



Child Protection Policy

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

All individuals involved in sports activities with children and young people have a responsibility to safeguard their welfare. The majority of children who participate in sport do so in a safe and positive atmosphere with the support and encouragement of those involved with the sport. However a number of children do not have a positive experience and sport like other aspects of society now recognises the need to guard against individuals who may abuse their position in a sport. An increasing number of children and older athletes are now speaking out about their experiences of abuse and those involved in this field are beginning build up a clearer picture of the nature and extent of abuse in sport.

There are a number of steps you can take to promote the welfare of the children and young people involved in sport. Within this section you will find advice and information about developing good practice in relation to child protection.

You should also consider contacting British Triathlon who have produced a child protection policy and detailed guidance about how to respond to concerns.

What is abuse?

Child Abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. It commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and represents an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a child regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

Abuse and Neglect

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

Neglect – where adults fail to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the

child's health or development (e.g. failure to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment). It may also include refusal to give children love, affection and attention. Neglect in sport could include a teacher or coach not ensuring children were safe, exposing them to undue cold, heat or to unnecessary risk of injury.

Physical abuse – where adults physically hurt or injure children by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, or scalding, suffocating, drowning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after e.g. factitious illness by proxy or Munchausen's syndrome by proxy. Examples of physical abuse in Sport may be when the nature and intensity of training and competition exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body; where drugs are used to enhance performance or delay puberty.

Sexual abuse – where girls and boys are abused by adults (both male and female) who use children to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing children pornographic material (books, videos, pictures) or talking to children in a sexually explicit manner is also a form of sexual abuse. In sport, coaching techniques, which involve physical contact with children, could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. The power of the coach over young performers, if misused, may also lead to abusive situations developing.

Emotional abuse – is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development? It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the child very nervous and withdrawn. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child. Emotional abuse in Sport may occur if children are subjected to constant criticism, name-calling, and sarcasm, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations consistently. The above definitions are adapted from Department of Health (1999) *Working Together to Safeguard Children – A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.*

It is important to recognise the impact and extent of bullying and discrimination in the lives of young people. Some people may not regard bullying and discrimination as child abuse because of the settings in which this often takes place and also because it is often other young people who are responsible for the behaviour.

What is bullying?

Bullying is often defined in terms of three components,
It must occur over time, rather than being a single aggressive act;
It involves an imbalance of power, the powerful attack the powerless;

It can be psychological, verbal, or physical in nature.

In the NSPCC study the most common experiences of bullying and discrimination reported by young people was at the hands of other young people.

Being called names, insulted or verbally abused;

Being deliberately embarrassed and humiliated by other children;

Being made to feel different or like an outsider;

Being lied about;

Being physically assaulted or threatened with violence;

Being ignored.

Boys were most likely to experience physical bullying or threats, have property stolen or damaged. Girls were more likely to be ignored or not spoken to.

Bullying by adults was a less common experience but one in ten reported this. Of this form of bullying the most common experiences were:

Being deliberately embarrassed or humiliated;

Being unfairly treated or verbally abused;

Being ignored or not spoken to.

The study confirmed previous investigations suggesting that bullying and discrimination by young people is one of the most common forms of harmful aggression experienced by young people.

Another important fact identified in the study is that for a quarter of those young people involved the experience of bullying and discrimination had long term harmful effects.

Some typical indications

Remember that every child is unique and it is difficult to predict how their behaviour will change as a result of their experience of abuse.

The impact of abuse is likely to be affected by their age, the nature and extent of the abuse and the help and support they receive.

There are some behaviour that are commonly seen in children who are abused but remember they may only give an indication and not confirmation.

Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, bites or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.

The child says that she or he is being abused, or another person says they believe (or know) that abuse is occurring.
The child has an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent or which has not been adequately treated.
The child's behaviour changes, either over time or quite suddenly, and he or she becomes quiet and withdrawn, or alternately becomes aggressive.
Refusal to remove clothing for normal activities or keeping covered up in warm weather.
The child appears not to trust particular adults, a parent or coach with whom she or he would be expected to have, or once had, a close relationship.
An inability to make close friends.
A deterioration in physical appearance or rapid weight gain/loss.
Pains or itching, bruising bleeding in or near genital area.
Inappropriate sexual awareness or behaviour for the child's age.

Listening to children

As an adult with trust and influence with children sports coaches are in a powerful position to recognise or receive information about abuse. However remember **it is not your responsibility** to decide if a child is being abused. Your role is to act on those concerns. Many sports have clear guidelines as to how child protection concerns should be dealt with and you should make yourself aware of these and must follow them if you have concerns. Failing to respond or responding in contravention to your sport guidelines can have serious implications for the future handling of the case. If you are involved in a sport that does not have guidelines here is some advice as to how to respond to concerns. Children will express themselves verbally or non verbally and it is important to respond sensitively and carefully to what they are saying or in how they are behaving. If the child tells you about their abuse listen carefully to what they tell you. Don't ask direct questions – "Who, What Where or When". Do encourage them to talk – "Do you want to tell me about this?". Be honest with them about what you can and cannot do. Tell them you are not able to keep what they have told you secret and that you will try to find them the help they need. Keep calm and even if you find what they are saying difficult or painful keep listening. When they have finished make a detailed note of what they have said and pass that information onto someone in a position of authority, child protection officer, junior co-ordinator, chair, or senior coach. If you have serious concerns about the immediate safety of that child contact the Police or Social Services. Record who you spoke to and tell your club official what you have done.

Do not contact or confront the individual who is alleged to be responsible.

Find someone you trust to talk to about or to support you but remember not to name or identify those involved in the allegations.

Responding to non verbal concerns

Changes in a child's behaviour can be the result of a wide range of factors and this makes it difficult to identify if the changes are linked to abuse. Even signs such as bruising or other injuries cannot be taken as "proof" of abuse. However if you have concerns you have a responsibility to act on those concerns.

Many sports will have guidelines about how you should respond to concerns arising from physical signs or other concerns. It is important you follow those guidelines.

If you are involved in a sport that does not have guidance here is a guide as to how you should respond.

Record carefully what you have observed and pass this information to an official in your club.

Talk to someone in your club .

The Coaches Charter

Coaches must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treat everyone equally within the context of their sport.

Coaches must place the well being and safety of the performer above the development of performance. They should follow all guidelines laid down by the sports governing body and hold appropriate insurance cover.

Coaches must develop an appropriate working relationship with performers, especially children, based on mutual trust and respect. Coaches must not exert undue influence to obtain personal benefit or reward.

Coaches must encourage and guide performers to accept responsibility for their own behaviour.

Coaches should hold up to date nationally recognised governing body coaching qualifications.

Coaches must ensure the activities they direct or advocate are appropriate for the age, maturity, experience and ability of the individual.

Coaches should at the outset clarify with performers, and where appropriate their parents, exactly what is expected of them and what performers are entitled to expect from their coach.

Coaches should co-operate fully with other specialists (e.g. other coaches, officials, sport scientists, doctors, physiotherapists) in the best interest of the performer.

Coaches should always promote the positive aspects of their sport (e.g. fair play) and never condone rule violations or the use of prohibited substances.

Coaches must consistently display high standards of behaviour and appearance.