's behaviour, e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper;
- inappropriate sexual awareness;
- engaging in sexually explicit behaviour;
- distrust of adults, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected;
- difficulty in making friends;
- being prevented from socialising with others;
- displaying variations in eating patterns including over eating or loss of appetite;
- losing weight for no apparent reason;
- becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt.

The above list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators should not be accepted as proof that abuse is taking place. It is NOT the responsibility of those involved in Weightlifting Wales to decide that child abuse is occurring. However it is everyone's responsibility to be vigilant and act on any concerns.

4 Bullying

Bullying may be perpetrated by another young person or group of people, or by an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour; usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. Bullying can be split into the following categories:

- Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding belongings, threatening gestures)
- Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic - because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber - all areas of internet, such as email & internet chat room misuse, mobile threats by text messaging & calls. Misuse of associated technology, e.g. camera & video facilities

In sport bullying may arise when a parent or coach pushes the child too hard to succeed, or a rival athlete or official uses bullying behaviour.

Signs of bullying include:

- behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go to training or competitions
- an unexplained drop off in performance
- physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes
- a shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

5 Poor practice

There are some behaviours or practices that would be considered poor practice and although highly unacceptable within the sport, would not be fully encapsulated by the definitions of abuse. Nevertheless, they must always be reported, addressed and action taken to prevent reoccurrence.

In some cases, there is a fine line between poor practice and abuse and it may be important to seek guidance from Social Services and/or the Police before a concern is treated as poor practice. If, following consideration by the Welfare Officer, senior officials and, if appropriate, following consultation with statutory authorities and Weightlifting Wales, a concern is deemed to be a matter of poor practice rather than abuse, a suitable course of remedial action should be agreed. Although it is often possible to resolve poor practice through guidance, mentoring and additional training, particularly where the individual is willing to accept their conduct was inappropriate, in some instances, poor practice concerns need to be managed as a disciplinary matter by invoking the appropriate policy and procedures.

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following practices are known to be significant risk factors in cases of abuse and can never to be condoned:

- Taking children to your home or other secluded place unaccompanied by others.
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games.
- Sharing a room with a child.
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Making sexually suggestive remarks.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Allowing allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Carrying out personal care for a child that the child can do unaided
- Departing from the premises without first supervising the safe dispersal of the children.
- Abusing a privileged position of power or trust.
- Resorting to bullying tactics, or verbal abuse.
- Causing a participant to lose self-esteem by embarrassing, humiliating or undermining the individual.
- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from other adults.

It may sometimes be necessary for adults to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. This would include tasks such as removing outer layers of clothing, tying up hair etc. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and (preferably written) consent of parents and the children involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in a task that involves physical contact. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Some children, particularly children with learning disabilities or serious physical disabilities may require some assistance with using toilet facilities. In some situations, this may lead to increased vulnerability both for the child and the person providing the care, particularly as some children with learning disabilities can find it difficult to set and maintain physical boundaries. Therefore, where a child requires this type of care, a parent/carer or someone trained in the provision of intimate care must be on hand to address these needs.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

In the event that any of the following incidents occur, they should be reported immediately to the appropriate welfare officer, who must make a record of the incident and ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- if you accidentally hurt a child
- if a child seems distressed in any manner
- if a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- if a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

It is essential that everyone challenges poor practice, even where there is a belief that the motives of an individual are well meaning. Failure to challenge poor practice can lead to an environment where abuse is more likely to remain unnoticed.

Responding to reports, disclosures and concerns

1 Introduction

Child abuse concerns can arise in many different situations and contexts. It is not the role of anyone within the sport to investigate possible child abuse concerns but it is essential that all staff and volunteers clearly understand the action that must be taken in the event of:

- A direct disclosure of abuse from a child or young person;
- A disclosure from an adult of abuse that occurred during their childhood (historical abuse);
- Observed abuse, neglect or poor practice;
- Observed concerning changes in a child's behaviour; appearance or relationships, or other possible indicators of abuse;
- A report from a third party (e.g. another young person or adult within the club) or via an external organisation.

The following procedures outline the steps that should be taken and provides guidance on sharing relevant information with Social Services and/or police and other relevant organisations without delay and within agreed protocols.

Child protection concerns fall into two categories:

- Internal – arising from behaviour or experiences within the sports organisation or environment (e.g. allegations of abuse by a coach);
- External – arising outside the organisation (e.g. allegations of abuse at home or bullying in school).

Everyone has a responsibility to respond to any concerns about the welfare of young people - irrespective of whether the cause of the concern is internal or external - and to ensure that they take action by reporting this in line with the organisation's procedures. In some cases, sharing a concern will not trigger an investigation, but may help to build up a picture, along with information from other sources, which suggests that a child may be suffering harm.

If any person has knowledge, concerns or suspicions that a child is suffering, has suffered or is likely to be at risk of harm, it is their responsibility to ensure that the concerns are referred to social services or the police, who have the statutory duties and powers to make enquiries and intervene when necessary.

2 Responding to a disclosure from a child

If a child discloses that they or another young person is being abused, the person receiving the information should:

- Stay calm and ensure that the child feels safe and is not at any immediate risk.
- Show the child that you have heard what they are saying, and that you take their allegations seriously.
- Encourage the child to talk, but do not prompt or ask leading questions. Don't interrupt when the child is recalling significant events. Don't make the child repeat their account.
- Recognise any difficulties the child may have in explaining the incidents.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in revealing the information.
- Explain what actions you must take, in a way that is appropriate to the age and understanding of the child.
- Do not promise to keep what you have been told secret or confidential, as you have a responsibility to disclose information to those who need to know. Reporting concerns is not a betrayal of trust.
- Write down as soon as you can and no later than 24 hours what you have been told, using the exact words if possible.
- Record in writing what was said using the child's own words as soon as possible. The following information should be included:
 - Dates and times
 - Any names mentioned
 - To whom the information was given
 - Information that is fact, hearsay or opinion should be noted as such
 - Ensure the record is signed and dated.

If the child indicates that he/she does not wish others to be informed about the allegations, it is important to sensitively explain why you need to share the information.

Actions to avoid

- Dismissing the concern
- Panicking
- Allowing shock or distaste to show
- Probing for more information than is offered
- Promising to keep the disclosure secret
- Speculating or making assumptions
- Approaching the accused person (this may put a child at further risk and/or jeopardise a criminal investigation).
- Investigation of the disclosure
- Making negative comments about the accused person.

3 Reporting concerns

Regardless of how concerns may have arisen, the person who received the disclosure or witnessed an incident must ensure the information is reported. They must not allow personal opinions regarding the credibility of any individual, or the information they have received, to prevent them from making the referral. They should not worry that they may be mistaken as the responsibility to make the assessment of the concern rests with the statutory agencies.

In the event that abuse is suspected, the concern must be reported to Social Services and/or the Police without delay and in all cases, within 24 hours. The following action should be taken:

- Report your concerns to the Club Welfare Officer. If they are not available, report the matter to the Weightlifting Wales Lead Safeguarding Officer or a senior person within the organisation.
- The Club Welfare Officer or senior person must refer the matter without delay to Social Services and/or the Police and inform the Weightlifting Wales Lead officer. The police need only be called where there is immediate risk to a young person. If it is believed that there is no immediate danger, the initial referral should be made to Social Services. Concerns that arise outside office hours should be made to the social services emergency duty service or to the police.
- The parent/carer will be informed at the earliest opportunity, unless this is inconsistent with the need to ensure the child's safety, but advice should be sought from Social Services as to what information should be provided to parents, by whom and when.
- If a child is at immediate risk and action needs to be taken urgently, a 999 call must be made to the Police.
- In the event that there is any uncertainty as to whether a referral is appropriate, the NGB Lead Officer, NSPCC 24-hour helpline or Social Services will be able to offer advice on what action to take.

In the case of historical abuse, disclosures must still be reported to Social Services and Police, as above, as the perpetrator may continue to present a risk to other children.

4 Recording information

Although urgent referrals should not be delayed, Social Services or Police referrals should be confirmed in writing within two working days and a copy should also be provided to the NGB. The report can be made using the NGB standard incident reporting form and should contain the following information:

- Personal details of the child concerned including full name, age or date of birth, gender, race, ethnic origin and address.
- Details of parent/carer and an indication of what, if any, information has been shared.
- The nature of the concerns;
- How and why those concerns have arisen;
- Description of any visible injuries including bruising;
- Any observed changes in child's behaviour, relationships, etc
- Detailed description of any account of how any injuries occurred.
- Any times and dates or other relevant information;
- A clear distinction between what is fact, hearsay or opinion;
- Full details of the person about whom the concern/allegation is made including full name, date of birth, address, relationship the child concerned and/or position held in the club, if any;
- Any information you have on the child's developmental needs;
- Information about the person making the referral, including contact details, role and relationship to the child.

The contact details of the social services duty officer or police officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, and any agreed action to be taken should be recorded.

