

QCSA POLICY - CCYPCG DISCLOSURE OF HARM

Preamble

The following policy and procedures will ensure that staff and volunteers respond as quickly as possible and in the best interests of the child or young person under 18 years of age, when disclosures or suspicions of harm are received. The QCSA recognises that children and young people are vulnerable members of the community and that extra measures must be taken to protect and support them.

Policy and Procedures for Handling Disclosures or Suspicions of harm

QCSA Volunteers will be made aware through this document of what they are to look for in relation to harm and the handling of disclosures or suspicions of harm. In all cases this behaviour is to be reported to both the QCSA SECRETARY (via telephone immediately and followed up with an email within 48 hours) and IMMEDIATELY to the RISK MANAGEMENT OFFICER of the QCSA.

The QCSA delegate will assess the situation reported and document same to send via email to the Club or hosting organisation as soon as practicable.

Definitions

Harm may be categorised in the following types:

- Physical abuse, for example, beating, shaking, burning, biting, causing bruise or fractures by inappropriate discipline, giving children alcohol, drugs or inappropriate medication
- Emotional or psychological abuse, for example, constant yelling, insults, swearing, criticism, bullying, not giving children positive support and encouragement
- Neglect for example, not giving children sufficient food, clothing, enough sleep, hygiene, medical care, leaving children alone or children missing school, and
- Sexual abuse or exploitation, for example, sexual jokes or touching, exposing children to sexual acts or pornography or having sexual intercourse with a child or young person under 16 years of age (even if the child appears to have consented).

Suspicion of harm

You can suspect harm if you are concerned by significant changes in behaviour or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries.

Disclosure of harm

A disclosure of harm occurs when someone, including a child, tells you about harm that has happened or is likely to happen. Disclosures of harm may start with:

- "I think I saw..."
- "Somebody told me that..."
- "Just think you should know..."
- "I'm not sure what I want you to do, but..."

Procedures to minimise harm to children and young people

The QCSA minimises harm to children and young people by acting in a manner that supports their interests and wellbeing, by:

- making sure they are safe by monitoring their activities and ensuring their environment meets all safety requirements
- taking anything a child or young person says seriously and following up their concerns and if confronted with a situation by letting them know there is no secret too awful, no story too terrible, that they can't share with someone they trust
- listening to children and young people and letting them know that staff are available for them if they have any concerns.

Procedures for receiving a disclosure of harm

When receiving a disclosure of harm:

- Remain calm and find a private place to talk
- Don't promise that you'll keep a secret; tell them they have done the right thing in telling you but that you'll need to tell someone who can help
- Only ask enough questions to confirm the need to report the matter; probing questions could cause distress, confusion and interfere with any later enquiries, and
- Do not attempt to conduct your own investigation or mediate an outcome between the parties involved.

Reporting guidelines for disclosures or suspicions of harm

Immediately following a disclosure or suspicion of harm that is reported by one of our volunteers the QCSA will endeavour to contact the correct persons that need to be informed as per the information that we have received. In the case of notifying a Club Executive, where possible this will be the Club Secretary as listed on documentation received from the club.

The QCSA will disclose all information given to them by the aggrieved person and ask for confirmation in writing that they have received this information. Any notes taken by the QCSA volunteer will also be handed over on request to assist with enquiries.

Actions following a disclosure of harm

The QCSA will offer support and counselling to the volunteer in all cases. The responsibility of support for the child or young person will always fall back to the person or club that the child or young person is a registered player with, who should offer the appropriate counselling and support.

The person who made the report Under Section 22 of the Child Protection Act 1999, a person who reports suspected child abuse is protected from civil or criminal legal actions and is not considered to have broken any code of conduct or ethics.

Details of the person who made the report are to be kept completely confidential and will not be made available to the family of the child or young person, or the person against whom the allegation has been made.

The person against whom the allegation has been made (in all cases where it involves a volunteer of the QCSA) will have their duties and QCSA suitability reviewed. In extreme cases legal advice may be an option taken by the QCSA to minimise any issues.

Closing Statement

The policy and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm will be reviewed and assessed occasionally by the QCSA Executive to ensure that the organisation is continuing to provide a safe and supportive service environment.