

Safeguarding Scenario:

Child decides to cut weight

The scenario:

A parent noticed their child wasn't eating very much at dinner times. When the parent asked the child why, they said they're trying to lose weight to change weight category and found out how to do this on social media. The parent raises this with you as the Coach or Welfare Officer.

Guidance:

This could be a situation where a child is misinformed, and an informal conversation can suitably redirect their thinking and behaviours.

1. Speak with the parent and agree how the issue will be addressed with the child.

Work together as a Coach, Parent, and Welfare Officer so you are all aware of what information will be covered in the conversation.

2. Have a conversation with the child to understand more about their motivations and what they've been reading or following.

Redirect their thinking around the importance of nutrition to:

- Carry out all the activities of day-to-day life (school, walking the dog, socialising etc)
- Train, recover, adapt, compete
- Sustain normal bodily functions (immune system, reproductive capacity, brain function etc)
- Support growth and development as a young person (increases in body size, changes to body composition, maturation of metabolic function, hormonal changes, and laying down of nutrient deposits. All of which support future health and, consequently, also performance as an athlete)

Convey the dangers of following advice online, for example:

- Unqualified sources
- Promotion of harmful methods
- Unrealistic body expectations
- Even well-meaning posts may not be supported medically
- Misinformation spreads quickly by going viral



3. Ask the parent to observe if there's any changes to the child's approach to eating.

4. If the initial intervention didn't work and the child continues to restrict their diet, or further concerns were noticed, refer the parent to seek advice from their GP.

Implications:

- Be aware that children may be following advice or copying what they see from other weight category sports or general fitness influencers.
- Be alert to children at your club not eating, avoiding food, or looking faint. Consider how your club can provide helpful messaging about nutrition.
- Restricting a child's food or liquid intake is neglect and a form of child abuse. If you are concerned that this may be happening to a child, seek further support.

As a coach/welfare officer...



Do work in coordination with the parent, coach and welfare officer



Don't respond in isolation to safeguarding concerns



Do be supportive and non-judgmental



Don't be critical or blameful



Do follow the guidance of medical professionals



Don't ignore professionals



Do seek further help to discuss a concern, no matter how small



Don't ignore the support available to you and your club

Further support:

As a coach, Welfare Officer or Parent you are not alone. Seek advice from:

- [Your local Sport Welfare Officer](#) or national agency for sport
- [British Weight Lifting's Safeguarding Lead](#)
- [Resources provided by the Child Protection in Sport Unit](#)



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