

**CHILD  
PROTECTION  
POLICY**

**for**

**Bradford  
Sport and Leisure Service**

**Draft 4 October 2003**

*Parts of this document have been reproduced by kind permission of sports coach UK. All rights reserved.*



## **Foreword**

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

The reality is that abuse does take place in sport and in some cases coaches and other trusted adults in sport have been convicted. Every adult has a legal and moral responsibility to protect children, young people and disabled adults in sport from abuse.

West Yorkshire Sport is committed to working in partnership with all agencies to ensure that information and training opportunities are available for staff to guide them in best practice when working with all children, young people and disabled adults. Adopting best practice will help to safeguard children, young people and disabled adults from potential abuse as well as protecting coaches and other adults in positions of responsibility from potential false allegations of abuse.

This document has been produced by West Yorkshire Sport in conjunction with sports coach UK, NSPCC and Sport England, and is available for partners to develop tailored policies as appropriate. Acknowledgements are also given to the Amateur Swimming Association and Child Line. It details procedures for administrators, coaches, instructors, officials, teachers, parents and young people. We all have a duty of care towards the young and vulnerable and can help to protect them from abuse.

## **West Yorkshire Sport**

West Yorkshire Sport is a partnership of the five Metropolitan Districts of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. Each Local Authority, National Governing Body, Sports Club, or other agent may have their own policy which, when they organise activities, they will adhere to.

Sport and Leisure Service has in accordance with the paragraph above amended and adopted the Policy to meet the needs of Bradford Sport and Leisure Service.

## Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1.0 Policy Statement</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Responsibilities	1
1.2 Principles	1
<b>2.0 Recruitment, Employment and Deployment of Staff</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Introduction	2
2.2 Pre-recruitment Requirements/ Information	2
2.3 Checks and References	3
2.4 Interview and Induction	3
2.5 Training	3
2.6 Complaints Procedures	4
<b>3.0 Promoting Good Practice with Young People</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1 Introduction	4
3.2 Good Practice Guidelines	4
3.3 Code of Ethics and Conduct	6
3.4 Guidelines for Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment at Sporting Events	6
<b>4.0 Recognition of Poor Practice, Abuse and Bullying</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 Introduction	7
4.2 Poor Practice	7
4.3 Abuse	7
4.4 Bullying	9
<b>5.0 Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegations</b>	<b>11</b>
5.1 Introduction	11
5.2 Responding to Disclosure	11
5.3 Responding to Suspicions	12
5.4 Allegations against Staff	14
5.5 Allegations of Previous Abuse	16
5.6 Action if Bullying is Suspected	17

## 1.0 Policy Statement

### 1.1 Responsibilities

Sport and Leisure Service will:

- Accept the moral and legal responsibility to implement procedures to provide a duty of care for young people, safeguard their well-being and protect them from abuse
- Respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of young people
- Recruit, train and supervise its employees and volunteers to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect young people from abuse, and themselves against false allegations
- Require staff/volunteers to adopt and abide by a Code of Ethics and Conduct and the Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Respond to any allegations appropriately and implement the appropriate disciplinary and appeals procedures.

### 1.2 Principles

This policy is based on the following principles:

- The welfare of young vulnerable people, (The Children's Act 1989 defines a young person as under 18 years of age) and vulnerable adults is the primary concern.
- All young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- It is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns regarding child abuse, however, **it is the responsibility of child protection experts** to determine whether or not abuse has taken place.
- All incidents of suspicious poor practice, and allegations, should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Confidentiality should be upheld in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

#### **Important**

*Please note that the term **parents** is used throughout this document as a generic term to represent parents, carers and guardians.*

*Please note that the term **young people** also refers to children, people with disabilities and vulnerable adults.*

## **2.0 Recruitment, Employment and Deployment of Staff**

### **2.1 Introduction**

All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with young people. The same procedures will be adopted whether staff are paid or unpaid, full or part-time.

### **2.2 Pre-recruitment requirements/information**

The following pre-recruitment requirements will be followed:

#### **2.2.1 Advertising**

When advertising is used to recruit staff, it will reflect the:

- Aims of the Service and where appropriate, the particular programme involved
- Responsibilities of the role
- Level of experience or qualifications required (e.g. experience of working with children is an advantage)
- The Services' open and positive stance on child protection.

#### **2.2.2 Pre-Application Information**

Pre-application information sent to interested or potential applicants will contain:

- A job description including roles and responsibilities
- A person specification (e.g. stating qualifications or experience required)
- An application form.

#### **2.2.3 Applications**

All applicants whether for paid, full, or part-time positions will complete an application form which will elicit the following information:

- Name, address and National Insurance Number (to confirm identity and right to work).
- Relevant experience, qualifications and training undertaken.
- Listing of past career or involvement in sport (to confirm experience and identify any gaps).
- Any criminal record.
- Whether the applicants are known to any social services department as being an actual or potential risk to children or young people, a self-disclosure question to establish whether they have ever had action taken against them in relation to child abuse, sexual offences or violence.

- The names of at least two people (not relatives) willing to provide written references that comment on the applicant's previous experience of, and suitability for, working young people (previous employer).
- Any former involvement with the sport/ activity.
- The applicant's consent to criminal record checks being undertaken.
- The applicant's consent to abide by a Code of Ethics and Conduct appropriate to the position sought (e.g. coach, official etc) and general terms and conditions of employment.

The form will also state that failure to disclose information or subsequent failure to conform to the Code of Ethics and Conduct may result in disciplinary action.

### **2.3 Checks and References**

**2.3.1** Applicants whose role involves regular contact with children will where appropriate be asked to complete a disclosure form which will be forwarded to the Criminal Records Bureau for a "standard disclosure". For posts that involve greater contact with young people an "**enhanced disclosure**" will be asked for.

**2.3.2** A minimum of two references will be taken up and at least one will be associated with former work with children/young people where possible.

### **2.4 Interview and Induction**

**2.4.1** All coaches or other staff who have direct access to working with children will be subject to an interviewing process. The interviewer will have completed the appropriate training in recruitment and selection procedures. At the interview the qualifications are substantiated.

**2.4.2** All staff will undergo a formal or informal induction in which:

- They sign up to a Code of Ethics and Conduct
- The expectations, roles and responsibilities of the job are clarified
- Child protection and welfare procedures are explained.

### **2.5 Training**

Checks are only part of the process to protect young children from possible abuse. Appropriate training will enable individuals to recognise their responsibilities with regard to their own good practice and the reporting of suspected poor practice/concerns of possible abuse.

**2.5.1** All staff working with children must be up to date, or receive training in the following areas within 6 months of employment:

- Child protection awareness
- Where appropriate First Aid

## **2.6 Complaints Procedures**

Bradford Council's complaints and appeals procedures will be used to deal with any formal complaints and/or appeals. We will strive to ensure that parents and young people are aware of the existence of these procedures.

## **3.0 Promoting Good Practice with Young People**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take. Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official, may have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where a young person needs protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice will be reported to Bradford Council and subsequently the appropriate National Governing Body.

### **3.2 Good Practice Guidelines**

All personnel in sport will be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations and create a positive culture and climate within sport.

#### **3.2.1 Good practice means:**

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations).
- Encouraging an open environment (e.g. no secrets)
- Treating all young people with respect and dignity
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance (e.g. it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them)
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process
- Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play

Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it will be provided openly and according to guidelines provided by the NGB. Care is needed as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child is constantly moving. Young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained.

Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.

- Keeping up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible (e.g. for the responsibility of their children in the changing rooms). If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always try to ensure parents/teachers/coaches/officials work in pairs.
- Ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. (NB: However, same gender abuse can also occur)
- Ensuring that at tournaments or residentials, adults **should not** enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognizing the developmental needs and capacity of young people – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.

All participants where applicable will be registered which will include:

- Securing parental consent in writing to acting *in loco parentis*, if the need arises to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Awareness of any medicines being taken by participants, or existing injuries.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.

### **3.2.2 Practice to be avoided**

Avoid spending time alone with children away from others. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the Organisation or the child's parents e.g., a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session:

### **3.2.3. Practice never to be sanctioned**

The following should **never** be sanctioned.

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
  - Share a room with Young People.
  - Allow or engage in any forms of inappropriate touching.
  - Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
  - Make sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun.
- 5
- Reduce a young person to tears as a form of *control*.

- Allow allegations made by young people to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Do things of a personal nature for young people that they can do for themselves.
- Invite or allow young people to stay at your home unsupervised.

NB: It may be sometimes necessary for staff to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the young persons involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

If any of the following incidents should occur, you should report them immediately to another colleague and make a written note of the event. Parents should also be informed of the incident:

- If you accidentally hurt a young person.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a young person appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

### **3.3 Code of Ethics and Conduct**

Sport and Leisure Service will adopt sports coach UK's Code of Ethics and Conduct which all staff will be required to sign up to. The Code will encourage:

- The development of an open and positive climate in sport
- Poor practice to be identified
- Investigations to be carried out
- Disciplinary action to be taken if appropriate.

### **3.4 Policy on Use of Photographic Filming Equipment at Sporting Events**

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people in vulnerable positions. Sport and Leisure Service will adhere to the policy detailed in Work Instruction 21e. Form QR 147 must be completed.

## **4.0 Recognition of Poor Practice, Abuse and Bullying**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. The staff in sport, are not experts at such recognition. However, they do have a responsibility to act if they have any concerns about the behaviour of someone (an adult or another child) towards a young person. We will encourage and expect staff to discuss any concern they may have about the welfare of a person immediately with the appropriate line manager.

### **4.2 Poor Practice**

Poor practice includes any behaviour that contravenes the Code of Ethics and Conduct which is constituted around the following:

- Rights—e.g. of the young person, the parent, the coach, the official/volunteers etc.
- Responsibilities —e.g responsibility for the welfare of the young person, the sport, the profession of coaching, their own development.
- Respect —e.g of other players, officials and their decisions, coaches, the rules.

### **4.3 Abuse**

Abuse can happen wherever there are young people. The effects of abuse can be damaging and if untreated, they may follow a person into adulthood.

#### **4.3.1 Disabled People**

There have been a number of studies which suggest children (or adults) with disabilities are at increased risk of abuse. Various factors contribute to this, such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves, or adequately communicate that abuse has occurred.

#### **4.3.2 Race and Racism**

Young People (and their parents) may have experienced harassment, racial discrimination and institutional racism. Although racism causes significant harm it is not, in itself, a category of abuse. Sport and Leisure Service will address institutional racism, defined in the Macpherson Inquiry Report on Stephen Lawrence as *'the collective failure by an organization to provide appropriate and professional service to people on account of their race, culture and/or religion'*.

### 4.3.3 Abuse and Neglect

Somebody may abuse or neglect a young person by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Young People 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 young person’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the their health or development (e.g., failure to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.) It may also include refusal to give love, affection and attention. **(Neglect in sport could include a teacher or coach not ensuring young people were safe, exposing them to undue cold, heat or to unnecessary risk of injury.)**
- **Physical abuse** – where adults physically hurt or injure child by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, or scalding, suffocating, drowning or otherwise causing physical harm to a young person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a young person whom they are looking after, e.g., fictitious illness by proxy of 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 young person’s immature and growing body; where drugs are used to enhance performance or delay puberty.)**
- **Sexual abuse** - where young people are abused by adults (both male and female) to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing pornographic material (books, DVD’s videos, pictures) is also a form of sexual abuse. **(In sport, coaching techniques which involve physical contact with young people could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. The power of the coach over young people, if misused, may also lead to abusive situations developing.)**
- **Emotional abuse** – is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a young person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the young person’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to young people 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 young people. It may involve causing young people to feel frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the young person very nervous and withdrawn. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a young person. **(Emotional abuse in sport may occur if young**

people are subjected to constant criticism, name-calling, sarcasm, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations consistently.)

#### 4.3.4 Indicators of Abuse

Indications that a young person may be being abused include the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else (a young person or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another young person.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour (e.g., becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper).
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour.
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Has difficulty in making friends.
- Is prevented from socialising with other young people.
- Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Loses weight for no apparent reason.
- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. **(It is not the responsibility of those working in sport to decide that child abuse is occurring but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns.)**

#### 4.4 Bullying

It is important to recognise that in some cases of abuse, it may not always be an adult abusing a young person. It can occur that the abuser may be a young person, for example in the case of bullying. Bullying may be seen as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. ( Nancy Duin defined bullying as *repeated (systematic) aggressive verbal, psychological or physical conduct by an individual or group against another person or persons.*)

**4.4.1** Although anyone can be the target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons – being overweight, physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture.

**4.4.2** Girls and boys can be bullies although it seems to be more conspicuous in boys. Although bullying often takes place in schools, research shows it can and does occur anywhere where there is inadequate supervision – on the way to and from school, at a sporting event, in the playground and changing rooms.

**4.4.3** Bullies come from all walks of life, they bully for a variety of different reasons and may even have been abused. Typically, bullies can have low self-esteem, be excitable, aggressive and jealous. Crucially, they have learned how to gain power over others and there is increasing evidence to suggest that this abuse of power can lead to crime.

**4.4.4** The competitive nature of sport makes it an ideal environment for the bully. The bully in sport can be:

- A parent who pushes too hard
- A coach who adopts a win-at-all costs philosophy
- A participant who intimidates inappropriately
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person

**4.4.5** Bullying can include:

- Physical: e.g. hitting, kicking and theft.
- Verbal: e.g. name-calling, constant teasing, sarcasm, racist or homophobic taunts, threats, graffiti and gestures.
- Emotional: e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating and ignoring.
- Sexual: e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments.

**4.4.6** The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to young people, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm). There are a number of signs that may indicate a young person is being bullied:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go to school, training or sports club.
- A drop off in performance at school or standard of play.
- Physical signs such as stomach-aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing for example on food, cigarettes or alcohol.
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

## **5.0 Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegations**

### **5.1 Introduction**

False allegations of abuse do occur. However, if a young person says or indicates that he/she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a young person is being abused, you should react immediately.

### **5.2 Responding to Disclosure**

#### **5.2.1 Actions to Take**

The person receiving information concerning disclosure should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the young person.
- Tell he/she is not to blame and that he/she was right to tell.
- Take what is said seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a young person who has a speech disability and/or differences in language.
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
- Reassure the young person but do not make promises of confidentiality which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments.
- Make a full record of what had been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible.

NB It may not be that all young persons are able to express themselves verbally. Communication difficulties may mean that it is hard for them to complain or be understood. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the signs of abuse from the symptoms of some disabilities or conditions, in relation to the nature of an individual's impairment. However, where there are concerns about the safety of a young person, record what has been observed in detail and follow these procedures to report these concerns.

#### **5.2.2 Actions to Avoid**

The person receiving the disclosure should not:

- Panic.
- Allow their shock or distaste to show.
- Probe for more information than is offered.
- Speculate or make assumptions.
- Make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
- Approach the alleged abuser.
- Make promises or agree to keep secrets.

### **5.3 Responding to Suspicions**

**It is not the responsibility of anyone working under the auspices of sport, or those working in affiliated organisations, to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse is taking place.**

However, there is a responsibility to protect young persons in order that appropriate agencies can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the young person.

#### **5.3.1 Social Services**

Social Services have a statutory duty under **The Children Act 1989**, to ensure the welfare of children and work with the local Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) to comply with its procedures . When a referral is made, the Local Authority Social Services staff have a legal responsibility to investigate. This may involve talking to the young person and family, gathering information from other people who know the young person. Enquiries may be carried out jointly with the police. If action needs to be taken urgently and out of office hours, then the police will deal with the enquiry sensitively and effectively.

#### **5.3.2 Sharing Concerns with Parents**

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns e.g., if a child seems withdrawn, there may be a reasonable explanation. He/she may have experienced an upset in the family, such as a parental separation, divorce or bereavement.

#### **5.3.3 When it is Not Appropriate to Share Concerns with Parents**

There are circumstances in which a young person might be placed at even greater risk if concerns are shared (e.g., where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately). In these situations or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to the person in charge as soon as possible and recorded.

#### **5.3.4 Designated Officer**

Each organisation should identify a designated person to handle child protection issues. The Head of Service is the designated person responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy within Sport and Leisure, he/she may appoint other officers as appropriate. These persons should undergo a CRB check for quality assurance purposes as appropriate. Each NGB should have a lead officer in Child Protection .

It is the responsibility of the designated person to inform the Social Services without delay. If the person in charge is not available or the concern is about the person in charge, the person with concerns or being informed of them should contact another of the nominated officers or failing this should themselves immediately contact the Social Services (emergency duty team) or police. In these circumstances, you do not have to give your name but it is helpful if you can. The Social Services, together with the designated person in charge where appropriate, will decide how and when parents or carers will be informed. Any incidents should also be referred to the NGB.

### **5.3.5 Expert Advice**

If you are not sure what to do, you can obtain advice by telephoning the local Social Services Department (emergency duty team) and speak to the duty worker or call the NSPCC 24-hour free phone Help Line on 0800 800 500. The police also have specially trained child protection teams who will give guidance and support, and deal with out-of-office-hours enquiries when Social Services are not available.

### **5.3.7 Records and Information**

Information passed to the Social Services or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record at the time of the disclosure/concern.

Information should include the following:

- The nature of the allegation.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries.
- The young persons account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Witnesses to the incident(s).
- Any times dates or other relevant information.
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- Child details, name, date of birth, address, parental details.

Reporting the matter to the police or Social Services department should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the Social Services Department should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record should also be made of the name and designation of the Social Services member of staff or police officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed.

A copy of this information should be sent to the NGB .

## **5.4 Allegations against Staff**

Child abuse can and does occur outside the family setting. Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse has occurred within institutions and may occur within other settings (e.g., sport or other social activities). It is crucial that those involved in sport are aware that abuse can and does take place within institutions and other settings e.g., sport and social activities. All allegations will be taken seriously and appropriate action taken. It is important that any concerns for the welfare of the young person, arising from abuse or harassment by a member of staff should be reported immediately.

### **5.4.1 Seek Advice**

The Head of Service may be informed of situations where there is uncertainty about whether the allegation constitutes abuse or not and therefore is unclear about what action to take. There may be circumstances where allegations are about poor practice rather than abuse but those responsible should always consult, gain advice from Social Services, Police or the NSPCC if there is any doubt. This is because it may be just one of a series of other instances which together cause concern.

### **5.4.2 Support for the Reporter of Suspected Abuse**

It is acknowledged that feelings generated by the discovery that a member of staff is, or may be, abusing a child, will raise concerns among other staff. This includes the difficulties inherent in reporting such matters. Sport and Leisure Service will fully support and protect anyone who, in goodfaith (without malicious intent), reports his or her concern about a colleague's practice or the possibility that a young person may be being abused.

### **5.4.3 Types of Investigation**

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation:

- Criminal
- Child Protection
- Disciplinary or misconduct

Civil proceedings may also be initiated by the person/family of the person who alleged the abuse.

The results of the police and Social Services investigation may well influence the Sport and Leisure Service disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

#### 5.4.4 Action if there are Concerns

The following action will be taken if there are concerns :

##### **Poor Practice**

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the Line Manager will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Line Manager, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be referred to Senior Management, who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.
- If the incident of poor practice is suspicious, all details should be recorded and reported.

##### **Suspected Abuse**

- Any suspicion that a young person has been abused by a member of staff should be reported to a Line Manager, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the young person in question and any other young person who may be at risk.
- The Senior Manager will refer the allegation to the Social Services Department who may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- The parents or carers of the young person will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Social Services Department.
- If the Line Manager is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made directly to a Senior Manager who is then responsible for taking the action outlined above.

##### **Confidentiality**

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a *need to know basis* only. This may include the following people:

- The Manager in charge.
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused.
- The person making the allegation.
- Social Services/police.
- Designated officers within the governing body of sport.
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a young person).<sup>\*</sup>

**\*Seek social services advice on who should approach alleged abuser.**

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with Data Protection Laws (e.g., that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

### **Internal Enquiries and Suspension**

- The Sport and Leisure Service will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and Social Services inquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the Social Services or police inquiries, the Sport and Leisure Service will assess all individual cases under the appropriate misconduct/disciplinary procedure, to decide whether a member of staff can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled with other staff. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the Service will reach a decision based on the available information that could suggest, on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of young people will always remain paramount.

### **Support to Deal with the *Aftermath***

- Consideration will be given about what support may be appropriate to young people, parents and members of staff. Use of Help Lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association of Counselling Directory<sup>1</sup> may be a useful resource.
- Consideration will be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

## **5.5 Allegations of Previous Abuse**

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g., by an adult who was abused as a young person or by a member of staff who is still currently working with young people). Where such an allegation is made, we will follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the Social Services or the police. This is because other young people, either within or outside sport, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with young people. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

---

<sup>1</sup> **The British Association for Counselling Directory** is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, E-mail: [bac@bac.co.uk](mailto:bac@bac.co.uk), Internet: [www.bac.co.uk](http://www.bac.co.uk)

## 5.6 Action if Bullying is Suspected

The same procedure will be followed as set out in Section 5.3 if bullying is suspected.

### 5.6.1 Action to Help the Victim and Prevent Bullying:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all young people to speak and share their concerns.<sup>1</sup> Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to keep it secret.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the person in charge (wherever the bullying is occurring).

### 5.6.2 Action Towards the Bully(ies):

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully's parents.
- Insist on the return of *borrowed* items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Provide support for the person in charge of the victim.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all appropriate members of staff of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately.