



## RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

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## RESPONDING TO CONCERNS AND ALLEGATIONS (POOR PRACTICE AND/OR ABUSE)

The Aikido Alliance UK (hereinafter referred to as the Alliance) is committed to dealing with safeguarding issues raised in its affiliated clubs and will ensure that any persons raising concerns are supported in doing so if they raise that concern in good faith. The procedures in this document clarify how to raise a concern and give guidance on who will take any required action.

The Alliance does not expect anyone in aikido to decide if an issue they observe or that they have raised to them is one child abuse. BUT the Alliance does expect that individual to raise all concerns appropriately to the relevant person within the Club – or to the statutory agencies (Police or Children’s Social Care Team) or to the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer. The person contacted will depend on the nature of the concern and the individual’s availability.

The Alliance acknowledges that raising concerns is not always easy, particularly if you know the person(s) concerned and have trust in them. This is particularly true when raising concerns regarding a colleague. The Alliance has a whistleblowing policy as outlined later in this document to help guide such referrals.

The Alliance also requires any matter involving children to be kept confidential on a “need to know basis”. Later in this document there is guidance on managing confidentiality appropriately.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT A CHILD

The Alliance has developed this guidance document to safeguard children in aikido through best practice in all areas involving children. However, experience and child safeguarding studies suggest that risk can never be completely eliminated no matter how good the guidelines or how well they are actioned.

We therefore need to develop a culture in which children (and adults) can openly raise concerns and where they know they will be listened to and their concerns acted upon. Research shows that children have to disclose seven times on average before their disclosure is taken seriously. In Aikido we want to make sure that a child’s disclosure of concern is acted upon appropriately and swiftly at the first time of asking.

## WHAT IF YOU ARE UNSURE?

The Alliance fully recognises that it is not always easy to know whether to act. You might have seen something and just feel unsure about whether to report it. Under these circumstances it’s important to discuss your feelings and worries with someone. By talking to someone who understands issues around safeguarding and abuse you will be better able to decide what to do next. If you do feel unsure about the next step to take then here’s what to do:

- Don’t wait until you’re certain. If you have any concerns, contact the NSPCC’s free helpline service on 0808 800 5000. It’s open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The NSPCC’s trained advisors will listen and assess your concerns, offer advice and support and can take action on your behalf if a child is at risk. You can remain anonymous if you wish.
- If you think a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

## WAYS TO CONTACT THE NSPCC'S ADVICE LINES

- Telephone: 0808 800 5000
- Text 88858
- Email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)
- Online: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/>

## OVERVIEW OF THE ALLIANCE'S REPORTING SYSTEM

The Alliance has developed a child safeguarding team from whom advice and guidance can be sought, and who will take the required actions and decisions in matters regarding child safeguarding. These are:

- The Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer
- The Alliance Case Management Group (Alliance CMG)
- Welfare Officers within affiliated Clubs (WOs)

**However, there is a principle of 'no delay' in safeguarding, and so if you cannot contact anyone within your Club or the Alliance then the statutory agencies should be contacted and they will advise on the action to be taken. Statutory agencies are The Police and Children's Social Services.**

A report may be raised as a result of:

- a child disclosing to another child or adult
- an observation of a concern
- a third person raising a concern
- a change in a child's behaviour or demeanour

## TYPES OF SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

- an abusive act or breach of the safeguarding or coaching policies
- a bullying incident
- a breach of the code of conduct
- any other concern for a child's wellbeing
- something that has taken place in the club and regarding an adult that may not be a member of the club, or external to the sports setting but disclosed to a safe and trusted person known to the child within the sports club.
- the behaviour of a child to another child
- an adult to a child
- a child to themselves (self-harming).

Concerns may be current or historical

*Note: This is not a definitive list.*

## LISTEN AND RESPOND

If a child discloses concerns to you, you should:

- Ensure the wellbeing of any children for whom you have responsibility and ensure they are being supervised by appropriate adults.
- Record what the child tells you along with any questions you ask and the child's responses. This could be crucial evidence and answers must be recorded in the child's own words (see later section on "Recording").
- Stay calm and listen carefully. Reassure the child they are right to tell you and they are not to blame
- Ensure that the child feels safe. For example if they tell you that they are scared about going home then you should dial 999.
- Always take the concerns raised seriously
- Be honest and explain you cannot keep what they are saying secret and never promise to do so.
- Try to reassure them by explaining what action you will be taking
- Disclose what you have been told only to those who "need to know".
- If the parents are not implicated in the concern ensure they are made aware at the earliest opportunity and ensure they are advised on the basis of the above information.
- Ensure the child receives appropriate medical treatment if required.

### DO NOT

- show that you are either upset, disgusted or disbelieve what you are hearing
- confront the alleged abuser
- promise to keep a secret
- take any action until you have considered and shared the information appropriately
- act alone. Use the flow chart to determine who to share the information with
- ask questions unless to clarify what is being said. It is important not to ask leading questions or make suggestions e.g. "has your Mum hurt you?"
- make assumptions
- make judgements

## REPORTING CONCERNS

It is everyone's duty to pass on concerns appropriately. The reporting structure of the Alliance is outlined here and in the flow chart at the end of this document. Ensure you follow the guidance given and report the concern as soon as possible to the appropriate person.

**The Welfare Officer (WO)** has the primary responsibility in the Alliance's affiliated clubs to receive and deal with concerns involving children. If they are not available speak to another officer of the club.

**The Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer** can be contacted (instead of, or in addition to, the WO) to give advice or to act on concerns, allegations and disclosures

The Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer will provide advice and guidance or may take over dealing with a concern if appropriate or necessary.

**In an emergency (or if any of the above contacts are not available to assist) the concern should be referred directly to the Children’s Social Care Team or the Police. Dial 999 if necessary or contact the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team**

Ensure you take names and contact details of the person spoken to and inform the Welfare Officer (who will then inform the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer).

The incident should be recorded on the Incident Report form (which can be found at the end of this document or can be downloaded from the Alliance website). If you cannot access this form, use a blank piece of paper and ensure you capture all necessary details (See section on Recording)

Once the concern has been raised, the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer will either:

- note the concern and await further action/outcome from the Welfare Officer
- advise on action to take
- take action directly
- consult specialist/statutory agency to discuss appropriate action.

Remember that you should operate on the principle of “no delay” so if in doubt contact your local authority safeguarding teams or the police and then inform your CWO at the earliest opportunity.

#### CONCERNS RAISED WITHIN AIKIDO – ACTION TO TAKE:

- Seek immediate medical assistance if required
- Ensure the child is safe from harm
- Contact a Welfare Officer who will decide what action to take. This may include:
  - Contacting the statutory agencies or seeking advice from the NSPCC.
  - Seeking advice from the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer
  - Taking action through the Alliance Case Management Group (and the Alliance disciplinary policy if required)

If you are concerned about a child at an event then you should contact the Welfare Officer designated for that event and then inform the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer

Remember that you should operate on the principle of “no delay” so if in doubt contact your local authority safeguarding teams or the police and then inform the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer at the earliest opportunity.

#### CONCERNS RAISED OUTSIDE AIKIDO – ACTION TO TAKE

- Seek immediate medical assistance if required
- Ensure the child is safe from harm
- Refer the concern to local Safeguarding Hubs or designated teams

- Inform the Welfare Officer or the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer who will advise on action or refer the matter to Statutory Agencies.

Remember that you should operate on the principle of “no delay” so if in doubt contact your local authority safeguarding teams or the police and then inform your Club’s Welfare Officer or the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer

## CONCERNS OF NON- RECENT ABUSE

Sometimes concerns raised by a child or an adult may be historical in nature. Such concerns must be listed to and acted upon in the same way as current safeguarding issues. The actions to be taken will be as outlined above whether the concern is within or external to aikido.

Additionally, the Alliance will have to consider action against the person identified as the alleged abuser to protect current members if they are still present in whatever capacity at an Alliance affiliated club. It is therefore important the matter is referred to the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer along with the statutory agencies.

## RECORDING

Once you have taken action to ensure the wellbeing of the child and passed on the information as required you will need to write a report of what you have been told, and/ or have observed.

It is important you are clear in this report what you have been told or observed. If in doubt leave it out or make a note that you are uncertain as to what was said or seen and that you saying what you believe to be so.

The Alliance has a referral form for you to use which can be found at the end of this document. If you do not have a form to hand the following information will need to be included in your report

Full details of the child concerned including:

- age or date of birth
- full name and gender
- race and ethnic origin
- address
- information about any disability or special needs
- parent, carer or guardians details
- your contact details, role etc.
- what information has been shared with the parent or carer?
- the allegation made
- full details of the person about whom the concern/allegation is made including:
  - relationship the child concerned and/or position held in the club, if any
  - if the child has any marks, injuries or bruising visible to you note them down and if possible draw an outline drawing of where they were seen on the child’s body

Also:

- Record as fully as possible the child's account, being factual as to what the child actually said (and keep any original notes – do not destroy them).
- Note down details of any witnesses
- Include any other relevant information including, but not solely, any other incidents including dates if possible
- Any information which has been passed to you as hearsay, second hand information or opinion clearly noting it as such.
- What was said to the child in response to the allegations
- Sign and date your report and give a phone number at which you can be contacted.
- If you do not have this information it will be available in the club but must only be obtained ensuring confidentiality is maintained.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

**In all situations the welfare of the child must be paramount** and support must be given to the child concerned throughout any investigation. Additionally consideration must be given to supporting staff and other club members including the person who raised the concern. Where there is a child safeguarding concern raised against a member there may be 4 types of investigation:

- An internal investigation by the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer
- A child protection investigation led by the relevant Statutory Agencies.
- A criminal investigation led by the Police.

In all situations the Alliance Case Management Group may, if required, seek advice from an Independent Child Safeguarding Adviser before considering if the individual concerned should be either:

- Removed from or refused a designated position temporarily or permanently (for example: is not to teach or assist with teaching children). Where the decision of the Alliance Case Management Group is that an individual should be removed from working in a designated position with children in Aikido, the individual concerned will be notified as will the Chief Instructor. A temporary suspension placed on a member during an Alliance or Statutory Agency investigation and will be on a “without prejudice” basis.

OR:

- Suspended from all activities within aikido temporarily or permanently. Where the conclusion of the Alliance Case Management Group is that an individual should be temporarily or permanently suspended from membership, the Alliance Safeguarding Officer notify the Chief Instructor for his further action. The Chief Instructor will, communicate that recommendation to the individual. A temporary suspension placed on a member will be on a without prejudice basis.

This process will be followed in all matters of child safeguarding irrespective of whether the referral is from a concern raised within the club, from an external agency, or the outcome of a criminal records check.

In some situations the statutory agencies will request no suspension be put in place while they investigate further. This may be to avoid alerting the person to the concern raised and preventing evidence being removed or destroyed. In such situations the club will be advised by the Statutory Agencies and/or the Alliance Case Management Group on how to manage the situation.

If a temporary suspension order (TSO) has been put in place, once the investigation is completed the outcome will form the basis of what disciplinary action is required.

Irrespective of the findings of the Statutory Agencies, the Alliance Case Management Group will assess all individual cases to decide if a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and consider how this can be sensitively handled.

Temporary or permanent suspension from aikido, or from teaching or assisting with teaching children, may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the Statutory Agencies. In such cases the Alliance Case Management team will reach a decision based upon the information that is available and on a balance of probability. In all considerations the welfare of children should always remain paramount. The action taken will be as outlined above. Under some circumstances it may also be necessary to make a referral to the DBS.

## WHISTLEBLOWING

‘Whistleblowing’ is the action of an employee/volunteer or member in disclosing evidence of wrongdoing arising from the deliberate commission of improper conduct, unethical activities (which may be of a criminal nature) and dangerous acts or omissions which create a risk to health, safety or the environment, within the organisation to which they belong. In terms of child safeguarding the act will involve or adversely affect a child.

The concept of Whistleblowing is important in any organisation that is committed to maintaining appropriate levels of safeguarding and good practice. Whistleblowing allows individuals to raise concerns about poor practice or misconduct by members and employees/volunteers. Children are vulnerable to abuse and all adults who work in clubs, whether voluntary or employed, paid or unpaid, members or non-members, must look to safeguard their welfare. The Alliance believes it is necessary to develop a culture in all clubs where concerned individuals can raise issues about unacceptable practice and misconduct in a safe and supportive environment.

It is important for coaches to be aware that the difference between abuse and poor practice can be minimal. For example some things that were considered acceptable behaviour in the past are not in the today’s society e.g. a coach who uses inappropriate language to a child is not acceptable today, but may not have been questioned in the past.

In order to provide children with the best possible experiences and opportunities in Aikido, it is imperative that everyone operates within an accepted ethical framework and demonstrates exemplary behaviour. Whistleblowing is an important part of this culture as it allows children and adults to raise concerns in a safe and appropriate manner.



Not raising concerns does not deal with them; it just delays the inevitable and may cause matters to get worse. Such matters will seldom, if ever, improve by being ignored and the damage to the children involved will inevitably increase.

## WHEN IS IT NECESSARY FOR YOU TO WHISTLEBLOW?

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with children in order to harm them. A coach, official or volunteer helper may have regular contact with children and be an important link in identifying cases where a child needs protection. All cases of poor practice or possible abuse must be reported following the guidelines in this document.

As a member or employee/volunteer you may witness or be told about a situation of poor practice, or a failure to safeguard or even abuse within the sport regarding an incident in which a colleague is implicated. For example, a child might tell you of something that has happened to them during a training session or while being chaperoned by an Aikido volunteer. Or you might become suspicious about the behaviour of a colleague or volunteer. Or a parent might make an allegation of abuse involving someone working with you in a paid or voluntary capacity. Should this happen to you such information will generate strong emotions. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgment about any action to take.

Remember it is not your responsibility to investigate such incidents. Your role is to respond appropriately and to report the concern in line with the guidance in this policy document

Once the concern has been raised you should refer it at once to the Club's WO who will consider the matter and involve the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer. Decisions will also be as to whether the matter should be referred to the statutory agencies.

As the person raising the concerns you are likely to have mixed emotions; colleagues are seen as people to trust implicitly and suspecting "unpleasant things" about a colleague is hard. You may find it difficult to accept what is being alleged and that to think that way is disloyal. Or you may fear victimisation if you raise a concern against a colleague. It is not unusual to feel this way but it is important to consider the welfare of the child as paramount and not allow your judgment to be clouded by personal feelings or worries. The WO will recognise that any person referring concerns involving a colleague may need additional support in light of the action they have taken and will support you throughout any such concern that is raised in good faith

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING

Issues involving child safeguarding must be kept confidential. All paperwork relating to a concern regarding a child must be kept in a safe and secure manner. However confidentiality must never prevent an individual sharing information with appropriate and relevant persons when not to do so may prevent appropriate safeguarding and place a child or children at risk of harm.

Research and experience has demonstrated that to keep children safe from harm it is essential that all who work with children maximise the potential for safeguarding by working in partnership with parent/s, carer/s and the statutory agencies and share relevant information appropriately. Often it is only when information from a number of sources has been shared, collated and analysed, that it becomes clear a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm.

The key factor in deciding whether or not to disclose confidential information is 'proportionality' i.e. is the proposed disclosure a proportionate response to the need to protect the child's welfare? The amount of confidential information disclosed and the number of people to whom it is disclosed should be no more than is necessary in protecting the health and well-being of the child .

The approach to confidential information should be the same whether any proposed disclosure is internal, within the organisation, or with an external statutory agency, e.g. to the police.

The Government Document "Every Child Matters" identifies 6 key points on information sharing:

1. You should explain to children and families at the outset, openly and honestly, what and how information will, or could be shared and why, and seek their agreement. The exception to this is where to do so would put that child or others at increased risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm, or if it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime (see glossary for definition) including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation.
2. You must always consider the safety and welfare of a child when making decisions on whether to share information about them. Where there is concern that the child may be suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm, the child's safety and welfare must be the overriding consideration.
3. You should, where possible, respect the wishes of children or families who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information, if in your judgment on the facts of the case; there is sufficient need to override that lack of consent.
4. You should seek advice where you are in doubt, especially where your doubt relates to a concern about possible significant harm to a child or serious harm to others.
5. You should ensure that the information you share is accurate and up-to-date, necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, shared only with those people who need to see it, and shared securely.
6. You should always record the reasons for your decision – whether it is to share information or not."

In addition the document states that information sharing is important to:

- Enable early intervention to help children and families who need additional services to achieve positive outcomes, thus reducing inequalities between disadvantaged children and others.
- Safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The Alliance is committed to ensuring no child is disadvantaged or placed at risk through a failure to share information.

## SEVEN GOLDEN RULES FOR INFORMATION SHARING

The following guidance has been issued by H M Government

1. Remember that the Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. Seek advice if you are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person where possible.
4. Share with consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case.
5. Consider safety and well-being: Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the person and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.
7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

## STORING INFORMATION RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

Once a matter has been handled at Club level and the route which a case will take has been established, all paperwork should be sent to the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer who will then store the case files in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

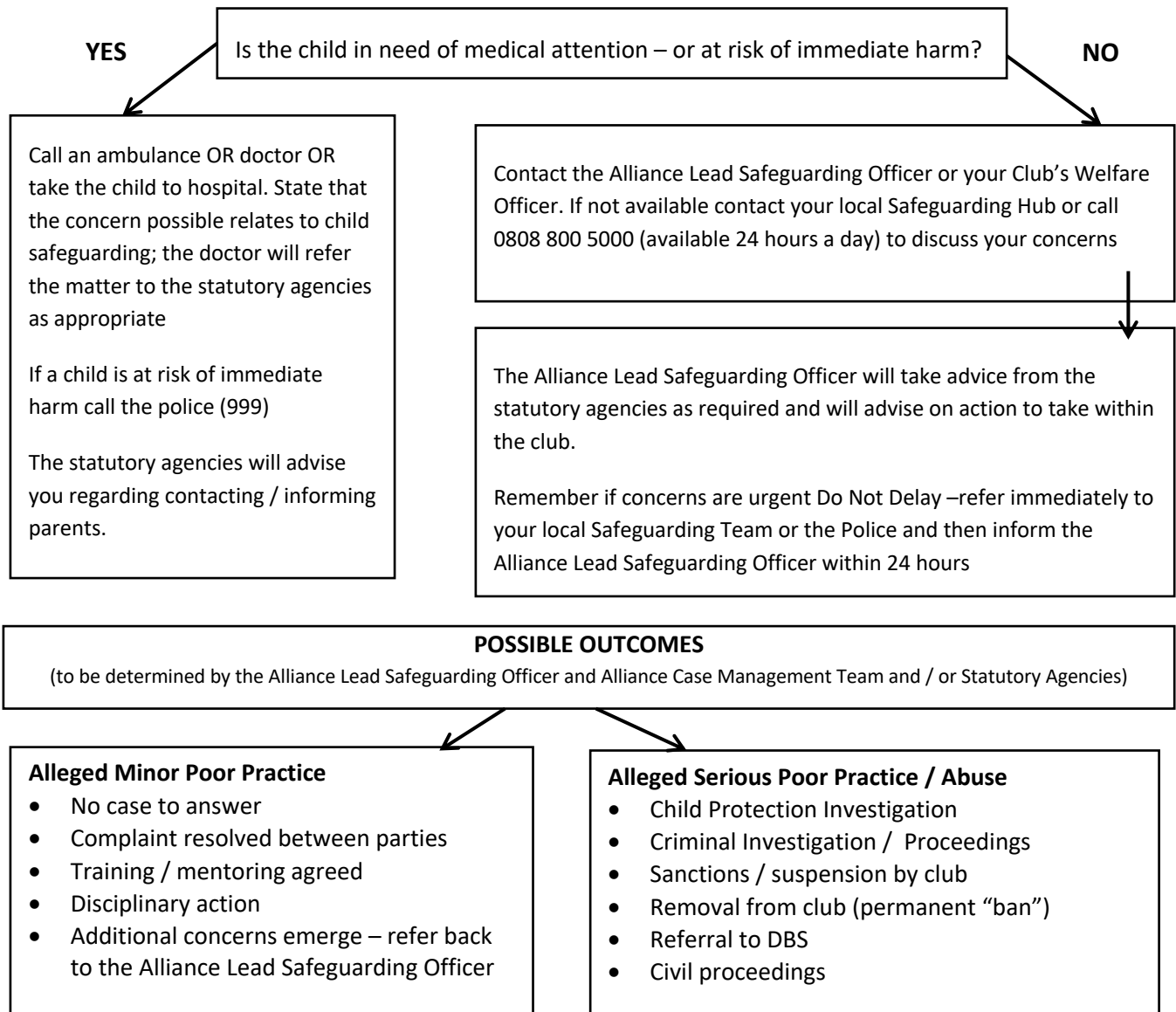
## APPENDIX 1 REPORTING CONCERNS (INSIDE AIKIDO)

Follow this action if:

1. A child tells you they are being abused within the club – or they raise concerns about poor practice
2. If you hear about abuse or poor practice in the club
3. You see something which raises concerns about abuse or poor practice

You must react IMMEDIATELY. If you cannot contact anyone from the Club then contact the Statutory Agencies (Police or Social Services). If you are unsure what to do contact 0808 800 5000 (available 24 hours a day) to discuss your concerns

- Stay calm
- If the child is present re-assure him/her that they are not to blame
- Keep questions to a minimum
- Do not involve anyone who might be implication in the concern
- Record information accurately using the child’s own words



## APPENDIX 2: REPORTING CONCERNS (OUTSIDE AIKIDO)

Follow this action if:

1. A child tells you they are being abused OUTSIDE the club – OR
2. If you hear about concerns or possible abuse outside of the club
3. You see something which raises concerns about abuse outside of the club

You must react IMMEDIATELY. If you cannot contact anyone from the Club then contact the Statutory Agencies (Police or Social Services). If you are unsure what to do contact 0808 800 5000 (available 24 hours a day) to discuss your concerns

- Stay calm
- If the child is present re-assure him/her that they are not to blame
- Keep questions to a minimum
- Record information accurately using the child's own words
- **Do not involve anyone who might be implication in the concern**

YES

Is the child in need of medical attention – or at risk of immediate harm?

NO

Call an ambulance OR doctor OR take the child to hospital. State that the concern possible relates to child safeguarding; the doctor will refer the matter to the statutory agencies as appropriate

If a child is at risk of immediate harm call the police (999)

The statutory agencies will advise you regarding contacting / informing parents.

Contact your Club's Welfare Officer or the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer will take advice from the statutory agencies as required and will advise on action to take.

Remember if concerns are urgent do not delay –refer immediately to your local Safeguarding team or the Police and then inform the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer within 24 hours

The statutory agencies will advise regarding contacting or informing parents / carers / guardians

**Prepare a report** to include all the information you have (names, addresses etc). If possible use an Incident Report Form. Note down your concerns and the action taken. Sign and date your report. Forward a copy of the report along with any other information to the relevant Statutory Agency dealing with the matter -- and the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer. **DO NOT CONTACT ANYONE WHO MIGHT BE IMPLICATED.**

**REMEMBER TO MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY AND ONLY SHARE INFORMATION ON A STRICTLY "NEED TO KNOW" BASIS. HOWEVER, THE WELFARE OF THE CHILD IS PARAMOUNT AND YOU HAVE A DUTY TO REFER AND SHARE YOUR CONCERNS WITH THE APPROPRIATE AGENCIES**

# Report form for recording concerns and referrals

Please complete as much information as you can. If the incident relates to one child please fill in as below. If it refers to more than one child please give as much information as you can about each child.

Name of person(s) against whom allegations have been made: \_\_\_\_\_

Age, or approximate age, if known: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Club: \_\_\_\_\_ Position in club: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age/date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or carer name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's relationship with club: \_\_\_\_\_

## Your details

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Club: \_\_\_\_\_

Position in club: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you reporting your own concerns?    Yes     No

If not, please give details of person who has raised concerns:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Brief details of concern or incident:

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Have you spoken to the person against whom any allegations have been made? Yes  No

If so what has been said?

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Have you spoken to the child? Yes  No

If so, please detail what has been said:

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Have you spoken to the parents? Yes  No

If so, please detail what has been said:

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Please detail any action taken to date

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Have the statutory agencies been informed? Yes  No  Date of referral:

If so, please give contact details : \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## CHANGE LOG
