

## WORKSTREAM 2 – System and structure

### Action 4: create your club’s response procedure (follow-up protocol as a guide to handle cases in the club)

The club’s response procedure describes the steps the Safeguarding Officer (SO) can take when there is a concern of physical, psychological, sexual interpersonal violence or neglect. However, it is not a fixed scenario: the SO will always have to make decisions according to the severity and nature of the situation and in consultation with the Safeguarding Emergency Team or the SO of the respective sport federation, and possibly experts outside the sports club.

#### How to act after the report of an incident or concern

Steps	GREEN (acceptable behaviour)	YELLOW (mild interpersonal violence)	RED (serious interpersonal violence)	BLACK (very serious interpersonal violence)
Phase 0	Report/concern			
Phase 1	Mapping the situation			
Phase 2	Assess severity of the situation and seek for advice			
Phase 3	Implementation of advice			
	Internal follow-up			
			Emergency services, children’s social care	Disciplinary procedures
			Police / justice	
Phase 4	Aftercare and evaluation			
Phase 5	Policies and improvement of actions			

#### Phase 0 – Report/concern

When reporting an incident or a concern, it is important to clearly state:

- The content of the complaint or report
- How the information was received by the SO. It may come directly from one of the members (or family) and/or through the club board. Depending on how this information is shared, additional details might be needed to further clarify the report.
- Who is the notifier? Often, the notifier is not the victim or someone directly involved, but a third party. In some cases, the notifier is not a direct witness to an incident but was informed by someone involved.
- If the notifier is directly involved:
  - Check in advance what the expectations of those involved are.
  - Always consider the wishes of the victim.

- Clearly explain in advance your role as SO and how you will handle the report.
- Emphasize the duty of discretion/confidentiality and clearly explain that if the report concerns criminal offenses, you are required to report it.

## Phase 1 – Mapping the situation

Carefully map the situation:

- **Who is involved?** Identify any possible victim(s), perpetrator(s), and other individual(s) involved (such as witnesses...).
- **What is known about the facts?** What remains unknown? What is still unclear?
- **What are the sources of information?** Determine how the facts became known, what the suspicion is based on, and what was specifically seen or heard.
- In most cases, additional information is required. The SO will contact the relevant individuals to gain a clear understanding of the situation.

## Phase 2 – Assess the severity of the situation and seek for advice

Try to assess the severity of the facts. Internal or external consultation may assist the SO if needed. If the situation clearly represents a “no” or “mild interpersonal violence” (green or yellow flags), consultation may not be required. For more serious offences (red or black flags), always schedule a consultation with the safeguarding emergency team of the club and contact the sport federation’s SO. Never act alone.

In order to evaluate the severity of a situation you can use the principles of the Flag System, which was developed in Belgium by *Sensoa*, for assessment of seriousness regarding situations of interpersonal violence.

### Flag system: assessing the seriousness of situations

The Flag System helps you reach a carefully considered response after applying six criteria to a specific situation. Following these criteria, you can classify interpersonal violence into four categories of severity, denoted by different colour flags. Additionally, this is a practical tool to assess different behaviours in a more substantiated and objective way, support the identification of appropriate responses and strengthen investigation.

The six criteria are:

1. Mutual consent
2. Voluntary engagement
3. Equality
4. Level of development or functioning
5. Context
6. Impact

In annex 1, you can find further information about these criteria.

After assessing the Flag System criteria, a certain flag colour is assigned to a situation.

The 4 interpersonal violence categories are assigned to a different coloured flag:

- Green flag: Acceptable behaviour
- Yellow flag: mild interpersonal violence

- Red flag: serious interpersonal violence
- Black flag: very serious interpersonal violence

You can find additional information about the Flag System [here](#).

### Internal consultation

- The SO may consult the **safeguarding emergency team** of the club to support the assessment and preparation of advice.
- The SO may promptly promote this meeting and incorporate key elements from the initial assessment.
- Legal provisions and the code of conduct can also serve as useful tools in guiding the assessment.

### External consultation

- The SO may always contact the sport federation’s SO for advice. In cases marked as red or black flags, contacting the sport federation’s SO and authorities is highly recommended.
- Additional external advice may be pursued. Make sure you identify and contact relevant services available in your own country, based on local regulations and resources.

### Preparing advice

- Consider the expectations of those involved.
- Consider what actions are needed within the organisation (both in the short and long term) and which target groups are affected.
- Evaluate whether it is necessary to refer to counseling services, law enforcement or judicial authorities (police/justice), or the federation’s disciplinary procedures.
- For situations that involve acceptable behaviour or mild interpersonal violence (green or yellow flags), internal follow-up will generally be sufficient.
- For cases involving serious or very serious interpersonal violence (red or black flags), consider referral to support services, legal authorities (police/justice), and/or disciplinary procedures of the federation.

GREEN (acceptable behaviour)	YELLOW (mild interpersonal violence)	RED (serious interpersonal violence)	BLACK (very serious interpersonal violence)
<b>Internal follow-up:</b> Short-term response + agreements Attention to safe context and supervision			
		<b>External follow-up:</b> Consider referral to emergency services, children’s social care Disciplinary action	
		<b>File a report:</b> Consider referral to police, justice & other measures	

- Establish clear agreements regarding feedback to the club board.
- Define how feedback will be provided to the individual directly involved, the notifier, and possibly any other relevant parties involved.
- Make sure that the privacy of those involved is not violated (duty of discretion). Be aware of your role as SO, particularly regarding omission of duty to report.

### Registration

- Register the advice in a confidential manner and secure the documents. In doing so, respect the duty of discretion.

### Phase 3 – Implementation of advice

The implementation of the advice is led by the club board, in cooperation with the SO. The sport federation's SO may be consulted for further guidance and support. The SO acts exclusively in an advisory and supporting role. Upon request from the club board, the sport federation's SO may assume specific tasks related to the case. Administrative responsibility must be considered on a case-by-case basis. This may lie with the club, the federation, or an external party.

	<b>GREEN (acceptable behaviour)</b>	<b>YELLOW (mild interpersonal violence)</b>	<b>RED (serious interpersonal violence)</b>	<b>BLACK (very serious interpersonal violence)</b>
Internal follow-up	- Inform, normalize	- Pedagogical response - Make agreements - Coaching	- Pedagogical response - Make agreements - Monitor and guarantee safety - Support those involved - Restorative mediation - Aftercare	- Pedagogical response - Make agreements - Monitor and guarantee safety - Support those involved - Restorative mediation - Aftercare - Impose sanctions
Referral assistance and mediation			- Victim support - Perpetrators support - Supporting others involved - Mediation	
Disciplinary action			- Refer to disciplinary committee - Follow-up on decisions	
Police/justice			- Report to police by victim - Report by SO (club or federation) - Report by third party	

## Lead and responsibility

- The club's board, with the support of the SO, holds primary leadership and assumes full responsibility of handling situations.
- The SO may initiate disciplinary proceedings, in consultation with the sport federation's SO.

## Internal follow-up

- In cases involving acceptable behaviour or mild interpersonal violence (green or yellow flag), the SO may provide pedagogical guidance on how to respond appropriately. Possible actions include clarifying or revising existing agreements, and/or offering coaching and support to the club.
- In cases indicating serious or very serious interpersonal violence (red or black flag), it may be important to consider how the club can improve the safety of those involved and optimize supervision.
- Attention should also be given to support and aftercare for all those involved in an incident. In some cases, it may be necessary to initiate actions aimed at recovery.
- In cases of very serious interpersonal violence (black flag), the application of sanctions or disciplinary measures as outlined in the regulations must be considered.

## Assistance

- In cases involving serious or very serious interpersonal violence (red or black flag), the individuals concerned may include both victims and possibly perpetrators. Referral to counseling services, specialized support or professional mediation may be necessary.
- This does not stop the responsibility of the club board, or the SO. Continued follow-up, support and recovery measures should be put in place beyond the referral stage. Clear arrangements must be made regarding SO's role and responsibilities in this follow-up process.

## Police/justice

- The SO may inform those involved about the possibility of filing a formal complaint with the police or judicial authorities. This applies to criminal offenses.
- There are several ways to initiate criminal proceedings depending on your national legislation framework. It's advisable to contact your government about the juridical procedures in your country.

## Phase 4 – Aftercare and evaluation

In the aftermath of an incident, feelings of insecurity or injustice may persist for a considerable time. Effective aftercare is often essential for those involved and contributes to reducing the risk of similar incidents occurring again. Transparency regarding the follow-up of the incident also creates a sense of safety and trust within the sports club.

## Aftercare

- Organise after-care conversations with those involved. Creating space to share and reflect on experiences shortly after an incident is generally beneficial.
- Repeat these conversations within a short time frame to ensure continuity of care. Victim support services may assist with group debriefings.
- Pay attention to communication with the broader community or club members, as appropriate.
- Establish clear agreement on how the club board will provide feedback following the recommended measures (e.g. reporting back to the sport federation's SO).
- The incident is formally closed with all those directly involved, including an overview of the steps already taken and any remaining follow-up actions.

## Evaluation

Evaluation of the process among all those involved can provide valuable information about how the handling of the situation by the club was perceived. Furthermore, it will provide information about areas of improvement for the club's safeguarding policy, notably:

- Consider whether individuals are satisfied with the handling of the incident, the clarity of communication and identify what worked well and what could be improved.
- The SO may offer recommendations to the club board on collecting and analysing feedback to support continuous improvement.

## Phase 5 - Policies and improvement of actions

Consider an incident as an opportunity to evaluate and strengthen the club's policies and practices. It raises important questions: Do things need to be addressed? Are existing agreements and codes of conduct clear for every member? How is supervision organised? Are all supervisors familiar with the basic agreements, and so on. Reflection is key to initiating meaningful improvements and implementing the following actions:

### 1) Analysis of the incident:

- Identify all contributing factors to the incident and explore potential underlying causes. This analysis may include relevant circumstances or events that preceded the incident.
- Make a thorough risk assessment to determine the likelihood that similar incidents will recur.

### 2) Make a list of possible actions for improvement:

- Introducing codes of conduct
- Organisation of educational sessions for coaches
- Communication about the club's safeguarding officer
- Clear guidelines for travel and competitions
- Etc.

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1: Flag System – the six criteria



1. **Mutual consent / societal agreement for the behaviour:**

*Look at the individual level to see if the people involved consent to the specified behaviour. It is also important to see if there are social agreements (formal/informal) around certain behaviours about how you treat each other.*

- At the individual level, it should be analysed carefully. Do they consent? Did they explicitly ask for it? Is it desired?
- On the other hand, you explore how this behaviour is perceived at the societal level. After all, when interacting with people, there are many formal and informal rules and agreements about how you treat each other. It is important that you know what the common manners, norms and values are within society and that you apply them.



2. **Voluntary engagement:**

*Voluntary engagement refers to being in the situation by choice and interacting with the other person completely voluntarily. It also means that at any time you can say stop and step out of the situation.*

- There is nothing voluntary when someone is physically or psychologically forced to do things. This can include manipulation, blackmail, deception, trickery, threats, or being forced to keep things secret. The situation becomes more severe when it becomes more difficult to escape from.



3. **Equality:**

*A situation can cross boundaries as soon as there is an inequality between those involved. This happens when there is an imbalance of power in terms of age, knowledge, intelligence, prestige, position, ... It is not the inequality that makes the situation cross a line, but the fact that this inequality is abused to take advantage of it.*

- (In)equality between those involved can occur in number, age, knowledge, intelligence, prestige, power, position, life experience, maturity, status, etc.
- In situations of bullying, there is always a lack of balance between the bully and the person being bullied. In sexual interactions, equality is preferred so there is no dominance of one person over another.



4. **Level of development or functioning:**

*We expect adults to have a minimum level of emotional self-direction and maturity to function in social and sexual situations. Behaviour of children and adolescents depends more on the developmental stage they are currently in. This does not mean we approve of them, but it sometimes sheds a different light on the situation.*

- We expect an adult to be able to assess and evaluate what is healthy and acceptable behaviour for themselves and others. In addition, a competent adult understands the importance of respecting boundaries, both of themselves and of others. But sometimes there are reasons to believe that the other person is not capable of understanding those boundaries, such as:
  - Illness or deterioration such as dementia
  - Mental disability
  - Temporary or permanent conditions such as psychosis, manic or depressive episode, grief, overtiredness, or love
  - Intoxication
  - Trauma
  - Disability: insufficient language to speak or insufficiently acquainted with customs and habits.
- When you have the knowledge that you are working or interacting with people with emotional developmental disabilities, you are less likely to be surprised if they act in an agitated manner or show less self-control, because this is more likely to suit their emotional developmental level.
- Behaviours of children or adolescents are more dependent on the stage of development they are in. The list of what behaviours to expect at what age can be found [here](#).

#### 5. **Context:**

*Depending on the etiquette and rules of a context, the situation becomes less severe or is even completely okay. Or conversely, the more inappropriate the behaviour is in one particular context, the more severe the situation will become.*

- A mother who pulls her child harshly up the sidewalk when a car with screeching tires is approaching is different from when the mother does the same thing because the child asks for a piece of candy at the checkout of a supermarket. (ex. giving a colleague negative feedback in a judgmental tone by themselves or in front of others?)

#### 6. **Impact:**

*Is there any negative impact or harm to those involved (whether to the person initiating the behaviour, the person undergoing the behaviour, to other people involved or the sport context)?*

- The impact from harassment and abuse can manifest itself in different ways (e.g., physical, psychological, social, etc.) and has different degrees (e.g., due to repetition and/or duration of behaviour, intensity, awareness and/or intention of behaviour).

Further information about the six criteria can be found [here](#).



## Annex 2: Safe Sport International – Concern report form

Instructions: Please only complete the boxes you can provide information on.

Date and time of report:

Child or adult 'at risk' details:

- Name (First/Last): \_\_\_\_\_
- Age: \_\_\_\_\_
- Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_
- Gender Identity: \_\_\_\_\_
- Race/Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_
- Any disability or learning needs? \_\_\_\_\_

If your concern is about a child or children, the details of their parent/s/carers with legal parental responsibility:

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Your relationship to the child or adult:

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Your role if the concern is about an organisation you work or volunteer for:

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Your details:

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Address: \_\_\_\_\_
- Contact email: \_\_\_\_\_
- Telephone number/s: \_\_\_\_\_

Please tell us if we can contact you on any of these or if there is another way, e.g., via another person, that we can contact you: \_\_\_\_\_

Details of person/s reported to be the source of concern and their contact details.

Details of the role in the organisation they are working or volunteering for:

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Details of anyone else involved e.g., witnesses, bystanders, other alleged perpetrators:

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Are you reporting your own concerns or those of someone else?

If the latter, please provide details:

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Details of the concern:

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Date/s and time/s of any incidents of concern:

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Details of any other organisation you may have reported your concern to and any action which has already taken place:

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# Annex 3: World Athletics reporting flowchart

