

**KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE**

**A GUIDE TO CHILD PROTECTION IN SPORT**

**Sport can have a very powerful influence on people, especially young people.  Not only can it provide opportunities for enjoyment and achievement; it can also develop a valuable qualities such as self-esteem, leadership and teamwork.  These positive effects can only take place if the sport is in the hands of people who place the welfare of young people first and adapt practices that support, protect and empower them.**

Reality is abuse does take place in sport and some cases coaches and volunteers have been convicted, however much positive work in is in progress to ensure a safer sport environment is created for all young people.

These guidelines will help you to be aware of the good practice that is expected from our coaches and volunteers at Sedgefield Harriers.  This will also help you understand the importance of child protection in relation to children’s involvement in sport.  We have a more in depth code of conduct for our coaches and volunteers, which is written is written by UKA and adhered to by our club and it is available on request.

**WHAT TO DO IF A CHILD IS DISTRESSED BY ANOTHER PERSON’S BEHAVIOUR?**

If you are worried, remember it is not your responsibility to decide if abuse is taking place but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it. If a child tells you about someone's behaviour (e.g. an adult or another young person) which he/she finds disturbing, always:

* stay calm and reassure the child - ensure he/she is safe, feels safe and does not feel to blame for what has happened.
* listen carefully, show and tell the child you are taking what is being said seriously.
* be honest, explain you will have to tell someone else to stop the behaviour that is distressing.
* never make promises you can not keep.
* make a note of what is said as soon as possible after the event (preferably completing the club’s incident report form.
* maintaining confidentiality - only share the information on a need to know basis, and if it would help a child.
* gain medical attention immediately if required and if appropriate contact the police or social services.

**WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT SOMEONE’S BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS A CHILD/CHILDREN?**

It is your responsibility to act if you are concerned about the behaviour of an adult towards a child, or if you feel that child is being bullied:

* always follow the club’s child protection procedures.
* report the concerns with full details to one of the club’s Child Welfare Officers - it is then the responsibility of the Child Welfare Officer to act.
* If none of the Child Welfare Officers are available, or the concerns about the one that is, or you do not feel appropriate action has been taken, seek advice from the NSPCC, the police or the social services.

Childline: **0800  1111** confidential service for children up to 19 years old.

NSPCC: **0808 800 5000** helpline helping adults protect children 24/7.

Club Child Protection Officers -

Marie Walker – marie.walker1992@gmail.com 07708 415 167

Tracy Brown - tracyb1602@gmail.com 07505 133 536

Kevin Archibold -  kevarchbold@hotmail.com 07809 063 110

**BEST PRACTICE**

Coaches and volunteers are expected to provide “best practice” for a child's involvement in sport, some of these guidelines are applicable to parents/carers too.

“Best practice” means you  -

* always put the welfare of the athlete first.
* treat all young people equally, and with respect and dignity.
* build balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers the athlete to share in the decision making process where appropriate.
* adhere to the clubs Codes of Conduct and Equity Statement.
* do not subject athletes to bullying, humiliating comments or sarcasm.
* maintain appropriate boundaries to prevent intimate and sexual relationships developing with athletes (avoiding horseplay, sexual suggestive comments and actions).
* make sport fun and enjoyable and promote fair play.
* keep up to date with coaching/officiating knowledge, skills, qualifications and  insurance.
* coaches and regular volunteers to complete the Child Protection in Sport and Leisure course, (Sedgefield Harriers provides this through Educare as an online course).
* get to know the athletes and involve parents/carers wherever possible.
* behave as an excellent role models - this includes not drinking alcohol or smoking in the company of young people at an activity arranged/supported by the club.
* give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
* recognise the development needs and capability of the athlete.
* avoid private locations, transporting a child alone and sharing overnight rooms with young children.
* no coach or volunteer should be “friends” with any junior members on Facebook.
* if a coaching techniques require physical contact or support the child permission should always be asked first (e.g, would you mind if I take your arm and show you what I mean?)  Any contact must be appropriate and not intrusive or disturbing..
* any travel arrangements made for young people must be in consultation with their parent/carers.

**WHAT SIGNS MIGHT REGISTER CONCERN?**

Everyone has a moral responsibility to support and care for young people not only while participating in club activities but also if they suspect abuse is taking place elsewhere.

There are physical and behavioural signs that might raise concerns about the welfare or safety of young people. Some examples include;

* unexplained bruising or injuries or reluctance to talk about them.
* unexplained changes in behaviour - becoming withdraw, aggressive or unhappy.
* something said by a young person or peer.
* a change observed for a long period of time (e.g. child losing weight, becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt).
* sexually explicit behaviour and language.

These are indicators not confirmation of abuse. However if you notice any of these signs regularly or more than one sign, you should record and report your concerns.

Abuse may result from various causes through the misuse of power by adults of peers:

**Neglect** (e.g. lack of food, warmth, supervision, supervision, love and affection).  In sport this may result from failure to ensure players are safe, free from risk of excessive cold, heat or injury.

**Physical abuse** (e,g, hitting, shaking, squeezing, biting, burning).  In sport this may result if the nature or intensity of training is inappropriate for the capability of the athlete.

**Sexual abuse** (e.g. any form of sexual behaviour between adult and a young person or the use of pornographic material). In sport this may be the result of coaches and older athletes involving younger children in any form sexual activity (e.g. sexual language, touching or relationships).

**Emotional abuse** (e.g. wherever there is any other forms of abuse as well as the withholding of love or affection, overprotection, frequent use of shouting or taunts).  In sport this may occur if athletes are subject to constant criticism, bullying (by coach, parents/carers or peers), taunting or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations.

In some cases it hard to distinguish between poor coaching practice and abuse.  Coaches are responsible to do everything within their power to ensure their coaching practice is beyond reproach.