Safeguarding Reporting Procedures - Development Guidelines

Table of contents

Safe from Harm in Scouting

Introduction

Over the years, Safe from Harm in the Scout Movement has become a top priority, ensuring that safeguarding children, young people, and adults remains central to every Scouting experience. Across all levels of Scouting, dedicated teams of volunteers and staff are committed to both preventing and responding to any form of abuse that may be encountered by our members.

The World Safe from Harm Policy defines the framework of safety, safeguarding, and well-being for the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) at every level. Safeguarding reporting procedures are linked to this document as they support National Scout Organizations (NSOs) in developing a reporting and response mechanism, ensuring the protection of their members.

In 2021, the World Scout Conference amended the WOSM Constitution to ensure all Member Organizations comply with mechanisms that provide a safe environment for children, young people, and adults. It is now a membership requirement for all NSOs to meet the standards defined in the Safe from Harm Assessment Tool. This assessment includes criteria related to child and youth safeguarding, the recruitment, selection and training of adults, reporting, response and case management, and education. Read the Safe from Harm Assessment guidelines to learn more about the tool.

Why do NSOs need a Safeguarding Reporting Procedure?

Having an accessible, clear, and easy way to report concerns for everyone will create a strong sense of safety and trust among members, as they will see that their organisation is prepared and proactive on safeguarding. It highlights the organisation's high standards and shows that it prioritises its members. It is also reassuring for parents to see that NSOs recognise and anticipate that harmful situations can happen and that they are prepared to react accordingly and listen to the concerns.

The Safeguarding Reporting Procedure is also an opportunity for the organisation itself. It will ensure more visibility for the organisation on the situations happening in local groups and allow it to have the appropriate tools to respond to such situations. It will also give more credibility amongst other youth organisations and a closer link with different stakeholders in each country. Having procedures like this in place, allows for stronger trust from all stakeholders, including members.

It is important to highlight that the Safeguarding Reporting Procedure is also one of the major non-conformity elements of the Safe from Harm Assessment. Having a Safeguarding Reporting Procedure is the only way NSOs are able to react safely, timely and with high quality standards to an often stressful, unexpected, and uncomfortable situation.

How does a Safeguarding Reporting Procedure look like?

To meet the requirements of the Safe from Harm Assessment, all NSOs must have a Safeguarding Reporting Procedure that covers the following:

1. A mechanism for members to **report** any Safe from Harm concerns.
2. Processes to **respond** to a Safe from Harm concern.
3. Any **essential considerations** linked to the mechanism.

The sections below delve deeper into how to develop the different sections of the Safeguarding Reporting mechanism. For further support, you can reach out to your Regional Support Centre or request a [WOSM Safe from Harm service](#).

Reporting a Safe from Harm concern

This section focuses on reporting mechanisms when a member has a concern while being involved in Scouting activities.

Develop your Safeguarding Reporting Procedures

Below are various elements that may need to be defined in your reporting procedures. Each section outlines what NSOs are expected to establish in their reporting procedures. Please note that your NSO can add additional elements if they are needed to meet your organisation's needs.

a) Aims of the reporting mechanism

In this section, you must **outline the objectives** of the reporting mechanism.

Guiding questions:

- Why is it important for your NSO to have this mechanism?
- What are the benefits of such procedures for your membership?

b) Definition of a Safe from Harm concern

It is essential to **define what constitutes a Safe from Harm concern for your NSO**. This will allow your membership to have clarity on what they can or should report. It also ensures a common understanding among your members.

Guiding questions:

- What does a Safe from Harm concern mean for us?
- Are there any legal definitions that we need to follow?

c) Scope of the procedure

This section clarifies when the **reporting procedures apply and when they don't apply**. The scope aims to ensure that all members understand which concerns should be reported through the procedures, and which should use different processes. NSOs can also use this as an opportunity to remind members of their national legal duty to report certain situations to the police.

Guiding questions:

- What types of concerns will be addressed by the Safe from Harm procedure?
- Which situations would not need to involve a response process led by the Safe from Harm team?
- What should be handled at the local level?
- Who is this reporting procedure for?

d) Who can report?

Reporting procedures should outline who may follow the reporting process. While reporting procedures are typically designed for adults, it's crucial to acknowledge the diverse membership of the organisation. Handling and receiving direct youth reports requires professional training that very few organisations provide. However, it is important to ensure that children and young people can also report to someone who could then instigate the reporting process on their behalf. Ensuring the accessibility of the platform is essential to secure an effective reporting process.

Guiding questions:

- Who can report to us?
- How will children and young people be able to express their concerns if they cannot report directly?
- What about parents, partners, or others involved in the short term?

e) What is the reporting process?

The reporting procedure must outline the steps a person must take to report their concern. Very often it is about filling in a reporting template or online form. This section enables members to understand the process they need to follow and the consequences of initiating such a process. To be effective, the reporting process should be easy to follow and be communicated to all members to ensure they are aware that reporting mechanisms are available and accessible.

It is worth noting that in many countries in the world, reporting is a legal requirement. The Safeguarding Reporting Procedures should outline this – while the duty to report is a principle of the NSO, it can also be a mandatory legal requirement.

Guiding questions:

- What steps must someone take to report their concerns?
- Which elements are mandatory?
- What is the best way to communicate this process to members?

f) Which channels can members use to report?

This section outlines the different ways a member can report their concerns to an NSO. It can be by form or email or contacting an emergency hotline or person in charge at the district or local level. You can also mention any helplines that may be available in your country, through non-governmental organisations or government authorities. NSOs are encouraged to have more than one way for members to report their concerns to ensure the neutrality of the reporting process. It is also important that members know that their concerns will be treated confidentially and that there will be no retaliation for raising concerns.

Guiding questions:

- Which tools do we already have that could be used for reporting purposes?
- Should we plan different ways of reporting for different audiences?
- What are the most efficient channels?
- How can we ensure strict confidentiality when receiving reports and ensure that they who make reports are protected against retaliation?

g) What is the timeframe of the report?

A timeframe must be defined in the reporting procedure that allows for a person wishing to make reports to know how and when to report their concerns. Additionally, clarity on the processing time of reports should be provided, outlining how long it will take for reports to be assessed and addressed once submitted. Prompt reporting is essential to ensure timely intervention and support for a person(s) at risk. Delays in reporting can compromise the effectiveness of the response and may impact the well-being of those affected.

Guiding questions:

- How much time do a person have to report a concern?
- What capacity does the team managing cases need to review and process the report?
- What are the different timeframes that must be met when a report comes through?

Explore the reporting components

Reporting a concern is often a challenging undertaking for the person making the report. Providing guidance on understanding how to share and what information to provide could be very helpful. Below are the reporting elements that should be present in a reporting form from an NSO. As mentioned above, other channels can be used for reporting, but the information provided should always be the same.

Identity of the person(s) making the report – The person making the report should share their name, the Scout group they belong to and their role in the organisation. More details may be requested by the NSO based on local requirements.

Identity of the person targeted by the harmful situation – If the person who made the report is reporting on behalf of someone else, we should encourage them to identify that person by providing the same information, as mentioned above. There may be cases where they want to protect that person's identity by not sharing their name.

Identity of the person who has triggered the harmful situation – The same information listed above is required, if possible.

Time, date, and location of the situation – Make sure there is clarity on time zones, if needed.

Details of the situation – Encourage the person making the report to share as much detail as possible about the situation. Make sure to make note of the facts as described. Try to identify and differentiate the factual information from perceived notions or feelings from the reporter.

Evidence – The form should have a space where the person making the report can add files, pictures, video, or other evidence that could support the understanding of the situation. Please note that in some countries, the sharing of pornographic images is a criminal offence. It is important to check your legal framework to define which evidence you are encouraging others to share.

Confidentiality agreement – Make sure you have a section at the end recognising the level of confidentiality the report will be handled with. This includes the duty to report of the reporter and the confidentiality it will be treated with by the case management team. You will find an example below (in child-friendly language):

Confidentiality
Note that members of our organisation have a duty to report any concerns they may have. Our NSO will keep what you tell us private. This is called confidentiality. This means we will not share your information without discussing it with you first. There are times when we will have to share what you tell us, these include:

- *If you are in danger.*
- *If someone else is in danger.*
- *If we can't help but someone else can.*

Remember if we have to tell someone, we will discuss it with you first. The people we sometimes have to involve are:

1. *Parents or caregivers*
2. *Other adults in Scouts*
3. *Our NSO leadership if you are unsafe or have been harmed*
4. *Child Protection Services, they are the part of the government whose job is to keep kids safe*
5. *The Police[1]*

* Note that this template is not exhaustive. Feel free to add any extra elements you feel would help you to manage the situation or better inform the situation based on the reality of your NSO.

Communicating the Safeguarding Reporting Procedure

Once your safeguarding reporting procedure is in place and adopted by your governing bodies, ensure that this procedure is shared and promoted amongst your members. Not only should they be aware that this procedure exists, but they should also feel comfortable to use it, and know which channel to use and where to find any templates they may need. Organising regular webinars or trainings around this topic or sending information in a video format to every local Scout group are some ways to ensure everyone gets access to this information.

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[1] Scouts Aotearoa Reporting Form

Responding to a Safe from Harm concern

Now that you have a reporting procedure in place, you will start receiving reports. The next step of your process is to decide what happens when a report is received. This is called a Safe from Harm Report Response Process (**response process**).

The following section explores what would be helpful to consider as an NSO to ensure you have an effective response process.

Developing a response process

Below are some components and considerations for your response process, outlining the steps you must take. If you would like to add more details to meet your NSO's needs, feel free to add this.

Case management team

A first step is considering who in your organisation will receive Safe from Harm reports in order to resolve and respond to them appropriately.

We recommend appointing a **case management team**. This is a group of volunteers and/or staff that manage Safe from Harm reports and are appointed by your organisation. Usually, the case management team determines the best person to handle and manage a specific case. This will be based on professional skills, speciality training, and experiences. They may have a legal background or have police or human resource case management experience.

Each member of the case management team is called a case manager. The case manager is responsible for resolving and responding to the report(s) assigned to them in a timely manner and in line with your response process and timelines. They have a clear job description, have gone through background checks and have signed a confidentiality agreement before joining the team. The case management team is appropriately trained in response processes, and they know which stakeholders to reach out to if further support is needed.

Note that it is important to have a designated person identified as coordinating the case management team. This ensures that a person has the oversight of the timelines and can

ensure that timely decisions are made on the next step for a specific case if urgent action is needed. The coordinator of the case management team does not have to be the designated Safe from Harm coordinator of an NSO.

Essential case management team principles

Every case management team should follow the Scout Law and Promise and the defined national Safe from Harm policy and code of conducts. Additionally, the specificity of this team brings the need to underline some elemental principles the team should follow:

- **Duty to care** – The case management team are responsible for ensuring that their members have access to an environment where they will be protected and supported.
- **Nonmaleficence (do no harm)** – The case management team should not take actions that will cause more harm to the victims.
- **Neutrality** – The case management team members must not have been or be involved or linked with any of the parties of a case. If so, they should declare a conflict of interest and not participate in the case.
- **Confidentiality** – The case management team must treat all cases with confidentiality and share only the information needed with identified stakeholders to follow the response process.
- **Equity** – The case management team must ensure all cases are treated in an equitable manner, ensuring no disparities in case management through the response process.
- **Timeliness** – The case management team must ensure all timelines defined in the response procedure are met and that all cases are managed in a timely manner.

What are the stages of case management?

Now that a reporting mechanism is in place and a case management team is ready to assign case managers to reports, you will need to design a process for appropriately responding to reports that case managers can follow. This will ensure that the Safe from Harm reports are processed in a consistent and timely manner. Follow this section to identify the steps to ensure an appropriate response.

1. *Receiving reports and acknowledgment*

After receiving a report, the first step is to acknowledge receipt to the reporter, ensuring they know their concern has been taken seriously and will be addressed. This can be done through an automated response if you have a special system managing the reports, or through a template email that is sent by the person in-charge to manage the reception of reports in the case management team as soon as the report is received. Note that this acknowledgement should be sent no more than 48 hours after receiving a report and should trigger the response process.

Guiding questions:

- What is our process for receiving and acknowledging reports?
- How will we ensure that reports are received respectfully and acknowledged promptly?

2. *Reviewing the information*

The case manager should thoroughly review the information provided in the report form to understand the nature and severity of the case. This step involves assessing the immediate risks and determining the urgency of the response. The case management team can have a template that identifies the different elements that should trigger immediate intervention (for example, if physical violence is identified, if the police were involved, etc.)

At this stage, the case manager should also note the missing elements that could prevent the team from moving forward (e.g. missing identities, lack of evidence, etc.)

Guiding questions:

- How will we assess and prioritise reports?
- What criteria will we use to assess the severity and urgency of a report?

3. Map stakeholders

The case manager must identify all relevant stakeholders who will need to be involved in a case. This involves creating a stakeholder map, which includes identifying individuals, organisations, and authorities who may have a role or interest in the case outcome. To build a stakeholder map, the following template can be used:
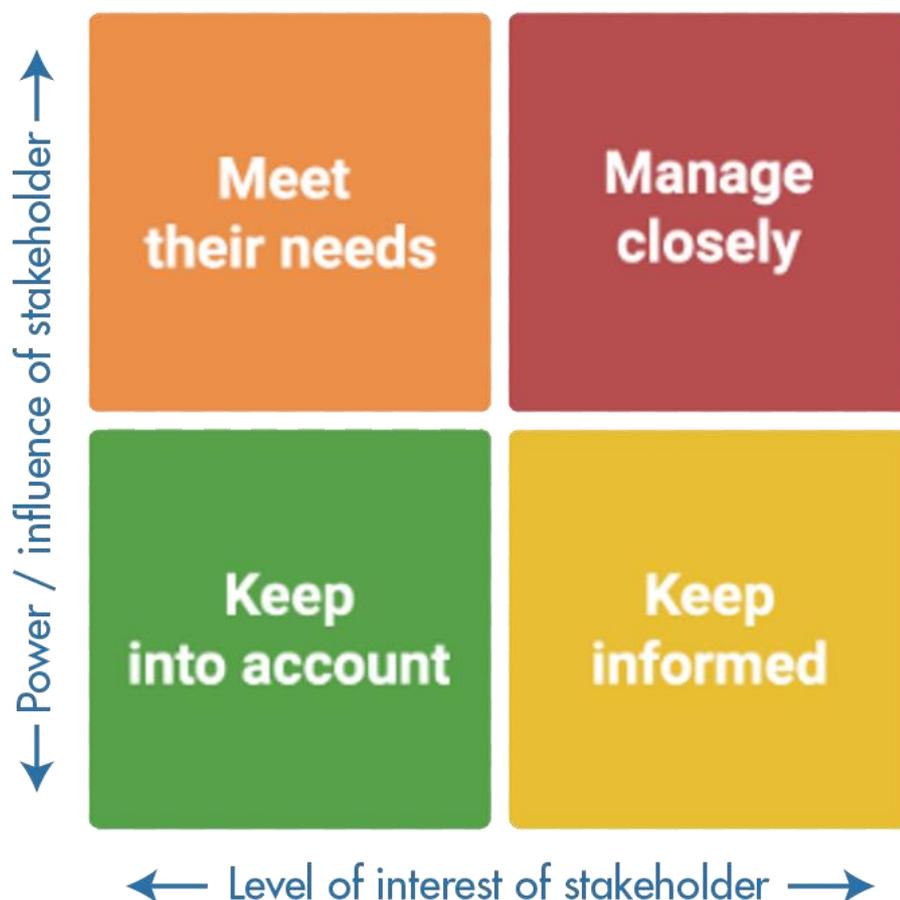
Note that some stakeholders might be involved in most of the cases while others will vary based on the nature of the case. For example, the coordinator of the district where the case is happening may need to be involved every time this district is affected by a case while the national training team may only get involved if something is flagged during a specific national training.

Once your mapping is finalised, identify who should be involved at each stage in the process. Some of your stakeholders will be sharing with you some initial reflections, while others may just need to receive the final report. Make sure the coordinator of the case management team is involved then as they will support the case manager to ensure everyone is involved at the right time.

Guiding questions:

- Who are the stakeholders?
- Who needs to be involved in the report response process (e.g. staff, volunteers, external agencies)?
- How will they be involved?

4. Communicating with stakeholders

Effective communication in case response involves timely and clear updates to all involved parties, maintaining confidentiality while ensuring transparency. It requires empathetic engagement and choosing appropriate communication channels to discuss case progress and resolutions, fostering trust and demonstrating the organisation's commitment to addressing the issue responsibly.

If you are unsure about the best way to communicate to some stakeholders, you may refer to other case managers or the coordinator of the case management team who should be able to guide you.

When communicating with stakeholders, make sure you share only the information they need to understand and take action on the case. Remember that confidentiality and duty to care are the principles the case management team lives by. Keep in mind that one of your stakeholders is also the reporter.

Guiding questions:

- How will we communicate with all parties involved?
- What will be our strategy for communication with the reporter, the subject of the report, and any other stakeholders?

5. Deciding on a response

The response to the report may vary depending on its nature and severity of a case. Options may include:

- Conducting an investigation to gather more information.
- Referring the case to the authorities if it involves criminal behaviour.
- Acknowledging the issue and apologising if the situation warrants it.
- Engaging in mediation, possibly with the help of a third party, to resolve the situation.
- Consulting with internal or external experts to determine the best course of action.

Note that every case is different. Even though some cases may look similar, the situation stays unique. You must assess all the possible actions and outcomes before making a proposal to the team.

Once you decided on what you feel is the most appropriate action to take, draft a small proposal for the case management team. This should include:

- A summary of the situation and the people involved
- Actions already taken
- Steps you suggest moving forward
- Stakeholders that will be involved
- A clear timeline for the process

Guiding questions:

- What can we do in this situation, taking into account the case management principles?
- What are the actions that could be mapped in the response process?

6. Discuss your proposed response with the case management team

Set up a meeting to discuss the case and plan the appropriate response with the case management team. This is an opportunity to explore other perspectives and approaches you may not have thought about. It will also ensure your response involves all stakeholders needed and give the legitimacy to the NSO in its actions.

Case management team meetings can be set in different ways depending on the working methods of your team. Recurring meeting are encouraged even though you do not receive cases often to ensure the follow up with the team and its engagement.

Guiding questions

- What are our working methods in the case management team?
- What would a streamlined agenda look like?

7. Take the agreed actions

Implement the agreed response actions, ensuring that they are carried out effectively and sensitively to address the issues raised in the report. This part can take some time, especially if you are required to involve further stakeholders. However, the case manager must follow-up and ensure the timelines are respected.

Guiding questions

- Who is the support to the case manager in the implementation of agreed actions?
- How will those actions be monitored?

8. Documenting and closing a case

Once the response steps and actions are completed, two scenarios may occur:

1. Another case management team is convened to take further actions based on the result of previous actions (e.g. an investigation).
2. The case has been resolved or was forwarded to another entity (e.g. the police)

In the second situation, the case manager will made a record of all relevant details, actions taken, and any learnings from the case. They must ensure that the documentation is complete and accurate, and share it with the coordinator of the case management team. If agreed, the case is then closed.

Guiding questions

- What documentation and record-keeping practices will we follow?
- How will we securely document and store information related to reports?

Case recording template

This template is an example covering relevant details of a case report should capture, facilitating a thorough and organised approach to Case Management.

1. Case manager
Who is managing the issue:
Name:
Role:

2. Report information
Who has raised the concern or made the complaint:
Name:
Role/Relationship:
Contact details:
Email:
Phone number:

3. Summary of the allegations
What does the report involve:
Give a summary of the report:

a) Details of the alleged incident
The date, time, and location:

Who else was present when the incident occurred:

b) Investigation or review process
Stakeholders *(who I spoke to about the issue):*
Name:
Contact details:

c) What those people said:
(This can be included as an attachment)

d) Supporting evidence
Relevant materials I reviewed as part of the complaint:
(This could be screenshots of messages, forwarded emails, photos, social media posts, etc., and can be included as an attachment)

e) Findings
Give a summary of your findings, including:

- What you decided occurred or did not occur?
- An explanation as to why that finding was reached.

f) <u>Outcome</u>

Give a summary of the outcome of the issue. This could include:
- Any disciplinary actions, recommendation, further training, or other requirements

- The date when the complaint was resolved or closed

g) <u>Learnings</u>

What are the learnings or possible improvements you found?

h) <u>Prevention</u>

Is there anything the Scout group, region, or NSO could do to avoid or minimise the risk of the issue reoccurring?

This template ensures that all aspects of a case are documented comprehensively, from the initial report through to the resolution and learnings derived from the process, aiding in continual improvement of the case management system.

Essential considerations when managing Safe from Harm cases

When handling Safe from Harm reports, navigating the process with care and diligence is essential to protecting the children, young people and adults involved. It is also instrumental to comply with legal requirements. Below are some key considerations you should think about as an NSO in your Safeguarding Reporting Procedures.

Legal implications

It is essential to understand the legal framework governing safeguarding and child protection in your jurisdiction (e.g. country, state, region, etc.)

This knowledge will guide you in the development of your safeguarding reporting procedures and throughout your actions and decisions in the process.

Guiding questions

- What are your national legal obligations?
- Which laws and regulations must you comply with in your jurisdiction regarding child protection and reporting?
- What are your legal obligations and regulations and, how they apply to your case management?

Information sharing

Determine your process of case information sharing. Sharing should always be done in a manner that protects the child's best interests and complies with legal requirements regarding confidentiality and data protection. Remember to keep information sharing on a strict need to know basis to avoid breaching confidentiality.

Guiding questions

- Who can you and can you not share the information of cases with?
- When should you share such information?
- What are the safe communication channels you can use to share information linked to cases?

Data storage

Implement secure and confidential methods for storing case records. Ensure that only authorised personnel have access to these records and that the storage system complies with data protection laws.

Guiding questions

- Which systems can you use to protect your data?
- Who can and cannot access the storage system?
- What are the risks in your current system and how can you mitigate those risks?

Confidentiality, privacy, and records

Maintain the confidentiality and privacy of all case-related information. Establish clear protocols for handling and documenting case records to ensure they are comprehensive, accurate, and securely stored. Keep in mind that all the people who need the information - either now or in the future - should be able to access and understand it.

Guiding questions

- How will we ensure confidentiality and privacy?
- What measures will we put in place to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the individuals involved in a report?

Severity of cases reported

It is worth noting that you will receive a great diversity of cases through the new reporting system. Your role is to identify with your team the level of severity of the case depending on the information around the case, the identified elements of physical, verbal, emotional or sexual harm or neglect. We encourage you to develop a scale outlining what is considered a mild, moderate, or severe case that you can refer to in your case management team. This will also help to recommend appropriate sanctions based on the severity of the situation.

You may also receive through this channel historical case or cases that happened way before the system was installed. Follow the same process as for any other case but don't forget to add a step around reviewing archives and internal documents that may give you more information around the case.

Guiding questions

- What are examples of situations we consider mild, moderate, and severe based on the code of conduct and our national Safe from Harm policy?
- What sanction could apply in these situations?

Sanctions

Unfortunately, sometimes the case management process leads to the need to issue sanctions against an individual. It is the role of your organisation to map the potential sanctions that could be issued to members based on severity, for failing to adhere to child protection policies, safeguarding standards and legal requirements. This includes both organisational sanctions and legal consequences.

> *Organisational Sanctions: These are penalties or disciplinary actions that an organisation itself may impose including verbal or written warnings, temporary suspension, or termination of membership, depending on the severity of the breach.*

Legal Consequences: Refers to the legal implications or punishments that can be imposed by the government or legal authorities for violation of child protection and safeguarding policies including fines, lawsuits, or even criminal charges depending on the nature and extent of the violation.

Guiding questions

- What are the sanctions that already exist in your NSO? Do they meet the needs of the case management team?
- What is the process to trigger those sanctions? Does the case management team have the right mandate?

Team training and support

Ongoing training and support must be provided to your case management team, ensuring they are equipped to handle Safe from Harm cases effectively and efficiently. This should include training on basic child protection and safeguarding principles, case management procedures, legal requirements, and emotional support to deal with the challenging nature of Safe from Harm work.

The case management team and others directly involved in handling the Safe from Harm reports, must receive specialised training tailored to their roles. This includes training on conducting interviews with children, young people or adults, documenting case information accurately, understanding the reporting process and maintaining confidentiality.

The case management team should also receive support throughout its mandate. This can include social gathering for the team, professional psychological support or any other types of recognition or opportunities to ensure the team is fit emotionally to deliver.

Guiding questions

- What training is required for your case management team?
- What kind of training do our Case Managers and other involved staff need to effectively handle reports?
- How can you provide emotional support to your team?

Learnings and feedback

To ensure your safeguarding reporting procedure is up to date, it must include a review process and a monitoring and evaluation system. This should be managed on a regular basis by the case management team but also by the national leadership as an oversight. Management and board reporting are key. Executive leadership should receive regular briefings on case management specifics and trends to enable organisational responses and actions. Timelines should be monitored to inform resourcing and ensure complaints are handled appropriately.

To handle feedback and learning, you can actively seek input from all parties after resolving a case. Analyse this feedback to identify improvements and integrate these lessons into future response processes. Regularly updating policies and training based on these insights ensures continuous improvement and more effective case management.

Guiding questions

- How often should we review our procedures? Who is in charge of this review?
- How will we handle feedback and learning?
- How can we incorporate feedback into our process and learn from each case to improve our response in the future?

Implementing and monitoring

Once the reporting and response procedures are developed, it's required to ensure that they are used and that they meet the needs of members. This section will allow you to further work on the implementation and the monitoring of your procedures.

Ensure continuous monitoring of incoming reports

A system must be put in place within the team to ensure that no incoming reports would be missed. Ensure the system takes into consideration after-hours and holidays of the team members. This will allow everyone to feel safer and more at ease when they are unavailable to join. Some organisations use external companies to support case management in certain periods of the year, for example during summer camps.

Plan annual reviews of the procedures

Based on the cases received for the entire year, the case management team should have a dedicated team every year to reflect on how to improve the procedures to simplify the reporting process and the response. This is an opportunity to reflect on the work of the team and the tool they use.

Set up a reporting timeline with the board

On a regular basis, the case management team should report updates to the board or any other governing bodies of the organisation. This is an opportunity for the team to share the number of cases and their severity overall but also to identify challenge and flag any mitigation actions the leadership could take or support. Further ensuring involvement of the board ensures stronger oversight, accountability and awareness of implications of cases for the organisation as part of risk management.