

Recognising Abuse in Sport

Abuse can look and feel different for different people. There are several types of abuse that can occur in a variety of environments.

Abuse in sport – when, where and who

For QAS supported athletes, abuse may occur:

- In competition – tournaments, events, games
- At training – team sessions, 1:1 sessions, in the gym, in the science lab
- In clinical appointments – medical, physio, psych
- Onsite – changerooms, consult spaces, the gym, the carpark
- Offsite – clubs, hubs, social events,
- On the road – cars, buses, hotels, airports
- At home.

For QAS supported athletes, abuse may involve:

- QAS staff – an employee or contractor
- NSO personnel within QAS or NSO outside of the QAS
- Club personnel
- Other support services – doctors, clinicians, specialists
- Other athletes
- Intimate partners, family or someone else in the community.

DEFINITIONS

-  **Child:** a person under the age of 12
-  **Young Person:** a person aged between 13-18
-  **Athlete:** any QAS supported athlete (any age / any category)
-  **Safeguarding:** having active measures in place to *prevent* institutional harm and abuse of athletes and *respond* to any safety concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm and abuse of any athlete.
-  **QAS Staff or Contractor:** any person engaged by the QAS

It is also possible, that as a trusted member of an athlete's support team, athletes may come to you regarding abuse experienced elsewhere.

Continuum of behaviour

Most behaviours sit on a continuum. Not everything is 'abusive', however many inappropriate behaviours may be indicating that someone is or has the potential to be abusive. It is important to recognise these behaviours, and call them out.



Types of abuse

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Any deliberate and unwelcome act that causes physical harm or injury to an athlete such as punching, kicking or shoving.

This can include any forced or inappropriate physical activity such as age, or physique- inappropriate training loads; when injured or in pain, forced alcohol consumption, or forced doping practices.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual Abuse occurs when an adult, or a person in a position of authority (i.e., older, or younger but more physically or intellectually developed) involves an athlete under the age of 18 in any sexual activity. An athlete under the age of 18 cannot provide consent.

This can include sharing nudes, making sexual comments, kissing, touching an athlete's genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse.

NEGLECT

When an athlete is deprived of the necessary resources for survival such as food, water, rest, medical treatment and adequate supervision.



GROOMING

Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child or young person for sexual activity at a later time.

Grooming can include singling out, communicating with, or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the athlete or their parent or carer.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Any unwelcome act including confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, or any other treatment which may impact the emotional, psychological or developmental wellbeing of an athlete or diminish the sense of identity, dignity and self-worth.

Indicators of abuse and inappropriate behaviours

- ⊗ Being secretive or asking you or other athletes to keep secrets
- ⊗ Singling out or excluding particular athletes – favouring certain people
- ⊗ Offering to help out more than usual – offering lifts, 1:1 training sessions, financial support
- ⊗ Contacting you or other athletes about things not related to sport
- ⊗ Be-friending parents, creating times where there is more contact with one athlete alone or with the family
- ⊗ Ignoring or dismissing simple rules or expectations, loose boundaries
- ⊗ Making sexual jokes, asking about relationships or showing private images
- ⊗ Creating scenarios where physical touch is required, outside of normal sport related contact. For example a coach giving a massage.

Indicators in other athletes

While you may or may not notice concerning or inappropriate behaviours in the adults and professionals around you, you may notice certain behaviours in other athletes, your peers, colleagues or friends that concern you, or indicate something is not right for them.



BEHAVIOUR OF OTHER ATHLETES THAT MIGHT CONCERN YOU

- Withdrawn, unusually quiet or absent
- Violent and aggressive
- Not wanting to go home or not wanting to come to sport
- Bruising or other injuries
- Reluctance to participate / be left alone with a specific adult
- Spending more time than others with an adult in sport

THESE BEHAVIOURS MIGHT BE TELLING YOU THAT THEY ARE

- Experiencing abuse or neglect from someone within the QAS or elsewhere in their sport
- Experiencing bullying or harassment
- Experiencing abuse or neglect at home or in another setting such as school
- In need of support regarding physical or mental health
- Is finding it difficult to participate due to accessibility, lack of inclusiveness, a learning difficulty or disability

Examples of abuse in sport

- ✘ A physio who requests 1:1 sessions with an athlete in their hotel room during a tournament.
- ✘ The manager who tells an athlete they *'aren't good enough to be in the team and won't make it at the top'*
- ✘ An AWE Advisor offering to take an athlete on a holiday
- ✘ A strength and conditioning coach hassling an athlete every time they are in the gym
- ✘ A coach who forces an athlete to compete with an injury, against medical advice
- ✘ A medical practitioner who sexually abuses young athletes under their care
- ✘ A physio who grooms a young athlete while on an overseas trip, sharing a cab between venues without anyone else present, sending them personal text messages throughout the day and making sexual comments during treatment.
- ✘ A board member charged with possessing child abuse material

What YOU can do

REPORTING CONCERNS

As an athlete you have the right to speak up to RAISE and REPORT a concern of any nature to any person you trust. If you have concerns about the safety of an athlete, someone's behaviour, or have seen or heard something that is questionable and just doesn't feel right, you can REPORT it to the QAS. We will take it seriously.

You can:

-  Speak to a family member or friend first.
-  Raise your concern with ANY person within the QAS. It doesn't matter what their role is, they will be able to support you and they will take it seriously and help you with the next steps.
-  Send an email to QAS.Safeguarding@dtis.qld.gov.au
-  Complete the [QAS Safeguarding Report Form](#) online or via the QR Code.

Remember: If anyone is in immediate danger contact the police on 000.

You can also report your concerns externally to:

- Sport Integrity Australia (SIA):
Hotline 1300 027 232
- AIS Be Heard:
Hotline 1800 565 965