

DEFINE

Children can be vulnerable to many forms of abuse - physical, sexual, or emotional, or neglectful. All of these should be treated seriously and can occur anywhere - including in our clubs. It can be inflicted by men, women, or even other children.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

This may include:

- Any type of physical punishment or assault that leaves bruising or cuts.
- Hitting, beating, biting, burning.
- Strangulation (which may or may not leave marks).

In sport physical abuse also includes situations where the nature or intensity of training is consistently inappropriate for the age of the child or young person or causes physical harm to them.

SEXUAL ABUSE

This occurs when someone who is usually older, stronger and more powerful involves a child in some sort of activity for their own sexual pleasure. It does not always have to involve physical force or even touching. For example, it might involve showing a child sexually explicit material, sending inappropriate text messages, or asking for nude photos.

In a team environment, sexual abuse might include:

- Allowing sexualised bullying of a player (for example lling down a player's pants).
- Encouraging sexually suggestive games, for example games that remove clothing or encourage children or young people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE, BULLYING OR HARASSMENT

Emotional abuse is an ongoing pattern of behaviour that affects a child's wellbeing and development. This may include:

- Rejecting, ignoring or isolating.
- Degrading or humiliating.
- Verbally abusing or terrorising a child.

These same behaviours can also occur in the digital environment. For example, on the Internet, in gaming with others or on mobile phones. Encouraging a person to commit suicide online is also a form of emotional abuse and is now against the law.

Online abuse is an increasing concern and should be treated with the same seriousness as face-to-face abuse and bullying.

NEGLECT

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child or young person's basic needs, causing long term harm to their health or development. This might be through lack of food, shelter, or medical care.



CHILD PROTECTION



PREVENT

Prevention starts with the kind of environment we create for kids. Any space that encourages children to talk about their concerns and encourages adults to listen, believe and act on these concerns, is an environment where harm is much less likely to occur and more likely to be taken seriously if it does happen.

INCREASE GENERAL AWARENESS

Talk about child protection in your communications with parents, coaches and kids, share your policy and make it clear how to contact your Child Protection Advisor (CPA).

POLICE VETTING

Follow the New Zealand Rugby (NZR) policies on police vetting. Your club may choose to extend vetting to all volunteers and staff who work with under 18s.

SET CLEAR RULES

Some clear rules to help keep everyone safe include:

- Having acceptable touching rules between adults and children.
- Ensuring clothes are worn at weigh-ins.
- Having rules about respecting children's privacy (in bathrooms/showers).

BEING AWARE OF OTHERS

It's okay to ask questions if we see behaviours such as:

- An adult or older child consistently seeking alone time or having especially close relationships with particular children.
- Buying gifts or giving money for no apparent reason.
- Overstepping children's personal boundaries, for example making a child to sit on their lap.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Where possible ask parents/caregivers to be responsible for their children or young people in changing rooms. Always ensure that whoever supervises does so in pairs.

OVERNIGHT STAYS

Follow NZR good practice guides for overnight stays. Simple steps include:

- Having two supervising adults, ideally male and female coach or helper.
- Ensure adults never sleep alone with a child (other than their own).
- Appointing a contact person to provide information and be a contact for parents.

PERSONAL CONTACT

Limit unnecessary personal contact between adults and children. If it's necessary to do things of a personal nature for a child, it is recommended you:

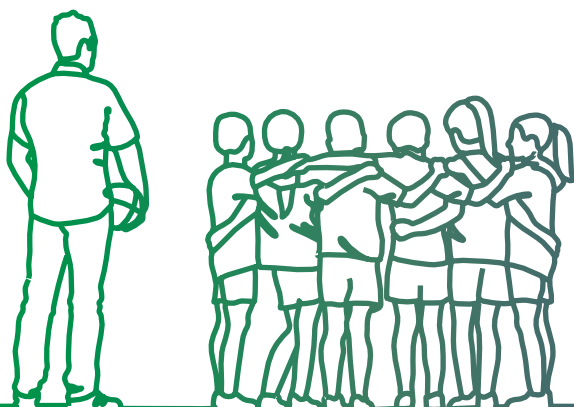
- Have another adult present.
- Where you can, get the consent of the parent/caregiver and if possible the child.
- Explain what you are doing and why.

PRIVACY

Ensure that use of photographic images and video are aligned to relevant privacy policies.

ALCOHOL

All people responsible for children and young people should always remain in an alcohol-free state so they can react appropriately to any situation that might arise.



CHILD PROTECTION



RESPOND

All concerns of child abuse should be acted upon. It is vital that you do not do your own investigation, and instead report them to a trained Child Protection Advisor (CPA) who can take the appropriate action.



Your CPA will know:

- The decision-making process for concerns of child abuse.
- The contact details of your local police and Ministry for Vulnerable Children.
- How to help you record your concerns on the template provided.

PROCESS FOR RESPONDING

Listen carefully to what the child is saying, do not interview the child. The only thing you should ask are 'who, where, when?'. Once you have established the facts, do not question them further. Disclosures may not always seem clear. We need to handle these with care.

REASSURE

Tell the child they have done the right thing by telling. Don't promise not to tell anyone else or a particular outcome. For example, 'I will keep you safe'.

CONTACT THE POLICE ON 111 IF THE CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER.

The police have a dedicated team of investigators who focus on child protection in all 12 districts. They will take over the process and can advise you.

IF THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE DANGER

RE-ENGAGE

If the child is distressed, offer support until they are ready to re-engage in activities.

RECORD

As soon as possible, document what the child has said word for word. Include time, date and who was present, so you can pass this information to authorities. Record factual observations not opinions.

REPORT

Contact your Provisional Union's CPA to either report your concern or advise that you have contacted police and the outcome. Your CPA can help you contact the Ministry for Vulnerable Children and get advice from their specialist team.

If you are unable to reach your CPA, inform a supervisor or manager at your Provincial Union.

Deciding when and who will inform the caregivers will be determined by Ministry of Vulnerable Children and police in consultation with your Provisional Union's CPA.

**CONTACT MVCOT ON
0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459)
OR CONTACT@MVCOT.GOV.NZ**

STORE INFORMATION

Record concerns, related discussions, advice, actions and rationale. Club committees and Provisional Union's need to store these securely with reference to the Privacy Act. Recording and storing information properly helps identify patterns and protects the identity of those accused and affected.

GET SUPPORT

Dealing with possible child abuse can be hard for the person handling the concern. Talk with your Provisional Union about getting support through the process and having a confidential debrief.

WHAT IF I AM WRONG?

Under the law any person who believes that a child has been, or is likely to be harmed, may report the matter to Ministry of Vulnerable Children or the police. Provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.