



BRITISHROWING

# Safeguarding Handbook 2

## Handling concerns



# Handbook Guide

Welcome to British Rowing's Safeguarding Handbooks. Within this handbook, you will be able to navigate with ease to find relevant policies, guidance and templates that will support you with your role in rowing.

Welfare in rowing means the safe and enjoyable participation of everyone, including children, young people and adults with care and support needs.

The Contents page will allow you to navigate to the relevant section by clicking on the section header or scrolling down to the corresponding page number.

If you want to print specific sections of this handbook, such as the sample templates we have included, go to your printer options, and specify the page numbers or page range you would like to print.

To save paper, we would encourage you to make the most of this digital version and avoid printing the whole handbook.

We hope you find these handbooks useful in supporting you to create a safe and enjoyable environment for all participants in rowing.

If you have a concern, or have seen, or experienced, something that is not quite right, please report your concerns to your Club Welfare Officer, use the [British Rowing Report a Concern form](#) available on our Welfare webpage, or speak to British Rowing's [Lead Safeguarding Officer](#). Further contacts can be found on our [Governance Team page](#).

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# Definitions

**Referral:** A referral is when an individual contacts the Club Welfare Officer (CWO) or British Rowing's Lead Safeguarding Officer (LSO) because they have concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child or adult at risk. Anyone can make a referral, no matter how small their concerns may seem.

**Concern:** A concern is when an individual suspects that a child or adult at risk may be suffering from any form of abuse. You should never wait for a child or adult at risk to tell you they are experiencing abuse; you should raise your concerns as and when they arise.

**Allegation:** An allegation, in a safeguarding context, is any suggestion or concern, including a concern that has been referred to a CWO or British Rowing's LSO, that an individual has behaved in a way that contravenes Safeguarding legislation, but that has not yet been proven.

**Disclosure:** A disclosure is a process by which a child or adult at risk tells someone that either a safeguarding or welfare concern or an instance of poor practice has taken place or is taking place. This may not be a single instance and may take place over a period of time.

# Terminology

For the purpose of this handbook, we will be using the following terminology:

**Children and young people:** A child is anyone under the age of 18 years. A young person is someone who is over 16 and under 18.

Throughout this handbook, we will refer to children and young people using the collective term of 'child'.

**Adults at risk:** An adult at risk is an adult who has care and support needs; is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect; and because of their care and support needs cannot protect themselves against actual or potential abuse or neglect.

**Adults with care and support needs:** An adult with care and support needs is an individual, who, due to illness, disability, a mental health issue or an addiction, cannot cope without care and support.

Throughout this handbook, we will refer to both adults at risk, and adults with care and support needs, using the collective term of 'adult with care and support needs'.

**Parents, carers and guardians:** A **parent** is any person who is the biological father or mother of another person. A **carer** is any person who cares for an individual, who, due to illness, disability, a mental health issue or an addiction, cannot cope without that care and support.

A **guardian** is a person who has been appointed by a court or otherwise has the legal authority to care for the personal and property interests of another person.

Throughout this handbook, we will refer to parents, carers and guardians with the collective term of 'parents/carers'.

# Introduction

British Rowing recognises that abuse can take place anywhere, including in a rowing environment and online, and that it is everyone's responsibility to report concerns. Inaction is not an option. Abuse can take place face-to-face and online and perpetrators can be other children or adults, including those in positions of trust.

The purpose of this handbook is to guide British Rowing Staff, Club Welfare Officer(s) and their clubs, and other volunteers, when they receive safeguarding or welfare concerns regarding an individual's behaviour towards a child or adult at risk.

This handbook focuses on how to determine whether a concern is a safeguarding and welfare concern, a poor practice concern, or a disciplinary concern and whether or not it needs to be managed at club level or must be referred to British Rowing. It also contains key information in determining what abuse looks like and how to handle disclosures.

All concerns about a child or adult at risk must be acted upon in line with our safeguarding reporting procedure. Where concerns and disclosures of abuse or poor practice against a child or adult with care and support needs occur, we prioritise the wellbeing of children and adults with care and support needs and act in accordance with our policies and guidance, which reflect UK legislation and best practice. Poor practice is to be taken extremely seriously and may be viewed as a breach of our safeguarding policies and procedures, resulting in disciplinary action.

This handbook is underpinned by the British Rowing Code of Conduct, as well as our Safeguarding policies, procedures and guidance, all of which can be found on [British Rowing's Policies and Guidance Webpage](#).

# Section 1 - Referrals and disclosures

If you are unsure of when to report your concern to British Rowing, please see the guidance in [Section 1.2 of this handbook](#). If you have a concern and wish to report it immediately, please use the [British Rowing report form for recording concerns and referrals](#).

## 1.1 - Advice and guidance for those receiving a disclosure

A disclosure is a process by which a child or adult at risk tells someone that either a safeguarding or welfare concern, or an instance of poor practice, has taken place, or is taking place. If someone discloses something to you, it is important that you do the following.

1. **Listen carefully to what they're saying.** Be patient and focus on what you're being told. Try not to express your views and feelings. If you appear shocked or as if you don't believe them, it could make them stop talking and take back what they've said.
2. **Let them know they've done the right thing by telling you.** Reassurance can make a big impact. If they've kept the abuse a secret, it can be a big relief knowing they've shared what happened.
3. **Tell them it's not their fault.** Abuse is never a child or adult at risk's fault. It's important they hear and know this.
4. **Tell them you'll take them seriously.** They may have kept the abuse secret because they were scared that they wouldn't be believed. Make sure they know they can trust you and you'll listen and support them.
5. **Don't confront the alleged abuser.** It is easy to feel angry or upset at what you've been told and to feel that it is your duty to stop it. However, it is *essential* that you follow the necessary steps set out in this handbook as confronting the alleged abuser could make the situation worse for the child or adult at risk as well as putting yourself at risk.
6. **Explain what you'll do next.** For younger children, explain you're going to speak to someone who will be able to help. For older children and adults at risk, explain you'll need to report the abuse to someone who can help. For adults at risk, it is best practice to gain consent before sharing concerns. However, if this is not possible, consent is not required to share a concern if there is a legitimate interest in safeguarding the adult.
7. **Report what the individual has told you as soon as possible.** Report the abuse as soon as possible after you've been told about it so the details are fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly. It is helpful to take notes as soon as you've spoken to the child or adult at risk. Try to ensure these notes are as accurate as possible and add a date so that you can confirm when they were taken at a later date if necessary.

When receiving a disclosure, make sure you avoid:

- being completely alone with a child or adult at risk and out of sight of other adults, as this can leave you in a vulnerable situation;
- asking the child or adult at risk leading questions;
- telling the child or adult at risk that you will get this resolved and promising an outcome;
- promising the child or adult at risk confidentiality;
- interrupting the child or adult at risk, asking them to pause while you take notes. You should only take notes once the child or adult at risk has finished disclosing, or as soon as possible afterwards.

### 1.1.1 - Recording concerns

Make a record of the concerns, noting who was involved, what is said to have happened, and where and when it is said to have happened. Use the person's own words, even if you find them difficult to repeat or upsetting, and include the adult's views if known. Make sure that this is done *after* the person has finished their disclosure



and once they've left. This way, you can ensure you give the person 100% of your attention. You can record the details by writing them down, or making a voice recording, allowing you to handle the information safely.

For further information on what to do when recording a safeguarding concern, please see Section 2.2 of [British Rowing's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy](#).

## 1.2 - Advice and guidance for those who have a concern

If you have a concern about a child or adult at risk, or behaviour towards a child or adult at risk, those concerns, no matter how small you feel they are, should be reported to the CWO who will have received the appropriate training and will be able to offer appropriate guidance. If the CWO is unavailable or is implicated in your concern, then you should disclose your concern to the Club Chair or an appropriate member of the Club Committee.

*If there is any immediate danger to a child or adult at risk, you should report this immediately to the police or emergency services (by calling 999) and seek any necessary medical attention.*

## 1.3 - Advice and guidance for those who have made a disclosure

If you have disclosed a concern to your CWO and it has passed the British Rowing threshold for a safeguarding concern as described in Section 2 of this handbook, your CWO will report it to British Rowing's Lead Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible. If your concern does not pass the threshold for a safeguarding concern, and it is a disciplinary matter or relating to poor practice, then the CWO will investigate the concern.

British Rowing's LSO will consider all disclosures made to them and either refer back to the club to be processed by the CWO or refer them to British Rowing's Case Management Group (CMG) for consideration. Upon the receipt of any disclosures, the CMG will decide on the next steps, including the referral of the matter back to the club for an enquiry or investigation, or, in the most serious cases, referring the matter to the police and/or Children Services.

This process is detailed in Appendices [2](#) and [3](#).

## 1.4 - Advice and guidance for those against whom an allegation has been made

British Rowing recognises that having a concern raised against you regarding your behaviour towards or with children or adults at risk can be distressing. If you are notified of concerns regarding your conduct or behaviour, it is recommended that you familiarise yourself with British Rowing's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, or British Rowing's Safeguarding and Protecting Adults at Risk Policy, both of which can be found on our [Safeguarding](#) webpage.

You may find it useful to know the following.

- If you are suspended from your role, this is a neutral act, as it protects all parties involved in the case.
- If you have any queries or concerns, you should contact British Rowing's [Lead Safeguarding Officer](#).
- You will receive regular communication by either telephone, letter or email to update you regarding the case and the steps being taken. If you don't, please contact British Rowing's Lead Safeguarding Officer.

### 1.4.1 - Your rights during this process

During the investigative process, you are entitled to:

- the right to a fair and unbiased investigation;
- the right to have a representative of your choosing accompany you to any hearings;
- the right to appeal the decision of the Case Management Group.

## 1.4.2 - What is expected of you during this process

During the investigative process, you will be expected to:

- comply with British Rowing's processes and procedures;
- comply with all reasonable requests for further information;
- be entirely truthful and honest in responding to any line of questioning carried out by British Rowing, or an appointed investigator;
- comply with the terms of any suspension that is imposed during the investigative process.

We recognise that individuals who have had an allegation raised against them may need support. For a list of useful contacts, see [Appendix 5](#) of this handbook.

# Section 2 - Handling safeguarding and welfare referrals

## 2.1 - British Rowing thresholds for a safeguarding and welfare concern

This section, as well as [Section 3](#), should be read by the Club Welfare Officer and any other individual who is responsible for classifying and identifying concerns at their club.

Once the referral of a safeguarding and welfare concern has been made to the CWO, British Rowing's Lead Safeguarding Officer (LSO) should be made aware of the referral where either of the following thresholds have been met.

- There is a concern of abuse, or criminal offence, against a child, irrespective of where that concern may emerge from.
- There is a concern of abuse, or criminal offence, against an adult at risk, irrespective of where that concern may emerge from.

As the Club Welfare Officer, it is important to understand these thresholds. If neither of these thresholds have been met, then the concern should be treated as poor practice and processed as per [Section 3 of this handbook](#). If you still feel unsure of the correct procedure to follow, see Appendices [2](#) and [3](#) of this handbook, which detail British Rowing's reporting structure for safeguarding concerns relating to children and adults at risk.

## 2.2 - What constitutes abuse?

British Rowing recognises that there are five main forms of abuse that can be carried out towards a child or adult at risk. For the full definition, please see [British Rowing's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy](#). For information on how to spot the signs and indicators of these types of abuse, please see [Section 2.3 of this handbook](#). The five main forms of abuse are:

- physical;
- emotional;
- neglect;
- sexual;
- bullying.

## 2.3 - Signs and indicators of abuse

### 2.3.1 - Spotting the signs of physical abuse

It is important to realise that children do have trips, falls and accidents that may cause cuts and bruises. These injuries are usually innocent and tend to affect bony areas such as the knees, elbows or shins, and are not usually a cause for concern. However, injuries that are likely to indicate physical abuse include:

- bruises on the cheeks, ears, palms, arms and feet;
- bruises on the back, buttocks, stomach, hips and backs of legs;
- clusters of bruises, usually on the upper arms or outer thighs;
- bite marks or burns that have the shape of an object, e.g. cigarette burns.

If a child or adult at risk is frequently injured, and if the bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation does not match the injury, concerns should be disclosed to the CWO initially, who will then raise these concerns with the LSO, who will decide whether the concerns need to be referred to the police and/or the LADO and children's services.

### 2.3.2 - Spotting the signs of emotional abuse

There are not usually any obvious signs of emotional abuse in children and adults at risk, but you may spot sudden or gradual changes in their actions and emotions. Be alert to behaviours which appear to be out of character for the individual or are particularly unusual. These behaviours may include:

- seeming isolated from their parents or carers;
- lacking in social skills, being withdrawn from their peers, or having few, if any friends;
- fear of making mistakes;
- self-harming;
- struggling to control strong emotions, or being prone to extreme outbursts.

### 2.3.3 - Spotting the signs of neglect

Neglect is the most common type of child abuse. It often happens in conjunction with other forms of child abuse. Neglect can also be very difficult to identify. Isolated signs of neglect may not mean that a child or adult at risk is suffering from neglect, but multiple and persistent signs over time could indicate a cause for concern. Some of the signs include:

- appearing continuously hungry, and attending training sessions or camps with little to no food, snacks, water etc;
- appearing dirty or smelly and in unwashed clothes;
- not having clothes adequate for weather conditions, such as layers for winter training etc;
- being left alone or unsupervised for long periods during training, eg waiting alone for a lengthy period to be picked up from training;
- untreated injuries, health or dental problems;
- poor language, communication or social skills;
- not being provided with the appropriate level of care for either the child's stage of development or the needs of the adult at risk.

### 2.3.4 - Spotting the signs of sexual abuse

Sexual abuse can involve contact abuse and non-contact abuse, for which the signs and indicators of can differ. Contact abuse involves:

- sexual touching of any part of the body, whether the child or adult at risk is wearing clothes or not;
- making a child or adult at risk take their clothes off or touch someone else's genitals;
- forcing or encouraging a child or adult at risk to take part in sexual activity.

Non-contact abuse involves non-touching activities and can happen online or in person. Non-contact abuse involves:

- encouraging or forcing a child or adult at risk to watch or listen to sexual acts;
- making a child or adult at risk masturbate while others watch;
- showing pornography or indecent images to a child or adult at risk.

There may be physical signs and indicators that a child or adult at risk has suffered contact sexual abuse, which include:

- bruising or bleeding near the genital area;
- discomfort when walking or sitting down;
- sexually transmitted infections;
- pregnancy.

There may also be non-physical signs that a child or adult at risk has suffered contact or non-contact sexual abuse, which include:

- using sexual language or knowing things about sex that you wouldn't expect them to;
- being sexually active at a young age, or engaging in sexual and suggestive behaviour towards people much older than them;
- having indecent images or pornographic material on their electronic devices.

### 2.3.5 - Spotting the signs of bullying

It can be very difficult to know when a child or adult at risk is being bullied. They might not tell anyone out of fear that the bullying will get worse, and they may also feel that the bullying is their fault. No one sign indicates someone is being bullied, but there are certain things you should look out for, including:

- belongings being reported as damaged or lost on multiple occasions;
- physical injuries, such as bruising;
- being afraid of, or coming up with excuses not to attend normal activities, such as training or school;
- continuously asking for, or stealing, money or food (to give to the bully);
- suddenly or gradually becoming nervous, losing confidence or becoming distressed and withdrawn, when initially, this was not the individual's nature;
- problems with eating and sleeping;
- attempting to, or bullying others.

British Rowing also recognises 'hazing' as a form of bullying and therefore, a form of abuse. Hazing can be defined as:

*'The practice of rituals, challenges, and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation, used as a way of initiating a person into a group'*

Hazing is seen in many different types of social groups, including gangs, sports teams and school groups. The initiation rites can range from relatively benign pranks to protracted patterns of behaviour that rise to the level of abuse or criminal misconduct. Hazing may include physical or psychological abuse and may also include nudity or sexual assault. Some indicators of hazing may include:

- wanting to leave the team/club suddenly, and with no real explanation;
- sudden change in behaviour or attitude after joining the team;
- being nervous or acting differently around senior members of the team;
- increase in secrecy and unwillingness to share details.

## 2.4 - Spotting the signs of abuse in adults

[The Care Act, 2014](#), recognises 10 categories of abuse that may be experienced by adults with care and support needs. As well as the five main forms of abuse that are pertinent to children and young people, adults with care and support needs are also at risk of being subjected to:

- self-neglect;
- modern slavery;

- domestic abuse;
- discriminatory abuse;
- organisation/institutional abuse;
- financial/marital abuse.

## 2.4.1 - Spotting the signs and indicators of self-neglect

Self-neglect covers a wide range of behaviour, including neglecting to care for one's hygiene, health or surroundings, such as the home. For example, self-neglect could be neglecting to seek assistance for medical issues, not attending to living conditions, eg letting rubbish accumulate, or a refusal to cater for basic needs such as physical health and appropriate clothing.

Possible signs and indicators of self-neglect could include:

- malnutrition and/or dehydration;
- poor personal hygiene or an unkempt appearance;
- living in squalid, unsanitary conditions, or hoarding items at their home;
- unwillingness, or inability, to take medication or address physical injuries.

## 2.4.2 - Spotting the signs and indicators of modern slavery

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Modern slavery can also be a risk for adults who may have been groomed. For guidance on how to spot the signs of grooming, please see Section 5 of [British Rowing's Safeguarding Handbook 4 - Safety in the digital world](#).

Possible signs and indicators of modern slavery include:

- isolation, being withdrawn or appearing to be under the control of others;
- avoiding eye contact, appearing frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers;
- always wearing the same clothes and appearing unkempt;
- living and working at the same address or living in overcrowded accommodation.

## 2.4.3 - Spotting the signs and indicators of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any incident, or series of incidents, of controlling or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults or who have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This can include but is not limited to physical, emotional, sexual or financial abuse.

Possible signs and indicators of domestic abuse include:

- low self-esteem, isolation, not seeing friends or family;
- limited access to money, damage to personal property;
- physical signs of violence, such as cuts, bruises, burns or bite marks;
- being verbally or physically abused in front of other people.

## 2.4.4 - Spotting the signs and indicators of discriminatory abuse

Discrimination is abuse that is based on a difference, or perceived difference, particularly concerning race, gender, disability, or any of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act.

Possible signs and indicators of discriminatory abuse include:

- expressions of anger, frustration, fear or anxiety;
- appearing withdrawn or isolated;
- showing signs of someone who is, or has been, bullied or assaulted;

- activities not accounting for the person's individual needs regarding a protected characteristic.

## **2.4.5 - Spotting the signs and indicators of organisational/institutional abuse**

This includes neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting, such as a hospital or care home, or concerning care provided in one's own home. It can also range from one-off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment.

Possible signs and indicators of organisational/institutional abuse include:

- lack of respect for the dignity and privacy of adults;
- not providing adequate resources or nourishment;
- not accounting for individuals' cultural, religious or ethnic needs;
- authoritarian management, rigid regimes or not offering choice or independence.

## **2.4.6 - Spotting the signs and indicators of financial/marital abuse**

This includes theft, fraud or coercion relating to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including their property, wills, inheritance or financial transactions.

Possible signs and indicators of financial/marital abuse include:

- financial hardship or their personal finance being managed by someone else;
- missing personal possessions, or being seen to frequently give their possessions to others;
- recent changes in deeds or property titles, or large financial transfers;
- the person allocated to manage financial affairs is evasive or uncooperative.

## Section 3 - Handling poor practice

Any individual who has witnessed poor practice, or who receives a disclosure regarding poor practice, must refer the concern to the CWO at the earliest opportunity. Once an instance of poor practice has been raised with the CWO, they should raise the issue/s as appropriate with other committee members of their club, and then assess the matter against the club's internal practices.

It is then the responsibility of the CWO (together with members of the committee, as appropriate) to determine the appropriate course of action and intervention. To assist with the management of such matters, all clubs should align their policies with those of British Rowing, including the Safeguarding policies, Code of Conduct, the Anti-Bullying Policy and Whistleblowing Policy, which you can find on our [Safeguarding Handbooks](#) webpage.

CWOs are encouraged to contact [British Rowing's Lead Safeguarding Officer](#) as necessary for advice and guidance on matters of poor practice. British Rowing always welcomes enquiries from CWOs, or indeed any member, on safeguarding and welfare concerns and referrals.

Sometimes, if the individual who witnessed poor practice is confident in doing so, this can be challenged informally on the spot. This could be framed as 'constructive feedback' or simply offering tips or advice on individuals' conduct around the club. This behaviour can help the club create a culture where everyone is helping each other grow and develop in whatever role they have at the club, paid or unpaid.

### 3.1 - British Rowing thresholds for poor practice

Once a referral has been made to the CWO, and the concern does not meet the two thresholds for a safeguarding and welfare concern ([listed in Section 2](#)), the referral will be classified as a 'poor practice concern' where:

- there is a concern about a breach of the club's, or British Rowing's, Code of Conduct, that does not cause danger, physical harm to, or a criminal offence against, a child;
- there is a concern of a breach of the club's, or British Rowing's, Code of Conduct, that does not cause danger, physical harm to, or a criminal offence against, an adult at risk.

### 3.2 - What constitutes poor practice?

Poor practice is defined as '*non-adherence to British Rowing's safeguarding policies, procedures and/or guidance which does not result in abuse*'.

Note that poor practice is potentially damaging to a child, an adult at risk or a club and can, if allowed to go unchallenged, lead to the creation of an environment conducive to abuse as well as concerns about an individual's motivation. It can also normalise behaviour which is unacceptable and should not be condoned. Where individuals display poor practice and hold positions of trust, have elevated roles and act as role models, children and adults at risk may mirror this behaviour and create an unhealthy culture, contrary to that which is in the best interest of everyone involved in rowing.

To assist CWOs, and any other individual in a position of trust, or an individual who may receive disclosures, we set out below a non-exhaustive list of examples of poor practice:

- when insufficient care is taken to avoid injuries, e.g. from excessive training or ignoring the ['How Much How Often Guidance'](#);
- any breach of British Rowing's Anti-Bullying Policy which does not amount to the abuse of a child or adult at risk;



- any instance of hazing, or not reporting instances of hazing, which is defined in British Rowing's [Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy](#) which does not amount to abuse;
- where minor infractions have taken place, e.g. a coach using social media to contact a young rower directly on one or two occasions;
- unprofessional or inappropriate use of a person's individual or club's social media account;
- using foul and abusive language, especially in the presence of children or adults at risk;
- giving continued and unnecessary preferential treatment to certain individuals;
- prioritising performance over the safety of rowers;
- allowing roughhousing, physical and dangerous play, bullying, the use of bad language or inappropriate behaviour from rowers;
- showing a lack of respect for other individuals, such as umpires, opposition coaches, volunteers, rowers or spectators;
- using punishments that humiliate or cause unnecessary risk of harm towards children or adults at risk;
- providing one to one coaching without any supervision or the presence of another club official or member of staff;
- failure to challenge or report poor practice from other club staff;
- failure to record incidents or accidents;
- failing to address the additional needs of rowers with a disability or other vulnerable groups;
- allowing confidential information to be shared inappropriately;
- failure to acknowledge or respect the opinions of children and adults at risk and consider their rights and responsibilities.

### 3.3 - Investigations into poor practice

When there is an instance of poor practice at the club, and it cannot be dealt with informally as described in this Section of the handbook, the CWO should investigate the alleged poor practice.

When investigating instances of poor practice, it is vital to ensure that every decision you make has the interests of the child or adult at risk at the centre of the decision. The process below is designed to be adapted to best suit your club's structure and governance, and describes what an investigation into poor practice may consist of. During any stage of the process, if you feel you, or your club, need further guidance, you can contact the Lead Safeguarding Officer at British Rowing by emailing [lso@britishrowing.org](mailto:lso@britishrowing.org).

To assist the CWO and the Committee in properly investigating instances of poor practice, British Rowing offers full guidance on carrying out investigations into poor practice, which you can read in full in [Appendix 4, of this Handbook](#). Otherwise, a short summary of what a good investigation at club level looks like can be found below.

1. Assign a Lead Investigator.
2. Decide a framework for the investigation, which could include:
  - a. Aims and objectives of the investigation
  - b. Methods
  - c. Scope
  - d. Time frame
  - e. Confidentiality
  - f. Limitations.
3. Ensure confidential communication between the necessary parties.
4. Conduct Interviews (including taking statements).
5. Record outcomes.
6. Identify the next steps and future learnings.

During any point throughout the investigation, if the CWO is unsure of anything, they are encouraged to contact British Rowing's LSO for further advice by emailing [lso@britishrowing.org](mailto:lso@britishrowing.org).



# Section 4 - Handling concerns relating to adults

Safeguarding adults<sup>1</sup> can be very complex, and receiving concerns of possible abuse towards adults can be overwhelming due to the subtle differences and difficult decisions you must make during this process when compared to safeguarding children. Specifically, the rights of the adult to self-determination, to be involved in the decision-making process, must be balanced against the need to keep them and others safe.

If at any point you are not sure of the best approach during the safeguarding process for both adults and children, you can seek advice from British Rowing's Lead Safeguarding Officer by emailing [lso@britishrowing.org](mailto:lso@britishrowing.org). When safeguarding adults, the welfare of the adult is always paramount. Inaction is not an option.

If the adult has care and support needs that affect their communication, try to work closely with their interpreter, or someone who understands them.

## 4.1 - Six principles of safeguarding adults

[The Care Act, 2014](#), sets out the following principles that should underpin the safeguarding of adults.

### 1. Empowerment

*Adults should be supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and given the opportunity to provide informed consent.*

Adults should be asked what they want as outcomes from the safeguarding process, and this should inform the actions involved in the process where possible.

### 2. Prevention

*It is better to take action before harm occurs.*

Adults should receive clear and simple information about what abuse is, what it entails and what it looks like. This way, adults know how to recognise the signs and know what they can do to seek help. Remember, safeguarding should be proactive, rather than reactive.

### 3. Proportionality

*The least intrusive response, appropriate to the risk presented.*

Adults should feel sure that the CWO will work in their interests and they will only be asked to take action as far as is necessary.

### 4. Protection

*Support and representation for those in greatest need.*

Adults should get the help and support they need to report abuse and neglect. Adults should get help so that they can take part in the safeguarding process to the extent that they want to.

### 5. Partnership

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<sup>1</sup> In this section, the term 'adult' will refer to both adults with care and support needs and adults at risk.

*Services offer local solutions through working closely with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.*

Adults know that the CWO will treat any personal and sensitive information in confidence, only sharing what is helpful and necessary. Adults should be confident that professionals will work together, and with the adults, to get the best result for them.

## 6. Accountability

*Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.*

Adults understand the role of everyone involved in their life, including those at their rowing club.

Any report or disclosure of a safeguarding concern relating to an adult at risk or an adult with care and support needs should be shared with the Club Welfare Officer unless this person is implicated in the concern. If you cannot raise the concern with your Club Welfare Officer, speak with British Rowing's LSO at

[lso@britishrowing.org](mailto:lso@britishrowing.org).

For a flowchart outlining how concerns of abuse towards adults should be dealt with, please see [Appendix 3](#).

## 4.2 - Recognising adult safeguarding concerns

For guidance on spotting the signs and indicators of abuse adults may face, please see Section [2.4 of this handbook](#).

Recognising signs of abuse can be a challenging task, regardless of whether adults or children are involved. If you work or volunteer in rowing, best practice suggests that you should complete some form of safeguarding training, to help you understand how to spot signs and indicators of abuse, and what action to take if you do. For guidance on what the appropriate training is for your role, please see Section 6 of [British Rowing's Safeguarding Handbook 1 - the Club Welfare Officer](#).

Remember to stay alert for sudden changes in appearance, behaviour or attitude. Never be afraid to ask someone if they're OK.

## 4.3 - Responding to adult safeguarding concerns

To understand what to do when receiving a disclosure of abuse or poor practice regarding an adult, please follow the steps outlined in [Section 1.1 of this handbook](#).

If you're concerned about an adult, do not keep these concerns to yourself. Depending on your relationship with the adult, and how serious your concerns are, ask if the adult would like to talk to you or the Club Welfare Officer. By simply opening up a dialogue, you can take a positive step towards helping adults feel comfortable in raising their concerns.

When safe to do so, discuss any safeguarding concerns with the adult to establish their views and desires. A very useful phrase to remember is 'no decision about me, without me'. This will remind you that adults have a right to be involved in the decision-making process and that their intentions should be at the forefront where possible.

## 4.4 - Reporting adult safeguarding concerns

When reporting concerns regarding adults, just as if the concern involved a child, it should be raised with the CWO as soon as possible. It is not up to the person receiving the initial concern to determine if it is abuse or investigate the information further. Holding back information could mean that poor practice or abuse continues or gets worse. If the adult asks you what you're going to do with the information they have disclosed to you, you must tell them you're going to pass it to the CWO, British Rowing's LSO, or an external authority.

Once the CWO receives the concern, they should involve the adult to establish their views and keep them involved in the next steps, if it is safe to do so. As described in [Appendix 3](#), British Rowing's reporting structure requires information that passes the threshold for abuse to be shared with the LSO as soon as possible. The CWO should record concerns using British Rowing's report form, which can be found in [Appendix I](#), or on the [British Rowing Safeguarding Page](#).

Once the CWO has reported the concern, they should record the information as if handling a concern relating to a child. For guidance on how to record concerns relating to adults, please see Section [1.1.1 of this handbook](#). If the adult has care and support needs that affect their communication, try to work closely with their interpreter, or someone who understands them.

# Section 5 - Handling concerns that arise outside of rowing

Many adults in sport develop positive relationships with children, young people, and adults with care and support needs through their roles as coaches, volunteers and Club Welfare Officers. They are ideally placed to recognise signs or indicators of abuse, or any other form of behaviour that may raise concerns, and to receive a disclosure of abuse from a child, young person, or adult directly.

If you receive concerns that have come to light within rowing but arose elsewhere in the person's life, such as school, home, or the wider community, they must be acted upon in line with the reporting procedures set out in the appendices of this handbook. No matter where the concern arose from, everyone must put the welfare of the individual, whether it be a child, young person, or adult, at the centre of their approach.

If someone raises a concern or discloses information to you, it is important to understand that even if the incident did not occur in rowing, we still must do what is best for the child, young person, or adult, which is to report the incident. This means that any instance of abuse, or poor practice that you witness, or is disclosed to you, regardless of where the abuse or poor practice took place, should be reported via the reporting structures outlined in appendices [2](#) and [3](#) of this handbook.

Some examples of concerns that might occur outside of rowing may include:

- a child disclosing to you that their parent hit them;
- an adult disclosing to you that their carer has stolen money from them;
- a child coming to rowing sessions without ever bringing food or drink with them;
- an adult attending a rowing session with a black eye.

**Remember, if you see, hear, or are told anything that you feel isn't quite right, report this to either your Club Welfare Officer or British Rowing's Lead Safeguarding Officer, as soon as possible.**

## Section 6 - Useful contacts

### The NSPCC

24-hour free and confidential telephone helpline that provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of ill-treatment or abuse. Telephone: 0808 800 5000 Email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk). Website: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk). For those with hearing difficulties, there is a textphone number: 0800 056 0566.

### Family Rights Group

Advises parents and other family members whose children are involved with or require children's social care services because of welfare needs or concerns. Telephone: 0808 801 0366. Email: [advice@frg.org.uk](mailto:advice@frg.org.uk). Website: [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk).

### Childline

Childline is the UK's free helpline for children and young people. It provides a confidential telephone counselling service for any child with any problem, 24 hours a day, every day. Telephone: 0800 1111. Text: 78101. Website: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk).

### Family Lives

Family Lives is a national charity providing information and support to anyone in a parenting role. The helpline is staffed by trained volunteers who are parents themselves. They can provide advice on a whole range of subjects, including help for those who are at risk of abusing their children. Telephone: 0808 800 2222. Email: [askus@familylives.org.uk](mailto:askus@familylives.org.uk). Website: [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk).

### FASO

FASO is a voluntary organisation dedicated to supporting anyone affected by a false allegation of abuse. Telephone: 0844 335 1992. Email: [support@false-allegations.org.uk](mailto:support@false-allegations.org.uk). Website: [www.false-allegations.org.uk](http://www.false-allegations.org.uk).

### The Samaritans

Nationwide, non-religious, non-political 24-hour confidential support. Telephone: 116 123. Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org). Website: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org).

### Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice has a website section entitled '[If you've been accused of child abuse](#)' where it details several specialist organisations you can contact. Telephone: 0800 144 8848. Textphone: 18001 0800 144 884.

# Appendix 1 - British Rowing report form for recording concerns and referrals

Please complete this form with as much relevant information as possible. If you are unsure of the reporting process at British Rowing, or would like further assistance with reporting your concerns, please contact the Lead Safeguarding Officer at [lso@britishrowing.org](mailto:lso@britishrowing.org).

If your concern relates to poor practice at your club, please report the instance to us via this form, but continue to deal with the matter at your discretion, and we will look to get back in touch within five working days.

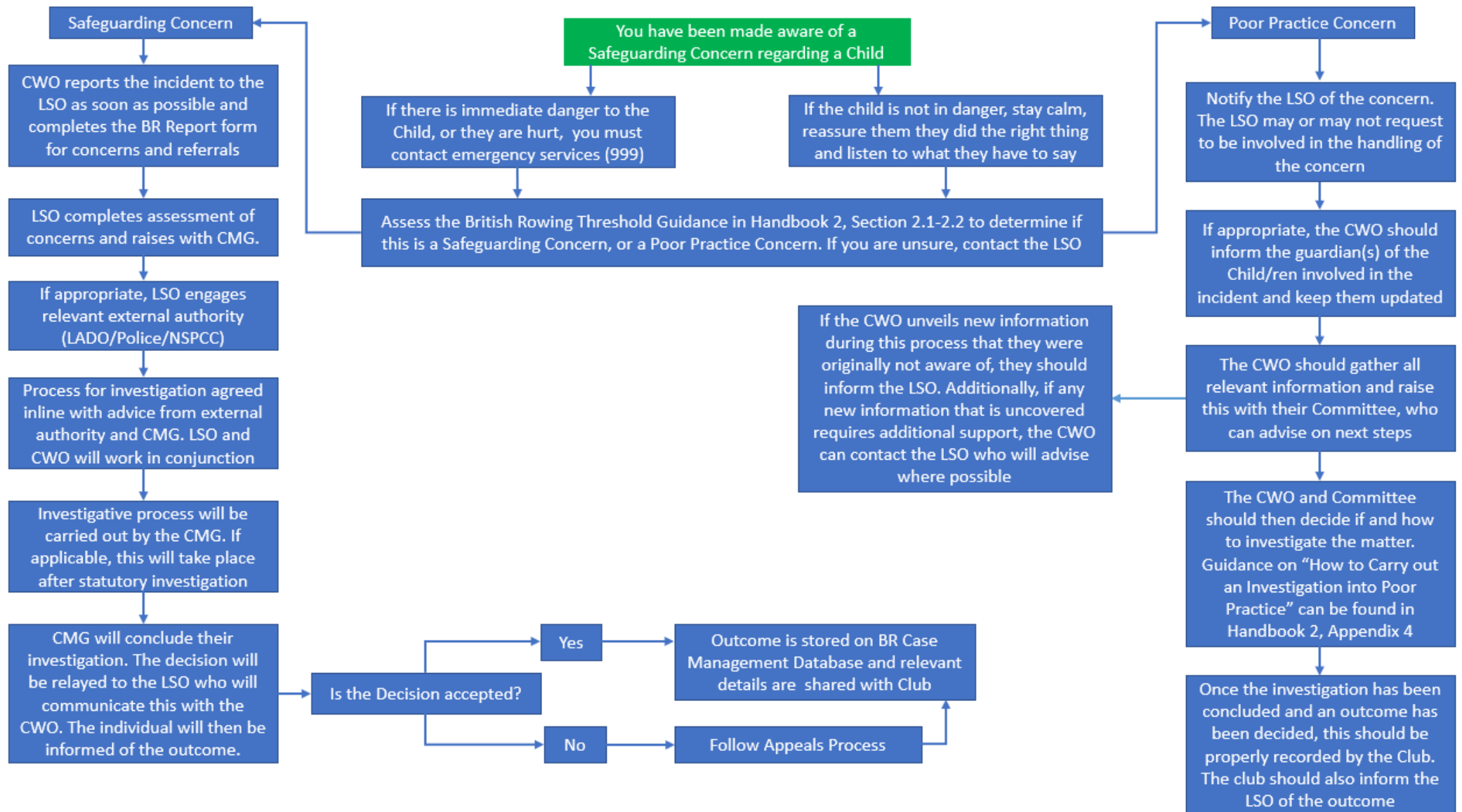
If your concern relates to a safeguarding concern, we will look to get back to you as soon as possible. If anyone is in immediate danger or risk of harm, please contact the emergency services on 999.

Please provide your name and contact details (phone number and email address)	
Please provide the name of your club	
Please describe the nature of your concern	
Please provide the name of the individual who has committed the safeguarding concern/poor practice	
Please provide the date and time of the incident(s)	
Please provide the location(s) of the incident(s)	
Please provide the name of the individual who was subjected to the abuse/poor practice	



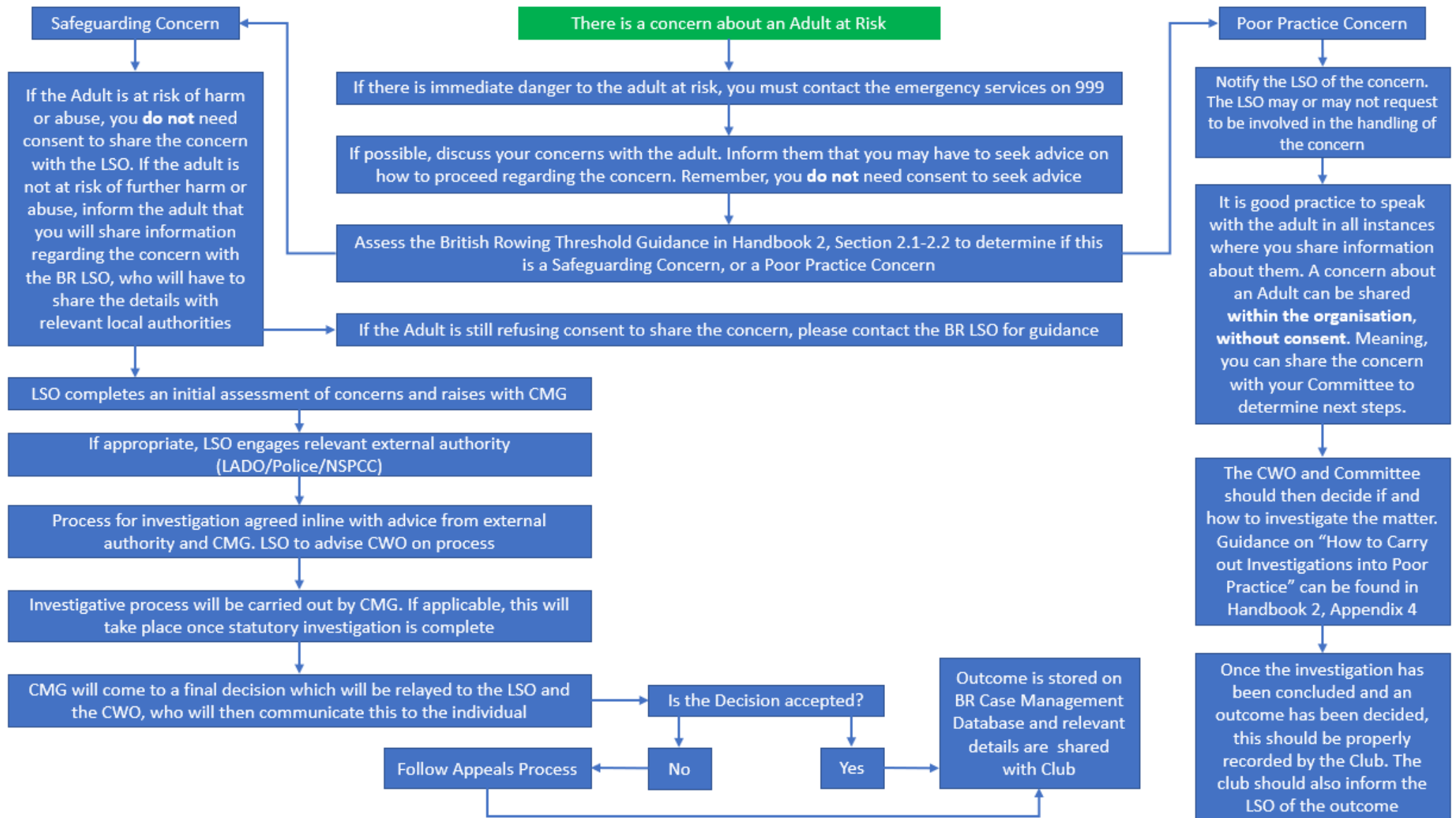
<p>Please provide the age and gender of the individual who was subjected to the abuse/poor practice</p>	
<p>Please include a brief summary of any actions that have already been taken, or any actions that are planned</p>	

# Appendix 2 - British Rowing Child Safeguarding and Welfare Concerns reporting structure



# Appendix 3 - British Rowing Adult at Risk Safeguarding and Welfare

## Concerns reporting structure



# Appendix 4 - How to carry out an investigation into poor practice

When there is an allegation of poor practice at a club, and it cannot be dealt with via an informal challenge as described in [Section 3](#), the CWO should investigate the alleged instance of poor practice.

When investigating allegations of poor practice, it is vital to ensure that every decision you make has the interests of the child or adult at risk at the centre of the decision. The process laid out below is designed to be adapted to best suit your club's structure and governance, and describes the process you may wish to use. During any stage of the investigation, if you feel you or your club need further guidance, you can contact British Rowing's Lead Safeguarding Officer by emailing [lso@britishrowing.org](mailto:lso@britishrowing.org).

## 1. Assigning the Lead Investigator

Usually, an investigation into poor practice concerning children or adults at risk should be led by the CWO, with the support of the Club Committee. The only exception to this would be if the investigation is into an allegation concerning the CWO themselves. If the CWO is unavailable to carry out the investigation, it should be done by someone on the Club Committee who has a working knowledge of safeguarding and who is not involved in any capacity with the individual to whom the concern relates. The Club Chair may want to discuss further with the LSO should such a situation arise.

## 2. Framework

Once the investigator has been agreed, a framework for the investigation should be agreed on to ensure everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities. A framework for an investigation could consist of:

- aims and objectives of the investigation;
- methods;
- scope;
- timeframe;
- confidentiality;
- limitations.

These should then be shared with the Club Committee, who should be supporting the investigator throughout this process. At any stage if you wish to seek advice from British Rowing's LSO, email [lso@britishrowing.org](mailto:lso@britishrowing.org).

## 3. Communication

Before any formal stage of the investigation begins, the investigator should communicate with anyone involved in the investigation, including:

- the individual accused of poor practice;
- the child/adult at risk involved in the incident;
- the parent/carer/guardian of the child/adult at risk involved in the incident.

This may also include:

- the line manager of the individual accused of poor practice;
- any witnesses who may be able to provide more context to the incident.

While investigating poor practice, the club may consider temporarily suspending the individual who committed the alleged poor practice. In this situation, this needs to be communicated to the individual concerned and, if appropriate, to the individual's line manager. If suspension is considered, the club should signpost the individual

to sources of support, such as the charities listed in [Section 4 of this handbook](#), as this can be a very stressful time for them.

Details and information regarding the investigation should be shared on a need-to-know basis with the appropriate parties, and confidentiality must be maintained during this process. Examples of best practice regarding information sharing during the investigation process include the following.

- When sending individual emails to people involved in the investigation, make sure you don't copy others in. For instance, if you are emailing a parent regarding the poor practice of a coach, you **must not** include both the parent and the coach in one email. A separate email must be sent to each person.
- Mark any correspondence being sent, paper or electronic, as 'Private' or 'Strictly Confidential' etc.
- Keep all correspondence in a confidential folder that is password protected (if electronic correspondence) or in a locked store cupboard or drawer (if paper).
- Keep a record of what correspondence has been sent, to whom, by whom, when it was sent and when it was received.

It is also worth noting that parents and carers of the child may be distressed during this process, so regular communication with them in a friendly and reassuring manner is highly encouraged. You can signpost them to some of the useful contacts listed in [Section 4 of this handbook](#).

#### 4. Interviews

To ascertain all the relevant information surrounding the instance of poor practice, it is highly likely you will need to carry out interviews. Typically, an investigator into an instance of poor practice would interview the individual alleged to have carried out the poor practice, the victim and any witnesses. If deemed appropriate by the investigator, character references may be requested as a secondary method to find out more information about the individual.

Interviews should be as standardised as possible and should follow the same process for each individual who is interviewed. It is best practice to ensure that the interviews are documented, follow a structured layout and are live-recorded, either via minute taking or voice recording (with the interviewee's consent).

Each interview requires planning. Following an introduction, the interviewer should explain why the investigation is taking place and what the purpose of the interview is. They should then ask them for an account of the situation and for any background information for added context that may be relevant. Try to have questions planned out before the interview and refrain from asking questions based on feeling and instinct. At the end of the interview, seek clarification to ensure you have understood the interviewee correctly, let the interviewee know if you feel you will need them for anything else and inform them of your next steps.

It is also good practice to signpost the interviewee to guidance to help them through the process. [Section 1 of this handbook](#) provides guidance for those who have had a concern raised against them and [Section 4 provides](#) useful contacts for support.

#### 5. Outcomes

After concluding the interview, all transcripts must be filed safely and securely as they may contain confidential information. The investigator will need to compile a report on the interviews, which must be clear, factual, objective and concise. This report should include:

- a description of the incident;
- the immediate steps that were taken and the justification for them
- an outline of the agreed-upon process;
- who was interviewed, including dates, times and locations;
- the findings from the interviews;

- outcomes and next steps.

Outcomes of investigations into instances of possible poor practice in safeguarding may be classified in the following ways.

- **Substantiated** – There is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation that poor practice did occur, by the named individual, in the manner originally described.
- **Unfounded** – There is no evidence or proper basis to support the allegation being made.
- **Malicious** – There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and to show that there has been a deliberate act to deceive.

Whatever the outcome of the investigation, the investigator should decide what further action should be taken. If the allegation has been substantiated the investigator should decide what the penalty should be. The investigator should first consider whether it would be appropriate for the individual who committed the poor practice to learn and develop by providing training either delivered by the club, by requiring the individual to undertake a mentoring process, or attend a form of external training, possibly at their own expense, for example, attending a safeguarding training course.

If the conduct is more serious, the investigator may consider that some form of disciplinary action is required. The club's disciplinary process should be followed. In exceptional circumstances where the investigator is of the view that abuse has occurred, they should recommend that the matter should be reported to the British Rowing LSO at [iso@britishrowing.org](mailto:iso@britishrowing.org).

If the allegation is unsubstantiated, this should be communicated to all parties as soon as possible. If the allegation is found to be malicious, the club committee should consider taking disciplinary action against the person who made the allegation unless the circumstances are exceptional. Investigations in which an allegation was proven to be false, unsubstantiated, or malicious should not be included in employer references.

#### 6. Communication of the outcome and right of appeal

If the allegation is substantiated, the victim and their parent(s)/carer(s) (if applicable), should be informed that the matter has been investigated and the concern has been handled properly. You do not need to tell the victim and their parent(s)/carer(s) the outcome of the investigation.

The individual who has had the substantiated allegation raised against them, as well as that person's line manager (if applicable), should be notified of the outcome of the investigation, and whatever disciplinary action that follows. If the disciplinary action involves mentoring or training, the individual should be asked to confirm if they agree to this, and if not, what further disciplinary action will be taken. If the disciplinary action is agreed upon, this should be documented and all parties should be given a copy of the agreed outcome.

If the allegation is unsubstantiated, or being referred to the Lead Safeguarding Officer, then all parties should be notified of this outcome as soon as possible.

If the allegation is malicious, disciplinary proceedings will usually be instigated against the person who made the allegations. All parties should be notified of the outcome (finding the allegations to be malicious) as soon as possible. The person who made the allegations should be notified of disciplinary proceedings in the usual way.

The report into the investigation should not be shared in its entirety except on a strict need-to-know basis, or unless disciplinary proceedings are instigated, in which case it will be disclosed to the person who is being disciplined in the usual way.

# Appendix 5 - Useful contacts for those who have had an allegation raised against them

If you have been notified by British Rowing that there are reported causes for concern regarding your behaviour towards or with children or adults at risk, you may find the following contact details useful as a form of support and guidance.

## The NSPCC

24-hour free and confidential telephone helpline that provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of ill-treatment or abuse. Telephone: 0808 800 5000 Email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) Website: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk). For those with hearing difficulties, there is a textphone number: 0800 056 0566.

## FASO

FASO is a voluntary organisation dedicated to supporting anyone affected by a false allegation of abuse. Telephone: 0844 335 1992. Email: [support@false-allegations.org.uk](mailto:support@false-allegations.org.uk). Website: [www.false-allegations.org.uk](http://www.false-allegations.org.uk).

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