



**WORLD
ATHLETICS™**

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

April 2024



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1. Foreword

The first World Athletics Safeguarding Policy was published in October 2021 and has been reviewed by the Safeguarding Task Force and Council twice. This, the third edition of our Safeguarding Policy sets out the commitment of World Athletics to protect everyone in our sport from abuse, harassment and exploitation and promote safe and positive environments for athletes, coaches, officials, staff and volunteers.

Member Federations and Area Associations have agreed to introduce safeguarding policies and procedures - a shared and high priority responsibility that we all take seriously. We now have tailored materials available for Area Associations, as well as for Member Federations, to assist them with the development and implementation of their safeguarding policies and procedures. Clear, well-publicised policies will give our athletes at every level the confidence and trust they need to report abuse knowing that they will be listened to and action will be taken.

The goal of increased and sustained participation in athletics will only be achieved by taking safeguarding seriously, prioritising it within our organisations and embedding it in our working practices. Without safeguarding woven into every aspect of our sport we risk losing athletes, officials and other participants, and will struggle to attract new ones.

The World Athletics Championships Budapest 2023 saw both World Athletics and the Budapest 23 Organising Committee appoint safeguarding officers to work together and with the designated safeguarding officers of all national teams to provide support and guidance to all athletes and team officials.

There is a lot more to do but I am grateful that our Areas and Member Federations are committed to and embarking on a safeguarding journey and to our Safeguarding Task Force for all their hard work in driving this important work forwards.



Sebastian Coe
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 abuse, harassment 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 abuse, harassment 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 this Safeguarding Policy (“the Policy”) to help stakeholders guard against abuse, harassment and exploitation and to take action if it occurs. This Policy outlines the scope, objectives, guiding principles as well as the implementation framework underpinning World Athletics’ approach to safeguarding.

3. Scope

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

4. What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is about proactively putting in place measures to protect vulnerable persons, children and adults from abuse, harassment and exploitation. Creating a safe and welcoming sport 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 abuse, harassment or exploitation, listen to accounts from children and adults of their experiences and respond safely and fully if there is a problem.

5. Principles

- 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, socio-economic status, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, beliefs, religious or political affiliation.
- Everyone has the right to participate, enjoy and develop personally through athletics in a safe, inclusive environment free from all forms of abuse, harassment or exploitation.
- Everyone 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 is responsible for the care and protection of children, making decisions in their best interests as their welfare is paramount.

6. Purpose

World Athletics is committed to safeguarding everyone involved in athletics from abuse, harassment and exploitation as well as upholding the principles set out above. In creating safe and positive environments everyone is able to enjoy, compete or work in 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:

- Implementing and embedding this Policy within their areas of responsibility
- Raising awareness of the nature of abuse, harassment and exploitation that can occur in the athletics community
- Developing and delivering safeguarding 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
- Reporting concerns expeditiously
- Responding appropriately when concerns are raised
- Establishing partnerships with organisations and institutions engaged in the prevention of abuse, harassment and exploitation within and beyond athletics.

This Policy describes the procedures to be followed in the event abuse, harassment, or exploitation occurs. Everyone should know to whom they can turn for help when they need to report a concern about a person associated with athletics, whether the actions in question are experienced personally, witnessed directly, known through reports from others, or reflect one's own conduct.

7. World Athletics Safeguarding Rules

World Athletics Safeguarding Rules give World Athletics the specific authority to make orders imposing limitations and/or restrictions on individuals if there is reason to believe they pose a risk to others. World Athletics Safeguarding Rules deal with any concern, incident, suspicion, action, behaviour or failure to act in a way which has caused, causes or may cause abuse, harassment or exploitation falling within the scope of the Rules. Reports and

investigations of safeguarding concerns involving World Athletics Officials or persons participating in or accredited at World Athletics Events, the Olympic Games or a Congress must be dealt with in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Athletics Safeguarding Rules.

8. Implementation

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

World Athletics, Area Associations and Member Federations will work together to implement this Policy; this is everyone's responsibility. 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 abuse, harassment and exploitation that they may witness or have reported to them. They will also be able to consider the appropriateness of their own behaviour and make changes where indicated. It is also important to recruit carefully providing new staff and volunteers with induction and orientation programmes where appropriate.

The following explains how this Policy will be implemented and embedded in athletics organisations operating at the global, Area and Member Federation level:

WORLD ATHLETICS

- World Athletics promotes best practice throughout the athletics community and provides a Safeguarding Starter Pack and Guidance to help Member Federations implement this Policy.
- World Athletics promotes best practice and provides Guidance for Area Associations enabling them to develop and implement their own safeguarding policies aligned with this Policy.
- World Athletics improves and develops its workforce (whether volunteers or employees) to

help the growth of the sport through the sharing of knowledge and skills. World Athletics provides appropriate safeguarding training, both online and face-to-face, for a wide range of audiences and in many languages. Training courses are accessible via the World Athletics e-learning platform and combined with other training courses provided on the platform.

- Training for elite athletes is being developed and will be promoted and delivered through different channels.
- World Athletics, Area Associations and Member Federations promote physical and mental health and wellbeing of all those associated with athletics. This includes taking steps to protect athletes from unsafe, excessive or unwelcome training regimes, and measures to prevent human trafficking, financial abuse or manipulation of an athlete's age, nationality or competitive results.
- World Athletics monitors and evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of this Policy by assessing how thoroughly World Athletics itself, Area Associations and Member Federations address safeguarding in their respective territories. One important evaluation criterion is whether or not Area Associations and Member Federations implement the guidance provided by World Athletics.
- World Athletics may consider sanctions, funding conditions or other measures to incentivise and ensure compliance by Area Associations and Member Federations with this Safeguarding Policy.

AREA ASSOCIATIONS AND MEMBER FEDERATIONS

- Member Federations must adopt and implement a safeguarding policy and procedures which follow local legislation and the World Athletics Safeguarding Policy by December 2023. The procedures must describe the steps 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. Member Federations must inform the relevant public authorities where this is required by legislation and should work alongside local agencies and services to ensure that concerns are dealt with in line with local laws and regulations.

- World Athletics may impose sanctions, funding conditions or other measures on those Member Federations who missed the December 2023 timeline for adopting a safeguarding policy and procedures and therefore any such Member Federation is strongly encouraged to develop these products on an urgent basis, and to reach out to World Athletics if they require advice or assistance.
- Area Associations must adopt and implement a safeguarding policy which complies with this Policy by the end of December 2024. They should facilitate and encourage Member Federations in their Area to fulfil their obligation to adopt and implement a safeguarding policy. Area Associations must also have procedures in place by the end of December 2024 to be followed when a concern is reported to the Area Association. This may mean that the concern is dealt with by the Area Association if they have jurisdiction to do so or that it is referred to the relevant Member Federation. Area Associations must inform the relevant public authorities, when required to do so by legislation in the applicable country and will work alongside local agencies and services to ensure that concerns are dealt with in line with any relevant local laws and regulations.
- Area Associations and Member Federations should ensure that individuals 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 recruitment guidance contained in the Guide to Safeguarding. There is also information about recruitment in the Safeguarding Essentials Training course which is available here. The

workforce must be regularly trained in safeguarding to ensure capacity to provide support and advice to their athletics communities and anyone who raises a safeguarding concern. Area Associations and Member Federations must ensure that their workforces (volunteers or employees alike) undertake 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, sex, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, 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 timely, confidential, sensitive and discreet manner and in accordance with the relevant procedures.
- 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 where it is required by law.

9. Reporting Procedures

If an individual is at immediate risk of harm there should be no delay in reporting the matter to 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 may vary based on the age of a child along with other factors and may also differ between a child and an adult. If an individual refuses to give consent the matter may still need to be reported.

This is an area that varies widely across different countries and is usually addressed by national or local legislation or procedures and should be included in a Member Federation's safeguarding policy.

If the concern is one that requires the involvement of law enforcement agencies, because of the nature of the incident or because it may be a criminal offence, then it is essential that they are made aware of the matter as a priority.

If at any point anyone has a concern about an individual who requires medical support (for physical or psychological injury) this should be sought in the first instance.

World Athletics or the Athletics Integrity Unit may request information from a Member Federation or an Area Association in relation to a particular case or generally. This may be to establish whether the Athletics Integrity Unit should take action under the Safeguarding Rules, because a matter has been referred to an Area Association or Member Federation by the Athletics Integrity Unit to investigate and deal with, or for any other reasonable grounds. Area Associations and Member Federations must comply promptly with any such request from World Athletics or the Athletics Integrity Unit.

10. Review

This Policy will be reviewed regularly by the Council of World Athletics and at least once every two years.

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



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Appendix

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.

Abuse, harassment 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, cannot be given, 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 (online or in person) whereby an individual builds a relationship with an athlete 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 athlete is used to isolate them from friends and family who might otherwise warn or caution them from complying with the groomer’s demands.

Harassment is any unwanted or unwelcome behaviour which offends or makes the person feel humiliated or intimidated. Power harassment is where someone in a position of power over another individual, usually in a workplace, uses that power to physically or psychologically harass another person in a lower position. Power harassment can include exclusion, inappropriate work assignments (too little, too much or of a lower level that acceptable) as well as intrusive behaviour.

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 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.

Abuse, harassment and exploitation 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 abuse or harassment 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 abuse, harassment or exploitation if the individual is a child or if the individual has not authorised 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 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.

Abuse, harassment 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, harassment or exploitation but understands that those involved in athletics will need to focus on pro-active measures directed to deterring the more severe forms of abuse, harassment or exploitation.

