

## **Investigation Case Study**

### **Investigation of allegations against a national coach of bullying young athletes**

#### **Dispute background**

The parents of three young athletes complained that a coach has persistently ignored and singled out their children for inappropriate treatment. This included behaviours such as refusing to acknowledge the athletes, denying them access to services and opportunities and humiliating them by requiring them to participate in additional training. The coach denied the allegations and put the complaints against him down to long standing disagreements with a small group of parents. The NGB instructed Sport Resolutions to investigate the complaints.

#### **The parties**

The National Governing Body for a sport and its national coach.

#### **Sport Resolutions Service**

Sport Resolutions investigated the complaint under the auspices of its National Safeguarding Panel (NSP). A brief was agreed with the NGB which set out the objectives and scope of the investigation. A recently retired police officer member of the NSP was appointed to lead the investigation. The NGB provided a copy of the letters of complaint and evidence provided by the parents of the young athletes along with a copy of their relevant rules, regulations and policies. Sport Resolutions liaised with the investigator and the NGB to compile a list of people to be interviewed. Once finalised the NGB was asked to contact all individuals to request their co-operation with the investigation and to consent to their personal contact details being passed to Sport Resolutions for this purpose. Sport Resolutions then arranged an interview schedule for the investigator over the course of two weekends. The investigator interviewed 14 individuals in total, the majority in person but some by telephone. This included five young athletes, their parents, the national coach and NGB officials and coaches. All interviews were written up as formal witness statements and the witness given the opportunity to approve or amend the statement. At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator provided a summary report and recommendations and a bundle of evidence which included all the signed witness statements and other documents which had been reviewed as part of the investigation.

#### **Cost to the parties**

The cost of the investigation was met by the NGB. The total bill was £900 which included the time and travel of the investigator and the administrative support provided by Sport Resolutions.

#### **Outcome achieved**

The investigation was concluded within three weeks with the summary report and bundle of evidence provided to the NGB two weeks later. The investigator concluded that there was a case to answer because if proved, the allegations were child protection issues that constituted bullying

and emotional abuse by isolation. A recommendation was made to hold a hearing before an independent panel which gives the children the opportunity to be heard and the coach the opportunity to respond to the allegations made against him.

### **Benefits**

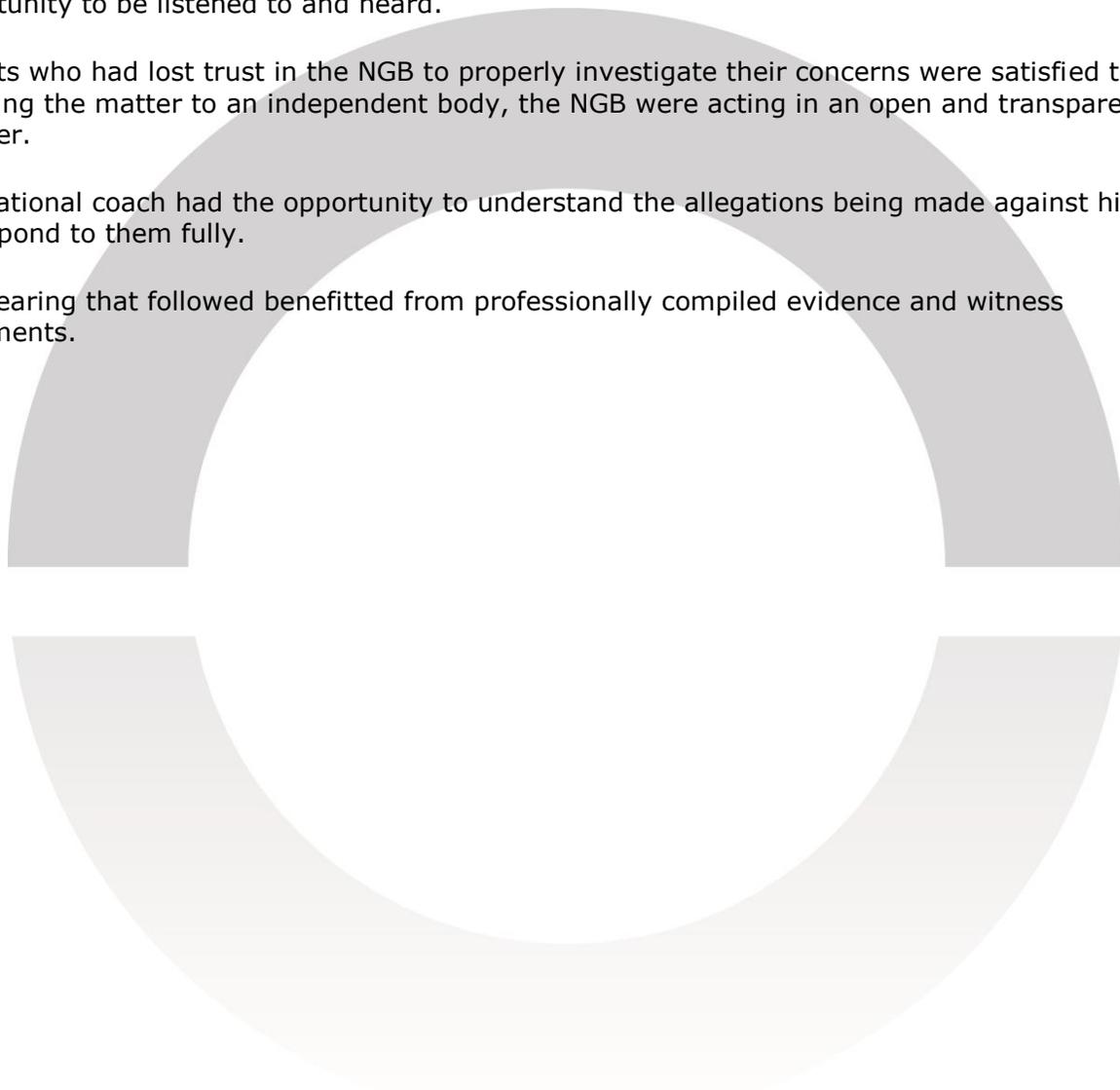
The NGB was finally able to get to the root of a long-standing issue within its sport.

Children whose voices were at risk of being lost amongst adult arguments were given the opportunity to be listened to and heard.

Parents who had lost trust in the NGB to properly investigate their concerns were satisfied that by referring the matter to an independent body, the NGB were acting in an open and transparent manner.

The national coach had the opportunity to understand the allegations being made against him and to respond to them fully.

The hearing that followed benefitted from professionally compiled evidence and witness statements.





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