

RESPONDING TO CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD PROCEDURE

Children have the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken seriously (Article 12, UNCRC). This must be at the forefront of any concerns that are raised about a child. Their views must be considered based on the age and maturity of each child. They also have a right to privacy (Article 16, UNCRC) which is also important to consider when assessing if and at what stage information is shared and who with.

These procedures apply to all volunteers and staff involved in **Vale of Leithen FC** activities with children under 18 years old.

1. Best interests of the child

Vale of Leithen FC is committed to working in partnership with parents/carers whenever there are concerns about a child. Parents/carers have the primary responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of their children.

Where concerns are raised about a child, this will be considered in line with the wellbeing indicators and *may* be discussed with parents/carers. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, he/she may have experienced an upset in the family, such as a parental separation, divorce or bereavement. Common sense is advised in these situations and the best interests of the child will be considered as to what is the best support for each individual child. Children will be asked who they feel is suitable to be informed and when relevant, consent gained from the child.

Confidentiality will not be maintained if it is assessed that a child is at risk or their wellbeing is being impacted in such a way that their right to be protected becomes more significant. Any incidents which cause concern about the wellbeing of a child should be recorded on the Concern Recording Form (can be found on appropriate Affiliated National Association website) and reported to **Vale of Leithen FC's** Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer as soon as possible. In line with early intervention, the principles of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Getting it Right for Every Child approach, appropriate and proportionate information may be shared with the child's Named Person.

2. Information regarding a concern about a child

Club volunteers or members of staff may be informed in different ways with regards to details of a concern about a child. This may be a direct disclosure by the child. In this situation follow section 4 in responding to that disclosure. The details may become clear due to the observation of a child, which is perhaps demonstrated in a change in their behaviour, appearance or nature. A third option could be information that is shared from another individual or organisation. A concern or possible abuse of a child may be observed by another child or adult.

Depending on the nature of the concern, observations or information from others, this may not need to be discussed with the child, instead the information recorded then reported. Advice should be sought from the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer if there is any uncertainty about the appropriate course of action where there are concerns about a child's wellbeing which can be discussed by anonymising the child, therefore maintaining confidentiality if appropriate.

If the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer is not available and an immediate response is required, the police and social work services must be contacted. They have a statutory responsibility for the protection of children and they may already hold other concerning information about the child. Record any advice given, actions taken and the response by other agencies. At the earliest opportunity thereafter the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer should be informed.

3. Concerns affecting a child's wellbeing

If a concern about a child is identified that affects one or more of their eight wellbeing indicators (SAFE, HEALTHY, ACTIVE, NURTURED, ACHIEVING, RESPECTED, RESPONSIBLE, INCLUDED), complete Part A of the Concern Recording Form.

When information is being recorded about a child, it is important that the child understands why we are recording their details and gain their consent where possible for further reporting of the concern. If a child recognises that people can help and support, and that this is the purpose of their details being shared, they will be more included and informed of the processes.

Where there is information or details in relation to the conduct an adult affecting a child's wellbeing, this should be recorded in Part B of the Concern Recording Form.

4. Child's right to be protected

Where the concern about a child's wellbeing suggests they are in need of protection, the information must be passed on with or without their consent for the purposes of their protection. Allegations of abuse must always be taken seriously. ***No member of Vale of Leithen FC shall investigate allegations of abuse or decide whether or not a child has been abused.*** False allegations are very rare. If a child says or indicates they are being abused or information is obtained which gives concern that a child is being abused, the information must be responded to on the same day in line with the following procedure.

What to Do if a Child Discloses Abuse

4.1 Respond

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child.
- Listen to the child and take what they say seriously. Do not show disbelief.
- Reassure the child they are not to blame and were right to tell someone.
- Be aware of interpreting what a child says, especially if they have learning or physical disabilities which affect their ability to communicate or English is not their first language.
- Do not assume that the experience was bad or painful - it may have been neutral or even pleasurable.
- Avoid projecting your own reactions onto the child.
- Avoid asking any questions. If necessary only ask enough questions to gain basic information to establish the *possibility* that abuse may have occurred. Only use open-ended, non-leading questions e.g. What? When? Where? Who?
- Do not introduce personal information from either your own experiences or those of other children.

Avoid:

- Panicking.
- Showing shock or distaste.
- Probing for more information than is offered.
- Speculating or making assumptions.
- Making negative comments about the person against whom the allegation has been made.
- Approaching the individual against whom the allegation has been made.
- Making promises or agreeing to keep secrets and giving a guarantee of confidentiality.

If you are concerned about the *immediate safety of the child*:

Take whatever action is required to ensure the child's immediate safety.

Pass the information immediately to the police and seek their advice.

4.2 Record

Make a written record of the information as soon as possible using the Concern Recording Form completing as much of the form as possible. It is important that we include the contact details of the child's Named Person which will have been collated within their Consent Form – U18 Players.

4.3 Report

Contact the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer on **077515 80665** to report the concern then email the completed form to **wilsor84@gmail.com** as soon as possible after completion; do not delay by attempting to obtain information to complete all sections. The club Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer will email the concern recording form to the appropriate Affiliated National Association. Please do not keep any electronic, printed or written versions of this form. It is important to maintain confidentiality to delete or shred as soon as the information has been passed on.

4.4 Sharing Concerns with Parents/Carers

Where there are concerns that the parents/carers may be responsible for or have knowledge of the abuse, sharing concerns with the parents/carers may place the child at further risk. ***In such cases advice must always firstly be sought from the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer or the police/social work services as to who informs the parents/carers.***

RESPONDING TO CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD PROCEDURE FLOWCHART

