

Child Safeguarding Policy

Policy and Procedures Document.

Okehampton Running Club

1st March 2024

Policy Statement

Everyone who takes part in athletics is entitled to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment. Okehampton Running Club (ORC) is committed to establishing and implementing policies and procedures to ensure a safe environment for all.

All children and young people have the right to be cared for, protected from harm and abuse, and to participate in a sporting environment which is safe, and in which their rights are respected, and their needs met. Children and young people should get the help they need, when they need it, and their safety is paramount.

This policy has been compiled with reference to UKA Safeguarding policy and has been made relevant and appropriate to Okehampton Running Club. This policy and the associated procedures and guidelines establish our collective commitment to protect all children and young people from poor practice, abuse, and exploitation.

This policy operates in conjunction with the relevant government policies and legislation regulating the protection of children and young people and we will work with the appropriate external partners to ensure best practice is implemented and maintained.

This policy links with our Adult Safeguarding Policy to ensure that as young people move into adulthood safety and wellbeing will continue to be protected.

Application

Safeguarding and protecting children is everyone's responsibility, not just the obligation of a few. Therefore this policy applies to all members of Okehampton Running Club.

Definition of a Child

The Children Act 1989

A Child is anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means children and young people throughout. The fact a child has reached 16 years of age, living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody, does not change his or her status or entitlement to protection under the Children Act 1989.

Key Principles

This policy is based on the following key principles:

- The welfare of children is the primary concern.
- The protection and wellbeing of all children in our care is everyone's responsibility.
- A child, whatever their age, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and or sexual identity have the right to protection from all forms of harm and abuse.
- A child has the right to express views on all matters that affect them, should they wish to do so.
- A child's rights and opinions should be respected and promoted.
- The best way to promote the wellbeing, health and development of a child is to work in partnership with the child, parents/carers and other relevant organisations.

Implementation

To implement this policy and keep children safe ORC will:

- Promote the health and wellbeing of children through the provision of opportunities to take part in athletics safely.
- Put in place procedures to promote the well being and protection of children.
- Seek to prevent and address bullying through the development and implementation of effective ant-bullying policies and practices.
- Apoint a lead Welfare Officer.
- Train and support our volunteers to prioritise and safeguard the wellbeing of children who take part in our activities and protect them from harm.

- Require volunteers to abide by this safeguarding policy and related procedures and regulations including the codes of conduct for working with children.
- Respect the rights of all children to express views on any matter that affects them should they wish to do so.
- Respond to any child wellbeing or protection concerns in line with this policy and related procedures.
- Regularly monitor, review and evaluate the implementation of this policy and related procedures.

To implement this policy and keep children safe ORC will:

- Implement the guidelines, procedures and regulations related to this policy
- Appoint at least one Club Welfare Officer
- Safely recruit volunteers in accordance with club volunteer recruitment guidance
- Promote safeguarding best practice in all aspects of club activity
- Ensure all volunteers, officials, coaches, athletes and parents agree to and sign the relevant code of conduct for their role
- Accept that all office bearers and committee members have a responsibility for safeguarding children's wellbeing and protecting them from harm, and are prepared to respond to any concerns of abuse or poor practice
- Challenge and change poor practice
- Implement any recommendations of UK Athletics relating to this policy area
- Promote an environment where all concerns can be raised without fear of victimisation or reprisal
- Ensure that everyone volunteering or working with children at their club attends a relevant child safeguarding training course every three years

Equality

ORC endorse the principle of equality and will strive to ensure that everyone who wishes to be involved in athletics:

- Has a genuine and equal opportunity to participate to the full extent of their own ambitions and abilities, without regard to their age, sex, gender identity, disability, marital and civil partner partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, religion, race, socio-economic status or sexual orientation.
- Can be ensured of an environment in which their rights, dignity and individual worth are respected and, in particular that they are able to enjoy their sport without the threat of intimidation, victimisation, harassment or abuse.

Section 2 Supporting information

This policy addresses the following forms of harm.

- **Practice concerns**
- **Wellbeing concerns**

- **Child abuse**

Practice Concerns

A practice concern is behaviour that falls short of abuse but which nevertheless harms or places someone at risk of harm, or has a negative and adverse effect on the safety and wellbeing of children. Practice concerns include any behaviour, act or omission by volunteers, coaches, officials that may contravene this policy, or any associated procedures and guidelines, in particular the codes of conduct.

This policy, along with the safeguarding procedures, codes of conduct and safeguarding regulations, promotes and supports the maintenance of healthy and positive relationships between those in positions of trust, such as coaches, and the young people in their care.

In England and Wales the government has amended the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and extended the legal definition of position of trust to include non-statutory settings such as sport by reference to activity which the adult is carrying out in relation to the child, namely coaching, teaching, training, supervising and instructing. In effect the changes have extended the settings and roles where it is illegal for an adult holding a position of trust to enter into a sexual relationship with a 16-or 17-year-old in their care, and this now includes athletics.

However, athletics has adopted a broader interpretation of the term 'position of trust' to acknowledge the inherent power imbalance in coach/athletic relationships. Such relationships can be exploitative and where this happens it can impact on a child's wellbeing and/or lead to abuse of a position of trust.

In addition, it would be considered as an abuse of a position of trust in athletics if an athlete is coerced or indoctrinated with attitudes to training, drugs, cheating, or social, political and religious views (radicalisation) which go against societal norms or the rules of the sport.

Wellbeing Concerns

Whilst most children's needs will be met by their parents and carers, it is acknowledged that participation in sports can support and promote a child's wellbeing. Government policy in all parts of the UK recognises that sports clubs and their volunteers are often significant role models and trusted people in children's lives. They are therefore well placed to identify when a child's wellbeing and health is, or is at risk of, being adversely affected by any matter, and to act in the child's best interests.

A wellbeing concern can be identified in different circumstances. For example:

- A child may reveal that they are worried, anxious or upset about an incident or set of circumstances, either within or outside of athletics.
- You may have noticed a change in a child's behaviour, demeanour or development progress.
- You may have concerns about the impact on a child of an incident or set of circumstances, either within or outside the sport.

- You may have concerns for a child's physical or mental health.

There are of course other factors which can impact on a child's wellbeing. Government policy and guidance varies across the UK, so please refer to UK Athletics website for specific wellbeing guidance.

Child Abuse

There are four well established categories of abuse:

Physical- Any action causing physical harm to a child or young person. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child they are looking after.

Physical harm can be caused by:

- Overtraining or dangerous training of athletes.
- Allowing an athlete to compete too frequently or over an extended period.
- Failure to do a risk assessment of physical limits or pre-existing medical conditions.
- Administering, condoning or failure to intervene in drug use.

Signs which may raise concerns about physical abuse include:

- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Improbable explanation for injuries
- Reluctance to go home
- Repeat injuries over time
- Untreated injuries
- Fear of parents being asked for an explanation
- Avoiding certain activities due to injury
- Avoiding the removal of warm up clothing during sessions.

Emotional- Persistent emotional neglect or maltreatment of an individual as to cause severe and persistent and adverse effects on the individual's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued on insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may involve the imposition of age or developmentally inappropriate expectations of a child. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger and includes exploiting or corrupting children. Some level of emotional abuse will be present in other types of ill treatment of children, but it can occur independently of other forms of abuse.

Examples of emotional abuse in sport include:

- A persistent failure to show any respect to a child (e.g. continually ignoring a child)
- Humiliating a child by continuously criticising their performance.
- Continually being aggressive towards a child.

- Acting in a way which undermines a child's self-esteem.
- Signs which may raise concerns about emotional abuse include:
- Low self-esteem
- Running away from home
- Extremes of passivity and aggression
- Significant decline in concentration
- Indiscriminate friendliness and neediness
- Self-harming

Sexual – Any act that involves a child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person, whether or not it is claimed that the child either consented or assented. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at or in the production of pornographic material or in watching sexual activities, using sexual language towards a child or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Some children may never be able to tell someone they have been sexually abused. Changes in a child's behaviour may be a sign something has happened. In some instances, there may be no overt signs to suggest a child has been sexually abused.

Examples of sexual abuse in sport include:

- Exposure to sexually explicit inappropriate language or jokes.
- Showing a child pornographic material or using a child to produce such material.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Sexual intercourse and or sexual intercourse with a child under 16.

Signs which may raise concerns about sexual abuse include:

- Lack of trust in adults, over familiarity with adults, or fear of a particular adult.
- Sleep disturbance (nightmares, bedwetting, fear of sleeping alone)
- Girls taking over the mothering role
- Reluctance or refusal to participate in physical activity or to change clothes for games.
- Drugs/alcohol abuse
- Psycho-somatic indicators such as recurrent abdominal pain or headaches.
- Eating disorders
- Social isolation/being withdrawn or introverted, poor peer relationship
- Running away from home
- School problems (falling standards, truancy)
- Low self-esteem
- Sexual knowledge beyond the child's age
- Sexual promiscuity/over sexualised behaviour
- Anxiety/depression/self-harm/suicide attempts

Neglect- Persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or failure to respond to the child's basic emotional needs.

Neglect may also result in the child being diagnosed as suffering from "nonorganic failure to thrive", where they have significantly failed to reach normal weight and growth of development milestones, and where physical and genetic reasons have been medically eliminated. In extreme forms children can be at serious risk from the effects of malnutrition, lack of nurturing and stimulation. This can lead to serious long term effects such as greater susceptibility to serious childhood illnesses and reduction in potential stature. With young children in particular, the consequences may be life threatening within a relative short period of time.

Examples of physical neglect in sport include:

- Exposing a child to extreme weather conditions (heat and cold)
- Failing to seek medical attention for injuries.
- Exposing a child to risk of injury through the use of unsafe equipment.
- Exposing a child to a hazardous environment without a proper risk assessment of the activity.
- Failing to provide adequate nutrition and water.

Signs which may raise concerns about neglect include:

- Constant hunger
- Constant tiredness
- Untreated medical problems or injuries
- Poor relationships with peers
- Poor personal hygiene/ clothing in poor condition
- Being frequently late or not attending sessions
- Low self-esteem
- Stealing

There are other circumstances and behaviours that can be considered as either forms of abuse, indicators that a child is at risk of abuse or that a child's wellbeing is being compromised. The following examples should not be considered as a definitive list.

- Bullying
- Children and young people with a disability
- Negative discriminatory behaviour
- Children and young people experiencing or affected by mental health problems
- Financial abuse

- Parental problematic alcohol and drug misuse.
- Domestic abuse
- Female-genital mutilation
- Honour based violence and forced marriage.
- Child criminal exploitation
- Child trafficking

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner in the event of legislative changes or revisions to related policies and guidelines.

APPENDIX 1: PROCESS MAP - REPORTING A CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD

