

RESPONDING TO CONCERNS TOOLKIT – APPENDICES



NOTHING
MATTERS
MORE

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ACCOUNTABLE



APPROACHABLE



EMPOWERING



INCLUSIVE

Appendix 1 – What is a chronology?

A chronology is in essence a list in date order of significant events. It can be a useful tool to record action taken and significant events, particularly if there are ongoing concerns about the wellbeing of a child or young person or an adult's conduct towards a child or young person. A chronology is not an assessment in itself but rather part of accurate record keeping and a useful working tool which can aid in understanding the concern.

Using a chronology can help:

- Analyse information and develop a better understanding of the risks to a child or young person
- Develop a better understanding of the needs of a young person
- Understand patterns in relation to the concern of a child or young person or a person's conduct
- Predict future behaviours

When recording information on a chronology it is important that it is succinct and only significant events should be recorded. If too much information is recorded the chronology will lose its value and it will be harder to highlight patterns. Similarly a chronology relies on having accurate and up to date information that holds enough detail.

What should be recorded on your chronology?

A new chronology should be started as part of the response to the concern the wellbeing of a child or young person, or the conduct of an adult. Basic information which should be recorded on the chronology includes but is not limited to:

- Date the concern was received
- Date any action was taken
- Date information was shared
- Date advice was sought
- Any significant events relevant to the concern

A chronology can also be used when there are multiple concerns from different sources about the same individual. For example, over a period of time several parents raise a concern about one particular coach, or there ongoing concerns about a particular young person.

Below are examples of significant events which can and should be recorded on a chronology. This list is not exhaustive but rather is intended to act as a guide.

Example 1

Date	Detail	Action taken	Additional information	Initials
01/09/2020	Concern received from John Smith, parent of Liam Smith, via email regarding the conduct of the U12's coaches at a recent match.	Email sent confirming receipt of concern and time arranged to speak to John for more information.		FB
03/09/2020	Telephone call with John Smith to confirm details of concern.	Arrange to speak to relevant coaches.	Agreed to call back and provide update on 10/09/2020.	FB
07/09/2020	Spoke with relevant coaches to inform them that I had received a concern regarding their conduct and to hear their account of what happened.	Begin assessment, arrange to speak to other witnesses and if appropriate children and young people.		FB
10/09/2020	Spoke with other witnesses who were present at the match. Confirmed John Smith's account of what happened.	Record information gathered.		FB
12/09/2020	Attended match to observe coaching practice.	Record observations.	No concerns observed.	FB
14/09/2020	Informed all relevant parties of outcome of assessment and what action will be taken. Coaches at the club demonstrated poor practice.	Educational session with coaches to be arranged.		FB
29/09/2020	Educational session with coaches carried out.	Continued observations of training and matches to take place.		FB

Example 2

Date	Detail	Action taken	Additional information	Initials
06/04/2021	Concern received from coach regarding Lewis Crawford – he hasn't been himself lately.	Agreed coach will have a chat with Lewis as they have existing relationship.	Advice given to coach to support them with this conversation. Follow up on 10/04/2021 after coach has had the opportunity to speak to Lewis.	FB
09/04/2021	Coach spoke with Lewis after training last night, said that everything was fine.	Coach to monitor and report any further concerns.		FB
16/04/2021	Update from coach – Lewis has missed both training sessions this week.	Call parents/carers to check everything okay.		FB
17/04/2021	Telephone call with Lewis parents, confirmed Lewis has been unwell and off school. Will return next week.	Continue to monitor and check in with coach. Attend some training sessions.		FB
20/04/2021	Attended training session, spoke to Lewis who said he was feeling better.	Continue to monitor and check in with coach.		FB
30/04/2021	Spoke with coach regarding Lewis, no additional concerns since last conversation.	As above.	Coach aware to contact CWPO if any further concerns.	FB
19/05/2021	Coach called to say Lewis was in altercation with another young person last night and stormed off from training.	Agreed with coach that we should speak to Lewis together.		FB
24/05/2021	Spoke with Lewis, he advised everything is okay and apologised for altercation with other young person.	Continue to monitor and check in with coach		FB
01/06/2021	Lewis has not attended any training sessions or matches since speaking on the 24 th May.	Call Lewis parents.		FB
02/06/2021	Telephone call to Lewis parents, Lewis has been away visiting family, will return to training next week.	Continue to monitor and check in with coach. Attend some training session to check in with Lewis.	Have arranged to call back on 07/06/2021	FB
08/06/2021	Attend training, speak to Lewis. He appeared quiet and distracted.	Continue to monitor and check in with coach.		FB
15/06/2021	Coach reports that Lewis made concerning statement at training that he is "fed up of life".	Follow up immediately with parents.		FB

Example 3

Date	Detail	Action taken	Additional information	Initials
02/11/2020	Complaint received from weekend's opposition team – Team A - regarding conduct of our coaches at the club towards young people in our team.	Arrange to speak to potential witnesses		FB
03/11/2020	Notified coach concern has been received	Arrange to speak to coach once information gathered from any other relevant parties	Precautionary suspended not considered necessary at this time.	
10/11/2020	Spoke with parents of young people in our team – they did not corroborate the account of Team A regarding the conduct of coaches at the club.	Arrange to speak to children and young people	All parents given consent to speak to the young people on the team.	FB
12/11/2020	Spoke with young people in our team – they did not corroborate the account of Team A regarding the conduct of coaches at the club.	Arranged to speak to the coaches		FB
13/11/2020	Spoke separately to all coaches. They deny any allegations made against them	No action	No action taken as no further information to substantiate the original concern.	
20/01/2021	Complaint received from referee association regarding conduct of coaches at recent match.	Arrange to speak to potential witnesses		FB
25/01/2021	Spoke with parents of young people in our team – they did not corroborate the referee's account r regarding the conduct of coaches at the club.	Arrange to speak to children and young people		FB
27/01/2021	Spoke with young people in our team – they did not corroborate the account of referee regarding the conduct of coaches at the club.	No further action.		FB
16/02/2021	Complaint received from parent of opposition team regarding conduct of coaches and parents at a recent match.	Arrange to speak to potential witnesses		FB
25/03/2021	Telephone call from Team B advising they did not want to play us due to the conduct of coaches.	Speak to club chairman.		FB

Appendix 2 – Common mistakes when responding to concerns

Research has shown that there is often common mistakes made by those who are responding to a concern about the wellbeing of a child or young person, or the conduct of an adult towards a child or young person. These mistakes may not only lead to a flawed or unfair response but can also compromise the wellbeing of a child or young person further.

Being mindful of these common mistakes when responding to a concern can help you ensure that you keep an open mind and always remain fair and impartial.

Below is a summary of what these mistakes can look like in practice.

<u>Subjective response</u>	<u>What it is</u>	<u>What this might look like in practice</u>
Over-optimism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A misguided positive belief about a person • Over emphasis on addressing perceived strengths / positives • Potentially influenced by status and/or reputation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adult whose conduct has been brought into question is a well-respected coach who has worked football for a number of years and there is a belief that they would not do that • The adult whose conduct has been brought into question is an excellent coach and there have never previously been any complaints about them • The child/young person is the best player in team
Over-pessimism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fixed negative belief/ perception about a person • Over emphasis on addressing perceived weaknesses/ negatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking that <i>“they have always been a troublemaker”</i> • This is not the first allegation to be made against this adult and the previous concerns were found to be unfounded • It sounds like something this person would do
Collusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing to believe what a person says despite evidence to the contrary • Accepting someone's perception or account without challenge, even if it contradicts facts • Alerting a person to an allegation and/or providing them with too much information regarding the nature of the concern in advance of any official meeting to discuss the concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believing the account of the person whose conduct has been brought into question despite several allegations or witnesses providing accounts to the contrary • Failing to act on concerns raised about an individual • Protecting the reputation of an individual/club/Association • Misguided loyalty towards an individual
Fixed idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding a specific idea or view about the nature of the concern • Pre-judging and reaching a conclusion before gathering all relevant information • Remaining committed to an initial hypothesis without seeking information or ignoring information which may disconfirm or refute it • Being closed to other explanations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only asking questions to establish information which backs up the fixed idea • Only speaking to witnesses who have information which corroborates the fixed idea • Ending the response once there is information which confirms the fixed idea and not exploring all the relevant information • Lack of analysis on the information which has been gathered

Avoidance

- Failing to address and respond to concerns appropriately
- Avoiding a particular individual or situation.

- Selective information gathering
- Purposefully avoiding situations where there is a suspicion or knowledge that poor practice is occurring and inappropriate behaviours need to be challenged
- Avoiding particular individuals, e.g. individual who are intimidating due to their reputation, status, professional qualification
- Failing to challenge or ask difficult and/or sensitive questions
- Failing to ask questions for fear of offending someone

Appendix 3 – Information sharing

Sharing appropriate information is an essential part of safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people. It is important that all adults working or volunteering with children and young people understand:

- When it is appropriate to share information
- Who the information should be shared with
- What information should be shared

Principles of information sharing:

- The wellbeing of a child is of central importance when making decisions to lawfully share information with or about them.
- If a child's wellbeing is considered to be at risk, relevant information must always be shared with the appropriate individuals and/or statutory agencies.
- Children have a right to express their views and have their views taken into account when decisions are made about what should happen to them. In general, information will only be shared with the consent of the child (depending on age and maturity). However, if there is a risk to a child's wellbeing, it may not be necessary to seek their consent and relevant information should be shared with other individuals or agencies, as appropriate.
- The reason the information has been shared should be communicated openly and honestly with children/young people and, where appropriate, their parents and carers.
- The information shared should be relevant, necessary and proportionate to the circumstances of the child and the concern, and limited to those who need to know.
- When information is shared, a record should be made of when it was shared, with whom and for what purpose, and whether it was shared without the consent of the child or young person or their parent or carer.

Who might you share information with?

- Parents and carers
- Other relevant officials at the club
- Scottish FA or your Affiliated National Association
- Universal services, for example, schools, GP
- Statutory services, for example, social work or the police
- Disclosure Scotland

The age of parental responsibility in Scotland ends when a child turns 16. However, parents continue to have the statutory responsibility to give guidance until the child turns 18. If a child aged 16 or over raises a concern against someone out with their own family and they say that they do not want their family informed, there is no legal obligation to inform their parents of the concern.

There can be a number of challenges when deciding whether or not the information needs to be shared. These can include, but are not limited to:

- The child or young person has asked for the information to not be shared
- Another relevant party or senior official has asked for the information to not be shared
- Fear about the consequences for an individual, yourself or the club

- Sense of loyalty towards an individual or the club
- Fear that a child or young person will leave, or be removed from the club
- Uncertainty as to who and/or what agency/service the information should be shared with
- Uncertainty as to what information should be shared
- Fear of breaching confidentiality laws

Despite these challenges, sharing relevant information is essential for protecting children and young people and information must be shared as and when required. Throughout the four stages of the response the concern, it should continually be reviewed as to whether information should be shared, and, if so, who it should be shared with.

If there is potential criminal conduct, or there is information to suggest that a child/young person or any person is at risk of significant harm, the information must be shared with the police and/or social work. It is for the statutory agencies to respond and it is not for us to assess the seriousness or validity of the concern. Even something which seems a relatively minor concern when combined with information held by other agencies or governing bodies may point to a much more serious concern.

Appendix 4 – Maintaining Confidential Records

Maintaining confidential records is a critical aspect of safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people. It can help identify patterns of behaviour, enhance your understanding of the nature of the concern and help to decide the best course of action.

Records must be accurate and kept up to date. Concerns about the wellbeing of a child, or the conduct of an adult can develop over time and the club/Association may have to refer to these records in the future. This can also include any future legal proceedings.

Principles of recording information:

- Records should be concise with only relevant information recorded
- Record factual information, i.e. what was seen and/or heard
- Always use appropriate language, with the only exception being when recording the exact words of a person. For example, if an allegation of racism was made it would be appropriate to make a record of the exact word(s) that were used as this is relevant to the concern
- Always record the exact words of any disclosures made
- Never use derogatory or judgemental language to describe a child or anyone else. If the concern relates to the conduct of an individual, focus on the behaviour and do not use any disparaging or offensive language to describe the person

Important information to record:

- A summary of the concern
- Details of who has been spoken to as part the response, when they were spoken to and what they said
- Any evidence that is relevant to the concern e.g. screenshots of messages, however, **never receive or store images of a sexual nature**
- Important dates e.g. the date the concern was received, dates when updates have been provided to any persons associated with the concern
- The name of the person and/or agency the information has been shared with, the date it was shared and the reason for doing so
- The name of the person and/or agency who provided advice and a summary of the advice that was given
- A summary of action taken e.g. issued a precautionary suspension and the date it was issued
- Copies of letter/emails or any correspondence sent or received relevant to the concern e.g. acknowledgement of a concern, notification of decision etc.
- The outcome of the concern, including pertinent information, the analysis and the action(s) which will be taken
- The reason for any delays in reaching an outcome

Storage of information

Top tips for securely storing records:

- Records should be stored electronically and on a secure device
- Records should be stored in an organised and accessible manner, e.g. by creating a new folder for each concern
- Any communication regarding the concern should be saved into a designated folder, e.g. emails received, written notes taken during your assessment
- Electronic records should be password protected – this is especially important on a shared device
- Records should be kept confidential and accessed on a need to know basis and only by those officials who are part of the response e.g. additional CWPO, members of the safeguarding panel or members of the HR department, if applicable
- Records should be retained in line with the Club/Association's Data Retention Schedule

Appendix 5 – Seeking the view of children and young people

Children and young people have the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken seriously (Article 12, UNCRC). Children and young people will often be able to give valuable information that can contribute to the understanding of the concern and how best to respond. Children and young people are more likely to give an authentic answer that is less rehearsed and thought through. However, there will be some instances when it will not be appropriate or necessary to seek the views of children and young people.

Things to consider when determining if it is appropriate and necessary to seek the view of the child/young person:

- The nature of the concern:
 - The nature of the concern may cause the child/young person further distress to talk to you about it
 - There is information to indicate that a criminal offence has been committed against a child or young person. In these circumstances it **would not be appropriate** to ask the child or young person any questions about the incident, instead the concern should be reported to the police. The only exception would be if a child or young person has made a direct disclosure and you require to clarify this information
- The age and maturity of the child or young person
- Does the child or young person have any additional support needs that could impair their understanding of the situation or their ability to express their views?
- Does the child or young person have any communication difficulties that could impair their understanding of the situation or their ability to express their views?

Preparing for the meeting

If it is necessary to speak to a child or young person then preparation is absolutely vital. The purpose of the conversation should be clear and communicated to the child or young person.

Questions should be prepared in advance or there should at least be a structure to the conversation to ensure all the points are covered. There should be a range of open and closed questions, however, there should be some flexibility to go in a different direction depending on the child/young person's response to your questions. Also think about potential questions the child or young person may have and how these will be answered. An effective way of doing this is to ask yourself **“what if?”**

What if:

- The child or young person makes a direct disclosure of abuse
- The child is worried about, or asks what will happen next
- The child refuses to speak or avoids the questions
- The child is argumentative and confrontational
- The child expresses worry about the potential consequences of speaking about the concern

- The child's responses are being influenced by another person in the room
- Another person in the room interrupts the conversation

Preparing in this way will help to give you confidence to answer any questions the child or young person may have and reassure them as necessary. It is also an opportunity to identify any other potential issues which may arise during the conversation.

Practicalities of the conversation:

- Who should be present at the conversation?
- Where and when will the conversation take place?
- Do I have/need consent to speak to the child/young person? Generally, consent should be sought from the child's parents/carers, unless obtaining that consent places the child or young person at risk. For example, if the child has made an allegation of abuse against a parent or carer, seeking consent would place the child or young person at risk of harm.

Who should be present?

When speaking to a child/young person it is important to create a safe space where they can talk freely. Who is present during this conversation could potentially compromise the child or young person's ability to speak freely and/or honestly if their presence makes the young person feel uncomfortable.

Deciding on the most appropriate person:

- Does the young person have an existing relationship with this person?
- Is this a positive relationship, or has there even been conflict between this individual and the young person?
- Would this person being present during the conversation compromise this relationship in any way?
- Would this person being present embarrass the young person or prevent them from speaking freely?
- Does this person have any influence over the young person, perceived or otherwise?
- Is this person closely associated with the person there is an allegation against?
- Would the young person worry that this person being present will have a negative impact on team selection or their future success at the club?

Regardless of the nature of the concern, the child or young person should also have the opportunity to have another trusted adult, of their choice, present with them during the conversation for support. This could be a parent/carer, a teacher or another adult at the club. Depending on the nature of the concern, it may be necessary for the child's parents to be part of the conversation, even if the young person has expressed a desire for them not to be. For example, if the concern is of a serious nature, if the concern is about the conduct of the child/young person, the potential consequences etc.

Even if the child/young person chooses not to have another person with them, those responding to a concern **must never meet with the child/young person alone**. Another appropriate adult from the club/Association **must** be present when speaking to the child/young person. However, this **must never** be someone who is directly involved in the concern e.g. the person who there is an allegation against.

Choosing the correct environment

It is important to ensure that the conversation takes place in a safe space. Best practice would be to ask the child or young person where they will feel most comfortable to talk, if this is appropriate.

Top tips for choosing the correct environment:

- Ask the child or young person where they would feel most comfortable to talk
- Choose an open space that still allows for privacy – consider not only whether the place allows for you not to be heard but also for you not to be seen e.g. if the concern is about the conduct of a coach, the child or young person may not want their coach to see them talking to you
- Choose a child friendly space – this means avoiding formal settings e.g. can you avoid sitting across a desk or table from the child or young person, can you add soft furnishings etc.
- Choose a place which is comfortable e.g. is there seating, is it too warm or too cold, is it too noisy?
- Make sure the space is big enough for everyone who will be present at the meeting and to respect personal but close enough to allow you to communicate with each other
- Avoid a place where you are likely to be interrupted. If this cannot be guaranteed, take the necessary action to prevent or minimise any interruptions or distractions

Choosing the correct time

Choosing the correct time to speak to a child or young person is equally as important. Having the conversation at a time which is not in the best interests of the child/young person may result in the conversation being unproductive.

Top tips for choosing the correct time:

- Allow plenty of time for the meeting – there is no telling how long the conversation will last therefore adequate time must be given so that no one feels rushed
- Avoid arranging the meeting at a time when the child will miss out on an activity, e.g. during training or a match
- If the conversation is taking place before a football activity, allow sufficient time to ensure the child or young person is not pre-occupied or worried about being late
- If the conversation is taking place before an activity, consider if the nature of the conversation will compromise the child/young person's enjoyment of the activity
- If the conversation is taking place after a football activity the child/young person, keep in mind they may feel hungry, tired or upset about the result of their performance. They may also have people (parents/carers, other young people) waiting on them which may distract them

Understanding young people's barriers

Before engaging in a conversation with a child or young person it is important to remember how difficult it can be for them to talk to adults, particularly if it is a sensitive or upsetting conversation. It may not be easy for the child/young person to tell you what they saw, heard or how they feel, you may need to draw these answers from the child.

There can be many reasons why a child or young person does not want to or is unable to talk, e.g. they may:

- Not trust you or do not know if they can trust you
- Have spoken to you, or someone else before, and did not see any change or outcome
- Be worried that they will get into trouble for talking to you

- Feel worried or anxious that they will lose their place in the team or have to leave the club as a result of talking to you
- Be worried that someone they care about will get into trouble
- Be worried about the reaction of others, e.g. other adults at the club or their teammates
- Feel embarrassed or ashamed
- Feel a sense of loyalty towards the person the concern is about
- Be afraid that talking to you will make things worse

Understanding these barriers will help you engage more effectively with a child/young person. If the child or young person is not initially chatty or forthcoming, be patient and be prepared to try again at another time. It can take time for the child or young person to build up trust in an adult. Do not vent, show frustration and/or anger towards a child if they are reluctant to speak. As the conversation progresses the child/young person may begin to feel more comfortable, if this is the case you may be able to ask questions that they were reluctant to answer at the start of the conversation.

Instead you should reassure the child by using phrases such as:

- *I am here to listen and to try to help in any way I can*
- *I might not have all of the answers, or be able to tell you exactly what will happen but if something is worrying you it is better to talk to someone*
- *It is part of my job to make sure that you are treated fairly and feel safe and respected at this club*

Starting the conversation

Children and young people are more likely to open up and talk freely and honestly with someone that they already have a safe, positive and trusting relationship with. As such it **may** be more appropriate for another person to lead the conversation with the child e.g. the other trusted adult who is present at the meeting, such as the coach, with the CWPO taking on a more observatory role at this meeting. The responsibility for responding to the concern rests with the CWPO, or the designated member of staff/volunteer if it would not be appropriate for the CWPO to respond, and that person must be involved in this conversation. Even if the decision is taken for another person to lead the conversation, the CWPO must take time before the meeting to agree on the questions which need to be asked in order to help the response to the concern.

Knowing how to start the conversation with a child or young person can be challenging and this can be especially true if matter to be discussed is of a sensitive nature. How to start the conversation will depend on a number of factors, however, there are some basic things which should be covered at the start of every conversation.

For example:

- Explain your role to the child or young person and why you are talking to them
- Ensure they understand why the club is responding to the concern
- Explain what you will do with the information, including the reasons why you might need to share the information and who you would share it with
- Ensure that they understand the potential outcomes, especially if it is possible that they will be released from the club as a result of this conduct
- Reassure the child/young person that they can ask questions at any time throughout the conversation

When speaking to a child/young person in these circumstances it can be easy to forget that the conversation is a two way process. For children and young people to feel involved and respected what they say needs to be valued and the person speaking to them must show them that they are listening. Doing this will help to build trust and confidence.

What to do:

- Start by asking open questions to give the child or young person the opportunity to tell you what they think/feel/saw
- Don't interrupt, if you need to clarify anything the child/young person has said wait until they have finished speaking
- Give them time. If they take a while to answer do not rush or pressure them. They may be nervous, worried or upset
- Don't be afraid to let the child/young person ask you questions
- Make eye contact (Remember the 8 second rule)
- Reflect or repeat back what the child/young person has said to show your understanding
- Have courage, don't be put off by a negative response and most importantly don't feel you have to fill a silence

Useful introductions and conversation starters:

- *My name is _____, my role in the club is the child wellbeing and protection officer. It is my job to make sure children and young people are safe and happy at the club, and to help in any way I can if they are worried or upset about something*
- *I am going to ask you some questions about _____*
- *There will be some time at the end for you to ask any questions, however, you can ask at any time, or if there is anything you don't understand or need me to repeat then please say.*
- *Once I have spoken with everyone involved I will _____*
- *Can you tell me how things are going for you at the club?*
- *What's your favourite thing about the club?*
- *Is there anything you don't like at the club?*
- *Is there anything that is making you feel worried or sad?*
- *What is making you feel worried or sad?*
- *Is there someone you can speak to if you are worried or upset?*

Things to consider when speaking to children and young people:

- Be mindful of your body language, tone of voice and positioning in the room. Be careful not to stand over the child, appear threatening in any way or block any exits
- Show empathy and a willingness to understand the child/young person's perspective
- Monitor the child or young person throughout the conversation, look out for signs that they are becoming distressed, anxious or confused about what you are asking them

- Talk to a child or young person at their level
- Ask clear and concise questions
- Use simple language and keep sentences short
- Use familiar words
- Use your usual way of talking

Ending the conversation with a child or young person

How to end the conversation with a child or young person is equally as important as the start of conversation. Remember they may be upset, worried and/or anxious about what has been discussed.

Some useful ends to the conversation can include:

- *Thank you for talking to me and telling me how you feel*
- *Do you have any more questions for me*
- *If you think of anything later you can call/ text me on _____ or email me on _____*
- *If you are worried about anything or want to talk again then I am here to listen*
- *Do you have someone you can talk to later if you are upset or worried*

Appendix 6 – Timeline

All concerns about the wellbeing of a child or young person, or about the conduct of an adult(s), must be responded to in an orderly and timely manner.

The timeline below should be used as a general guide when responding to any concerns. There may be occasions when the timescales will vary because of circumstances specific to the concern. However, safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of a child or young person must always be the priority. This is particularly important if there are delays or where there is a need for more urgent action due to the nature of the concern.

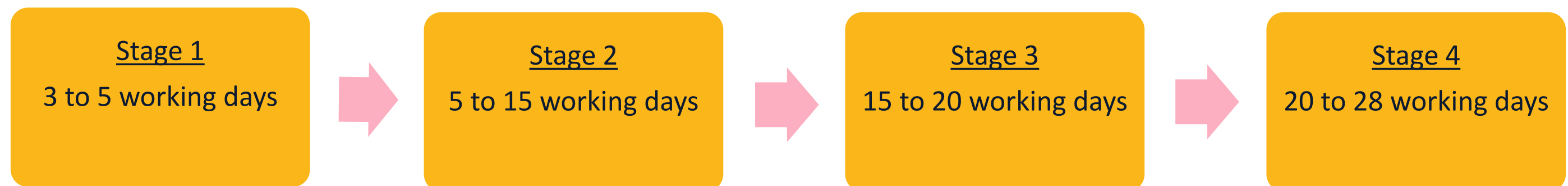
At every point in the timeline you should:

- Consider the wellbeing of the child or young person and what can be done to support them
- Contact the Scottish FA's Wellbeing and Protection team or your Affiliated National Association if there is any uncertainty on how to proceed or if advice and support is required
- Consider if information needs to be shared with another person or agency to safeguard the wellbeing of a child or young person, including with the Scottish FA if a child, young person or adult concerned is involved elsewhere in football or sport

The best interests of the child must always be the priority

Any concerns that a child or young person is at an immediate risk of harm should be reported to the police and/or social work services without delay

Timeline



Stage 1 – Initial Considerations

1. Next working day after receipt of the concern

- By the next working day receipt of the concern should have been formally acknowledged. Even if the concern has been given verbally, it is best practice to follow up with written communication. An example of how to acknowledge receipt of the concern in the 'Acknowledgement of Concern' template.
- Consider whether there is an immediate risk to the child or young person and if there is take the necessary action.

2. 3-5 working days

Within the first 3-5 working days the next steps of the response should be planned out.

The planning should include but is not limited to:

- Consider if, based on the information available, any immediate action is required. For example, a precautionary suspension or a removal from regulated work, or if the information requires to be shared etc.
- Ensure there is a sufficient understanding of the concern in order to proceed to gathering information (stage 2). This should be done by speaking to the person/s who reported the concern and, if necessary, obtaining more information. Be clear on *your* understanding of the concern, and clarify or seek further information on anything which is unclear. For example “*my understanding of your concern is that...*” This helps to avoid any misunderstandings and prevents additional concerns potentially being raised at the conclusion of the response.
- If appropriate, agree with the person who reported the concern when they can expect to hear from you with updates on the progress of the response and the likely time it will take to reach a conclusion. You will find more information on how to agree timescales in the section below.
- **If appropriate**, notify the person who the concern has been raised about. Do not disclose too much information as this could be seen as colluding or tipping the person off. If the concern relates to possible criminal conduct and has been reported to the police then you **MUST NOT** notify the person about the concern until the police have indicated that the person can be told. See 'Notification of Concern' Template.

Agreeing timescales

It is important to agree expected timescales with all relevant parties e.g. the person who has reported the concern, the person who made a disclosure and/or the person who the concern is about. Agreeing timescales can include letting them know when and how you will provide updates on the progress of your response and when you expect to reach a conclusion. This will help to manage the expectations of everyone involved and reassure them that the concern is being addressed appropriately and in line with the Responding to concerns procedure.

Stage 2 – Information Gathering

3. 5-15 working days

Unless the concern has been reported to the police and they have advised that, at this time, you should not respond to the concern, within 5-10 working days you should begin to gather relevant information.

To do this:

- Review the information you have received so far.
- Consider what additional information you need to find out and how this will be obtained, e.g. speak to relevant people, observe training sessions or games or review information already held by the club/association.
- **If appropriate**, speak to the child or young person(s) and/or their parents and carers.
- Speak to the people you have identified as having information relevant to the concern.
- If the concern is about the conduct of an adult, speak to the person against whom the concern has been raised.

Stage 3 – Analysis

4. 15-20 working days

Within 15-20 working days you should have concluded gathering information and be ready to progress to Stage 3 –Analysis.

To do this you should:

- Review the information you have gathered and consider if you need to speak to anyone else or gather any further information.
- Analyse the information you have gathered as part of your assessment
- Consult with and/or seek advice from other members of the club, for example committee or board members.
- Reach a conclusion and decide what action, if any, you need to take

Stage 4 – Action

5. 20-28 working days

Within 20-28 working days carry out or put into place any action you have identified as necessary to respond to the concern.

Within this timescale you should:

- Inform relevant parties of the outcome. See 'Notification of decision' Template.
- Ensure there is an accurate record of the information you have gathered, the outcome and any further action required. (See Template – Recording Response).
- If applicable, action any disciplinary outcome required for a staff member or volunteer e.g. issue a formal warning.
- If applicable, make a referral to any relevant external agencies, e.g. Disclosure Scotland.
- Identify and plan any further education or training needs.
- Reflect on the learning as a result of the concern.

Delays to a response

Regular updates should be given to all relevant parties. The first update should be within **10 working days of acknowledging the concern, and on a weekly basis thereafter**. However, each case is unique and this may not always be possible or practical. All timescales should be realistic and based on individual circumstances and **must always** be in accordance with the principle that best interests of the child is the paramount consideration.

When agreeing timescales for providing updates you should take into account:

- The complexity and nature of the concern
- How many people you need to speak to
- The availability and working patterns of the people you need to speak to
- Your own capacity and other commitments, including other concerns that you may already be responding to

An outcome should be reached and any actions identified within a calendar month. Your response should not be ongoing beyond this point unless there is a valid reason that a conclusion cannot be reached. For example, if you have been unable to start your response on the advice of the police.

If a outcome cannot be reached within a calendar month you should reflect on why this. For example:

- Have you been unable to speak to key witnesses or people with information relevant to the concern?
- Why have you been unable to speak to them? Is there a valid reason for this, or is the person avoiding speaking to you?
- Is there important information missing? Do you need this information to conclude your assessment?
- Have you received conflicting information from different people which requires further clarification?
- Are you unsure of what action to take and require advice and support?

In the event of any delays, consider whether a decision can be made in the best interests of the child/young person based on the information that is already available. If the answer is **yes** then you should proceed to make a decision. However, if it is the best interests of the child/young person to wait for the information to be available, then you should delay making a final decision.

The decision to delay reaching an outcome should take in account the following factors:

- The significance and relevance of the missing information to the concern
- The length of time until this information will be available
- Fairness to the other parties involved in the concern, e.g. if the concern relates to the conduct of another person

If there is going to be a delay the wellbeing of the child or young person should continue to be monitored and appropriate support provided to them.

The decision to delay reaching a conclusion should reviewed on an ongoing basis and the above factors should consistently be considered.