

WEST SUFFOLK ATHLETIC CLUB



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

It is the policy of UK Athletics to safeguard the welfare of all children by protecting them from neglect, and physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

- 1.1 The key principles that underwrite this policy are:
 - 1.1.1 Anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child for the purpose of this document.
 - 1.1.2 The child's welfare is paramount.
 - 1.1.3 All children whatever their age, culture, ability, Gender, Language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
 - 1.1.4 All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
 - 1.1.5 Working in partnership with children and their parents/carers is essential for the protection of the child.
 - 1.1.6 West Suffolk AC recognise the statutory responsibilities of Social Services Departments to ensure the welfare of children and it is committed to working with Local Area Child Protection Committees and to comply with their procedures.

2.0 ROLES

Effective implementation of this policy requires club members to work in partnership with other bodies responsible for athletics, each with a role to ensure the protection of the children in their care.

- 2.1.1 The role of the committee will be as follows:
 - a) To appoint a Child Protection Officer.
 - b) To accept that all officers and committee members have responsibilities in this area and be prepared to respond to any indication of abuse.
 - c) To be ready to amend bad practice.
 - d) To implement any recommendations of UK Athletics.
 - e) To maintain confidentiality of the child and the accused.
- 2.1.2 The role of the Child Protection Officer will be as follows:
 - a) To ensure all club helpers/officials/coaches complete a volunteer reference form.

- b) To send all forms to UK Athletics on request.
- c) To receive and advise on reports from other club members.
- d) To initiate action, ensuring all appropriate persons have been contacted.

2.1.3 The role of Suffolk AA will be as follows:

- a) To appoint a Disciplinary Panel.
- b) To provide support and guidance to the Child Protection Officer and Clubs.
- c) To make decisions on misconduct.
- d) To inform all appropriate individuals and bodies of their decision.
- e) To provide training for Child Protection Officers.
- f) To keep a list of all disqualified persons.
- g) To monitor the policy.

2.1.4 The role of UK Athletics

- a) To develop a training pack for Child Protection Officers.
- b) To keep a National Record of all disqualified persons.
- c) To monitor the policy.

3.0 IDENTIFYING ABUSE

Dealing with child abuse is rarely straightforward. In some cases a child's disturbed behaviour, or an injury, may suggest that the child has been abused. In many situations, however, the signs will not be clear cut and decisions about what action to take can be difficult.

Possible signs include:

- ◆ Uncharacteristic changes in the child's behaviour, attitude and commitment, e.g. becoming quiet and withdrawn, or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- ◆ Trackside gossip
- ◆ Bruises and injuries untypical of the sport or injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- ◆ Signs of discomfort and pain.
- ◆ Reluctance to remove tracksuit, or shower.
- ◆ The child becomes increasingly dirty, or unkempt.
- ◆ The child loses weight for no apparent reason.
- ◆ Nervousness when approached or touched.
- ◆ Fear of particular adults – especially those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- ◆ The child wishes to switch to another coach without a reasonable explanation.
- ◆ Inappropriate sexual awareness according to age (includes language and behaviour).
- ◆ Children who are always alone and unaccompanied and/or are prevented from socialising with other children.
- ◆ Children who are reluctant to go home.

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, and the presence of one or more indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. **It is not the responsibility of those working in athletics to decide that child abuse is occurring, but it is a responsibility to follow through on any concerns.**

4.0 RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGED OR SUSPECTED INCIDENTS.

4.1 You may become aware of abuse in a number of ways:

- A. A child may tell you.
- B. A third party may have reported an incident, or may have a strong suspicion.
- C. You may have a suspicion.

4.2 If an allegation is brought to your attention:

DO

STAY CALM – Do not rush into inappropriate action.

REASSURE THE CHILD – that they are not to blame and confirm that you know how difficult it must be to confide.

LISTEN – to what the child says and show that you take them seriously.

ALLOW ONLY ONE ADULT TO TALK TO THE CHILD – as any discrepancies in statements may lead to legal problems.

KEEP QUESTIONS TO A MINIMUM – use open ended questions i.e. those where more than a yes/no response is required. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed if it appears that the child has been led, or words and ideas have been suggested.

ENSURE THAT YOU CLEARLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THE CHILD HAS SAID and record it – so that you can pass it on to the appropriate agencies.

CONSULT WITH YOUR IDENTIFIED CHILD PROTECTION PERSON – ensuring that you communicate all the information accurately.

MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

DO NOT

IGNORE WHAT HAS BEEN DISCLOSED

PANIC

MAKE PROMISES YOU CAN'T KEEP – explain that you may have to tell other people in order to stop what is happening whilst maintaining maximum possible confidentiality.

MAKE THE CHILD REPEAT THE STORY UNNECESSARILY

DELAY

TAKE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY FOR FURTHER ACTION

4.3 RECORD KEEPING

- 4.3.1 Record what the child has said and/or your concerns legibly and accurately. Details should include:
- 4.3.2 The child's name, address and date of birth.
- 4.3.3 Date and time of the incident/s and/or nature of allegations.
- 4.3.4 Your observations e.g. describe the behaviour and emotional state of the child and/or bruising or other injuries.
- 4.3.5 The child's account – if it can be given – of what happened and how the bruising or injury occurred.
- 4.3.6 An account of any action that you took as a result of your concerns, e.g. comments made to the child; whether parents/carers have been contacted.
- 4.3.7 A statement as to whether the person writing the report is expressing their own concerns, or passing on those of someone else.
- 4.3.8 You must sign and date your completed report and then refer it to the Child Protection Officer in your club so that a decision can be made as to the most appropriate action. This person must forward the report to the chair of the Suffolk AA Disciplinary Panel indicating whether further action is required.**
- 4.3.9 You should keep a copy of the report ensuring that maximum confidentiality is maintained.**
- 4.3.10 If you are unhappy with the Child Protection person's handling of the incident or the allegations are made specifically against this individual, contact should be made directly to the Chair of the Disciplinary Panel of the Suffolk AA.**

5.0 GUIDANCE FOR DESIGNATED CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

When reports of misconduct or allegations are brought to your attention a decision must be made as to whether the allegation made is abuse, or related to poor practice.

5.1 REPORTING PROCEDURES

5.1.1 If the allegation is abuse, the following process should be followed:

- 5.1.1.1 Parents/carers should be informed to clarify initial concerns. However, in circumstances where a child may be placed at a greater risk if such concerns were shared e.g. where the parent may be responsible, or not able to respond to the situation appropriately, this should not occur.
- 5.1.1.2 Social Services and/or the Police should be contacted immediately. A record of the name and designation of the official informed together with the time and date of the call should be kept, in case future contact is required.

5.1.1.3 The Chair of the Suffolk AA Disciplinary Panel should also be informed and kept up to date with any local subsequent developments and a decision made as to what should occur to the accused in the period prior to a formal Panel meeting.

5.1.1.4 Confidentiality must be maintained.

5.1.2 If the allegation relates to poor practice:

5.1.2.1 The Chair of the Suffolk AA Disciplinary Panel should be informed so that an investigation can be carried out.

5.1.3 If you are unsure what to do advice can be obtained from the NSPCC freephone Helpline on 0800 800 500 or contact your social services department for further advice.

5.2 VETTING

It is the Child Protection Officer's responsibility to ensure that the clubs get all volunteers to complete the appropriate forms. The volunteers have to agree to the take up of any references and to police vetting. The forms must be sent to Suffolk AA on request. The club should also display posters highlighting the childline phone number. To assist the Child Protection Officer in their duties a pack will be provided and training offered on a regular basis.

6.0 PROCEDURES OF UK:ATHLETICS DISCIPLINARY PANEL

6.1 Because of the sensitive nature of this kind of action and in order to protect and shield children from the trauma of formal disciplinary hearings UK: Athletics will use the following procedures depending on the circumstances:

6.1.1. UK: Athletics shall create a separate and individually numbered file for each incident.

6.1.2. Reports of alleged misconduct, including those arising from a person's club, from court appearances or from actions by employers, are likely to cover a wide variety of behaviours. Each case will, thus be considered on its unique merits by the Disciplinary Panel as to whether misconduct has occurred.

6.1.3. If it is decided that the behaviour does not by itself call into question suitability for the particular role, no further action will be taken by UK: Athletics other than to formally advise the person of the receipt of a report and of the decision taken with a copy being sent to the Child Protection Officer. The recipient shall have the right to make immediate written representations or to reserve that right should he or she be reported for misconduct on a subsequent occasion. UK: Athletics also reserves the right on receiving a second report, to take into account the facts of prior submission.

6.2 If it is found that the report raises a question about a person's suitability within the sport, the UK: Athletics disciplinary committees shall proceed as follows:

6.2.1. The accused will be advised of the receipt of a report (with copies) and of UK: Athletics knowledge of any related disciplinary hearings or legal and/or employment proceedings. The accused will be asked to provide a written explanation

supported if he/she wishes by further representations including any representations, references or testimonials from whose knowledge of the person is relevant.

- 6.2.2. If the panel decides that a decision cannot be reached on the basis of a written representation alone – or on request from the accused – the accused shall be asked to give verbal evidence or representation to the panel. The accused may be accompanied by a friend, an official representing that person’s professional body, e.g. NASC or a legal representative.
- 6.2.3. When representations have been completed the panel shall decide whether the individual is unsuitable for the position he/she holds, and if so, whether he or she shall be barred or restricted from such work throughout the Federation/Association or shall be suspended or expelled from membership. The accused and the club (via the child protection officer) shall be notified in writing of the restrictions imposed.
- 6.2.4. Should the decision be that behaviour fell short of the expected standards, but there is no need for any bar or restrictions, the panel shall in writing issue a warning as to future conduct.
- 6.2.5. UK: Athletics and all affiliated clubs, areas and other associated bodies shall respect and enforce the sanctions imposed by other Sporting Governing Bodies for similar misconduct.

6.3 NOTIFICATION

- 6.3.1. The club (via the Child Protection Officer), the individual who made the accusations, local social services department and any Sport Professional body to which the individual belongs shall be notified of the outcome.
- 6.3.2. In any case in which allegations are found proved and a penalty imposed, all affiliated clubs, areas and other bodies within UK: Athletics shall also be notified as shall other Athletics Governing Bodies in Great Britain.
- 6.3.3. Report to DHSS Child Care (for inclusion on list of “Persons Suspected” etc.)

6.4 LIST OF OFFENDERS

- 6.4.1. UK: Athletics shall keep a confidential list of offenders who have been barred, restricted or warned. All affiliated clubs, areas and other association bodies shall have the right to have a name checked against this by written request.
- 6.4.2. The list shall only record the offender’s name, date of birth and UK: Athletics reference file number.

6.5 REINSTATEMENT

- 6.5.1. The period of suspension, or exclusion will normally last for at least 5 years. After this time a person may apply to be reinstated. No individual will automatically be reinstated.
- 6.5.2. The panel may give consideration to a request for earlier reinstatement, but only if in their view there are good grounds for doing so.

6.5.3. Decisions concerning such applications shall be made through the normal panel processes, although at its discretion, the panel may permit additional written representation or a verbal submission. In instances of verbal submission the accused has the right to be accompanied.

6.5.4. In such instances no appeal against the panel's decision shall be accepted.

6.5.5. UK: Athletics will not accept responsibility for any fees, expenses or other costs incurred by either or any party bringing or defending the action and shall have no liability to award any compensation for harm done or suffering by either party.

7.0 MONITORING OF THE POLICY

It will be the responsibility of the Disciplinary Panel to monitor the policy. This will be done by:

1. Keeping records of cases brought and their outcomes.
2. Requesting clubs for comments on a regular basis, about the ease of implementation and the effect of the policy.