

WORLD ATHLETICS SAFEGUARDING POLICY



WORLD
ATHLETICS

OCTOBER 2021



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1. Foreword

Safeguarding our athletes from abuse, harassment and exploitation is not just the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do when you have an ambition to grow your sport.

But words are not enough: action is required to make our athletes feel safe and supported – and there have been some sobering reminders recently of the challenges sport faces.

Having a written policy is important because it sets expectations, defines the specific roles and responsibilities of our Member Federations, Area Associations and World Athletics in protecting our athletes. Most importantly it gives confidence and trust to our athletes that there are structures and processes in place to report safeguarding abuse. In short that we will listen and we will act at every level in our sport.

When people talk about “safeguarding”, they often think of protecting children from harm. Perfectly understandable as this is, we want to try and ensure that all those involved in athletics – whether children or adults – are protected from abuse, harassment and exploitation.

It goes without saying, but I will say this nonetheless - if an athletics club or school or community sports environments are safe and happy places for those in our sport, we will be much better placed to retain our athletes and attract new athletes to our sport.

In order to achieve this, we need a clear set of guidelines so that Member Federations can align the work that I know many are currently doing in the safeguarding space, so we have a consistent approach across athletics. This in turn will help Member Federations to educate their own clubs and athletics communities. Area Associations also have a key role to play as they can help their members share and exchange best practice.

But we know the implementation is more complicated than the ambition so we have created, and will continue to develop, a series of materials to help Member Federations to create their own Safeguarding Policy that is promoted, policed and aligned to local law enforcement by 2023. These policies will apply in each respective country for those who take part in athletics in clubs or other community sports environments.

I am extremely grateful for the work that has been done by our working group to develop our Safeguarding Policy in a short space of time. This is just the start. We are in the foothills when it comes to standardising safeguarding across our sport. But we have big ambitions and goals so we will keep our Safeguarding Policy under annual review by the World Athletics’ Council. We need to move to a minimum set of safeguarding standards, and we need to do this quickly.

Safeguarding – and by that I mean our actions, not our words – is not just one of a list of activities and actions for which we need to tick the box or a nice to have when we have the time. Safeguarding is more than just a line in our integrity code of conduct. We need action – individually and collectively. We owe this to our athletes competing now and in the future.



President, World Athletics



2. Introduction

World Athletics is responsible for growing the sport of athletics, creating inspiring, appealing and accessible competitions and leading by example. World Athletics believes that everyone in athletics should be treated with respect and dignity, and be protected from harassment, abuse and exploitation. To help achieve this goal, World Athletics is committed to ensuring that persons in positions of authority and influence in athletics adopt practices aimed at eliminating harassment, abuse and exploitation.

World Athletics takes its responsibilities for creating safe and positive environments for all in, and involved with, the athletics community seriously. To this end, it has developed a Safeguarding Policy to guide the stakeholders to guard against harassment, abuse and exploitation in order to inspire and grow the sport. The policy clearly outlines the scope, objectives, guiding principles as well as implementation framework. It further provides available resources that complement its implementation such as the IOC safeguarding toolkit, the World Athletics Integrity Code and International Safeguards for Children in Sport among others.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to World Athletics, its Area Associations, Member Federations, athletes, staff and any other person affiliated with World Athletics. Each Area Association and Member Federation is required to comply with this Policy and any other policies related to safeguarding in athletics and to take all steps required by World Athletics to ensure that everyone associated with athletics is protected from harassment, abuse and exploitation.

4. What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the process of protecting vulnerable persons, children and adults, from harassment, abuse and exploitation. Creating a safe and welcoming environment, where everyone is respected and valued, is at the heart of safeguarding. Everyone involved with athletics has a role to play in making sure they actively prevent harassment, abuse or exploitation, listen to accounts from children and adults of their experiences and respond safely and fully if there is a problem.

5. World Athletics' Integrity Code of Conduct

World Athletics' Integrity Code of Conduct at Rule 3 requires all Applicable Persons as defined in the Code to meet the standards, one of which is:

“Dignity: to safeguard the dignity of individuals and not to engage, (directly or indirectly) in any form of harassment or abuse, whether physical, verbal, mental, sexual or otherwise.”

It is essential for all those who are subject to the Integrity Code of Conduct to behave in ways that meet the highest ethical standards.

6. Principles

- Everyone has the right to participate, enjoy and develop personally through athletics in a safe, inclusive environment free from all forms of harassment, abuse or exploitation.
- Everyone, both children and adults, has the right to have their voices heard particularly if raising a concern about their own or another person's welfare. Everyone should know who to ask for help when they have a concern about an individual's behaviour.
- Everyone, and particularly those involved in planning or delivering programmes for children, is responsible for the care and protection of children, making decisions in

their best interests as their welfare is paramount.

- Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to be free from discrimination whether it is based on sex, race, age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation or gender identity, beliefs, religious or political affiliation.

7. Purpose

World Athletics is committed to safeguarding all those associated with athletics from abuse, harassment and exploitation as well as upholding these principles. In creating safe and positive environments everyone is able to work, compete and enjoy the sport with the confidence that World Athletics is taking its duty of care seriously.

This Policy is designed to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities within the safeguarding landscape. In brief these are:

- Implementation and embedding this Policy
- Raising awareness of harassment, abuse and exploitation
- Developing and delivering education and training for those involved in athletics
- Supporting victims of abuse, harassment and exploitation
- Vetting and recruitment of staff and volunteers in line with acceptable ethical practices
- Responding to concerns raised
- Reporting concerns expeditiously
- Establishing partnerships with organisations and institutions engaged in the prevention of abuse, harassment and exploitation within and beyond the sports sector

This Policy describes the procedures to be followed in the event harassment, abuse or exploitation occurs. It also sets out how those who suffer harassment, abuse or exploitation should be supported. Everyone should know to whom they can turn for help when they need to report a concern about a person associated with athletics, whether witnessed directly or through reports from others.

8. Implementation

World Athletics, Area Associations and Member Federations will work together to implement this Policy; this is everyone's responsibility and it is important to raise awareness of the subject across the sport through education and training. By raising awareness everyone will be able to recognise and respond appropriately to concerns of harassment, abuse and exploitation that they may witness or have reported to them. It is also important to recruit carefully, particularly but not only those working with children, providing new staff and volunteers with appropriate induction programmes where appropriate.

The successful implementation of this policy depends on mutual cooperation, partnership and solidarity and networking among the various stakeholders.

The following explains how this Policy will be implemented and embedded in athletics organisations:

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- World Athletics shall promote best practice throughout the athletics community by providing a safeguarding starter pack and guidance to help Area Associations and Member Federations implement this Policy.
- World Athletics shall improve and develop its workforce (whether volunteers or employees) to help the growth of the sport by the sharing of knowledge and skills. Providing education and training in safeguarding overseen by leaders in World Athletics will show that it is taken seriously by those at the highest level of the organisation.
- Everyone associated with athletics must adhere to appropriate codes of conduct including the Athletes' Integrity Pledge and the Integrity Code of Conduct. World Athletics shall endeavour to make this pledge and the Code widely known. World Athletics shall ensure that appropriate steps are taken when an individual subject to the Code fails to live up to its requirements.

- World Athletics, Area Associations and Member Federations shall promote physical and mental health and wellbeing of all those associated with athletics. This includes athletes not being subjected to unsafe, excessive or unwelcome training regimes, human trafficking, financial abuse or manipulation of their age or nationality.
- World Athletics shall review its reporting processes and disciplinary procedures for alleged incidents of abuse, harassment and exploitation for concerns raised by Applicable Persons (as defined in the World Athletics Integrity Code of Conduct) that fall within the jurisdiction of World Athletics and the Athletics Integrity Unit.
- World Athletics shall provide access to educational material and training material for its workforce as well as direct individuals to appropriate training courses delivered by specialist organisations.
- World Athletics shall monitor and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of this Policy by assessing how effectively Area Associations and Member Federations are addressing safeguarding in their respective territories by implementing the guidance provided by World Athletics.
- Area Associations and Member Federations should ensure that those recruited as part of their workforce (whether volunteers or employees) meet the safeguarding criteria established by any local legislation and any safeguarding policies and requirements set by public authorities which apply to them. They should also follow World Athletics' safeguarding guidance. The workforce must be regularly trained in safeguarding to ensure that it is capable of providing support and advice to their athletics communities and those who raise safeguarding concerns. Area Associations and Member Federations must ensure that their workforce (volunteers or employees alike) undertakes any mandatory training or education prescribed by World Athletics.
- Area Associations and Member Federations should assess risks and put into place measures to reduce identified risks. Training should be provided to staff and volunteers to help them understand and identify the additional risks some individuals are exposed to due to their race, gender, sex, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation or identity, social background or culture.
- Member Federations should consult with children, athletes and other stakeholders about safeguarding policies to ensure their voices are heard and to build confidence in the value and strength of safeguarding policies and procedures. Engagement will help build commitment to safeguarding in the wider athletics community.
- Area Associations and Member Federations must deal with all allegations and concerns in a confidential and discreet manner. Athletics bodies/organisations should not disclose personal information without prior consent and should do so only when necessary to protect an individual from harm or, or where it is required by law.

AREA ASSOCIATIONS AND MEMBER FEDERATIONS

- Area Associations and Member Federations should adopt and implement a safeguarding policy which follows local legislation and this Policy. This should include procedures to be followed when a concern is reported, including investigative and disciplinary processes. There should also be a clear and fair process for administering consistent and proportionate sanctions where warranted. Fair process must include notice and the right/opportunity to be heard before any sanction is imposed. Area Associations and Member Federations must inform the relevant public authorities where this is required by legislation and will work alongside local agencies and services to ensure that concerns are dealt with in line with local laws and regulations.

9. Reporting Procedures

Concerns that are raised must be referred to the relevant Member Federation for consideration under their safeguarding policy and to any other sports body authorized to limit a potential perpetrator's involvement in athletics. World Athletics' jurisdiction is to deal with safeguarding concerns arising from a World Athletics Series event and/or in relation to Applicable Persons in accordance with its rules and procedures. Safeguarding Rules to be adopted by World Athletics in 2022 will define clearly who is directly subject to World Athletics' oversight.

The individual responsible for safeguarding at World Athletics is Karena Vleck or her duly authorised deputy; she may be contacted through: safeguarding@worldathletics.org.

If the concern is one that requires law enforcement agencies to be involved, because of the nature of the incident or because it may be a crime, then it is essential that they are made aware of the matter as a priority. World Athletics will provide further guidance and training in relation to the respective responsibilities of sport organisations and public authorities.

If at any point anyone has a concern about an individual who requires medical support this should be sought in the first instance.

If an individual is at immediate risk of harm there should be no delay in reporting a matter to the emergency services. There are occasions when the consent of the individual to report a matter should be sought, taking into account their age and mental capacity. The capacity for consent of a child under the age of 12 is different from that of a child between the age of 12 and 18 and between a child and an adult. If an individual refuses to give consent the matter may still need to be reported. This may be an area that is addressed by local legislation or procedures and should be included in a Member Federation's safeguarding policy.

10. Resources

There are numerous useful and interesting resources available, a few of which are set out below. There are documents, videos and information about education and training all of which relate to creating a safe sporting environment.

- IOC Safeguarding Toolkit can be found [here](#).
- IOC Guidelines for International Federations (IFs) and National Olympic Committees (NOCs) related to creating and implementing a policy to safeguard athletes from harassment and abuse in sport may be found [here](#).
- World Athletics Integrity Code of Conduct can be found [here](#).
- International Safeguards for Children in Sport can be found [here](#).
- Safe Sport website with resources can be found [here](#).
- World Athletics Strategy can be found [here](#).

11. Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Council of World Athletics.



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DEFINITIONS

Child - a “child” or “children” refers to an individual or group of individuals who have not yet reached the age of 18 years old.

Harassment, abuse and exploitation are described below:

Psychological abuse is an unwelcome act including vilification, belittling, rejection, confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, infantilisation or any other behaviour which may diminish an individual’s sense of identity, dignity or self-worth. This is at the centre of most types of abuse as when these occur so does psychological abuse. This can often also be seen as bullying or cyber-bullying.

Physical abuse is any intentional or unwanted act for example kicking, beating, biting or burning which causes injury or physical harm. It can include the forced consumption of alcohol or systematic doping practices. It can also be any forced or inappropriate physical activity such as training which is unsuitable for the age of physique of the athlete. Forced or excessive training may escape notice in a sporting environment as the ambitions of both athletes and coaches, as well as peer pressure, may induce one or both to impose or take on excessive training loads and/or competition commitments. Dialogue among athletes and coaches aimed at setting mutually agreed and achievable performance goals can help define tolerable and acceptable training demands. It is up to coaches to temper ambitions that may run counter to an athlete’s health and wellbeing.

Sexual abuse is any conduct of a sexual nature, either contact (penetrative or non-penetrative) or non-contact, where consent is not given or cannot be given or is coerced or manipulated. This can involve individuals looking at or making sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging others to

behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a person in preparation for abuse. It can be perpetrated by both men and women and is often where one party is in a position of power over the other.

Grooming is the process whereby an individual builds a relationship with a child encouraging them to trust them so that the groomer can manipulate and exploit them for their own advantage. Grooming an athlete’s family, entourage and friends often leads those individuals to believe that the groomer is dependable and trustworthy enabling the groomer to have access to the athlete. By manipulating the athlete and exploiting the relationship they will make the athlete believe they have to comply with the groomer’s demands. The power a groomer has over the child is used to isolate them from friends and family who might otherwise warn or caution them from complying with the groomer’s demands.

Grooming can take place online as well as in person; online grooming is often much quicker often due to the groomer pretending to be younger and sometimes a different gender than they are in reality. Groomers may provide advice to a child as well as offering gifts or attention.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal or physical. Examples include unwanted or degrading intimate questions relating to body, clothes or one’s private life, jokes with a sexual innuendo and proposals or demands for non-consensual sexual acts. These may be unwanted text messages, telephone calls, letters or other form of communication with a sexual content. They may also include staring, gesticulation, or sharing photographs or pictures with sexual allusions. Examples of physical sexual harassment are unnecessary physical contact with a sexual nature such as pinching, attempting to kiss or caress or touching.

Exploitation is when someone exercises control over another person and/or their assets for their own “personal gain” and without the fully informed consent

of the person. Personal gain may be psychological, reputational or commercial and constitutes exploitation when the rights of a person are sold or negotiated without express and fully informed consent of the other person. Examples in athletics may be fraudulent misrepresentation of an athlete's age or nationality, acting on behalf of an athlete fraudulently or taking an unreasonable share of the proceeds of sponsorship or funding arrangements. Exploitation comes in many different guises. Examples include sexual exploitation, financial exploitation and signing up athletes to long term contracts while they are still children.

Neglect is the failure to provide a minimum level of care either physical or emotional which causes harm, allowing harm to be caused or creating an imminent danger of harm. This usually relates to the care given by parents or caregivers to children but is also relevant to other people who have a duty of care towards another person such as a coach or team leaders towards an athlete. This can include the failure to provide adequate water in high temperatures, adequate clothing in cold temperatures or failing to provide suitable food, accommodation or safe travel arrangements. Harassment and abuse may be based on race, religion, colour, beliefs, ethnic origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, socio-economic status and athletic ability or a combination of any of these characteristics. It can be a single isolated incident or a series of events, in person or online, deliberate, unsolicited or coercive. Bullying, hazing, negligence or homophobia are all other aspects of harassment or abuse and should be treated in the same way under the terms of this Policy.

Any of these forms of abuse, harassment and exploitation may include an aspect of financial abuse. It may be that an individual may be coerced or unwittingly induced into signing contracts or agreements which benefit others financially but are not necessarily of financial benefit to themselves. Any element of coercion may be considered to be abuse, harassment or exploitation if the individual is a child or if the individual has not authorized someone to act on their behalf or if they have not been adequately advised by an independent professional such as an accountant or lawyer on the impact of the terms of the agreement.

There may be times when actions which might not be abusive to one person may be considered to be abusive or harmful due to the vulnerability of the individual who is being abused. This may be due to the person's age, ability or other form of vulnerability.

Harassment abuse and exploitation often result from an abuse of authority by someone in a position of trust, meaning the improper use of power by someone in a position of influence, power or authority by an individual against another person.

World Athletics does not condone any form of abuse but understands that those involved in athletics will need to focus on pro-active measures directed to deterring the more severe forms of abuse.



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