



## Paralympics Ireland Recognising and Reporting Abuse of Vulnerable Adults/Adults at Risk Policy

Date:	Reviewed by:	Version Number:	Note:
10/04/2024	TE and Governance Committee	1	TE

### 1. Introduction

All adults have the right to live free from abuse regardless of their circumstances. Safeguarding

means putting measures in place to uphold these rights to reduce risk of harm for those who are at risk/vulnerable. A vulnerable adult is an adult who may be restricted in capacity to guard himself / herself against harm or exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation. The restriction of capacity may arise as a result of physical or intellectual impairment vulnerability.<sup>1</sup> This term will at time be interchanged with ‘adults at risk’.

[<sup>1</sup>HSE Vulnerable Adult Definition](#)

Abuse of a vulnerable person may be a single act or repeated over a period of time and may comprise one form or multiple forms of abuse (see list of definitions in section 4).

People with disabilities may be particularly vulnerable due to; diminished social skills, dependence on others for personal and intimate care, capacity to report, sensory difficulties, isolation, and power differentials.<sup>2</sup>

[<sup>2</sup>HSE Vulnerable Factors](#)

## **2. Policy Statement**

This policy is created following guidance from Safeguarding Ireland, the HSE and the “*Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse - National Policy and Procedure (2014)*”.

Paralympics Ireland requires all employees and volunteers to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, to the designated persons or statutory authorities.

## **3. Application**

This policy applies to all Paralympics Ireland employees (including those on permanent or fixed term contracts and work placement) and volunteers. We all have a duty of care to report any allegation, disclosure or concerns of abuse.

## **4. Types/Definitions of Abuse<sup>3</sup>**

There are several forms of abuse, any, or all of which may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or lack of insight and ignorance. A person may experience more than one form of abuse at any one time. The HSE define the following as the main categories/types of abuse.

- ***Physical Abuse*** includes slapping, hitting, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.
- ***Sexual Abuse*** includes rape and sexual assault, or sexual acts to which the vulnerable person has not consented, or could not consent, or into which he or she was compelled to consent.

- **Psychological Abuse** includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation, or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
- **Financial or Material Abuse** includes theft, fraud, exploitation; pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions; or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Institutional Abuse** may occur within residential care and/or acute settings including nursing homes, acute hospitals, and any other in-patient settings and may involve, for example, poor standards of care, rigid routines or inadequate responses to complex needs.
- **Neglect and Acts of Omission** include ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and/or heating.
- **Discriminatory Abuse** includes ageism, racism, sexism, based on a person's disability and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.
- **Institutional Abuse** may occur within residential care and acute settings including nursing homes, acute hospitals, and any other inpatient settings, and may involve poor standards of care, rigid routines and inadequate responses to complex needs.

[3HSE Abuse Definition](#)

## 5. **Recognition of Abuse**<sup>4</sup>

Abuse can be committed by any person who has contact with a vulnerable person, including a member of their family, community or a friend, informal carer, healthcare/ social care or other worker. Signs of abuse can fall in different categories such as physical, neglect, and financial.

Physical	Neglect	Financial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Unexplained bruises, marks, or injuries</li> <li>○ Unusual weight loss</li> <li>○ Dirty, or unsafe living conditions</li> <li>○ Anxiety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Inexplicable shortage of money</li> <li>○ Suspicious addition of names to financial accounts</li> <li>○ Unexpected changes to will, or Power of Attorney</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Poor hygiene</li> <li>○ Development of bed sores</li> <li>○ Hunger.</li> </ul>

[4Safeguarding Ireland Abuse Recognition Factors](#)

Abuse can be difficult to identify and may present in many forms. No one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse. It may indicate conditions other than abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the context of the person's situation and family circumstances.

## **6. Responding to Disclosure<sup>5</sup>**

If the Vulnerable Adult has made a direct disclosure of abuse or is upset and distressed about an abusive incident, listen to what he/she says and ensure he/she is given the support needed. It is important to consider the below guidance.

- Do not appear shocked or display negative emotions
- Do not press the individual for details
- Do not make judgments
- Do not promise to keep secrets
- Do not give sweeping reassurances

<sup>5</sup>[HSE Disclosure Advice](#)

## **7. Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Abuse**

The following steps should be taken in reporting abuse to the statutory authorities:

- (a) observe and note dates, times, locations, and contexts in which the incident occurred, or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information
- (b) report the matter as soon as possible to the Paralympics Ireland Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) with responsibility for reporting abuse. The DSO will inform the Paralympics Ireland Designated Team – this consists of relevant organizational personnel (e.g. Management, CEO, Board etc.), and escalate where appropriate. The DSO along with those relevant personnel will establish if there are reasonable grounds for concern (believing that the vulnerable adult has been abused or is at risk of abuse).
- (c) S/He will make a report to the HSE or the organisation in that jurisdiction who has statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual abuse. Reporting is done through community referral forms which are submitted to the Safeguarding and Protection Teams (SPT's) for the relevant Community Healthcare Organisations (CHO's) (*see Appendix 1*).
- (d) If there is an immediate and serious risk of harm to a person, the call the Gardaí at 999 or 112.
- (e) If the DSO is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist s/he can informally consult (*see Appendix 1*) with the local statutory agencies (HSE) seeking advice as to threshold of harm and if official reporting is required. S/he will be advised whether the matter requires a formal report. If no formal report is required, the relevant organisational personnel will be informed. Paralympics Ireland should ensure they have out of hours contact numbers for training events they are

organizing within Ireland for their local area.

- (f) It is recommended as best practice by the HSE to both inform the person who is subject of the report and to also obtain consent. However, if it is felt that doing such would be of further harm to the person then a report can be made in absence of these factors.

## **8. Guidelines about responding to an allegation about a staff member/volunteer**

Should Paralympics Ireland become aware of an allegation of abuse of a vulnerable adult by a coach/volunteer during the execution of that coaches/volunteer's duties, the Designated Safeguarding Officer, following consultation with statutory services and relevant organizational personnel, will privately inform the coach/volunteer of the following:

- the fact that the allegation has been made against him/her;
- the nature of the allegation.

The coach/volunteer should be afforded an opportunity to respond following advice from statutory services. The Designated Safeguarding Officer will note the response and pass on this information when making the formal report to the relevant authority. All subsequent actions following an allegation of abuse against a coach/volunteer will be taken in consultation with the HSE, HSCT, PSNI and An Garda Síochána. An immediate meeting will be sought with these agencies for this purpose. The Paralympics Ireland Designated Safeguarding Person is also available to provide support and advice.

Under Paralympics Ireland rules, any coach/volunteer/manager who is the subject of a statutory investigation into alleged child abuse, is required to stand down from all Paralympics Ireland activities until the investigation is completed. Therefore, the Paralympics Ireland Designated Safeguarding Person must be informed immediately of any formal notification to the Statutory Authorities, by another party. When a person is asked to stand down it should be made clear that it is only a precautionary measure in keeping with standard procedures/guidelines and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings.

The coach/volunteer concerned should be advised that the procedures being undertaken are in accordance with statutory requirements. He or she should be treated with respect and fairness and be assured that all information will be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner. Paralympics Ireland will carefully consider the outcome of the statutory investigation

and will then assess if there are any outstanding disciplinary issues in relation to their internal rules or infringements of the Paralympics Ireland best practice guidelines. It must be remembered that the fact that the alleged abuser has not been prosecuted or been found guilty does not mean that they are appropriate to work with young people in the future. Internal Paralympics Ireland disciplinary proceedings can only be initiated after the Statutory Authorities have completed theirs.

### **9. For Northern Ireland Only**

Paralympics Ireland are aware of their duty under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) 2007 Order to refer information to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). In all cases there are two conditions, both must be met to trigger a referral to the DBS by a regulated activity provider. A referral must be made to the DBS when a regulated activity provider, such as an employer or volunteer coordinator withdraws permission for an individual to engage in regulated activity, or would have done so had that individual not resigned, retired, been made redundant or been transferred to a position which is not regulated activity; because:

- they think that the individual has:
- engaged in relevant conduct;
- satisfied the Harm Test; or
- received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence.

An employer or voluntary club/organization is breaking the law if they don't refer someone on the DBS for any of the above reasons. If you want help referring someone to the DBS, contact the DBS referrals helpline. If both conditions have been met the information must be referred to the DBS. The referral should be made to the DBS when the regulated activity provider has gathered sufficient evidence as part of their investigations to support their reasons for withdrawing permission to engage in regulated activity and in following good practice, consulted with their Health and Social Care if appropriate.

### **10. Designated Safeguarding Officer/Person Details**

The Designated Safeguarding Person for Paralympics Ireland is; **Tara Evans**  
She may be contacted at (01) 6251175 or at [tara@paralympics.ie](mailto:tara@paralympics.ie) Emergency no: 087 202 5507

## **Appendix 1**

## Useful Contact Details

- **Health Service Executive (HSE) Details:** There are HSE Safeguarding and Protection Teams in place all over the country to provide help via nine different community healthcare organisations/regions. Details of CHO's can be found here [Safeguarding Protection Teams Contact Details](#).
- **Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Details:** The Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) can provide advice via their gateway teams to those who have a concern of abuse. A template report form can be requested from the HSCT team during consultation – details for gateway teams can be found here [HSCT Gateway Teams Contact Details](#) Out of hours the Emergency Social Work service is available by phone on 0044 28 9504 999.
- **HSE Community Referral Form Details:** Reporting of abuse of vulnerable persons is completed via community referral forms which are to be sent to the relevant region/CHO. Each community referral form can be found for download here [HSE Community Referral Forms](#).
- **Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Details:** The Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) can provide advice via their gateway teams to those who have a concern of abuse. A template report form can be requested from the HSCT team during consultation – details for gateway teams can be found here [HSCT Gateway Teams Contact Details](#) Out of hours the Emergency Social Work service is available by phone on 0044 28 9504 999.