

Child Protection for Volunteers in Sport

Every Child Matters

If you are a coach or volunteer working with children, you have a moral and legal duty to safeguard and promote their welfare. The laws on child welfare say that someone is a child until the age of 18. You should be aware of the child protection issues that can occur whilst coaching/volunteering in sport and what you should do if those situations occur. Every child and young person has the right to have fun, be safe and free from harm whether training for a local team or club. Each week more than eight million UK children take part in sport, from local groups to national competitions. Whilst most enjoy themselves in safety, a small number are at risk of abuse from individuals who use sport to gain access to children.

What is abuse?

Abuse is when the fundamental rights and needs of a child are not met at a satisfactory level or above. There are four main forms of abuse, these have been identified as:

- **Neglect:** Includes things like providing inappropriate clothing, food, in-appropriate attention, and lack of supervision, lack of safety or exposure to undue cold or unnecessary risk of injury.
- **Physical Abuse:** Physically hurting a child in any way, giving children alcohol, giving medication without permission, intensity of training beyond the capacity of the individual.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Any aspect of sexual abuse, whether physical or verbal, inappropriate physical contact. Access to inappropriate images.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Shouting, threatening or taunting children, constant criticism, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform.

Where can risks occur?

Violence and other forms of abuse can occur anywhere and does not always leave visible marks, although other indicators may be present, such as changes in behaviour and mood etc. Furthermore, children who encounter abuse are often reluctant to speak about it. Abuse mainly occurs in the home setting, school and in a sporting situation such as a club practice.

Abuse can have severe implications for children's development. It can affect the health and the ability of the child to learn or even the willingness to go to school or participate in sporting activities. Abuse can also destroy children's self-confidence and can undermine their ability to be good parents in the future.

*If you have any concerns about a child's welfare and safety it is **your responsibility to report your concerns** to your head coach/ designated child protection officer.*

Collecting and passing information

It is particularly important that all those whose work either brings them into contact with children or contact with adults who have children, are alert to the definitions and indicators of child abuse. In circumstances where **you** have concerns that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm to his or her health or development, or where a child gives information detailing abuse, the following principles must be adhered to:

- 1) All concerns and allegations, whatever their origin, must be taken seriously and considered with an open mind which does not pre-judge the situation;
- 2) In circumstances where a child volunteers/discloses information about abuse or which may suggest abuse, listen to the child. **Do not question him/her**;
- 3) Never stop a child who is freely recalling significant events. The child should **not** be asked to repeat their story to a colleague or asked to write it down;
- 4) In circumstances where a child has an injury but no explanation is volunteered, **it is acceptable to enquire how the injury was sustained**;-
- 5) If there are concerns about the explanation given for the cause of the injury, you should report these concerns to the designated person e.g. Senior Coach, who will then make a decision about further actions which need to be taken. There should be a reporting procedure within the club/school that everyone is familiar with. If after reporting you still have concerns or feel the person you have reported to has not taken appropriate action you should report your concerns directly to Children Services Department.
- 6) Always make a written record as soon as possible of any information volunteered to you. The record will include the time it was written, the setting, personnel present, as well as what was said; Incident Report Forms should be provided by the club/school.
- 7) **Above all** – Do not deal with the situation yourself report **IMMEDIATELY** to the coach if there is a problem or issue that you are not qualified to deal with.

For more information on child protection issues within your sport you can look on their National Governing Body website (e.g. Football is the FA) to view their procedures. Or view the list below for more website information or contact details.

Contacts

Northumberland County Council Children's Services:

Tel: 01670 714411 (Monday to Friday, 9:00am - 5:00pm)

Tel: 0808 100 8910 (Out of hours helpline)

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline:

Tel: 0800 800 5000 (Free from landlines)

Northumberland County Council:

Tel: 01670 533000 (Monday to Friday, 8:30 - 5:30)

Tel: 0808 100 8910 (Out of hours helpline)

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/>

Northumberland Sport:

<http://www.northumberlandsport.co.uk/>

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC):

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

Child Protection in Sport Unit:

<http://www.thecpsu.org.uk/Scripts/content/Default.asp>

Childline:

<http://www.childline.org.uk/Pages/default.aspx>

Worried Need 2 Talk

<http://www.childline.org.uk/Pages/default.aspx>