

### 6.3 Safeguarding Code for Members/Event Organisers and Virtus Safeguarding Policy

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This policy was approved by the Governing Board: **5<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Virtus is committed to protecting the rights of children and vulnerable adults, which includes the right to protection from abuse, throughout its membership and all activities.
- 1.2 People with an impairment or disability can be more vulnerable to abuse and Virtus requires that all Member Organisations and Event Organisers promote the welfare of participants.
- 1.3 Virtus retains the right to prevent access to any event or activity by any individual determined to be a risk to children and/or vulnerable adults.
- 1.4 The purpose of this code is to ensure every child or vulnerable adult connected to Virtus is safe and protected from harm and we expect everyone and every organisation within the Virtus family to share this commitment.
- 1.5 This means we will always work to take all welfare concerns seriously and always act in the best interests of a vulnerable person to
  - a) Protect them from mistreatment
  - b) Prevent impairment of health or development
- 1.6 This code will give clear direction to Board Members, officers, staff, volunteers, member organisations and event organisers about expected behaviour and responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all vulnerable people within the Virtus family.

#### 2 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 As an organisation registered in the UK, Virtus uses the UK legal definition of the terms:
  - a) "Children" and "child" to refer to anyone under the age of 18.
  - b) "Vulnerable Adult" to refer to anyone aged 18 or over who has needs for care and/or support and is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.
- 2.2 Within this document we use the term 'vulnerable people' to refer to both children and vulnerable adults.
- 2.3 For member organisations and event organisers the document sets out the code to which they should adhere as far as possible and to the extent that national laws and systems allow.
- 2.4 For Virtus as an International Federation, the document established the policy by which it will operate its own Safeguarding procedures.

### 6.3 Safeguarding Code for Members/Event Organisers and Virtus Safeguarding Policy

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#### 3 RESPONSIBILITIES

4 All members of the Virtus family will have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put vulnerable people at risk of harm.

4.1 As the global organisation, Virtus is responsible for:

- a) Establishing a global policy in respect of safeguarding
- b) Promoting best practice and ensuring all parts of the organisation establish their own policies and procedures in respect of the code
- c) Identifying a Board Member with overall responsibility for Safeguarding
- d) Identifying a staff member with day-to-day responsibility for Safeguarding
- e) The safe recruitment and ongoing management of staff and volunteers (within the global organisation)
- f) Investigating and acting on any safeguarding concern or referral against a member of the global staff and volunteer team.

4.2 Virtus Member Organisations are responsible for:

- a) Establishing and implementing an organisational policy in respect of safeguarding
- b) Observing all national laws in respect of safeguarding
- c) Identifying a Designated Safeguarding Lead person
- d) The safe recruitment and ongoing management of staff and volunteers (within the member organisation)
- e) Ensuring appropriate Safeguarding measures are implemented in respect of all activities including teams travelling to international or competition, domestic competition and other events such as training camps etc
- f) Investigating and acting on any safeguarding concern or referral against a member of the member organisation staff and volunteer team

4.3 Virtus Event Organisers are responsible for:

- a) Establishing and implementing an event policy in respect of safeguarding
- b) Observing all national laws in respect of safeguarding
- c) Identifying a Designated Safeguarding Lead person for the event
- d) The safe recruitment and ongoing management of event staff and volunteers
- e) Ensuring appropriate Safeguarding measures are implemented in respect of all event planning, particularly at accommodation and during non-competitive periods.
- f) Working with national teams and entrants to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all participants
- g) Ensuring a risk assessment has been conducted in respect of athletes under the

### 6.3 Safeguarding Code for Members/Event Organisers and Virtus Safeguarding Policy

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age of 18.

- h) Investigating and acting on any safeguarding concern or referral against a member of event staff or volunteers

#### 5 WHAT IS ABUSE?

5.1 Abuse may fall into a number of categories: - physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a vulnerable person. Somebody may abuse or neglect by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can happen within a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

- a) **Physical Abuse:** This is a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or coach fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness.

In sport it could also include encouraging overtraining or over-competing, inappropriate or unsafe training or coaching regimes, or physical attacks following perceived under-performance.

- b) **Emotional Abuse:** This is persistent emotional maltreatment such as to cause severe and adverse effects on emotional development. It may involve conveying that a person is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing vulnerable people to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a vulnerable person, although it may occur alone.

In sport this might also include unrealistic expectations regarding performance, unfairly targeting under-performance or not recognising success, allowing team 'initiations' or allowing bullying.

- c) **Sexual Abuse:** This involves forcing or enticing a vulnerable person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving vulnerable people in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging vulnerable people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a vulnerable person in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can children.

In sport this might also include personal relationships between coaches and athletes, or between athletes.

### 6.3 Safeguarding Code for Members/Event Organisers and Virtus Safeguarding Policy

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- d) Neglect: This is the persistent failure to meet a vulnerable persons basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the persons health or development. Neglect may involve failing to provide adequate food or water, inadequate access to medical care or neglect of a person's needs due to an impairment.

In sport this might include failing to ensure appropriate food and diet for athletes, or denying access to physiotherapy.

## 6 VIRTUS RECOMMENDED GOOD PRACTICE

### 6.1 Member organisations and event organisers organising activities, hosting events or competitions sanctioned by Virtus, must:

- a) have published policies and procedures in respect of the protection of children and vulnerable adults even where national laws do not make this compulsory (this Virtus policy can be used as a template or Virtus can assist in developing a policy).
- b) take all possible steps to ensure that event staff, officials, coaches, volunteers and support workers are carefully selected, trained and supervised at all times. Where possible, a background check should be conducted.
- c) follow any national statutory child and vulnerable adult protection procedures
- d) include a statement on protection issues in the event information pack
- e) select venues that are consistent with good practice (particularly with respect to accommodation)
- f) ensure that staff team size is adequate for athlete team size and should include both male and female staff where a mixed team exists.
- g) develop safe practices designed to reduce the risk of abuse, particularly in respect of travel, accommodation and intimate personal care. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - i ensuring children and adults, or males and females, do not share rooms (unless for a specific medical or care reason)
  - ii ensuring that athletes are placed in the same area of accommodation as their support staff
  - iii ensuring that detailed procedures exist regarding intimate personal care and medication
- h) conduct a risk assessment of the activity should be undertaken to identify appropriate management and limit risk
- i) ensure that procedures exist to investigate and respond to alleged or actual abuse
- j) provide clear information for participants, parents, staff and volunteers about the guidelines that will be used following alleged or suspected abuse
- k) ensure that complaints processes are available and accessible to children and vulnerable adults
- l) uphold the principles of confidentiality

### 6.3 Safeguarding Code for Members/Event Organisers and Virtus Safeguarding Policy

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- 6.2 All Virtus Officials (Board & Committee members and anyone with a stated role within the organisation at a global, national or event level) and staff have a duty to:
- a) Undertake the Virtus Safeguarding online training course
  - b) Safeguard the wellbeing of vulnerable people and maintain public trust in the Virtus organisation as part of their voluntary or professional duties.
  - c) Maintain an Athlete-First approach to ensure a safe environment in which all members of the Virtus family can thrive
  - d) Act in accordance with Virtus policy and procedures with the aim of eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
  - e) Maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned.
  - f) Be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect.
  - g) Be aware of, and understand, the process for notifying Virtus of a concern,
  - h) Be aware of and understand the procedure to follow in the event that a vulnerable person confides they are being abused or neglected.
  - i) Be confident about the relevant data protection requirements and how to manage information which is sensitive and personal,
  - j) Always act in the best interest of the vulnerable person
  - k) Challenge senior leaders over any safeguarding concerns, where necessary

## 7 KEEPING AND SHARING INFORMATION

- 7.1 Notwithstanding confidentiality (point 2.1 above) where alleged or actual abuse occurs, Virtus will keep records and reserves the right to share these with appropriate and relevant organisations. This includes, but is not limited to, member organisations, other

### 6.3 Safeguarding Code for Members/Event Organisers and Virtus Safeguarding Policy

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sporting organisations and/or the police and other legal authorities in line with its data protection and information sharing policy.

#### 8 PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CONCERNS

8.1 The procedure to follow will depend on where the concern arises. If in doubt, contact Virtus in the first instance for advice:

- a) Everyone connected to the organisation has a duty to recognise concerns and pass the information on in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.
- b) Virtus officers and staff who have any concerns about a vulnerable person should notify the Executive Director or a member of the Governing Board at the earliest opportunity
- c) A safeguarding form should be completed as full as possible and sent to [safeguarding@virtus.sport](mailto:safeguarding@virtus.sport)
- d) Where an incident, allegation or suspicion concerns a member organisation or national team, contact the relevant organisation directly according to their policies and procedures.
- e) Any person who does not feel that their concerns have been responded to appropriately and in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy should raise their concerns with Executive Director or Governing Board.
- f) Where concerns still remain about the way Virtus has handled a concern or allegation, then this can be reported under the Whistleblowing Policy.
- g) If you have a concern:
  - i Do not divulge details or discuss it with other people (privacy)
  - ii Do not try and investigate it yourself

#### 9 DISCLOSURES

9.1 If a vulnerable person reports a concern, this is known as a disclosure.

- a) Listen carefully to the person and avoid expressing your own views on the matter
- b) Let them know they've done the right thing
- c) Tell them it's not their fault
- d) Say you believe them
- e) Don't ask any leading questions
- f) Record the facts and exact words used by
- g) If there is a visible injury note this on a body map
- h) Don't talk to the alleged abuser

### 6.3 Safeguarding Code for Members/Event Organisers and Virtus Safeguarding Policy

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- i) Explain what you'll do next
- j) Don't promise to keep the disclosure to yourself
- k) Don't delay reporting the abuse

#### 10 SAFER RECRUITMENT

- 10.1 Virtus, its member organisations and event hosts should ensure safe recruitment practices are followed at all times for both voluntary and paid roles.
- 10.2 The precise laws and services available to ensure this will vary from nation to nation but should include as far as possible:
  - a) All roles should have a clear role description including an overview of responsibilities
  - b) It should be clear who the person reports to and who they are responsible for
  - c) An application form and/or cv should be requested including, where possible references from a previous employer or person who know the applicant well.
  - d) Where the person may/will have responsibility or unsupervised access to vulnerable people, a check should be conducted against the national police database (for example in the UK this is known as the 'Disclosure and Barring Service 'DBS'). Note: this may not be needed for one-off 'event volunteer' roles for example where the person will not work unsupervised.
- 10.3 A clear induction process should be in place
- 10.4 All officers should undertake the Virtus online Safeguarding training

## SECTION 6: CODES



### 6.3 Safeguarding Code for Members/Event Organisers and Virtus Safeguarding Policy

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#### APPENDIX 1 Recording Form for Safeguarding

Your Name:		Email Address:		Phone Number:	
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Details about the concern or disclosure: (give as much information as possible and use the body diagram overleaf if necessary)

## SECTION 6: CODES



### 6.3 Safeguarding Code for Members/Event Organisers and Virtus Safeguarding Policy

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Date(s) of the concern		Has the concern been reported before?		Were there other witnesses?	
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Your signature:		Date:	
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Office Use only:

Action taken:	
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6.3 Safeguarding Code for Members/Event Organisers and  
Virtus Safeguarding Policy

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