



Aberdeen Schools Rowing Association (ASRA)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Responsibilities

The ASRA will

- Promote the health and welfare of children and vulnerable adults by providing opportunities for them to take part in rowing safely.
- Respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of children and vulnerable adults.
- Promote and implement appropriate procedures to safeguard the well-being of children and vulnerable adults and protect them from abuse.
- Recruit, train, support and supervise its coaches & volunteers to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and to minimise risk to themselves.
- Require coaches & volunteers to adopt and abide by this Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and these Procedures.
- Respond to any allegations of misconduct or abuse of children or vulnerable adults in line with this Policy and these Procedures as well as implementing, where appropriate, the relevant disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- Review and evaluate this Policy and these Procedures on a regular basis.

Principles

The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to protecting them from abuse. Children and vulnerable adults have a lot to gain from sport. Their natural sense of fun and spontaneity can blossom in a positive environment created by sports organisations. It provides an excellent opportunity for them to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own unique potential. This Policy and these Procedures are based on the following principles:

- The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is the primary concern.
- All children and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- It is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns about abuse and the responsibility of the Social Work Department and the Police to conduct, where appropriate, a joint investigation.
- All incidents of alleged poor practice, misconduct and abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All personal data will be processed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Review

This Policy and these Procedures will be regularly monitored and reviewed:

- In accordance with changes in legislation and guidance on the protection of children and vulnerable adults or any changes within the ASRA
- Following any issues or concerns raised about the protection of children or vulnerable adults within the ASRA
- In all other circumstances, at least annually.

Documents for Reference

Appendix A: Definitions of Terms

ASRA Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Procedures

1 Recruitment and Employment

All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults.

For all positions that require regular contact with children or vulnerable adults the following recruitment procedures must be completed.

1.1 Advertising

All forms of advertising used to recruit members for positions involving regular contact with children or vulnerable adults will include the following:

- The aims of the ASRA and, where appropriate, details of the particular programme involved.
- The responsibilities of the role.
- The level of experience or qualifications required (e.g. experience of working with children is an advantage).
- Details of the ASRA's open and positive stance on child and vulnerable adult protection.

1.2 Pre-application Information

Pre-application information for positions involving regular contact with children or vulnerable adults will be sent to applicants and will include:

- A job description including roles and responsibilities.
- A candidate specification (e.g. stating qualifications or experience of working with children or vulnerable adults required).
- An application form and self-declaration form.
- Information on the ASRA and related topics.

1.3 Application and Self-Declaration Form

All applicants will be requested to complete an application and self-declaration form. The purpose of the application form is to obtain relevant details from the applicant for the position. The purpose of the self-declaration form is to collect information on criminal behaviour that is relevant to the position e.g. criminal records or investigations. The self-declaration form is requested in a separate sealed envelope and is not opened until the applicant is selected for an interview. If the applicant is not selected the form is returned unopened to the applicant.

1.4 References

References will be sought as required. Where possible at least one of these references will be from an employer or a voluntary organisation where the position required working with children or vulnerable adults in any of the following capacities: employee; volunteer; or work experience. If the person has no experience of working with children or vulnerable adults, specific training requirements will be agreed before appointment.

1.5 Checks

The SARA is registered with Disclosure Scotland or Central Registered Body for Scotland and prior to appointment with ASRA a Disclosure Scotland check and/or equivalent international check will be completed. This will require the prospective position holder to complete and submit a Disclosure Scotland form, with the results returning to the Child Protection Officer or in his absence one of the Trustees.

As recommended by Disclosure Scotland (Protecting the Vulnerable by Safer Recruitment, 2002) the following types of checks are to be requested for positions requiring contact with children and vulnerable adults:

Standard Disclosure

Standard disclosures will be requested from those applying for positions listed in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (ROA) (Exceptions) Order 1975. These categories include occupations with duties that involve regular contact with children and young people under the age of 18; and the elderly, sick and handicapped people.

Enhanced Disclosure

Enhanced Disclosures will be requested for positions that involve a greater degree of contact with children or vulnerable adults. For example positions that require regular contact with, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children and young people.

1.6 Interview

For positions that require regular contact with children or vulnerable adults, interviews will be carried out. An interview will include requests for additional information to support the application.

1.7 Offer of Position

Once a decision has been made to appoint an individual, an offer letter will be presented to the applicant including the details of the position, any special requirements and the obligations e.g. agreement to the policies and procedures of the organisation, the probation period and responsibilities of the role. Confirmation of the position being accepted will require the offer letter to be formally accepted and agreed to in writing e.g. by the individual signing and dating their agreement on the offer letter and returning it to the organisation.

1.8 Induction

The induction process for the newly appointed member will include the following:

- An assessment of training, individual aids and any other needs and aspirations.
- Clarification, agreement and signing up to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Clarification of the expectations, roles and responsibilities of the position.

1.9 Training

Newly appointed members will complete the following training over an agreed period:

- Protecting children and vulnerable adults.
- Working effectively with children and vulnerable adults (including presentation skills, developing child and vulnerable adult friendly resources and activities).
- Any other identified training needs.

1.10 Probation

Newly appointed members will complete an agreed period of probation on commencement of their role.

1.11 Monitoring and Performance Appraisal

All members who have contact with children or vulnerable adults will be monitored and their performance appraised. This will provide an opportunity to evaluate progress, set new goals, identify training needs and address any concerns of poor practice.

Documents for Reference

Appendix B: Application Form

Appendix C: References Form

Appendix D: Self-Declaration Form

Appendix E: Guidance Notes for Completing Self-Declaration Form

Appendix F: Guidance on Disclosure Scotland Checks

2 Members with Specific Responsibility for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

2.1 Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer

The Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer has the main responsibility for managing child and vulnerable adult protection issues within the ASRA. The role and responsibilities of the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer are detailed below. Specific responsibilities in relation to allegations against coaches & volunteers are detailed in the Procedure for Managing Suspicions and Allegations of Abuse of a Child or Vulnerable Adult against Coaches & volunteers (Section 7.5).

2.2 Role and Responsibilities of the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer

Within the ASRA the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer will:

- Implement and promote the ASRA's Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Regularly report to the Trustees of the ASRA
- Act as the main contact within the ASRA for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- Provide information and advice on the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- Support and raise awareness of the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- Communicate with coaches & volunteers on issues of child and vulnerable adult protection.
- Keep abreast of developments and understand the latest information on data protection, confidentiality and other legal issues that impact on the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- Encourage good practice and support of procedures to protect children and vulnerable adults.
- Establish and maintain contact with local statutory agencies including the Police and Social Work Department.
- Maintain confidential records of reported cases and action taken and liaise with the statutory agencies and ensure they have access to all necessary information.
- Organise training for coaches & volunteers.
- Regularly monitor and review the ASRA's Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures.

Recommended Characteristics of the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer:

- Have an understanding of the issues affecting children and vulnerable adults and the sensitive way in which they must be managed.
- Be able to communicate the implications of protecting children and vulnerable adults to all members.
- Be able to communicate with children and vulnerable adults.
- Be supportive of the introduction of Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.
- Have an understanding and appreciation of the need to respect confidentiality.
- Be able to follow procedures and recognise when to seek advice and not rely solely on their own judgement.
- Be willing to challenge members who do not comply with the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures.

3 Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

This code of conduct details the types of practice required by all members of the ASRA when in contact with children or vulnerable adults. The types of practice are categorised into good practice; practice to be avoided and practice never to be sanctioned. Suspicions or allegations of non-compliance of the Code by a member will be dealt with through the ASRA 's Disciplinary Procedure for misconduct or through Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Abuse against a coach or volunteer of the ASRA (Section 7.5).

3.1 Good Practice

The ASRA supports and requires the following good practice by coaches & volunteers when in contact with children and vulnerable adults.

When working with children or vulnerable adults:

- Make sport fun, enjoyable and promote fair play.
- Always work in an open environment e.g. avoid private or unobserved situations and encourage an open environment for activities.
- Treat all children and vulnerable adults equally, with respect and dignity.
- Put the welfare of each child or vulnerable adult first before winning or achieving performance goals.
- Be an excellent role model including not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children or vulnerable adults.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Ensure that if any form of manual or physical support is required for a child or vulnerable adult, it is provided openly, the child or vulnerable adult is informed of what is being done and their consent is obtained.
- Deliver educational instruction first verbally; secondly role-modelled; and thirdly, and only if necessary, with hands on - which must be accompanied by telling the child or vulnerable adult where you are putting your hands and why it is necessary and obtaining their consent.
- Involve parents, guardians and carers wherever possible.
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust that empower children and vulnerable adults to share in the decision-making process.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of children and vulnerable adults and avoid excessive training or competition and either pushing them against their will or putting undue pressure on them.

First Aid and Treatment of Injuries:

If, in your capacity as a coach or volunteer of the ASRA, a child or vulnerable adult requires first aid or any form of medical attention whilst in your care, then the following good practice must be followed:

- Where practicable all parents/guardians of children under 16 must complete an ASRA Medical Consent Form before participating in Rowing
- Be aware of any pre-existing medical conditions, medicines being taken by participants or existing injuries and treatment required.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Where possible, ensure access to medical advice and/or assistance is available.
- Only those with a current, recognised First Aid qualification should respond to any injuries.
- Where possible any course of action should be discussed with the child/vulnerable adult, in language that they understand and their permission sought before any action is taken.
- In more serious cases, assistance must be obtained from a medically qualified professional as soon as possible.
- The child's or vulnerable adult's parents/guardians or carers must be informed of any injury and any action taken as soon as possible, unless it is in the child's or vulnerable adult's interests and on professional advice not to do so.
- A Notification of Accident Form must be completed and signed and passed to the organisation as soon as possible.

For taking and transporting children or vulnerable adults away from home:

If it is necessary to provide transport or take children or vulnerable adults away from home the following good practice must be followed:

- Where practicable request written parental/guardian consent if members are required to transport children or vulnerable adults.
- Always tell another member that you are transporting a child, give details of the route and the anticipated length of the journey.
- Ensure all vehicles are correctly insured.
- All reasonable safety measures are taken, e.g. children in the back seat, seatbelts are worn.
- Ensure, where possible, a male and female accompany mixed groups of children or vulnerable adults. These adults should be familiar with and agree to abide by the ASRA 's Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Always plan and prepare a detailed programme of activities and ensure copies are available for other members and parents/guardians.

3.2 Practice To Be Avoided

In the context of your role within the ASRA , the following practice should be avoided:

- Avoid having 'favourites' - this could lead to resentment and jealousy by other children or vulnerable adults and could lead to false allegations.
- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children or vulnerable adults away from others.
- Ensure that when children or vulnerable adults are taken away from home adults avoid entering their rooms unless in an emergency situation or in the interest of health and safety. If it is necessary to enter rooms, the door should remain open, if appropriate.
- Avoid taking children or vulnerable adults to your home.
- Avoid, where possible, doing things of a personal nature for children and vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.

Important Note:

It may sometimes be necessary for members to do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults, particularly if they are very young or vulnerable. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the child or vulnerable adult and where possible their parents/guardians. It is important to respect their views. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible, particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child or vulnerable adult to carry out particular activities. Do not take on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

3.3 Practice never to be sanctioned

In the context of your role within the ASRA , the following practices should never be sanctioned:

- Never engage in sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Never engage in rough or physical contact except as permitted within the rules of the game or competition.
- Never form intimate emotional or physical relationships with children or vulnerable adults.
- Never allow or engage in touching a child or vulnerable adult in a sexually suggestive manner.
- Never allow children or vulnerable adults to swear or use sexualised language unchallenged.
- Never make sexually suggestive comments to a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun.
- Never reduce a child or vulnerable adult to tears as a form of control.
- Never allow allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Never share a room with a child or vulnerable adult for sleeping accommodation.
- Never invite or allow children or vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home.

Important Note:

In special cases sharing may be required for health and safety reasons or if the child is very young or particularly vulnerable. If so, explain why this is necessary to the child/vulnerable adult and their parent or guardian and seek their consent. Where possible ensure that at least two adults, preferably male and female are in the room.

3.4 Reporting

If members have concerns about an incident involving a child or vulnerable adult that seems untoward or unusual they must report their concerns as soon as possible to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer. Parents should also be informed of the incident as soon as possible unless it is not in the child's or vulnerable adult's interests to tell them (refer to Section 8, Sharing Concerns with Parents, Guardians or Carers).

Report, record and inform if the following occur:

- If you accidentally hurt a child or vulnerable adult.
- If a child or vulnerable adult seems distressed in any manner.
- If a child or vulnerable adult misunderstands or misinterprets something you have said or done.
- If a child or vulnerable adult appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a child or vulnerable adult needs to be restrained.

Documents for Reference

Appendix G: Medical Consent Form

Appendix H: The Law and Medical Consent: Children and Vulnerable Adults

Appendix I: See ASRA HS&E folder for accident forms.

Appendix J: Notification of Incident Form

4 Identifying and Managing Bullying

The lives of many people are made miserable by bullying. Victims of bullying can feel lonely, isolated and deeply unhappy. It can have a devastating effect on a child or vulnerable adult's self-esteem and destroy their self-confidence and concentration. They may become withdrawn and insecure, more cautious and less willing to take any sort of risk. They may feel it is somehow their fault or that there is something wrong with them and at worst cause depression and/or feelings of worthlessness that lead to suicide.

To ensure the ASRA creates an atmosphere where bullying of children and vulnerable adults is unacceptable and to help members manage bullying issues, guidelines for identifying and managing bullying have been developed.

Any suspicions or allegations of bullying of a child or vulnerable adult against a member will be dealt with through the ASRA Disciplinary Procedures and/or Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Abuse against a Member of the ASRA (Section 7.5).

5 Photographing, Videoing and Filming of Children and Vulnerable Adults

There is evidence that some people have used sporting venues and activities as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children and vulnerable adults. The following procedures have been developed to protect children and vulnerable adults.

The following is required for the ASRA's activities or events where children or vulnerable adults are participating:

- Where appropriate all materials promoting the ASRA events or activities shall state that accredited photographers will be present.
- Where possible consent from the parent/guardian for photographing, videoing and/or filming of a child or vulnerable adult must be obtained prior to the event or activity.
- Where possible anyone wishing to use photographic/film/video equipment at a venue must obtain the approval of the ASRA.
- An activity or event specific identification badge/sticker must be provided to and clearly displayed at all times by accredited photographers, film and video operators on the day of the activity or event.
- No unsupervised access or one-to-one sessions are to be permitted unless this has been approved in advance by the child or vulnerable adult, parent/guardian and the organisation, and appropriate vetting has occurred e.g. Disclosure Scotland check of individual wanting to photograph, film or video.
- The ASRA reserves the right at all times to prohibit the use of photography, film or video at any event or activity with which it is associated.
- The requirements above are publicly promoted to ensure all people present at the event or activity understand the procedure and are aware of whom to contact if concerned.

5.1 Concerns about Photographers, Video or Film Operators

Any concerns with photographers or video or film operators are to be reported to the ASRA's Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer and where relevant, the Police.

6 Children or Vulnerable Adults in Publications and on the Internet

Sport websites and publications provide excellent opportunities to broadcast achievements of individuals to the world and to provide a showcase for the activities of young people or vulnerable adults. In some cases, however, displaying certain information about children and vulnerable adults could place them at risk. The following procedure must be followed to ensure that ASRA publications and ASRA information on the Internet do not place children and vulnerable adults at risk.

ASRA publications and ASRA information on the Internet must adhere to the following:

- Publications or information on an Internet site must never include personal information that could identify a child or vulnerable adult e.g. home address, e-mail address, telephone number of a child or vulnerable adult. Any contact information must be directed to either the ASRA or another relevant organisation's address, for example another governing body or club.
- Before publishing any information about a child or vulnerable adult, written consent must be obtained from the child or vulnerable adult's parent/guardian. If the material is changed from the time of consent, the parents/guardians must be informed and consent provided for the changes.
- The content of photographs or videos must not depict a child or vulnerable adult in a provocative pose or in a state of partial undress other than when depicting a sporting activity. Where relevant, a tracksuit may be more appropriate attire. Children and vulnerable adults must never be portrayed in a demeaning or tasteless manner.
- All published events involving children or vulnerable adults must be reviewed to ensure the information will not put children or vulnerable adults at risk. Any publications of specific meetings or child/vulnerable adult events e.g. team coaching sessions, must not be distributed to any individuals other than to those directly concerned.
- Particular care must be taken in publishing photographs, film or videos of children or vulnerable adults who are considered particularly vulnerable e.g. the subject of a child or vulnerable adult protection issue or a custody dispute.
- Particular care is to be taken in publishing photographs, films or videos of children or vulnerable adults with physical, learning and/or communication or language disabilities, as they could be particularly vulnerable to abuse.

Important Note: Any concerns or enquiries about publications or Internet information should be reported to the ASRA's Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer.

Documents for Reference

Appendix K: Guidelines for Identifying and Managing Bullying of Children and Vulnerable Adults

For further information about bullying, see:

- www.kidscape.org.uk
- www.childline.org.uk
- www.children1st.org.uk

Appendix L: Consent Form for the Use of Photographs, Film or Video Recordings of Children or Vulnerable Adults

Appendix M: Application Form to Photograph, Film or Video a Sporting Event or Activity involving Children or Vulnerable Adults

7 Responding to Disclosures

Information you receive about or from a child or vulnerable adult may fall into one of the following categories:

- 1 Suspicion or allegation of misconduct against a coach or volunteer of the ASRA
- 2 Suspicion or allegation of abuse against a coach or volunteer of the ASRA
- 3 Suspicion or allegation of inappropriate behaviour against someone who is not a coach or volunteer.
- 4 Suspicion or allegation of abuse against someone who is not a coach or volunteer.

If unclear about the nature of the information (and therefore which category the disclosure falls into) advice must be sought from the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer or the Police or Social Work Department.

It is not the responsibility of anyone from the ASRA to decide whether or not a child or vulnerable adult has been abused. It is however everyone's responsibility to report concerns.

It is very important that the ASRA coaches & volunteers understand what is meant by the term 'abuse'. The different types of abuse are:

- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Negative Discrimination (including racism)
- Bullying (includes bullying by gangs; bullying by family members; physical bullying; verbal bullying; teasing; and harassment)

The definitions for the types of abuse and signs that may suggest abuse are detailed in Appendix A. It is very important that this appendix is read and understood.

7.1 How to Listen to a Disclosure

It is important to listen carefully to the information a child or vulnerable adult discloses. When listening to a disclosure the following good practice is required:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child/vulnerable adult.
- Listen to the child/vulnerable adult.
- Do not show disbelief.
- Tell the child/vulnerable adult that he/she is not to blame and that he/she was right to tell.
- Take what the child/vulnerable adult says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what a child/vulnerable adult says, especially if they have a speech disability and/or differences in language.
- Do not pre-suppose that the experience was bad or painful - it may have been neutral or even pleasurable.
Always avoid projecting your own reactions onto the child or vulnerable adult.
- If you need to clarify, keep questions to the absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
- If you need to clarify or the statement is ambiguous, use open-ended, non-leading questions.
- Do not introduce personal information from either your own experiences or those of other children or vulnerable adults.
- Reassure the child or vulnerable adult.

Actions to Avoid

When receiving a disclosure:

- Avoid panic.
- Avoid showing shock or distaste.
- Avoid probing for more information than is offered.
- Avoid speculating or making assumptions.
- Avoid making negative comments about the person against whom the allegation has been made.
- Avoid approaching the individual against whom the allegation has been made.
- Avoid making promises or agreeing to keep secrets.
- Avoid giving a guarantee of confidentiality.

7.2 Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Inappropriate Behaviour or Misconduct against Someone who is Not a coach or volunteer of the ASRA

In the course of your role within the ASRA a child or vulnerable adult may disclose information to you about a person who is not a coach or volunteer that leads to a suspicion or allegation of inappropriate behaviour or misconduct.

If the disclosure is about an incident that occurred during an ASRA event or activity:

- Listen to the child as detailed above.
- Acknowledge the information received.
- Pass the information to both the manager of the event or activity and the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer and if appropriate the parents/guardians/carers of the child or vulnerable adult (refer to Section 8 Sharing Concerns with Parents, Guardians or Carers).
- Make a full written record of the disclosure on the day you receive the disclosure.
- Sign and date the record then pass it to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer.

7.3 Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Inappropriate Behaviour or Misconduct against a Coach or volunteer of the ASRA

If you receive a disclosure that leads to a suspicion or allegation of inappropriate behaviour or misconduct against a member:

- Listen to the child as detailed above.
- Acknowledge the information received.
- Pass to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer.
- Make a full written record of the disclosure on the day you receive the disclosure.
- Sign and date the record then pass to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer.

Establishing the Basic Facts

The Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer must clarify the basic facts to establish whether there is reasonable cause to suspect or believe that misconduct has occurred. If the basic facts support a suspicion or allegation of misconduct by a member, the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the ASRA's Disciplinary Procedure.

7.4 Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Abuse against Someone who is Not a coach or volunteer of the ASRA.

All allegations of abuse must be taken seriously. Although false allegations of abuse do occur, they are less than usual. If a child or vulnerable adult says or indicates that he/she is being abused or information is obtained which gives concern that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused, you must react as soon as possible that day in line with the following procedures.

Where there is uncertainty about whether the concern relates to abuse or misconduct, the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer must firstly be consulted for advice on the appropriate course of action. If the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer is unavailable, external agencies such as the Police and Social Work Department must be consulted for advice. This is important because they have an overview of child protection issues and they may well have other information that together causes concern.

On receiving information about a non-member that leads to a suspicion or allegation of abuse:

- Listen to the child or vulnerable adult as detailed in section 7.1 How to Listen to Disclosures.
- Pass your concerns to the Social Work Department or the Police in the area where the abuse is alleged to have occurred immediately (these are available 24 hours a day). Act on any advice given. At the earliest opportunity tell the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer about the action taken.
- Make a full written record of what has been seen, heard and/or told as soon as possible in the child/vulnerable adult's own words. The information must, where known, include the following:
 - Name of child/vulnerable adult.
 - Age, date of birth of child/vulnerable adult.
 - Home address and telephone number of the child/vulnerable adult.
 - The nature of the allegation in the child/vulnerable adult's own words.
 - Any times, dates or other relevant information.
 - Whether the person making the report is expressing their own concern or the concerns of another person.
 - The child/vulnerable adult's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any injuries occurred.
 - The nature of the allegation (include all of the information obtained during the initial account e.g. time, date, location of alleged incident).
 - A description of any visible (when normally dressed) injuries or bruising, behavioural signs, indirect signs (do not examine the child/vulnerable adult).
 - Details of any witnesses to the incident.
 - Whether the child/vulnerable adult's parents/guardians/carers have been contacted.
 - Details of anyone else who has been consulted and the information obtained from them.
 - If it is not the child/vulnerable adult making the report, whether the child/vulnerable adult has been spoken to, if so what was said.
- Record, sign and date on the day what you have seen, heard or been told.
- If making an electronic copy do not save to the hard drive or floppy disk. Print off the record, sign and date, then delete the electronic copy, that day.
- Pass the record to the Social Work Department or the Police.

Remember: Listen; Respond; Report and Record

7.5 Responding to a Suspicion or Allegation of Abuse against a coach or volunteer of the ASRA

The feelings caused by the discovery of potential abuse by a coach or volunteer will raise different issues, e.g. disbelief that a coach or volunteer would act in this way. It is not the responsibility of a coach or volunteer to take responsibility or to decide whether or not a child or vulnerable adult has been abused. However, as with allegations against non-members, it is the responsibility of the individual to act on any concerns.

Any information that raises concern about the behaviour of a coach or volunteer towards a child or vulnerable adult must be passed on as soon as possible that day, in accordance with these procedures. No coach or volunteer in receipt of such information shall keep that information to himself/ herself or attempt to deal with the matter on their own.

These Procedures aim to ensure that all suspicions and/or allegations of abuse against a coach or volunteer are taken seriously and are dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner. They must be read in conjunction with the ASRA's Disciplinary Procedures.

7.5.1 On receiving information about a coach or volunteer that leads to a suspicion or allegation of abuse:

- Listen to the child or vulnerable adult as detailed in section 7.1 How to Listen to Disclosures.
- Pass your concerns to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer on the day or if not available, the Social Work Department or the Police in the area where the abuse is alleged to have occurred (these are available 24 hours a day). Act on any advice given.
- Make a full written record of what has been seen, heard and/or told as soon as possible in the child/vulnerable adult's own words.
- Sign and date the record including what you have seen, heard or been told, that day.
- If making an electronic copy do not save to the hard drive or floppy disk. Print the record, sign and date, then delete the electronic copy, that day.
- Pass the record to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer or the Social Work Department or Police.

Important Note: Where the concern is about the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer it must be reported to one of the other Trustees of the ASRA.

7.5.2 Actions for the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer when Concerns are Reported

Before taking any action the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer must always seek advice from the Police or Social Work Department. Thereafter:

- **Establish Basic Facts** - the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer must initially clarify the basic facts to establish whether there is reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a coach or volunteer may have abused a child and/or vulnerable adult.

Important Note:

- This may necessitate the child(ren) or vulnerable adult(s) involved being asked some basic, open-ended, non-leading questions solely with a view to clarifying the basic facts. It may also be necessary to ask similar basic questions of other children, or other appropriate individuals e.g. coaches. After seeking advice from the Police and/or Social Work Department, the parents/guardians may be approached to provide consent to speak to a child/vulnerable adult.
- Advice must be sought from the Police and/or Social Work Department as to whether the coach or volunteer about whom the allegation has been made may be approached as part of the initial enquiry.
- This process will not form part of the disciplinary investigation.

Making a Referral in Cases of Suspected and/or Alleged Abuse – If the basic facts support a suspicion or allegation of abuse:

- The Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer will refer the suspicion and/or allegation to the Social Work Department and the Police, as soon as possible that day.
- Appropriate steps may be required to ensure the safety of the child(ren) or vulnerable adult(s) who may be at risk.
- A record should be made of the name and designation of the Social Work Department member of staff or the Police Officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow up is required.
- Following advice from the Social Work Department and/or Police, the parent/guardian of the child or vulnerable adult should be contacted as soon as possible.

Important Note:

- Reporting of the matter to the Police or Social Work Department must not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. A Referral for Reporting Suspicions and/or Allegations of Abuse Against a coach or volunteer of the ASRA Form must be completed as soon as possible that day. Where possible, a copy of this form must be sent to the Police and Social Work Department within 24 hours.

Possible Outcomes following advice from Police

Where the initial enquiry reveals that there is reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a member has abused a child and/or vulnerable adult there will be an investigation. There are three types of investigation that can result:

- A disciplinary investigation
- A child protection investigation
- A criminal investigation

Following advice from the Police, disciplinary action may be taken in cases where a criminal investigation is ongoing provided sufficient information is available to enable a decision to be made and doing so does not jeopardise the criminal investigation.

Procedures 7.5.1 and 7.5.2 are summarised in Flowchart 1.

7.5.3 Managing the coach or volunteer Against Whom the Allegation has Been Made

Following advice from the Police, if the decision is made that the coach or volunteer against whom the allegation has been made is to be informed, the coach or volunteer should be told an allegation has been made which suggests abuse. It is essential to preserve evidence for any criminal proceedings while at the same time safeguarding the rights of the coach or volunteer.

7.5.4 Suspension

- Suspension is not a form of disciplinary action. The coach or volunteer may be suspended whilst an investigation is carried out.
- Suspension will be carried out by the Trustees of the ASRA in accordance with the ASRA's Disciplinary Procedures.
- At the suspension interview the coach or volunteer will be informed of the reason suspension is taking place and given the opportunity to give a statement should he/she wish. Notification of the suspension and the reasons will be conveyed in writing to the member in accordance with the ASRA's Disciplinary Procedures.

Managing False or Malicious Allegations

- Where after investigation, the allegation is found to be false or malicious the coach or volunteer will receive an account of the circumstances and/or investigation and a letter confirming the conclusion of the matter. The coach or volunteer involved may wish to seek legal advice.
- All records pertaining to the circumstances and investigation will be destroyed.
- Where this involves a coach or volunteer of the ASRA, they will be advised of the appropriate counselling services available.

7.5.5 Managing Allegations of Historical Abuse

- Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event e.g. an adult who was abused as a child by a coach or volunteer who is still currently working with children. Where such an allegation is made the procedures for managing allegations of abuse, detailed in Sections 7.4 and 7.5, must be followed.

8 Sharing concerns with Parents, Guardians or Carers

8.1 Where it is Not Abuse

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents/guardians/carers where there are concerns about a child/vulnerable adult. Therefore in most situations, not involving the possibility of the abuse of a child or vulnerable adult, it would be important to talk to parents/guardians/carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child or vulnerable adult seems withdrawn, he/she may have experienced an upset in the family, such as a parental separation, divorce or bereavement. Common sense is advised in these situations however advice should be sought from the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer if there is any uncertainty about the appropriate course of action.

8.2 Allegations of Abuse

There are circumstances in which a child or vulnerable adult might be placed at even greater risk if concerns are shared e.g. where a parent/guardian/carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately. **In all cases of suspected or alleged abuse, advice and guidance must first be sought from the local Social Work Department or the Police as to who contacts the parents.**

9 Legal Framework

The legislation and guidance on which this policy and supporting procedures is based is located in Appendix O.

Defamation

Concerned adults may be reluctant to report suspicions of abuse for fear that the person suspected will sue them for defamation. An allegation of abuse will always be defamatory but damages will not be awarded if the maker of the allegation can prove that it is true. Such allegations should not be made unless the maker of the allegation has a legal duty to make it and the Receiver has such a duty to receive it. Thus a person may safely express concerns to, for example, the Police, a social work reporter, the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer or a line manager in the governing body. Similar reciprocal duties exist between an employee and his/her employer or his/her employer's representative. Of course the making of untrue allegations for purely malicious reasons would always be actionable.

Confidentiality

Members receiving information about possible abuse should always treat that information as confidential in the sense that it must not be disclosed to anybody except those having a legal duty to receive it, for example the Police, a social work reporter, the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer or a line manager in the governing body. Communicating information obtained from a Disclosure Certificate under the Police Act 1997 is a criminal offence.

The Procedure for Managing Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse against members must be read in conjunction with ASRA's Disciplinary Procedure.

Documents for Reference

Appendix N: Referral Form for Suspicions or Allegations of Abuse of a Child or Vulnerable Adult

Appendix O: Model Policy and Procedures Legal Framework

Flowchart 1: Procedure for Responding to Suspicions and/or Allegations of Abuse of a Child or Vulnerable Adult against a Member

