

Managing Allegations Against Coaches

Dragon Academy Ltd (company number 16871720)

Version 1.0 · Approved by Dylan Powell, Director · Designated Safeguarding Lead: Dylan Powell · Next review: by 31 October 2027

1. When this policy applies

This policy applies whenever information suggests that someone who works with children for Dragon (called "the person" below) may have:

1. behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
2. possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child;
3. behaved towards a child or children in a way that suggests they may pose a risk of harm; or
4. behaved in a way, **in or outside their work with Dragon, including in their private life**, that suggests they may not be suitable to work with children.

These are the four threshold criteria in the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. This policy applies whether the information comes from a child, a parent, a coach, another organisation, the local authority or the police, and whether or not it relates to Dragon. It follows **Section 5 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, "Safeguarding allegations/concerns about practitioners and those in positions of trust"**. Section 5 names sports coaches, and covers self-employed people.

Lower-level worries that do not meet these criteria (for example, poor boundaries or a breach of the Coach Code of Conduct) are still recorded and dealt with by Dragon. A pattern of low-level concerns can itself meet the threshold, so each one is recorded.

2. Principles

1. The child's safety and welfare come first.
2. **Dragon does not investigate allegations itself.** The local authority and the police decide what investigation is needed. Dragon co-operates fully and acts on their advice.
3. Concerns are acted on **the same day**.
4. The person is treated fairly. An allegation is not proof. Suspension is a precaution, not a punishment.
5. Information is shared only with those who need it, and is recorded accurately.
6. If the allegation is about the DSL, the Deputy DSL takes the DSL's role in this policy. Dylan Powell is both the DSL and the owner, so Dragon has no more senior manager: the Deputy DSL reports straight to the local authority designated officer, who oversees the case.

3. Immediate steps

Step	What happens	Who	When
1	Make sure every child is safe. Call 999 if a child is in immediate danger.	Whoever is present	At once
2	Tell the DSL (or the Deputy DSL if the concern is about the DSL).	Whoever receives the concern	Same day
3	Record the concern, using the record form in policy 02, Appendix A.	DSL	Same day
4	Report it to the local authority's designated officer (the LADO or DOS, section 4). Tell the police as well if a crime may have been committed. Make a separate report to children's services about any child who may have been harmed.	DSL	Within 24 hours (next working day if out of hours). At once if serious.
5	Decide whether to suspend or restrict the person (section 5). If the risk is immediate, the person is stood down at once, before any advice.	DSL	Same day
6	Remove the person's access to Dragon's systems, groups and children's information if they are suspended or restricted.	DSL	Same day
7	Ask the designated officer (and the police, if involved) how much the person can be told, and don't approach any child or family about it until they agree.	DSL	Before telling anyone
8	Complete and record a risk assessment: what restrictions are needed, and whether any other children are at risk. Share it with the designated officer.	DSL	Same day, then at each review

4. Working with the local authority (Section 5 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures)

- 1. Who Dragon reports to.** Every council has a **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**, or a **Designated Officer for Safeguarding (DOS)** acting for them, within social services. They receive, decide on and monitor allegations about people who work with children. Dragon reports to the designated officer for the council where the alleged incident took place or the concern arose. If that is unclear, Dragon calls any of the three councils for advice.
- 2. What Dragon tells them.** The DSL makes clear that this is a safeguarding allegation about a person in a position of trust, and sends the written record and Dragon's risk assessment, including what immediate safeguards are in place.
- 3. If the allegation came from outside Dragon.** Where the concern arose in another setting or in the person's private life, the police or social services should tell Dragon's DSL. Dragon still records it, assesses the risk to Dragon children and co-operates with the process.
- 4. What happens next.** The designated officer decides whether the four threshold criteria are met. If so, they hold a **Section 5 strategy discussion**, then chair a **Section 5 strategy meeting** with the

police, the employer or engaging organisation and others. Dragon attends when invited, shares all relevant information (including any earlier concerns) and carries out the actions agreed. The procedures' good-practice timescales are: response to a report within 2 working days, strategy discussion within 2 to 3 working days, and the first strategy meeting within 5 working days of that.

5. **Dragon's own decisions.** Decisions about whether the person can keep working with Dragon belong to Dragon, not to the designated officer. Dragon makes them on the risk to children and records the reasons. The process continues whether or not the person is still engaged by Dragon.
6. **Telling the person.** The person should be told the nature of the allegation at the earliest safe stage. It can be held back only for documented reasons, such as a risk to others or harm to a criminal investigation. Dragon follows the designated officer's and police's advice on this and reviews it at every stage. Where there is no parallel criminal investigation, the person is given the chance to give their account, which Dragon feeds into the process.
7. **Outcome.** The process ends with a decision, on the balance of probabilities, that the allegation is **substantiated, unsubstantiated, unfounded or malicious**. Dragon tells the person the outcome directly, as well as the designated officer writing to them.

None of the three councils publishes a direct line for its designated officer. Reports go through the council's front door for children's services, clearly marked as **an allegation against a professional, volunteer or person in a position of trust**. The council passes it to the LADO or DOS.

Council	Route	Contact
Bridgend	MASH, using Bridgend's "Request for Help" form	01656 642320 · mashcentra@bridgend.gov.uk
Rhondda Cynon Taf	Children's services (MASH/IAA), using RCT's C1 referral form	01443 425006
Neath Port Talbot	Single Point of Contact (SPOC)	01639 686802 · spoc@npt.gov.uk
Out of hours (urgent only)	Emergency duty team	Bridgend and RCT: 01443 743665. NPT: 01639 895455

Ask for the LADO or DOS by name when you call, and record their name and contact details for future cases.

5. Suspension

1. Dragon may suspend the person at once, under the coach agreement, whenever:
 - there is a possible risk to children;
 - the police or local authority advise it;
 - the person is under investigation, arrested, charged or bailed, or subject to conditions that restrict contact with children or with any Dragon venue; or
 - the allegation is serious enough that the person could not continue while it is looked into.

2. Dragon considers alternatives first where they fully protect children (for example, working only alongside another vetted coach with no contact with the children concerned). Where there is any doubt, the person is suspended.
3. **Suspension is a neutral act.** It is not a finding, and the person is told this in writing.
4. During a suspension, the person does not attend any Dragon activity, has no contact with Dragon children or families about Dragon, and has no access to Dragon systems, groups or data. They return Dragon property and stop using any Dragon data, under the coach agreement, clause 10. **Dragon does not tell a suspended person to delete anything until it has checked with the police or the designated officer**, because the material may be needed as evidence. Dragon also keeps its own records and the person's accounts, and does not delete them.
5. The DSL records the decision and the reasons, and reviews it at least every 4 weeks, or sooner if new information arrives. Each review is recorded.
6. Dragon tells the person in writing (when the police or local authority agree) that they are suspended, why in general terms, what happens next, and who they can contact. The person is told about independent sources of support.

6. Talking to others

1. **Parents of a child directly involved** are told by, or as agreed with, the local authority or the police.
2. **Other families, coaches and the public:** Dragon does not make any announcement or public statement about a case without first getting advice from the local authority or police, and from Dragon's insurer or solicitor. Any statement is factual, does not identify the person or any child, and does not prejudice an investigation.
3. **Coaches** are told only what they need to know (for example, that a coach will not be at sessions), and are reminded not to discuss it.
4. **Other organisations** the person works for: information is shared through the local authority's professional concerns process, not informally.
5. **Media and social media enquiries** go to Dylan Powell only. No one else comments.

7. The DBS duty to refer

Dragon is a **regulated activity provider**, so it has a legal duty under section 35 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 to refer people to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This applies to self-employed coaches.

1. **When the duty applies.** Both of these conditions must be met:
 - Dragon has removed the person from regulated activity (for example, ended their agreement or stopped them working with children), **or would have done so** if they had not resigned, left or been moved; **and**
 - Dragon thinks the person has engaged in **relevant conduct** (conduct that harmed a child or put a child at risk of harm), or satisfies the **harm test** (credible evidence that they may harm

a child), or has been **cautioned or convicted of a relevant offence**.

2. **Suspension alone.** While a person is suspended pending an investigation, a referral may not yet be needed. Dragon asks the DBS Regional Outreach Team for advice (dbsregionaloutreach@dbs.gov.uk) and agrees timing at the Section 5 strategy meeting, so that any police investigation is not harmed. The Wales Safeguarding Procedures say the DBS referral can be arranged at any point in the process.
3. **No indefinite waiting.** Dragon does not let a referral drift. Once the conditions are met, it refers, even if a long time has passed, the person has left, or the matter has already gone to the police or the local authority. Dragon may also refer earlier on the advice of the police or a safeguarding professional.
4. **How.** Online through the DBS Barring Referral Service (gov.uk, "Making barring referrals to the DBS"). It takes about an hour. Dragon includes all the relevant information it holds: the role, the chronology, the concern, investigation records and outcomes. DBS helpline: 03000 200 190 (Welsh: 03000 200 191).
5. **Information requests.** If the DBS asks Dragon for information about a referred person, Dragon must provide it.
6. **It is a criminal offence** for a regulated activity provider to fail to refer without reasonable excuse when the duty applies. The DBS guidance refers to a fine of up to £5,000.
7. The DSL records the decision on referral, the reasons and the date, at each stage.

8. Outcomes

When the police and local authority processes end, the DSL records the outcome and decides, with advice from the local authority:

1. whether the person can return to work with children, and on what conditions;
2. whether the coach agreement ends;
3. whether the DBS referral conditions are met (section 7), if not already referred; and
4. what Dragon can learn, and any changes to its policies or practice.

A person whose suspension ends returns only after a meeting with the DSL, a new self-declaration and an Update Service status check.

9. Records

1. The DSL keeps a full, accurate, dated record of every allegation: what was alleged, what was done, advice received, decisions and reasons, the outcome and any referral. The record is **added to, never edited**. Corrections are added as new entries.
2. Records are kept securely and seen only by the DSL and Deputy DSL, and anyone they must be shared with by law.

3. Records are kept until the person reaches normal pension age or for 10 years, whichever is longer, even if the person leaves Dragon, and longer if needed for legal proceedings or an official inquiry (policy 08).
4. Records are not destroyed while any investigation, legal claim or inquiry is ongoing.

10. Support

- **The child and family** are supported and kept informed, as advised by the local authority.
- **The person** is told about independent support (for example, their GP or Samaritans) and has a named contact at Dragon.
- **The person who raised the concern** is supported, kept informed as far as possible, and protected under the Whistleblowing Policy (policy 07).

11. Unfounded and malicious allegations

An unfounded or unsubstantiated allegation is not the same as a malicious one. Only where there is clear evidence of a deliberate attempt to deceive is an allegation treated as malicious. If that happens, the DSL considers, with the local authority, what action is appropriate. A malicious allegation by a coach is a serious breach of the coach agreement.