

## **PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS BY PARENTS/CARERS AND BY YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS CHILDREN**

The process for dealing with complaints is included in the Coerver Coaching *Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy and Procedures* available on [www.coerver.eu/safeguarding](http://www.coerver.eu/safeguarding)

First, we need to consider whether the behaviour is low-level poor practice or more serious poor practice that could possibly lead to abuse.

### **WHAT IS POOR PRACTICE?**

Poor practice is behaviour that falls below that required by Coerver Coaching and/or constitutes a breach of the code of conduct.

Environments that encourage, ignore or facilitate poor practice can be the seedbeds for more serious abuse. Poor practice may be accompanied by abuse, and of course abuse always constitutes serious poor practice.

Poor practice is harmful for individual children, provides negative modelling, and damages the reputation of a club or sport.

### **RESPONDING TO POOR PRACTICE**

Alleged or suspected poor practice by coaches, volunteers, officials, parents/spectators or young participants always requires a response. Concerns may also arise through the organisation's whistleblowing procedures. In relation to poor practice some level of investigation, risk assessment, conclusion and (if warranted) action is usually required.

Coerver Coaching's Lead Safeguarding Officer or Licensee's Case Management Group may decide that a concern constitutes low-level poor practice.

This may however require investigation and/or subsequent management at a local Licensee level.

Persistent poor practice, or investigations that reveal more serious concerns should be referred back to the Lead Safeguarding Officer/or the Case Management Group for a decision about further action.

### **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO RESPOND TO LOW-LEVEL POOR PRACTICE?**

If these issues are not responded to or managed appropriately and in a timely fashion there is a real danger that they may escalate. In many cases this has resulted in lengthy and expensive (in terms of both time and money) conflicts involving increasingly entrenched parties where the focus has shifted from the original (often relatively minor) complaint to a bitter argument over the manner in which the matter has or has not been managed.

### **MEDIATION**

Mediation services can provide an effective method of resolving safeguarding disputes which arise as a result of misunderstandings in communication and/or a breakdown in relationships. These types of situations do not lend themselves to a more formal and protracted approach, which is designed to manage complex or more serious safeguarding issues and concerns.

A neutral mediator is appointed to facilitate the process and to assist the parties to reach a settlement agreement. Where settlement is not reached or turns out to be inappropriate, there is nothing to prevent a return to a more formal process.

### **REPEATED OR MORE SERIOUS POOR PRACTICE**

More serious safeguarding concerns require a robust and immediate initial response, informed and directed by the Lead Safeguarding Officer and/or the Case Management Group. This will usually include consultation with and/or referral to statutory agencies e.g. Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

### **REFERRAL TO / CONSULTATION WITH STATUTORY AGENCIES**

In situations where it is alleged or suspected that a child has been or may have been abused, or a crime committed, the matter should always be discussed with or referred to Children's Social Care and/or the Police<sup>1</sup>.

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Where abuse or other criminal behaviour is suspected the Lead Safeguarding Officer should consult with or refer concerns to Children's Social Care, and/or Police,) before decisions are made to take internal disciplinary action (even on a temporary or interim basis).

There are circumstances where the Police may want to initiate enquiries or an investigation (e.g. by checking records, or by speaking to the alleged victim or witnesses) before putting the concerns / allegations to the alleged perpetrator. In these situations, an organisation or you may unwittingly hamper or impact on a police investigation or later prosecution by prematurely informing the individual in the course of initiating internal disciplinary/suspension processes.

### **COMPLAINTS MADE BY PARENTS/CARERS AND BY YOUNG PEOPLE**

Whilst the above describes the generic process for dealing with poor practice possibly leading to abuse it is important to recognise that complaints may be made on behalf of a child/young person or by a child or young person themselves.

### **COMPLAINTS MADE ON BEHALF OF A CHILD (INCLUDING BY A PARENT)**

Subject to the child/young person's understanding, it is important to try and confirm whether the complaint is being made on the child/young person's behalf and that the complaint submitted reflects his/her views.

Where a complaint is received from a representative acting on behalf of someone in these circumstances, you have the discretion to decide whether or not the person is suitable to act as a representative or has sufficient interest in the child's/young person's welfare.

If it is felt that the representative is unsuitable or does not have sufficient interest you should notify them in writing, explaining that no further action will be taken.

Whilst the above wouldn't normally applicable to parents it could be applied if it is thought that they are not acting in the best interests of the child/young person.

### **COMPLAINTS MADE BY A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON**

Coerver Coaching takes all safeguarding complaints seriously, including those made by children and young people. Whilst the Licensee or Welfare Officer in the respective territory takes the lead on dealing with safeguarding complaints at a local level, if a complaint is made by a child or a young person this should be welcomed and dealt with through the usual reporting and referral process.

If a child or young person does wish to make a complaint they should also be offered additional support at a local level. The person allocated to support will help them to complete the paperwork and will assist them throughout the process.