

# **Bournemouth Athletic Club**

## **Child Protection Policy & Procedures**

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### **1. Introduction**

It is the policy of UK Athletics to ensure that every child or young person who takes part in athletics should be able to participate in a fun and safe environment and be protected from neglect and physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

The key principles that underwrite this policy are:

- Anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child for the purposes of this document
- The child's welfare is paramount
- All children whatever their age culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- All suspicious and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- Clubs and other organisations will be provided with the appropriate documentation and support to ensure they are able to implement the policy
- To ensure that adults working with children are also provided protection and are aware of the best practice so they can be protected from wrongful allegations
- Working in partnership with children and their parents/carers is essential for the protection of the child

- UK Athletics recognises the statutory responsibility 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. Definitions

The term child abuse is used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults and often by those they know and trust.

There are four main types of child abuse, though a child may experience more than one kind at any one time in his/her life.

**Physical Abuse** - Occasions when parents, adults or other children deliberately inflict injuries on a child or knowingly do not prevent such injuries. It includes injury caused by hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning, biting or using excessive force, and giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison, and attempts to suffocate or drown them. Physical abuse may also be deemed to occur if the nature and intensity of training disregards the capacity of the child's immature and growing body, or predisposes the child to injury resulting from fatigue or overuse.

**Emotional Abuse** - Occasions when adults fail to show children due care and attention or threaten, use sarcasm, taunt or shout at a child causing him/her to lose self confidence or self esteem and become nervous or withdrawn. These may also occur when an adult repeatedly ignores or fails to respond to a child's efforts or progress, or places the child under unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations constantly.

**Neglect** - Occasions where adults fail to meet a child's essential needs, such as adequate clothing, food, warmth and medical care. It also includes occasions where an adult leaves a child alone without proper supervision, or does not ensure that the child is safe, or exposes them to undue extremes of temperature or risk of injury.

**Sexual Abuse** - Occurs when males and females use children to meet their own sexual needs. Examples include forcing a child to take part in sexual activity, fondling or exposure to pornographic material. This also includes suggestions that sexual favours can help (or refusal can hinder) a career.

There is also the abuse of trust - Where young people are indoctrinated with attitudes to training, drugs and cheating, or social, political and religious views which are unacceptable to the young athlete's family, community or rules of the sport.

The inappropriate use of photographic material taken at sporting events is an area of abuse that is increasing and all those involved within the sport should be aware of this.

All forms of bullying, both verbal and physical from other children is also a form of abuse and there is a requirement for all within the sport to ensure that there are sufficient mechanisms to allow children to report instances of bullying.

## 3. 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
- Track side gossip
- Bruises and injuries not typical 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
- 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. Roles**

For effective implementation of this policy all deliverers of athletics must work in partnership, each with a role to ensure the protection of the children in their care.

The role of the club will be as follows:

- To appoint one Welfare Officer
- To accept that all Officers and Committee members have responsibilities in this area and be prepared to respond to any indication of abuse
- To be ready to amend bad practice
- To implement any recommendations of UK Athletics relating to this area
- To maintain confidentiality of the child and the accused.

The role of the Welfare Officer within the Club will include:

- To act as Child Protection Officer
- To ensure all club helpers/officials/coaches complete a volunteer reference form
- To send all forms to UK Athletics on request
- To receive and advise on reports from other club members
- To initiate action, ensuring all appropriate persons have been contacted

The role of UK Athletics will be as follows:

- To appoint a Disciplinary Panel when necessary
- To provide support and guidance to the Child Protection Officers and Clubs
- To make decisions on misconduct
- To inform all appropriate individuals and bodies of their decision
- To provide training for Child Protection Officers
- To keep a list of all disqualified persons
- To monitor the policy

The Role of UK Athletics

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

Everyone has a responsibility to maintain awareness and openness with regard to child protection issues.

## **5. Responding to Complaints and Alleged or Suspected Incidents**

Abuse may become apparent in a number of ways:

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

**If an allegation is brought to your attention**

**Step 1 - Listen and Reassure**

**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 and believe - 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 - in many cases it may be more appropriate to nod and acknowledge the child's account. If you must question then 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 - so that you can pass it on to the appropriate agencies
- Consult with the identified Child Protection Person - ensuring that you communicate all the information accurately
- Maintain confidentiality.

**DO NOT**

- Panic
- Make promises you cannot 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

In all cases if you are not sure what to do you can gain help from NSPCC 24 hour telephone on 0800 800 500

**Step 2 -Record**

Record what the child has said and/or your concerns legibly and accurately. Details should include:

- The child's name, address and date of birth
- Date and time of the incidents and/or nature of allegations
- Your observations e.g. describe the behaviour and emotional state of the child and/or bruising or other injuries

- The child's account - if it can be given - of what has happened
- Any action that you took as a result of your concerns e.g. comments made to the child, whether the parents/carers have been contacted
- Record whether the person writing the report is expressing their own concerns, or passing on those of someone else
- Sign and date the report
- Keep a copy of the report

Please note that when a disclosure is made, it is the person to whom the disclosure is made that the authorities (police and/or social services) will come to for an account of what was said. This first hand account is of primary importance.

### **Step 3 - Involve the appropriate people**

Once you have completed your report you must ensure that the Child Protection Officer in your club has been informed so a decision can be made as to the most appropriate action. This person must forward the report to the UK Athletics indicating whether further action is required, thus allowing UK Athletics to appoint a Disciplinary Panel.

If you are unhappy with the Child Protection Officer's handling of the incident or the allegations are made specifically against this individual you should contact the person in charge immediately and make a record of this - this person might be the Club Chairman, the Head Teacher of the school, the Sports Centre Manager, the Team Manager. The person in charge shall then contact the Social Services and/or the Police immediately. A record of the same 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. Contact should also be made directly to UK Athletics.

In all cases - do not delay - if you cannot contact the persons above immediately, you must contact the authorities (police and/or social services).

**If you are unsure what to do advice can be obtained from the NSPCC Free phone helpline 0800 800 500 or contact your local social services department**

## **6. Guidance for the 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.

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

- Make a full report of any allegations or suspicions
- Report to the person in charge (definition as above) or the Local Social Services Department immediately and make a record of this
- UK Athletics should also be informed and kept up to date with any local subsequent developments. UK Athletics will make a decision regarding the accused in the period prior to appointing a Disciplinary Panel

- Confidentiality must be maintained

If the allegation relates to **poor practice** the following process should be followed:

- Make a record of the allegations
- UK Athletics should be informed so that a Disciplinary Panel can be appointed and an investigation can be carried out

## **7. Promoting Good Practice**

By promoting good practice throughout the Club and in the wider context of the sport it is possible to reduce situations for the abuse of children. The Club should have a policy that ensures children are protected and kept safe from harm and everyone should know what to do if there are concerns about abuse and where the procedures are kept.

The appointment of a Child Protection Officer plays a key part in this process and will be encouraged to promote good practice throughout the Club and by ensuring everyone is aware of their responsibilities. This role may include leading by example, organising simple training briefings and the use of leaflets/posters and notices throughout the areas used by the Club.

In addition to the procedures described above it is the Child Protection Officers responsibility to ensure that the Clubs get all volunteers to complete the appropriate forms. The volunteers have to be prepared to subject themselves to police vetting. The forms must be sent to UK Athletics on request. Clubs should also display Child Protection material highlighting the child-line phone number. To assist the Child Protection Officer in their duties a pack will be provided and training offered on a regular basis.

**Use of photography and video recorders** - There has been an increase in the misuse of sports photography and video recording within the sporting arena. To reduce the risk of abuse to children some Sports Centres require any person wishing to use cameras and video recorders to declare their interest by filling in a simple form which asks their name, address, who they are with and the reason for the use of the camera/recorder. This is not intended to prevent bona fide use of this equipment for family or coaching purposes but may deter the inappropriate use of such material. Clubs, event promoters and Sports Centres are encouraged to adopt this practice.

**Bullying** - There is a possibility that bullying may occur between children and all involved in the sport are encouraged to be aware of this possibility Clubs are encouraged to adopt an anti-bullying policy and ensure that everyone understands bullying will not be tolerated in any form. Clubs must be prepared to take the problem seriously and investigate any incident and decide on appropriate action, also ensuring that children are able to report the instance of bullying (either to themselves or team members) to someone in authority, preferably the Child Protection Officer.

**Team Management/Team Travel** - Implicit within this Policy is the Duty of Care that a Team Manager and/or Club has to its young athletes when travelling to events. It is recommended that Clubs travel with a full address list and contact telephone numbers for all the children within their team and the permission of the parent/guardian of each child (the inclusion of special instructions, dietary requirements and allergies is also extremely useful). This will allow Team Managers to take the necessary action in the event of an emergency.

For those events that require an overnight stay in lodgings/hotels it is essential that Team Managers take the necessary action to prevent the misuse of alcohol (from hotel mini bars etc.) and access to adult video/film channels.

## **8. Procedures for the UK Athletics Disciplinary Panel**

Because of the sensitive nature of this kind of action and in order to protect and shield children from the trauma and rigor of formal disciplinary bearing the UK Athletics will use the following procedures depending on the circumstances. The General Manager will appoint a Disciplinary Panel when deemed necessary.

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.

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. 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 submissions.

If it is found that the report raises a question about a person's suitability within the sport, the UK Athletics Disciplinary Panel shall proceed as follows: The accused will be advised of the receipt of a report (with copies) and of the 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 or she wishes, by further representations, including any representations, references or testimonials from those whose knowledge of the person is relevant.

UK Athletics may make an immediate decision to temporarily suspend an individual accused of abuse pending further inquiries and will inform the Club and other relevant organisations as necessary.

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 or a legal representative.

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 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.

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.

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

## **9. Notification**

The club (via the Child Protection Officer) of 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.

All affiliated clubs, area and other bodies with the UK Athletics shall also be notified as shall other athletics governing bodies in Great Britain.

## **10. List of Offenders**

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 the list checked by written request.

The list shall only record the offender's name, date of birth and UK Athletics reference file number.

## **11. Reinstatement and Allegations of Previous Abuse**

The period of suspension or exclusion will normally last for at least five years. After this time a person may apply to be reinstated. No individual will automatically be reinstated.

The Panel shall give earlier consideration to a request for reinstatement, but only if in their view there are good grounds for doing so.

Decisions concerning such appeals 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. In such instances no appeal against the Panel's decision shall be accepted.

Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children.

All volunteers must complete a Volunteer Application Form - Annex C in which there is a self declaration of previous convictions and any failure to disclose information on this form will also lead to suspension and subsequent inquiry.

## **12. Responsibilities**

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.

## **13. Monitoring of the Policy**

It will be the responsibility of the Child Protection Officer to monitor the policy by:

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

#### **14. Annex A: Code of Conduct for People working with Children**

To ensure that all forms of abuse are prevented and to help protect people who work with young athletes the following guidelines should be followed:

- Always be publicly open when working with children. Avoid situations where you and an individual child are completely unobserved.
- If a performer needs to be touched, it should be provided openly and the performer should be asked first. Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when providing manual support if the child is constantly moving. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about touching children and their views should always be carefully considered.
- Where possible parents should take responsibility for their children in changing rooms. If groups are to be supervised in changing rooms, always ensure that adults work in pairs.
- Where mixed teams compete away from home they should always be accompanied by at least one male adult and one female adult.
- Volunteers and professionals must respect the rights and dignity and worth of all and treat everyone with equality.
- Volunteers and professionals must place the well being and safety of the performer above the development of performance. They should follow all guidelines laid down by UK Athletics and be adequately insured.
- Coaches should hold current athletics leadership or coaching qualification.
- Adults must ensure that the activities which they direct or advocate are appropriate to the age, maturity and ability of the performer e.g. they must not break the UK Athletics rules on age group for competitions.
- Adults should always promote the positive aspects of their sport (e.g. fair play) and never condone rule violations or use of prohibited substances.
- Adults must consistently display high standards of personal behaviour and appearance.
- Adults should never overtly criticise athletes or use sarcasm where it may cause the child to lose self-esteem or confidence.

Everyone should also be aware that as a general rule it does not make sense to:

- Spend amounts of time alone with children away from others
- Take children alone on car journeys, however short
- Take children to your home if they will be alone with you
- If it should arise that such situations are unavoidable they should only take place with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club/governing body and/or the child's parents/carer. In addition you must discourage over enthusiastic kisses and embraces

If you accidentally hurt a child, cause distress in any manner, or the child appears to be sexually

aroused by your actions, or misunderstands, or misinterprets something you have done, report the incident as soon as possible. Parents/carers should also be informed of the occurrence.

You should never:

- Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Share a room with a child Permit or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Permit children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for itself. However it may be necessary for a volunteer to do things of a personal nature for children particularly if they are very young or disabled. Such tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/carer. There is also a need in these instances to be responsive to the child's reactions - if a child is fully dependant upon you talking with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible.
- Agree to meet a young athlete on your own

**15. Annex B: Advice for young people on how to avoid misconduct by others in athletics and what to do about it**

**What is misconduct?**

Very broadly, any form of unacceptable behaviour towards you such as sexual misbehaviour, physical acts, inappropriate remarks, suggestive gestures, pictures or other material, or some other forms of abuse such as physical violence and all forms of bullying.

What you can do to avoid such misconduct?

- Listen to the advice of your parents
- Avoid being left alone with anyone
- If you have to leave a group tell someone - where you going, why you are going, how long you are likely to be, and report to them when you return
- Do not allow anyone to talk to you about something personal concerning themselves or ourselves if it has nothing to do with their job or work in sport. If they still persist, walk away and complain to someone in a senior position
- Do not agree to meet anyone on your own any time, without informing another adult
- Do not accept a lift from anyone if you will be the only passenger, unless you have informed another adult. Either refuse or insist that someone else go along too. Do not accept a lift if you feel unsafe
- Do not be over friendly towards those who work with you in athletics

- Do not walk home alone at night
- Be especially wary of parked cars with engine running
- Do not tolerate any form of bullying from team mates and other athletes.

If misconduct happens what should you do?

- Tell that person to stop at once
- Tell others who may be present what happened
- If they actually saw what happened remember who they are so they can be your witnesses
- If the misconduct continues, tell that person again to stop at once then leave if you can or shout help. If this is not possible then you must report the matter as soon as possible, to another official or adult
- Tell your parents as soon as possible
- Keep a record of the date, time and place and what happened, and make a list of any witnesses
- If any of your group or club mates have suffered the same sort of experience, ask them to make a similar record
- Ask any witnesses to do the same
- Talk to your parents and decide to whom to make a formal complaint. You should at least report it to your club (ideally the Child Protection Officer) and UK Athletics

What you should definitely not do:

- Do not wrongly complain if nothing happened
- Do not exaggerate if something did happen
- Do not ignore behaviour that makes you uncomfortable
- Do not keep to yourself what happened
- Do not delay before complaining
- Do not agree to hush up or hide what happened
- Do not be afraid or embarrassed to tell your parents or a friend

**In all cases if you are not sure what to do you can gain help from the NSPCC 24 hour telephone Child Helpline on 0800 800 500**

Policy Approved by the Executive Committee of Bournemouth Athletic Club on xxxxxxxx 2016

Signed ..... Trish Stamas, Club Welfare Officer

Signed ..... Tony Jones-Pert, Club Welfare Officer