



Tyne United Rowing Club Safeguarding Dealing with Disclosures

Rowers experiencing distress or abuse may seek out an opportunity to “speak” at rowing training or events, often because sporting clubs provide a place where they feel most safe, secure and listened to.

It is not unusual for rowers to choose to speak to a coach or volunteer because they may be perceived as having less authority and less intimidating than other adults they know.

All members should be aware of the protocol below detailing how to respond to a disclosure from a junior rower or vulnerable adult. **All disclosures must be directly referred to the Club Welfare Officer (CWO).**

If someone discloses harm to any member it must be remembered that the club’s role is to recognise and refer abuse, not to investigate. This is to avoid contamination of evidence gained in any subsequent investigation undertaken by Police &/or Social Services and to ensure that the person is not placed in the stressful position of having to repeatedly describe the situation.

Confidentiality with respect to any form of abuse cannot be given to a junior rower or vulnerable adult as the Club Welfare Officer may well need to refer the reported incident on to Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the Police.

‘Not investigating’ does not mean that questions cannot be asked; club members should ask for more information to ascertain the need. However, careful thought needs to be given to how and what questions are asked, avoiding anything that can be interpreted as ‘leading’. The basic rule of thumb is to **ONLY** ask enough questions to clarify whether there is a safeguarding concern. Once it has been clarified that they are being harmed or are at risk (or it is evident that the rower is safe), no further questions are required.

If a rower presents with an injury accompanied by a clear disclosure that they have been harmed, or makes a clear sexual disclosure it should not be necessary to question the rower other than perhaps to clarify who was involved and when an incident took place. The rower should be listened to actively and their story carefully recorded. In this situation, the club member should ensure **immediate** information is shared with the Club Welfare Officer (or an alternative senior contact point – Club Chair or Club Captain). It is likely that such a scenario will require **immediate** consultation about action to be taken and an urgent referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be necessary.

In other situations where the rower appears to be making a possible disclosure or has a suspicious injury, it is reasonable to ask open, non-leading questions in order to establish the situation.

Examples of reasonable questions are:

- That's a nasty bruise, how did it happen?
- Tell me about what happened?
- You seem a bit upset and I'm worried about you, is anything troubling you?
- Can you tell me more about that?

You may wish to use the acronym 'TED' as a reminder that the rower can be encouraged to 'Tell', 'Explain' and 'Describe' the concern.

If it is necessary to seek further clarification, club members should keep to open questions such as: What? When? Who? How? Where? It is important to remember that questions should only be asked to help clarify whether the rower is at risk of harm. Once clarification is achieved, no further questions should be asked.

Sometimes rowers choose to disclose concerns through a third party such as a friend 'telling' on their behalf, or indirectly e.g. sounding out information and reaction by asking 'what if my friend.....?' If such concerns arise they should be taken equally seriously and be followed up with the CWO in the same manner as a direct disclosure.

Rowers may also seek to disclose and share their experiences through drawings, writing or electronic communication. If concerns arise, it is appropriate to talk further with the rower to allow wider discussion and clarification. This might involve inviting the rower to explain further.

Basic guidelines for dealing with disclosures

If a rower discloses abuse, this information requires immediate sharing with the Club's Welfare Officer.

1. Remember that the **rower's welfare and interests must be the paramount** consideration at all times.
2. **Listen carefully and actively.** At this stage there is no necessity to ask questions. Let the rower guide the pace.
3. **Do not show shock** at what you are hearing. This may discourage the rower from continuing their disclosure as they will feel that the person receiving the information is unable to cope with what they are hearing or may be viewing them in a negative light.
4. **Do not investigate.** If you need to clarify what is being said and whether the rower is at risk, ask open questions (TED, what, when, who, how, where, do you want to tell me anything else? etc.) but only to the point of clarification being achieved. Avoid the question 'why?' as this can imply guilt / responsibility on the child.
5. **Stay calm and reassure** the person that they have done the right thing in talking to you.
6. **Never promise to keep a secret or confidentiality.** You have a duty to ensure the information is passed on to CWO and possibly other agencies in order to keep the person safe. If a rower requests confidentiality, use a 'prepared' response, such as 'I'm really concerned about what you have told me and I have a responsibility to help ensure that you are safe. To help make sure you are safe, I have to tell someone (such as the CWO and name the person) who will know

how to help us to do this'. Make sure the rower understands what will happen next with their information.

7. **Record factually what the rower has told you** or what you have observed as soon as possible. Ensure records include the date, time, place of disclosure, behaviour and words used by the rower. Failure to accurately record information or writing down your 'interpretation' of the rower's account may lead to inadmissible evidence.