

Lee Valley Rowing Club



**Safeguarding**  
**Child Abuse – Recognition and Reporting**  
**Policy**

**Version 1.0**

**(01/03/2022)**

## 1. Document Details

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**Important Note:** If the 'Status' of this document reads 'Draft', it has not been finalised and should not be relied upon.

## 2. Revision History

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## 3. Relevant/Related Existing Internal Documents

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## 4. Relevant/Related Existing External Documents

Rowing Ireland Safeguarding Child Abuse – Recognition and Reporting Policy
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Rowing Ireland as a Governing Body has obligations to recognise and report abuse. Individuals working with young people in Rowing Ireland must be aware of what abuse is and understand that it can happen in any setting. It is also equally important to be able to recognise the indicators of abuse or harm on young people caused by others outside the sport of rowing.

By implementing Rowing Ireland policies, you undertake to create a safe and fun environment for young people to enjoy their sport. By understanding abuse and knowing what to do if you have a concern or allegation from a young person or other adult you strengthen the protection of young people in our sport.

This Policy provides an awareness of abuse and how to report it, and is divided into two sections:

1. Recognising abuse
2. Reporting abuse

### **Recognising Child Abuse**

There are defined categories of abuse: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and in NI under Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People (2017). Further consideration must be given to bullying behaviour when understanding the different forms of abuse a young person may experience. A young person may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

Detailed legal definitions of the various categories are available in the Neglect and Abuse Factsheet, available [HERE](#)

#### **Neglect**

Neglect in young people is the most frequently reported category of abuse. Neglect occurs when a young person does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the person is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a young person's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety.

#### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a young person as part of the overall relationship between a care-giver and a young person. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and a young person are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a young person's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse may also involve bullying including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobiles phones and can be perpetrated by the young person's peers.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a young person physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents and take many forms including hitting, biting, pinching, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning or suffocating. A reasonable concern exists where the young person's health and/or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a young person is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the young person being involved in sexual acts such as masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex or exposing the young person to sexual activity directly or through pornography forcing a young person to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities. Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by males or females and a 1/3 of those who experience sexual abuse are harmed by other young people.

### **Exploitation (recognised in NI)**

Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a young person or to take selfish or unfair advantage over a young person for personal gain. Exploitation may take many forms such as child labour, slavery, engaging a young person in criminal activity or fraud, begging or trafficking. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

### **Bullying**

Bullying behaviour is the repeated and intentional use of power or aggression by one or more persons to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights and needs of another individual or group. An individual or individuals may be targeted through a variety of methods e.g. through social media sites, physically or verbally harmed, through text or other messaging services. Bullying may manifest in different forms such as cyberbullying, exclusion bullying, extortion bullying, gesture bullying, physical bullying and /or verbal bullying.

### **Reasonable Grounds for Concern of Abuse or Harm**

The Statutory Authorities should always be informed when there are reasonable grounds for concern that a young person may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse. Young people need to know they can trust an adult and to know they will be listened to and taken seriously by any person involved with RI by following RI reporting procedures. Where there are concerns about a young person it can be difficult to decide if the matter should be reported or meets the threshold of significant harm. If an allegation is made, the Statutory Authorities **MUST** be consulted, and advice sought about the need for a formal referral to be made. Statutory authorities will decide if the threshold of significant harm is met.

Some young people are more vulnerable to harm and are more vulnerable to continued abuse if they think those around them will not listen or take their concerns seriously and they won't get the help they need.

There are other factors that make young people more vulnerable, however the presence of any of these factors does not automatically mean a young person is being abused.

Such factors to consider are:

- Family/carer circumstances e.g. substance abuse, mental health issues etc.
- The young person e.g. age, ability, communication difficulties, sexuality etc.
- Community factors e.g. cultural or religious norms outside expected child protection practices etc.
- Environmental factors e.g. housing, poverty, bullying or social media concerns etc.
- Poor engagement of parents/careers e.g. lack of understanding, reluctance to engage etc.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- A specific indication from the young person that he or she was abused
- An account by a person who saw the young person being abused or strongly believes a young person is being abused (allegation)
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way
- An injury or behaviour that is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation, but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse e.g. a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, and other indications of abuse and/or dysfunctional behaviour (concern).
- Consistent indication, over a period of time that a young person is suffering from emotional or physical neglect (concern).
- An admission or indication from an adult or young person of an alleged abuse they committed (disclosure)
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse
- The behaviour of an adult towards a young person that is inappropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable (allegation / concern)
- Evidence of non-contact abuse through social media, online or other form of technology (concern)

The responsibility of deciding if a young person has been abused lies with Statutory Authorities, not with the people working within Rowing Ireland. However, all adults have a responsibility to protect children by reporting grounds for concern.

Indicators of Abuse Factsheet [HERE](#)

Self-Harm in Sport Factsheet [HERE](#)

## Reporting Child Abuse

**Rowing Ireland** follows the statutory guidance for reporting abuse to a young person.

Safeguarding Incident Report template [HERE](#)

People involved:

1. Mandated Person – for Rowing Ireland this is the National Children’s Officer (NCO). The Mandated Person is required to co-operate with the Statutory Authorities where requested to do so.
2. Designated Liaison Person (DLP) – for Rowing Ireland this is the National Children’s Officer and for Clubs it is the Club Children Officer (CCO). The DLP has the responsibility to consult informally with Statutory Authorities or to report where a reasonable concern exists.
3. Members of Rowing Ireland – as a member of Rowing Ireland anyone who has a concern or has received an allegation of abuse from a young person has the responsibility to pass this on to the DLP or directly to the Mandated Person. Anyone can report a concern or an allegation directly to the Statutory Authorities.
4. Anyone external to Rowing Ireland – reporting a concern of abuse to a child is the responsibility of everyone and we encourage individuals to raise concerns about a Rowing Ireland member to the appropriate person. The Club, Branch or Rowing Ireland Child Safeguarding Statement has details of who to contact.
5. An external Mandated Person – there are individuals who are a Mandated Person in their professional role. However, only members of the An Garda Síochana are Mandated Persons at all times regardless of any other voluntary or otherwise role they may have, e.g. a school teacher is a Mandated Person when in the role of a school teacher, however as a CO in a club the individual would not be a Mandated Person as this is not a mandated role. Contracted individuals such as doctors, physiotherapists, psychologists are also Mandated Persons when working in their professional role in Rowing Ireland.

### Responding to an allegation from a young person

If a young person makes an allegation that they are being harmed or abused it is important to be sensitive and to listen. The young person has chosen to tell you because they trust you. Young people may also make an allegation in different ways, there may be a hint about what is happening to them, a reluctance to take part in an activity or looking to talk to someone they trust.

If a young person makes an allegation to you, you need to:

- Stay calm, the person trusts you and has decided to tell you about what has happened
- Listen and hear by giving the person time to speak and by accepting what you have heard
- Reassure the person that they have done the right thing
- Record in writing as soon as you are able to and, if possible, remember the person’s words
- Report to the DLP, and record this is done

On hearing an allegation from a young person, it is easy to feel panicked, angry or even disgusted, however remember to keep your emotions under control and to let the young person speak. Don’t ask leading questions or promise to keep any information a secret – this doesn’t help the person. Only listen to what the young person tells you, don’t make enquiries into the details of the abuse and don’t ask the young person to repeat their account unnecessarily. The report must be made immediately to the DLP or directly to the Mandated Person, do not delay in this.

### Responding to Grounds for Concern

If you have a concern you need to share any significant information with the DLP – the safety and wellbeing of the child takes priority. The Statutory Authorities will decide and/or investigate if a situation is abusive or abuse has occurred. The role of the Mandated Person,

DLP or Rowing Ireland member is to report any concern and not to attempt to deal with the matter.

Where a concern or allegation is brought to the DLP the DLP should consider the following:

- Is any young person in immediate danger and has any assistance been sought?
- Is the concern a safeguarding/poor practice issue? It may be necessary to check out some details, without stepping into an investigative role
- Advice from Statutory Authorities on an informal basis to determine the best course of action
- Report to Statutory Authorities where there is concern of abuse or based on advice from informal enquiries
- Informing the parents of the young person following advice from statutory agencies.

#### **DLP decides not to report**

Where a DLP decides not to report the matter to the Statutory Authorities the reasons must be recorded as well as any action taken as a result of the concern. The person who raised the concern must be informed with the reason why the matter is not reported. Any individual is free to report a concern they have directly to the Statutory Authorities.

#### **Responding to Information Uncovered from Other Sources**

It may be that during an enquiry into a complaint or disciplinary matter or during an investigation into poor practice you uncover significant information and become concerned about abuse occurring or an abusive practice – this is when an informal consultation is required. The DLP must be informed and advice from the Mandated Person sought.

#### **Record Keeping**

Concerns or allegations of abuse must be clearly and factually recorded. Where the matter has been brought to the attention of the DLP, the following information should be included in the record:

- Date and time
- Nature of the concern – i.e. disclosure, allegation, indication
- People involved
- Advice taken
- Action taken immediately
- Action advised to follow up with

This information must be kept by the DLP safely and securely and should only be used for the intended purpose i.e. to pass on a concern about a young person. Such records should be kept for six years as currently specified by the Rowing Ireland Data Retention Policy. Records should be updated and reviewed if necessary, by the DLP.

#### **Confidentiality of Records and Sharing Information**

Information concerning the welfare of a young person should be shared on a need to know basis. The best interests of the young person take precedence over the needs of any adult involved. Passing on or sharing information to assist Statutory Authorities is not a breach of data protection or confidentiality.

There may be other people who need to know and if there is any doubt advice should be sought from the Mandated Person.

In a case involving a complaint or disciplinary action relating to a young person, a parent must always be informed; however, where there is a concern of abuse it may not be possible to share significant information with a parent if this would endanger the young person or the person reporting the concern. Advice should be sought from statutory agencies.

### **Reporting in ROI**

In ROI there are two Statutory Authorities you can contact if you have a concern about a young person or have a disclosure or allegation of abuse concerning a young person. The Statutory Authorities are Tusla (Child and Family Agency (CFA)) and An Garda Síochána.

#### **Tusla**

If you want to report a concern, allegation or disclosure of abuse or you are seeking an informal consultation you should contact the social work office locally to where the young person lives. You can report your concern in person, by telephone or in writing, including by email or online.

The details of each office can be found here:

[www.tusla.ie/children-first/contact-a-social-worker3/](http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/contact-a-social-worker3/)

If you make the report verbally, you should follow it up by completing the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form. Mandated persons must make mandated reports on the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form.

Reporting forms can be found here:

[www.tusla.ie/children-first/report-a-concern/](http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/report-a-concern/)

## **An Garda Síochána**

If there is an immediate danger to the safety of a child or children, you should contact An Garda Síochána using the emergency number (112 or 999).

### **Out-of-Hours Service**

There is a social work service that deals with any emergencies that occur outside of office hours, available by contacting An Garda Síochána. If you have concerns for the immediate safety of a child or where a child is at immediate risk of harm you can contact An Garda Síochána in an out-of-hours situation. Emergency placements can be made when necessary.

## **Information to Provide When Reporting**

To help the person receiving your report you should provide as much information as possible. It may not be possible to have all the details, so you just need to answer what you can. It is not your responsibility to seek out information you don't know. You should provide as much relevant information as you can about the young person, his/her home circumstances and the grounds for concern.

Information should include:

- Name and address of the child; include any further information about their location if different in an emergency
- Nature of the harm
- Any need for immediate medical attention
- Concerns that abuse is taking place
- Any action already taken
- Details of disclosure if given
- Other persons involved and action taken if member of Rowing Ireland

You may be asked about their school, siblings, name of parents etc. Remember to give as much accurate information as you can without investigating. This will help identify if a young person has been referred to the Statutory Authorities previously or the family is known to the social workers. If a young person is in immediate danger the social workers can decide how to action this, and the more information they have the better their response will be.

## **Reporting Peer to Peer Abuse**

Any individual involved in a concern of abuse even those under the age of 18 must be reported to the Statutory Authorities. This means if the person suspected of being responsible for the abuse or harm is under 18 this young person must be included in a report. Peer to peer abuse requires reporting in the same way as any other concern with the same information.

If peer to peer abuse is suspected, it is important to take steps to protect all young people. Abusive behaviour should be stopped, and clear explanations as to what is happening and why it is wrong. If possible, accounts from any young person involved should be gathered and parents informed, unless this would endanger the child or the reporter.

Advice should be sought as soon as possible from the Statutory Authorities and if a criminal offence is suspected this may require intervention from An Garda Síochána or the PSNI.

Advice may also be sought from the Mandated Person.

## Reporting Non-Recent Abuse

Allegations of non-recent abuse can be made, where an adult makes an allegation of an abusive event or situation from their childhood.

This may be because of a change in circumstances for either the survivor or the alleged perpetrator. Any non-recent allegations must follow the current RI safeguarding procedures. If there are grounds for concern, then statutory authorities must be informed (Police or TUSLA/HSCT Gateway Teams). The following points should also be considered;

- Clearly establish with the adult complainant if there may be any young people currently at risk of harm from the person, they are saying abused them as a child.
- Advise the person making the complaint that they should inform the Police. Encourage them to do so while acknowledging the brave steps they have already taken in beginning to talk about their experience as a child. It is important that the person knows that there is a likelihood that an abuser will not have stopped abusing after their individual abuse ended and if the person harmed them, they could be continuing to cause harm to others. This needs to be done without reinforcing the inappropriate guilt the survivor may already have for not coming forward earlier.
- If the complainant refuses to talk to the statutory authorities but has provided you with enough identifying factor's then this information **MUST** be shared with the police. This breach of the complainants' confidence is only appropriate if there is any potential that the alleged perpetrator is still a risk to children or could face prosecution (i.e. they are alive). Remember, the welfare of any children currently at risk is paramount. This must take priority over any request of confidentiality from the person providing you with the information/complaint. This should be explained to them at the earliest possible stage
- Offer support to the complainant when making a formal complaint to the police.
- Signpost the complainant to support agencies that can provide counselling

This must be reported to determine any current or potential future risk to young people. Anyone who receives a retrospective allegation should report this to the DLP and/or the Mandated Person. Where necessary advice is sought from the Statutory Authorities. There is a specific Retrospective Abuse Form for reporting non-recent abuse to Tusla (ROI) which cannot be submitted online. To report non-recent abuse in NI you should report directly to the HSCT.

## Concern or Allegation of Abuse Against a Rowing Ireland Member

If report of a concern or allegation of abuse involves an allegation against a member of Rowing Ireland the response must be consistent with the primary concern being the well-being of any young person involved. All protective measures must be taken to ensure no young person is exposed to an unnecessary risk.

A concern, allegation or disclosure of abuse must be reported to the Mandated Person and the Membership Risk Assessment Policy will be followed to determine the course of action to be taken. This process will be started immediately to ensure fair treatment of any individual recognising the importance of protecting young people. If an individual does not engage with the Membership Risk Assessment policy this will be deemed a withdrawal from the process and from membership of Rowing Ireland.

Where an allegation involves an existing member of Rowing Ireland the CEO may be required to inform the individual of the allegation and the need to step down from their position.

At Branch and Club level the CEO is responsible for liaising with the Statutory Authorities and possibly, the family of the young person/people involved. At Governing Body level, the NCO and CEO will initiate the required action to remove or suspend an individual. All concerns, allegations or disclosures of abuse must be reported to the Mandated Person and support can be given to the club or Branch

### **Importance of Dealing with Issues by Rowing Ireland, Branches and Clubs**

Being involved in any type of safeguarding issue is very distressing for all concerned and for others who may not be directly involved e.g. poor mental health may affect a group of friends. Even those on the periphery of an issue but have an understanding something has happened can be affected.

It is therefore important any incident needs to be dealt with sensitively and calmly and it is helpful to recognise those who may need to be involved, whilst also recognising that help and support needs to come from those professionally qualified to provide this and this will usually be outside the organisation.

It is also important that within Rowing Ireland a cohesive plan is in place to deal with an issue so any assistance suggested is not being pulled in different directions which may lead to confusion of messages and rumour.

### **Communication**

In Rowing Ireland, the CEO will be the person to ensure the correct message is being conveyed, and that any members' privacy is not invaded.

### **Media Involvement**

The CEO of Rowing Ireland will handle any media interest – where appropriate. No other member of Rowing Ireland should engage or provide comment to any media source as this may lead to hurt and distress for those involved

### **Designated Children's Officers in Rowing Ireland**

Republic of Ireland: Tom Fennessey Telephone 086 8308610  
Northern Ireland: Brenda Ewing Telephone 079 79253900 (UK)