

Responding to Non-Recent Allegations of Abuse

N.B It is advised to use the following terms - survivors and not victims, and non-recent allegations not historical abuse, as some language can further offend.

It is possible that non-recent allegations of abuse can be made a number of years after the actual incident. This may be because of a **change in circumstances for either the survivor** or the alleged perpetrator. Any non-recent allegations must follow the current Athletics NI safeguarding procedures and if there are grounds for concern then statutory authorities must be informed (Police or HSCT Gateway Teams). The following points should also be considered;

- Clearly establish with the adult complainant if there may be any children currently at risk of harm from the person they are saying abused them as a child
- Advise the person making the complaint that they should inform the Police. Encourage them to do so while acknowledging the brave steps they have already taken in beginning to talk about their experience as a child. It is important that the person knows that there is a likelihood that an abuser will not have stopped abusing after their individual abuse ended and if the person harmed them they could be continuing to cause harm to others. This needs to be done without reinforcing the inappropriate guilt the survivor may already have for not coming forward earlier.
- If the complainant refuses to talk to the statutory authorities but has provided you with enough identifying factors then this information **MUST** be shared with the police. This breach of the complainants' confidence is only appropriate if there is any potential that the alleged perpetrator is still a risk to children or could face prosecution (i.e. they are alive). Remember the welfare of the child is paramount not the desire of the person providing you with the information/complaint for secrecy and this should be explained at the earliest possible stage
- Offer support to the complainant when making a formal complaint to the police.
- Signpost the complainant to support agencies that can provide counselling for example;

NEXUS <http://www.nexusni.org/>

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When an adult making a complaint chooses not to report the matter to the police and you have already discussed the possibility of any child still being at risk you **MUST** follow (name of sports) reporting procedures and inform the PSNI or Gateway Team immediately of any identifying features of the allegation including the name of the alleged abuser. The person making the complaint should be informed that this is the organisations moral and legal responsibility (Criminal Law Act 1967). If the individual wishes to remain anonymous this should be respected but again explaining that without any further cooperation there may be little action the Police can take to protect others. Encourage them to talk directly to the Gateway Teams if not the Police in order to enable social services to consider if there is any action they can take to protect children at risk, as their threshold for intervention is lower than the evidence required for any criminal justice prosecution .