

WheelPower

Safeguarding Children Policy

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Introduction

WheelPower's position is that safeguarding children and young people is **everyone's** responsibility (Statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2013).

Child abuse can and does occur outside the family setting. It can happen wherever there are children and at any time; at school, in the park, at the club. Sadly, there are some people who seek to be where children are simply in order to abuse them. Recent inquiries indicate that abuse that takes place within a public setting is rarely a one-off event.

If the Policy is to safeguard children, everyone involved in WheelPower's activities needs to see and discuss this Guide. WheelPower is, therefore, asking all staff, volunteers and coaches to ensure the Guide is widely distributed and discussed. It is also important that everyone knows the identity of the Safeguarding Officer (SO).

If you have any doubts about the policy, procedures and what constitutes good practice in this area please contact the WheelPower Safeguarding Officer (SO) for further guidance.

The Principles of Safeguarding Children

The guidance given in this Guide is based on the following principles:

- The welfare of young people (the Children Act 1989 defines a young person as under 18 years of age) must be the primary concern of any person working with them.
- All young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- It is the responsibility of child protection experts to determine whether or not abuse has taken place, but it is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns (i.e. anything that makes them suspect that some form of abuse may have taken place).
- All incidents of suspicious poor practice and all allegations must be taken seriously. They must be responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Confidentiality must be maintained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 2000 (see more detailed information on page 16).

Note: Anyone who is barred from working with children and young people by the Independent Safeguarding Authority (Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006) is automatically excluded from working with children.

Explanation of Use of Terms

Please note that the word "**parents**" is used throughout this Guide as a generic term to represent parents, carers and guardians. The principles for **children** and **young people** also apply to participants with disabilities.¹

¹ See section 9 of the Children Act 2004: "Any reference to a child includes, in addition to a person under 18, a person aged 18, 19 or 20 who...has been looked after by a local authority at any time after the age of 16 or has a learning disability."

Types of Abuse

It is generally acknowledged that there are four main types of abuse – Physical, Sexual, Emotional and Neglect.

- **Physical Abuse** is just what the term implies - hurting or injuring a child, for example by hitting or shaking them. It might also occur if a child is forced to train beyond his/her capabilities. Bullying is likely to come into this category.
- **Sexual Abuse** occurs when a child knowingly or unknowingly takes part in something which meets the sexual needs of the other person or persons involved – it could range from sexually-suggestive comments to full intercourse. This includes upskirting which is usually performed in a public place, such as on public transport or in a nightclub, among crowds of people, making it harder to spot people taking the photos.
- **Emotional Abuse** occurs when a child is not given love, help and encouragement, is constantly derided or ridiculed, or perhaps even worse, is ignored. Conversely, it can also occur if a child is over-protected. It is present in the unrealistic expectations of parents and coaches as to what a child can achieve. Racially and sexually abusive remarks constitute emotional abuse, and it can be a feature of bullying.
- **Neglect** usually means failing to meet children's basic needs, such as food, warmth, adequate clothing, medical attention, etc. It could also mean failing to ensure they are safe, or exposing them to harm.

Indications of Child Abuse

Recognising child abuse is not always easy, even for experts. The examples below are not a complete list, and they are only indicators that abuse may have occurred – not confirmation that it has actually occurred.

- **Information** - The child says that she or he is being abused, or another person says they believe (or actually know) that abuse is occurring.
- **Injuries** - The child has an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- **Behaviour changes** - The child's behavior changes, either over time or quite suddenly; he or she becomes quiet and withdrawn, or alternatively becomes aggressive.
- **Reaction to others** - The child appears not to trust adults, especially a parent, coach or volunteer with whom she or he would be expected to have, or did once have, a close relationship, and does not seem to be able to make friends.
- **Appearance** - The child becomes increasingly neglected in appearance, and may lose or gain weight for no apparent reason.
- **Sexual awareness** - the child shows inappropriate sexual awareness for his/her age, and sometimes behaves in a sexually explicit way.

REMEMBER that physically disabled children and children with learning difficulties are particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating about what is happening to them.

Good Practice

Everyone involved in WheelPower's work is encouraged to demonstrate good behaviour in order to protect children, and to protect themselves against allegations. The following are common-sense examples of how to create a positive environment:

Examples of Good Practice

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoid private or unobserved situations), and encourage an open environment between others (e.g. no secrets).
- Treat all young people equally and respect their dignity.
- Always put the welfare of each young person first, ahead of winning or achieving goals.
- Maintain a safe, appropriate distance in your dealings with young people. e.g. it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child, or to share a room with them.
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Make sport fun and enjoyable and promote fair play.
- Ensure that if any form of manual/physical contact is required, it is done openly and according to good coaching practice. Young people should always be consulted and their agreement obtained. If necessary, parents should be told what needs to be done and why and their agreement obtained.
- Coaches should give information to parents and young people about their coaching methods and style. They should explain that if any form of manual/physical contact needs to be done by the coach it is either done for safety reasons, or there is simply no other way to do it. The parents and young people should "sign up" to the coach's style and give consent to their actions.
- Keep technical skills, qualifications and insurance up to date.
- Involve parents wherever possible; e.g. to supervise their children in changing rooms.
- Ensure that if mixed teams participate in events that they are always accompanied by a male and a female member of staff. (NB; however, same gender abuse can also occur.)
- Be an excellent role model — this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Avoid excessive training or competition and pushing participants against their will. Recognise each individual's needs and capabilities.
- Secure parental consent in writing to acting in loco parentis (in place of a parent) if it may be necessary to give permission for emergency first aid and/or medical treatment.
- Be aware of any medicines being taken by participants, and any existing injuries.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, with the details of any treatment given.

- Obtain written parental consent if officials, coaches or volunteers are required to transport young people in their cars.
- Ensure all transport arrangements are agreed with a parent/carer

REMEMBER: Although any physical contact requires a level of agreement, safety must NEVER be compromised.

What Not To Do

The following actions or activities should be avoided unless they are necessary in an emergency. If situations arise where these actions are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge within the organisation, or of the child's parents; for example, if a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session.

NEVER:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually-provocative games, including horseplay;
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching;
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun;
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control;
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves;

ONLY IN EXCEPTIONAL SITUATIONS:

- Share a room with a child;
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised; □
Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others;
o Take children to your home where they will be alone with you.

*It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and of the children involved. Be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, discuss with him/her what you are doing, and give choices where possible. This is particularly important if you are involved in putting on or removing outer clothing, or where there is physical contact in lifting the person or assisting them to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

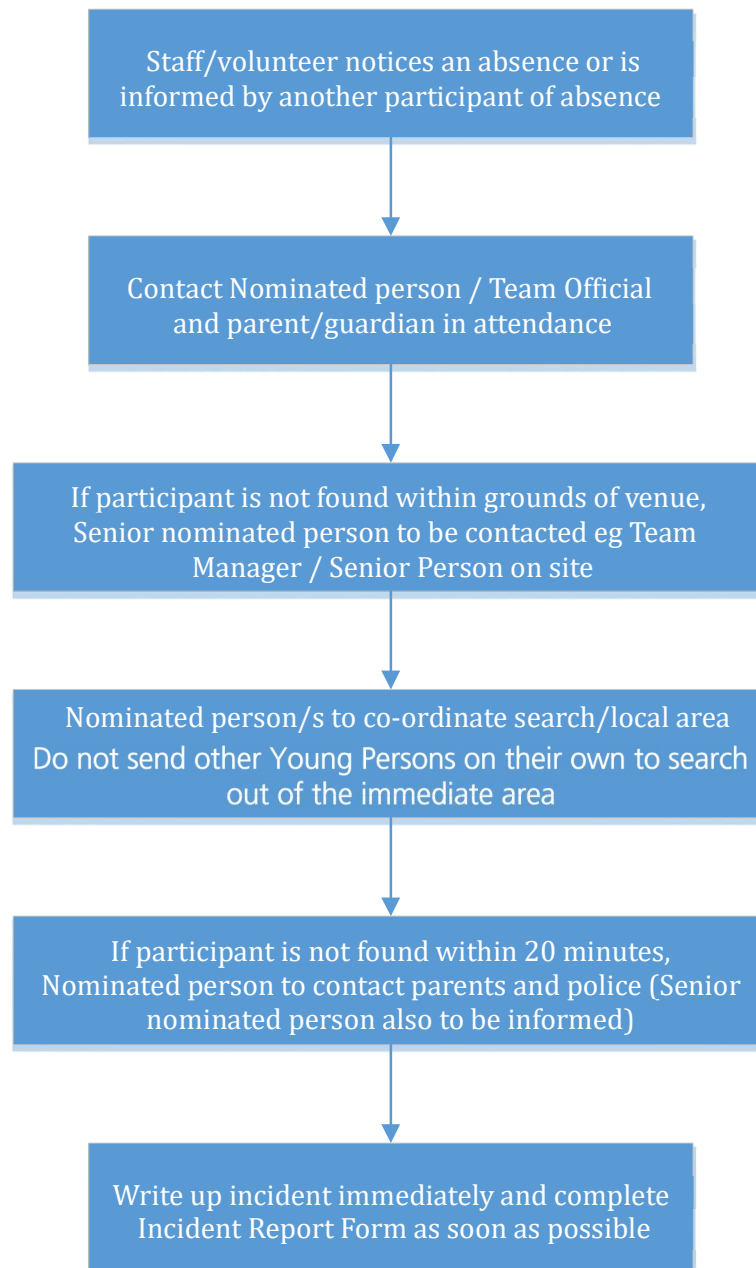
Handling Potentially Difficult Situations

If a young person:

- is accidentally hurt during an activity, or
 - seems distressed in any manner, or
 - appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or
 - misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, or
 - a child goes missing Then you should:
-
- report the incident immediately to the Child Protection Officer; and
 - report the incident immediately to another colleague, and
 - make a written record of the event (including a note of anyone who witnessed it), and
 - inform the participant's parents of the incident
 - see flow-chart 1 for Procedure for Missing Participants

Flowchart 1

PROCEDURE FOR MISSING PARTICIPANTS



Taking Action

You may be prompted to take action by:

- **Concerns** – developing from minor indications that there may be something wrong.
- **Suspensions** – arising from discovery of some clear indications that there is a problem.
- **Disclosure** of first-hand information by a victim or someone else.
- **Accusation** – a straight allegation or statement that abuse has taken place, made by the victim or someone else, who may be the victim's relative or friend, or might have been a witness.

Acting on Concerns or Suspensions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working under the auspices of WheelPower in a paid or voluntary capacity, nor of those working in affiliated organisations, to take responsibility for deciding whether or not child abuse is taking place. However, it is our responsibility to report any concerns or suspicions to the Police and Children's Social Care.

Seeking Advice

Occasionally the SO may be informed of situations where there is uncertainty about whether an allegation constitutes abuse or not, and therefore he/she is unclear about what action to take. Also, there may be circumstances where allegations are about poor practice rather than abuse. In such cases those responsible should always consult senior colleagues and obtain advice from Children's Social Care, Police or the NSPCC if there is any doubt. This is because an incident or allegation may be just one of a series of other instances which together cause concern.

Sources of Expert Advice

- Telephone the Children's Social Care responsible for the place where the incident has occurred and speak to the duty worker, or the Local Authority Designated Officer.
- The NSPCC's 24-hour Freephone helpline is on 0808 800 5000.
- The Police have specially-trained child protection teams who will give guidance and support, and which have out-of-office-hours enquiries facilities.
- If there is no response to the above services a 999 emergency call may have to be made to obtain help from the Police.

Children's Social Care and the Police

Children's Social Care and the Police have statutory duties under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 to ensure the welfare of children, and to work with the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs). When a child protection referral is made, the Children's Social Care staff have a statutory responsibility to investigate. This may involve talking to the child and family, and gathering information from other people who know the child. Enquiries may be carried out jointly with the Police. If action needs to be taken urgently and out of office hours, then the Police will deal with the enquiry sensitively and effectively.

Records and Information

Information passed to the Children's Social Care or the Police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record at the time of the disclosure or when the concern arose. Such information should include the following:

- The nature of the allegation.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Witnesses to the incident(s).
- Any times, dates or other relevant information.
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.

Reporting the matter to the Police or Children's Social Care Department should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the Children's Social Care Department should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record should also be made of the name and designation of the Children's Social Care member of staff or Police officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed. Copies of this information should be sent to WheelPower and to the Local Authority Child Protection Officer (CPO).

Sharing Concerns with Parents

There is always a requirement to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, there may be a reasonable explanation; he/she may have experienced an upset in the family, such as a bereavement, or parental separation/divorce.

When Not to Share Concerns with Parents

There are circumstances in which a young person might be placed at even greater risk if concerns are shared with parents (e.g. where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse, or may not be able to respond to the situation appropriately). In these cases or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to the person in charge as soon as possible, and recorded. Advice and guidance should be sought from the local Children's Social Care CPO on the question of conferring with parents.

Depending on the circumstances, and the time of day, the "person in charge" might be, for instance, the SO of the body that is running an event, an event organiser or other official at a competition, a team manager, the event manager, or the manager of the facility where the event is taking place.

Responding to Disclosure

There is a whole range of ways in which disclosure may occur. If a young person says or indicates that he/she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives rise to concern that a young person is being abused, you should react immediately.

What to do

The person receiving information concerning disclosure should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child.
- Tell the child he/she is not to blame and that he/she was right to tell what he/she knows.
- Take what the child says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child who has a speech disability and/or differences in language.
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said, and to avoid putting words into the child's mouth.
- Reassure the child, but not make promises of confidentiality which it might not be possible to keep in the light of subsequent developments.
- Make a full written record of what had been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible.

Note: Not all young or disabled people are able to express themselves verbally. Communication difficulties may mean that it is hard for them to complain or be understood. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the signs of abuse from the symptoms of some disabilities or conditions that may be relevant to the nature of an individual's impairment. However, where there are concerns about the safety of a young person, record what has been observed in detail and follow the procedures in this Guide to report these concerns. Where there are no procedures in place, seek advice from Children's Social Care (see above).

What not to do

The person receiving the disclosure should not:

- Panic;
- Allow their shock or distaste to show;
- Probe for more information than is offered;
- Speculate or make assumptions;
- Make negative comments about the alleged abuser;
- Approach the alleged abuser;
- Make promises or agree to keep secrets.

Bullying

It is important to recognise that not all cases of abuse involve an adult abusing a young person. The abuser may be another young person; for example, in the case of bullying. Bullying may be seen as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves.

Forms of Bullying

It can take many forms; the main types are:

- Physical - e.g. hitting, kicking and theft.
- Verbal - e.g. name-calling, constant teasing, sarcasm, racist or homophobic taunts, threats, graffiti and gestures.
- Emotional - e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating and ignoring.
- Sexual - e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments.

Potential Victims

Although anyone can be the target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons — being overweight, physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture.

Potential Bullies

Both girls and boys can be bullies, but it seems to be more conspicuous in boys. Although bullying often takes place in schools, research shows it can and does occur anywhere where there is inadequate supervision — on the way to and from school, at a sporting event, in the playground and in changing rooms.

Bullies come from all walks of life; they bully for a variety of different reasons, and may even have been abused themselves. Typically, bullies can have low self-esteem, be excitable, aggressive and jealous. Crucially, they have learned how to gain power over others, and there is increasing evidence to suggest that this abuse of power can lead to crime.

Bullies in Sport

The competitive nature of sport makes it an ideal environment for the bully. The bully in sport can be:

- A parent who pushes too hard;
- A coach who adopts a win-at-all-costs philosophy;
- A player who intimidates inappropriately;
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person.

Effects of Bullying on the Victim

The damage inflicted by bullying is frequently under-estimated. It can cause considerable distress to children and disabled adults, to the extent that it affects their health and development, or in extreme cases causes them significant harm (including self-harm).

There are a number of signs that may indicate that a young person is being bullied:

- Behavioural changes, such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down; reluctance to go to school, training or sports club.
- A drop off in performance at school, or in their standard of play.
- Physical signs such as stomach-aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bedwetting, scratches and bruises, damaged clothes, and bingeing on food, cigarettes or alcohol.
- A shortage of money, or frequent loss of possessions.

Action if Bullying is Suspected

The same procedure should be followed as set out in previous categories if bullying is suspected. All settings in which children are provided with services or are living away from home should have rigorously-enforced anti-bullying strategies in place.

Action to Help the Victim and to Prevent Bullying

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns.
- Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge at the club or school (an official or senior member of staff), or someone else in authority.
- Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak to the victim and the bully separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help him/her, although you cannot promise to tell no-one else.
- Keep records of what is said (by whom and when), and what happened.
- Report any concerns to the person in charge at the club or school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

Action Towards the Bully

The event organiser or person in charge should:

- Talk to the bully, explain the situation, and try to get him/her to understand the consequences of his/her behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim.
- Inform the bully's parents.
- Insist on the return of borrowed items, and that the bully compensates the victim.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.

- Encourage the bully to change his/her behaviour, and support his/her efforts to do so.
- Hold meetings with the families of both the victim and the bully to report on progress.
- Inform relevant organisation members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of all action taken.

WheelPower's Duties and Responsibilities

WheelPower will:

- Accept the moral and legal responsibility, under its duty of care for young people, for implementing the Safeguarding Children Policy to safeguard their well-being and to protect them from abuse.
- Respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of young people.
- Ensure that its employees and volunteers adopt best practice in order to safeguard and protect young people from abuse, and to protect themselves against false allegations.
- Require staff and volunteers to adopt and abide by their WheelPower Volunteer Code of Conduct and Equity Harassment Policies and its Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures set out in this Guide.
- Respond to any allegation appropriately, and implement its disciplinary and appeals procedures in the event that an allegation is proved to be true.

Safeguarding Children Personnel Structure

Safeguarding Officer (SO)

In order for the WheelPower Safeguarding Children Policy to be effective, a designated person for safeguarding and child welfare, known as "Safeguarding Officer" (SO) will be required.

In considering candidates for appointment of SO, WheelPower will bear in mind that the person selected must be 100% reliable in terms of discretion, and must fully understand the vital importance of confidentiality in handling safeguarding issues.

WheelPower recommends that all Affiliated Organisations:

- Appoint a SO.
- SO undergoes DBS check⁷.
- SO receive appropriate training.
- SO receives copy of WheelPower Safeguarding Children Policy.

The SO has the following additional responsibilities:

- Disseminate information on the Safeguarding Children Policy, procedures and issues.

All CPO's

In the event of a disclosure, suspicion or allegation of child abuse it is the responsibility of the SO to inform the Children's Social Care or Police without delay. In the absence of a SO or if the concern is about the SO him/herself, the person who has concerns, or who has been informed of them should immediately contact the Children's Social Care or the Police. The numbers are in the telephone directory.

The person reporting to the Children's Social Care or Police should give his/her contact details. If he/she has concerns about this, he/she should inform the Police or Children's Social Care about problems with confidentiality.

The Children's Social Care, together with the SO where appropriate, will decide how and when parents or carers are to be informed.

All incidents should also be reported to WheelPower, and to the Local Authority Designated Officer if this has not already been done (e.g. because the initial report was to the Police).

WheelPower Safeguarding Panel (SP)

The WheelPower Safeguarding Panel is responsible for development of policies, procedures, and systems for child welfare during WheelPower activities. It comprises of delegates from WheelPower's Board and the SO. It may also invite specialists to join the panel for specific duties.

The panel has two main functions:

- To discuss and agree WheelPower's Safeguarding Children measures, then disseminate them to Organisations.
- To deal with cases of child abuse during WheelPower activities and keep the WheelPower Board informed about such matters.

The SP decides the route that any investigations will take, but will not slow down the essential response to situations, nor prevent the people involved contacting the Police or Children's Social Care.

In all circumstances, when a Police or Children's Social Care investigation is taking place the SP will, on receipt of information resulting from those investigations, decide what steps should be taken in the light of the information provided. The steps may include disciplinary procedures.

Any WheelPower investigation may not take place until after the Police or Children's Social Care investigation has been completed. After a decision has been reached by the Children's Social Care or Police, or by a court of law, the SP will take into account their findings in its report to the WheelPower Board, and in its recommendations on what further action may be appropriate.

Responding to Suspicions, Disclosure and Allegations

WheelPower will respond to:

- Any disclosure, suspicion or allegation of poor practice.
- Any disclosure, suspicion or allegation made against a person who is involved in WheelPower's activities but relating to that person's activities outside the sport.

The flow diagrams on pages 19 and 20 show the full pathways for dealing with concerns relating to incidents both within and outside WheelPower's activities. Simply put, if you are concerned about someone's behaviour, or about the welfare of a child, you should:

- Deal with medical emergencies first – inform the doctor or medical staff that there may be a child protection issue.
- Report the incident to the Club, County or Regional CPO (whichever is appropriate), who will inform the National CPO and the relevant NGB CPO.
- Complete an Incident Report Form
- Report the incident to the Police or Children's Social Care if appropriate, recording the name and designation of the Children's Social Care member of staff or Police officer to whom the concerns were notified, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed.

Flow-chart 2 – Dealing with Concerns or Disclosure

This applies where:

- the incident concerned takes place within the WheelPower environment, and/or
- the suspected abuser operates in some capacity within WheelPower (i.e. is a participant, coach, official, volunteer or employee).

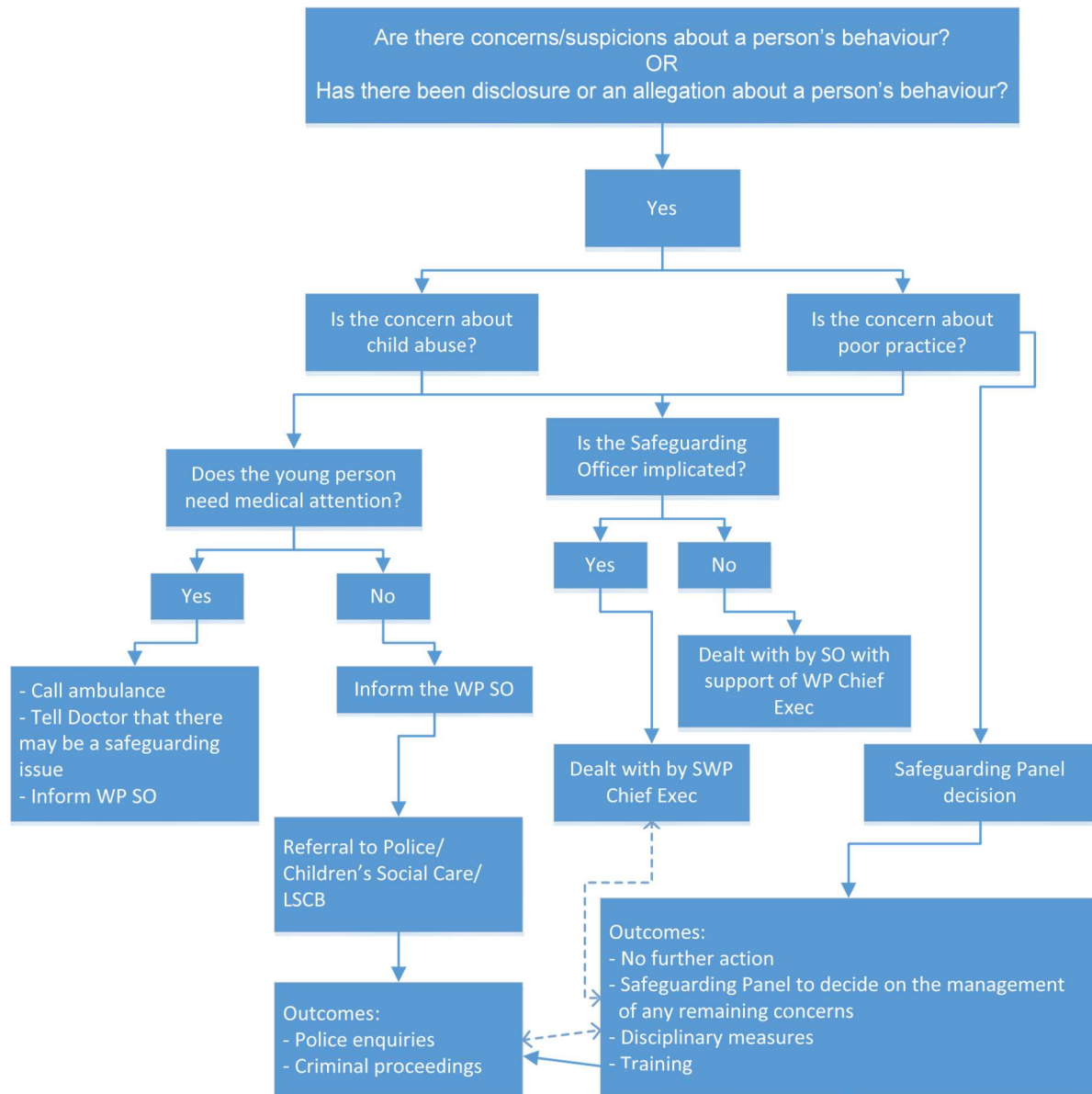
Flow-chart 3 – Dealing with Concerns or Disclosure Outside WheelPower

This shows the course of action where:

- the suspected abuser operates in some capacity within the disability sport, but
- the incident itself is not linked to a WheelPower activity, and
- the suspected/alleged victim has no connection with WheelPower.

Flowchart 2

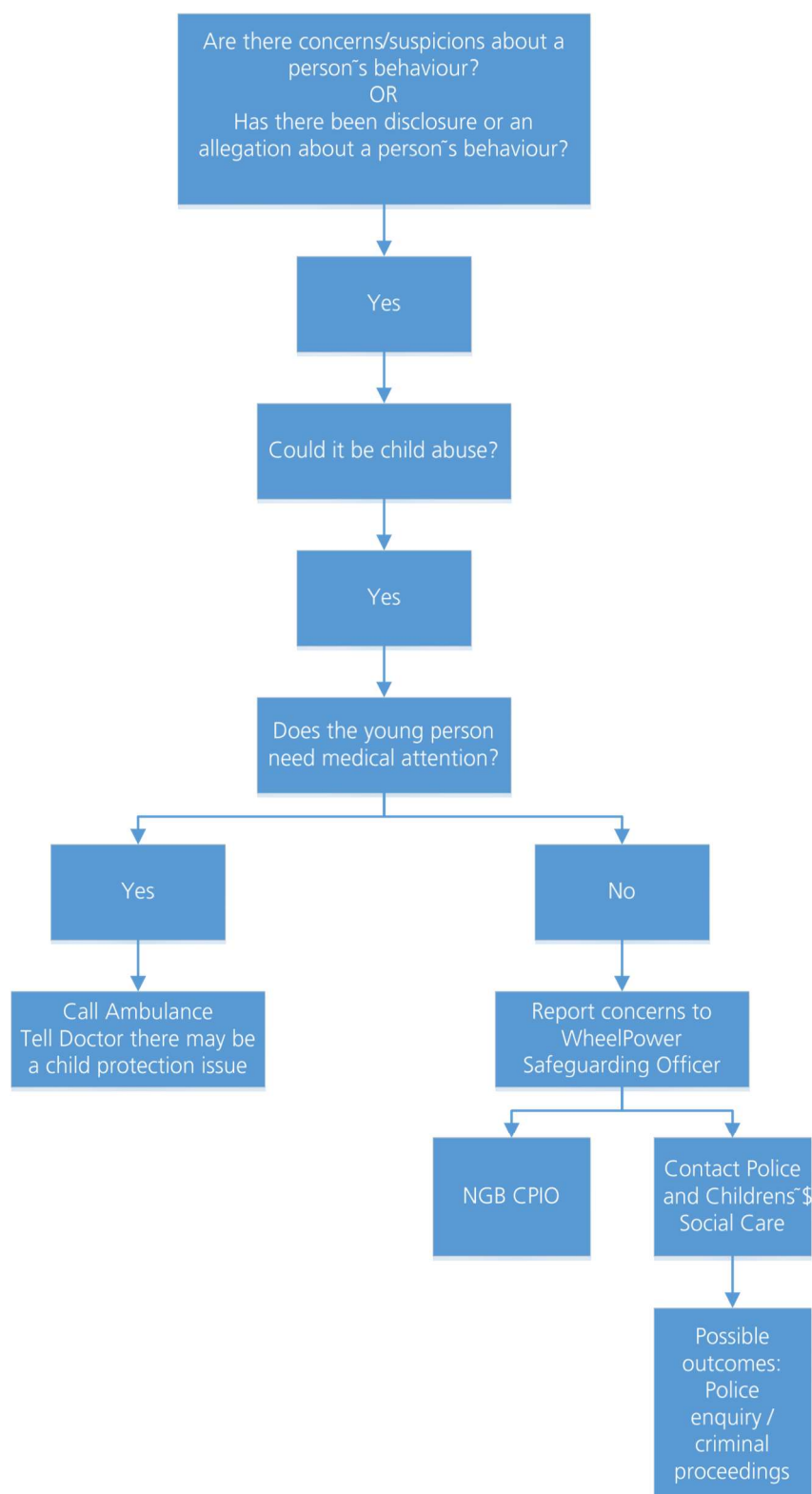
Dealing with Concerns, Suspicions or Disclosure Within WheelPower Environment



Note: Safeguarding Panel: WheelPower SO and Chief Executive, additional members may be selected in particular situations as appropriate

Flowchart 3

Dealing with Concerns, Suspicions or Disclosure Outside WheelPower Environment



Dealing with Allegations against Staff and Volunteers

The expression “staff and volunteers” covers anyone working with children at WheelPower, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity. Thus it includes, for example, staff, volunteers, competition officials and coaches.

Allegations of Previous Abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made a long time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child). These may relate to a person who is still working with children, so other children, either within or outside of WheelPower’s activities, may be at risk from that person. Where such an allegation is made, WheelPower will follow the procedures outlined in Flowchart 3, and will report the matter to the Children’s Social Care or the Police.

WheelPower will investigate any allegations of previous abuse or poor practice during WheelPower activities, and will act on the findings of any investigations by the Police or Children’s Social Care.

Confidentiality

Every effort must be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a “need-to-know” basis only. This covers the following personnel:

- The person making the allegation.
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused.
- The alleged abuser (and his/her parents if he/she is a child).
- Anyone who is retained by the alleged abuser to represent his/her interests (e.g. a solicitor, or a lay representative in disciplinary proceedings)
- Children’s Social Care
- Police
- The SO to whom the incident was initially reported.
- Members of the CPP.

All information about an incident must be stored in a secure place with access restricted to designated people. It must be dealt with in accordance with data protection regulations. The security requirement means that such information must **not** be communicated via e-mail or text-message, nor in messages left on telephone answering services. All communications sent by post must be clearly marked “Strictly confidential, to be opened by addressee only”.

Investigation of Suspected Abuse

Where there is an allegation of abuse against a member of staff or a volunteer, there may be three types of investigation leading to one or more hearing(s) before tribunals:

- Criminal, by the Police, leading to prosecution in the Magistrates' or Crown Court.
- Child protection, by the Children's Social Care, leading to measures to prevent further abuse.
- Disciplinary or misconduct, by WheelPower leading to disciplinary proceedings.

Civil proceedings seeking damages (i.e. financial compensation) may also be initiated by the victim of the abuse, or by his/her parents/guardians if he/she is a minor.

The results of investigations by the Police and Children's Social Care may well influence WheelPower's disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Further information on the potential actions of Children's Social Care may be found in the local LSCB guidelines².

Action if Abuse is Suspected

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported first to the SO/CPO of the organisation for whom the suspected person is working. The CPO will take such steps as are necessary to ensure the safety (within the WheelPower environment) of the child in question, and of any other child who may be at risk.

The CPO will refer the allegation to the local Children's Social Care, who may involve the Police. The CPO should go directly to the Police if it is out of office hours.

The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible, in accordance with whatever advice the Children's Social Care may give – unless the parent/carer is implicated in the allegation.

The Children's Social Care will also advise on who should approach the alleged abuser.

The CPO should also notify WheelPower's SP via WheelPower's SO, and liaise with the local authority's CPO, who will decide who should deal with any media enquiries.

² "Every local authority has a Local Safeguarding Children Board [which provides] inter-agency guidelines for child protection."

If the Organisation SO him/herself is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made directly to the SP, the members of which are then responsible for taking the action outlined above.

Support for Personnel Involved in an Incident

For Reporter of Suspected Abuse

It is acknowledged that feelings generated by the discovery that a member of staff or volunteer is, or may be, abusing a child, may be difficult for other staff or volunteers to manage. This includes the difficulties inherent in reporting such sensitive matters.

WheelPower assures all staff and volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith (without malicious intent), reports his or her concerns about a colleague's practices, or the possibility that a child may be being abused.

For Suspected/Alleged Abuser

Consideration should be given to what support is appropriate for the alleged perpetrator of the abuse. A 'link person' will be set up for the accused person to use while investigations are being carried out.

For Others Aware of the Incident

Consideration should be given to what support may be necessary for children, parents and other members of staff who know about an incident but are not directly involved in it. Use of telephone help-lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association of Counselling may be a useful resource.

Enquiries, Interim Measures & Disciplinary Action by WheelPower

Definition of "offence"

In this section, "offence" means:

- Any one or more of the offences against a child set out in the Children's Act 2004 and Working Together 2010 Guidance. and/or
- Any action or activity which reasonably causes the WheelPower Board, CPP, or CPO to believe that the individual accused of the offence is or may be a risk or potential risk to children or young persons.

Receipt of Information Initiating Interim Action by WheelPower

If the WheelPower Board receives any of the following:

- notification that an individual has been charged with a criminal offence;
or

- notification that an individual is the subject of an investigation by the Police, Children's Social Care or any other authority relating to an offence; or
- the result of a WheelPower search containing entries which leads the Board to conclude, on reasonable grounds, that an individual may be unsuitable to work with or have unsupervised access to children or young people; or
- a recommendation from the SP or SO; or
- any other evidence which causes the Board reasonably to conclude that an individual may have committed an offence, then it may impose upon the individual an immediate interim suspension of the involvement of the individual in any WheelPower activity, wherever that event or activity is being or is to be held.

Factors to be taken into Account

In considering whether an immediate interim suspension should be imposed the Board must take into account the following factors:

- the recommendation of the National SO and/or of the SP; and/or
- whether a child, children or young person(s) are or may be at risk; and/or
- whether the allegations are of a serious nature; and/or
- whether a suspension is necessary to allow the conduct of any investigation (by WheelPower or any other authority or body) to proceed unimpeded;
- whether such a suspension will be appropriate and proportionate in all the circumstances of the case.

Receipt of Information Initiating Disciplinary Proceedings by WheelPower

If the WheelPower Board receives any of the following:

- confirmation that the individual has been convicted of a criminal offence; or
- confirmation that the Children's Social Care or any other public authority has imposed any restrictions on the individual in respect of his/her future contact with children; or
- confirmation that on the basis of information supplied by the Police and/or Children's Social Care, the relevant local authority panel (LSCB) has "formed a view" that the individual is not suitable to work with children, or
- the result of a DBS search containing entries which clearly indicate that the individual is unsuitable to work with or have unsupervised access to children or young persons; or

- it is offence for anyone barred by the ISA to work with children or young persons; or
- a report from the CPP or CPO setting out any other evidence, which clearly indicates that the individual is unsuitable to work with or have unsupervised access to children or young persons, then the Board will invoke WheelPower's disciplinary procedure.

Poor practice

When an incident has been reported, recorded and presented to the SP via the SO, the panel will decide how to deal with the allegation and may recommend that the Board should consider whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

If, on consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the SP will deal with it as a misconduct issue, rather than as a disciplinary matter. This means that instead of imposing a penalty, the SP will require the person concerned to take steps aimed at avoiding any future poor practice. Such steps might include, for instance, attendance on a suitable course or undertaking some other form of training, perhaps by working under the supervision of a more experienced person for a specified period.

Penalties that may be Imposed

If the result of the disciplinary procedure is a decision that the individual is unsuitable to work with, or have unsupervised access to children or young persons, then the Board may order:

- a permanent ban on the individual taking part in any WheelPower activity or other activity promoted or authorised by WheelPower, or by anybody directly or indirectly affiliated to WheelPower, wherever that event or activity may be held.

Further Action that may be Taken

In addition to the interim measures and permanent penalties mentioned above, WheelPower may recommend to any NGBs or Sports Associations or Sports Clubs to which the individual may belong that they should also take disciplinary action against him/her, with a view to securing the suspension of the individual from membership and a ban on his/her involvement in events or activities organised by them.

Appeals

An individual who is disciplined and penalised under the above procedure will have a right of appeal to the WheelPower Disciplinary Committee against the decision(s) of the WheelPower Board.

If the individual states that they will appeal, the announcement of the penalty imposed as an interim measure, or after disciplinary proceedings, must be restricted to those who "need to know". This is so that if the appeal is successful, the individual is not prejudiced in future by widespread knowledge of the decision and penalty that have been overturned.

Compliance with WheelPower Safeguarding Children Policies

Any individual who fails to comply with a specific requirement of WheelPower's Safeguarding Children policies may, on the recommendation of the SP, be suspended by the WheelPower Board until such time as he/she has complied with any outstanding matters. This step may be taken provided that the individual has been warned beforehand of the risk of such a suspension, and has failed to take the appropriate steps within a reasonable time.

Any individual penalised for non-compliance will have a right of appeal to the WheelPower Disciplinary Committee, as set out above.

Additional Disability WheelPower Policies:

- Disciplinary and Appeals Policy
- Whistle Blowing
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

Policy Review Date: This policy will be reviewed no later than 19 November 2026 or sooner in the event of legislative changes or revised policies and best practice.

Incident Report Form

This form will be used by members of staff or volunteers to record disclosures or suspicions of abuse. The completed form should be sent to the manager dealing with the allegations.

Your name	Your position
Place of work	Contact phone number
The child / adult's details	
Name	
Address/phone number	
Date of birth	
Other relevant details about the child / adult: <i>Eg family circumstances, physical and mental health, any communication difficulties.</i>	
Parent/guardian/carers details	
Details of the allegations/suspensions	
Are you recording: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure made directly to you by the child/adult? • Disclosure or suspicions from a third party? • Your suspicions or concerns? 	
Date and time of disclosure	
Date and time of incident	
Details of the allegation/suspensions. <i>State exactly what you were told/observed and what was said. Use the persons own words as much as possible</i>	