



## **Safeguarding and protecting children in athletics – Medway Phoenix policy and procedures.**

### **Policy Objectives**

Everyone who takes part in athletics is entitled to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment. To ensure this Medway Phoenix is committed to establishing and implementing policies and procedures to ensure a safe athletics environment. Best practise in athletics benefits everyone - athletes, parents, carers, coaches officials and England Athletics. Most importantly, it ensures that those who choose to participate in athletics have a safe and fun experience. All athletes are entitled to a duty of care and to be protected from abuse.

Medway Phoenix is committed to devising, implementing and updating policies and procedures to promote best practice and to ensure that everyone in the sport understands and accepts their responsibilities to safeguard athletes from harm and abuse. This means taking action to report any concerns about their welfare. This includes making sure that all responsible adults within the club are aware how to report issues that cause them concern.

### **Policy Statement**

Medway Phoenix fully accept their legal and moral obligations to provide a duty of care, to protect all children and safeguard their welfare, irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, religion or belief, sex or gender and sexual orientation.

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All children have the right to protection from abuse

- All suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- All individuals involved with the club understand and accept their responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer. In order to meet this obligation all responsible adults will:
  - Provide and enforce procedures to safeguard the well being of all participants and protect them from abuse
  - Ensure all children who take part in athletics within the club are able to participate in a safe and fun environment
  - Respect and uphold the rights, wishes and feelings of children
  - Train and supervise responsible adults to adopt best practise to safeguard and protect young people from abuse, and themselves from false allegations
  - Require volunteers to adopt and abide by their Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, Codes of Conduct and the relevant grievance, investigatory and disciplinary procedures
  - Respond to any allegations appropriately and implement the appropriate complaints, child protection, disciplinary and appeals procedures
  - Review policies regularly (at least every 2 years)

## **Terms and Abbreviations**

CWO Club Welfare Officer

LSCB Local Safeguarding Children Board

DBS Disclosure and Barring Service

ISA Independent Safeguarding Authority

CPSU Child Protection in Sport Unit (NSPCC)

A Child is anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means children and young people throughout.

## Best Practice

Best practice means: -

- Being open and conducting all interactions with children in a public place and with appropriate consent
- Avoiding situations where you are alone with one child
- If you have to meet or coach one child ensure it is conducted in an open environment, and where full consent and emergency contact details have been provided
- If you are travelling alone with a child gain appropriate consent, avoid consistently having one child alone with you in the car
- Challenging bullying, harassment, foul or provocative language or controlling behaviour that could upset individuals or reduce them to tears
- Never ignoring bullying by parents, coaches or children. Listening to and supporting the person being bullied.
- Maintaining an appropriate relationship with children; this means treating people fairly, with respect and avoiding favouritism.
- Being friendly and open and ensuring that relationships are appropriate for someone in a position of power and trust.
- Respecting all athletes and helping them to take responsibility for their own development and decision making.
- Avoiding unnecessary physical contact. In certain circumstances physical contact is perfectly acceptable and appropriate, as long as it is not intrusive or disturbing to the athlete and that consent for contact has been given by the individual and appropriate parental consent.
- Being qualified and insured for the activities you are coaching and ensuring that your licence remains valid. Ensure that your practice is appropriate for the age and development stage of each athlete.

Adopting best practice not only ensures the individuals welfare, it also protects you from possible wrongful allegations. Children very rarely make false allegations. If they do it is usually because they are confused or covering up for someone else's behaviour and hoping their action might scare the real abuser into stopping.

### **Poor Practice**

The following are examples of poor practice and should be avoided:

- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games including horseplay.
- A coach shouting comments at athletes when they are not working hard enough.
- A coach using harassing and discriminatory language such as 'you run like a girl'
- A coach engaging in an intimate relationship with one of his/her athletes.
- A group of athletes ganging up on a new athlete and refusing to talk to him/her.

The list above is not exhaustive and many other examples exist.

If any of the following incidents should occur you should report them immediately to another colleague, make a written note of the event and inform parents and/or appropriate adults of the incident and inform the club Welfare Officer.

- If you accidentally hurt a child athlete
- If a child appears distressed in any manner
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

### **Abuse**

Abuse can occur wherever there are children There are four main types of abuse:

- Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
- Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express his/her views, deliberately silencing him/her or 'making fun' of what he/she say or how he/she communicates. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, which especially applies to when a child shares a protected characteristic e.g. racist, sexual or homophobic bullying or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
- 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 inappropriate physical contact. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, inappropriate images, encouraging children to behave in inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children
- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion

from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### **Information about volunteers**

All volunteers who have or are seeking to undertake a role and responsibility in relation to children in Medway Phoenix must complete or provide evidence of a DBS check. The club will keep and make available a list of all adults who have provided evidence of such checks. Furthermore, adults working with children are required to confirm that they are familiar with and will act within the clubs policies and procedures in addition to the completion of an application form including the following:

- Name and address
- Relevant experience, qualifications and training undertaken.
- All applicants who have or are seeking to undertake a role with direct responsibility for young athletes must complete a self-declaration to establish whether they are known to any Children's Social Care (social services) as being an actual or potential risk to children or whether they have ever had action taken against them (criminal/civil/disciplinary) that might indicate that they are unsuitable to work with or have responsibility for children. This is considered the first step in safeguarding.
- Two written references may be taken up. Referees (not relatives) should provide written references that comment on the applicant's previous experience of, and suitability for, working with children and permission to clarify information with referees.
- Any former involvement with athletics.

### **Training**

All volunteers who work with children will be provided with opportunities training where required. For all coaches and volunteers with roles in

relation to young athletes this should include attendance at a recognised direct delivery safeguarding workshop

All volunteers should be given the opportunity to receive regular feedback through observed practice, appraisal or informal feedback to identify training needs and to set goals. Concerns about misconduct, poor practice or abuse, however will be acted on as they arise. Appropriate support will be offered to those who report concerns/incidents or complaints.

Responsible adults are responsible for reporting any concerns about the welfare of a child .These concerns may arise due to:

- An individual disclosing that they are being abused.
- The behaviour of an adult towards a child.
- A number of indicators observed in a child over a period of time.

How to respond to a welfare concern or issues: Don't

- Probe for more information than is offered.
- Speculate or make assumptions.
- Show shock or distaste.
- Make comments about the person against whom the allegations have been made.
- Make promises or agree to keep secrets.
- Give a guarantee of confidentiality.

All suspicions and disclosures must be reported appropriately. It is acknowledged that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases of possible sexual abuse or where there is a misplaced loyalty to a colleague.

Medway Phoenix Welfare Officers should be contacted where specific advice or help is required or to raise a safeguarding issue within the club / take appropriate action on identification of a safeguarding issue.

## Reporting procedures

Any person with information of a disclosure, allegation or concern about the welfare of a child must immediately report this to a Club Welfare Officer (CWO) who will refer the matter as appropriate. If the CWO(s) is (are) not available or is involved with the issue which has been identified, the NSPCC helpline (0808 800 5000), Children 1st (0141 418 5674) or [DN add local sources of info] should be contacted.

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a volunteer there may be three types of investigation:

- Criminal: in which case the police are immediately involved
- Safeguarding children: in which case the social care services (and possibly the police) will be involved
- Misconduct: which will be dealt with using the complaints procedure.

Civil proceedings may also be initiated by the alleged victim of misconduct or abuse, or his/her family, or by persons wrongly accused. Records relating to all safeguarding issues must be kept for a minimum of 3 years.

### **Dealing with Concerns and Allegations**

While CWOs will have received training, they are not safeguarding experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. If there is any doubt about whether or not the alleged behaviour constitutes abuse, the concern must be shared with professional agencies that will be responsible for subsequent action. Any suspicion that an individual has been abused by a volunteer athletics should be reported to the CWO who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the individual in question and any other individual who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- The parents of the child will be contacted at the earliest opportunity
- If appropriate, an interim suspension of the individual(s) implicated based on the risk to young athletes (including the child(ren) concerned), an assessment of the seriousness of the allegation and the need to ensure a full investigation can be instituted

The welfare of the child is paramount. Where the police or social care services make a statutory referral and invite a club official to a case conference or professional meeting then the UKA CPLO must be informed as soon as possible to determine whether to attend and represent the governing body at the meeting and support the individual and club. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences relating to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. These decisions will be dealt with by the Independent Safeguarding Authority for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act (1999) and set out in Schedule 4 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act.

### **Poor Practice and Dealing with Bullying**

If the allegations are against a volunteer and after consideration are clearly about poor practice or bullying, these will be dealt with through the appropriate policy.

### **Records and Confidentiality**

Always follow the reporting procedure set out above. Use of the referral form will assist you to collect and collate the required information. Your reports should be factual and include where possible

- The referrer's and/or the child's name, address and date of birth
- The date and time of the incident.
- The facts about the allegation or observation.
- Your factual observations e.g. describe the behaviour and emotional state of the alleged victim, and note any marks, bruising or other injuries.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what happened using the exact words if possible.
- Details of any witnesses
- Any times, dates or other relevant information.
- Any action that was taken as a result of the concerns.

- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.

Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

### **Support for Victim, Accused and Reporter**

Difficulty in reporting concerns is acknowledged and Medway Phoenix will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith (without malicious intent), reports his or her concern about a colleague's practice or concerns about the welfare of a child. They will take appropriate steps to ensure that the victim (and parents, appropriate adults) is provided with appropriate professional support (e.g. Help lines, support groups and the Counselling Directory). They will also ensure through the appropriate allegation, disciplinary and appeals procedures that the accused is offered appropriate support.

## A YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO CHILD PROTECTION

You have rights – Sport should be fun.

You should feel safe and enjoy your sport.

You can't do this if you feel unhappy – if someone is bullying or abusing you.

When do you know if something is wrong?

Something is wrong if someone:

- Touches you, or does anything in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable
- Does anything that makes you feel lonely, worried, unsafe, hurt or embarrassed!

If you are being bullied or abused it is not your fault. If this is happening try to:

- Be firm and tell the person to stop – make a lot of noise to attract attention
- Get away from the situation quickly, go to a public place to find help or call the police (999)
- Tell your parents / carers , Club Welfare Officer or an adult you can trust what has happened as soon as possible, so they can help you
- Keep a record of the date, time and place, what happened, how you felt and the name of anyone who may have seen what happened
- Call your Club Welfare Officer or use the 24 hr free telephone helplines  
Childline 0800 1111 NSPCC 0800 800 5000 Keep trying if you can't get through straight away

Keeping Safe

To keep safe always:

- Tell someone you can trust so they can help you
- Trust your instincts about the people you meet
- Avoid being alone or with just one other person
- Travel with a friend, avoid traveling in someone else's car by yourself

- Avoid going to other people's homes by yourself
- Carry a mobile phone and make sure people know where you are going

If any of the above happens to you, do not wait for it to happen again, act immediately