

County Durham Sport Partnership

Safeguarding Guidance for Parents/Carers/Guardians

All children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to have fun and be safe and free from harm when participating in sport and physical activity.

Parents, Carers and Guardians should read this information for guidance on what constitutes good practice in relation to sporting activities as well as some useful tips when deciding upon activities for your children (*children, in the context of this guidance document, refers to children, young people and vulnerable adults*).

This guidance document contains information on:

- Your Responsibilities as a Parent, Carer or Guardian
- The Types of Abuse
- Key Questions to Consider Asking
- What You Should be Wary of
- How to React to Disclosures
- When to Take Action
- Reporting Your Concerns or Disclosures
- Useful Contacts for Advice

Your Responsibilities

This section gives information about the responsibilities that you as a parent/carer/guardian have to help ensure a safer sporting environment for your children:

- Always ensure that the children you are responsible for have the correct equipment, footwear clothing and refreshments for the activity they are taking part in
- Remember that children participate in sport for their enjoyment, not yours.
- Encourage children to participate, never force them.
- Focus on, and praise the effort and performance displayed, rather than the winning or losing
- Encourage children to play according to the rules and to settle disagreements without resorting to argumentative behaviour
- Never ridicule children for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- Remember that children learn best by example. Always show appreciation for good performances displayed by all participants
- Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from all sporting activities
- Respect coaches' and officials' decisions and teach children to do likewise
- Always show appreciation for the coaches, officials and administrators. Without them there would be no activity for your children to participate in.
- Respect the rights and dignity of all children regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion
- Behave responsibly. Discriminatory, offensive and violent behaviour towards any individual is unacceptable and will be acted upon
- Always ensure you are punctual when dropping off and collecting your children, do not put the coach/club in a difficult position by arriving late

- Ensure that the club/organisation/coach has an emergency contact number for your children, and inform them of any injuries, illnesses, disabilities or medical conditions etc. You must ensure that your children have any required medication with them, including inhalers
- Be aware of the club's/organisation's policies and procedures, including knowledge of how and when to report a concern, allegation or disclosure about possible abuse or poor practice
- Report any instances of unacceptable behaviour, such as discriminatory, offensive or violent behavior, so that they can be investigated and acted upon

Types of Abuse

Sport and physical activity can offer a number of benefits. It provides an opportunity for children to develop valuable skills and qualities, such as teamwork, leadership and confidence, and it can also provide opportunities for enjoyment and achievement. All children have the right to be safe and free from harm when they take part in any activity.

Unfortunately there is evidence that child abuse does occur within society, including within sports settings. Child abuse occurs when someone causes harm to a child or young person, and the different forms can be categorised as follows:

- **Physical abuse:** this includes hitting, kicking, shaking or punching, or giving children alcohol or inappropriate drugs.
- **Neglect:** this is failing to meet a child's basic needs, such as providing them with food, shelter, warm clothing etc. It also includes leaving children alone or unsupervised.
- **Emotional abuse:** this includes threatening children and insulting them.
- **Sexual abuse:** this includes sexual intercourse, touching children in an inappropriate way, or showing them sexual pictures or videos.
- **Bullying:** this includes deliberate, hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time.

Abuse creates all sorts of confusing feelings and emotions, including feeling frightened, alone, confused, angry, unloved, guilty or ashamed. Often a child may not realise that they have been abused, or if they do, they may feel that somehow it's their fault.

Questions to Consider

Some key questions that you should consider when choosing sporting activities for your children.

Are the staff and volunteers appropriately qualified?

All coaches and leaders must have an up to date, recognised National Governing Body (NGB) coaching qualification(s) which is appropriate for the sport and level of ability being coached.

Do they have appropriate training?

All staff and volunteers, including club personnel, should have attended recognised child protection training through the appropriate NGB, Sports Coach UK or Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

It is also important that relevant staff have also undertaken appropriate first aid, equity and coaching disabled performers training, and these should all be updated at least every three years.

Are they suitable to work with children and vulnerable adults?

All staff and volunteers, including club personnel, who have direct contact with children and vulnerable adults should have been through an appropriate recruitment process which includes successful completion of an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check and reference checks.

Is there appropriate insurance cover in place?

All coaches should have appropriate and valid insurance cover. All sports clubs/organisations should have public liability insurance.

Is the club/organisation working towards formal NGB accreditation?

Sports clubs/organisations should have, or be working towards NGB accreditation, or a recognised equivalent. You might see or hear reference to Clubmark, a national accreditation scheme which recognises sports clubs that have fulfilled criteria to demonstrate they are committed to providing a safe, effective and child friendly environment.

Does the club/organisation have appropriate policies and procedures in place?

All sports clubs/organisations should have a Child Protection Policy which outlines the procedures for dealing with possible abuse, disclosures or poor practice. They should also have a written Code of Conduct for coaches, club staff/volunteers, parents/carers and participants.

There should be health and safety procedures in place, which will include the premises having passed fire regulations, and all participants being required to complete registration forms, and consent forms as appropriate.

A good sports club/organisation should welcome questions about their activities and issues around safety.

What to be wary of?

This section gives information about what to be wary of, including the signs and indicators of potential abuse.

You should be wary of:

- Activities where parents are discouraged from staying to watch or become involved
- Behaviour or activities that encourage rough play, sexual innuendo or humiliating punishments
- Individuals who take charge and operate independently of organisational guidelines
- Individuals who show favouritism or personally reward specific children
- Encouragement of inappropriate physical contact
- Poor communication and lack of parental involvement, leaving you feeling uneasy
- Children who drop out or stop going for no apparent reason

- Invitations for children to spend time alone with staff or volunteers (or even to visit their home)

REMEMBER to listen to your children and ask questions about the activities that they take part in to ensure that they are enjoying it.

Things to look out for are:

- Unexplained bruising
- Sudden changes in behaviour
- Something that is said to you
- Sexually explicit language or behaviour
- Something about another adult's behaviour towards a particular participant or group of participants

These signs are not confirmation of abuse, but they are potential indicators. Remember, **IT IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to decide whether or not a child or vulnerable adult is being abused, but IT IS YOUR DUTY to report any concerns that you have** so that they can be investigated. Reporting such matters can be difficult, however, it is the welfare of the child or vulnerable adult that is paramount.

Reacting to Disclosures

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult confides in you;

- React calmly, don't panic or appear shocked
- Listen carefully to what they are saying and allow them to talk
- Don't probe for information, ask leading questions or make assumptions
- Tell them that you cannot keep what they have told you a secret, but that you will only tell designated officers that will help to find them the relevant help
- Reassure them that it is not their fault
- Don't approach the identified individual
- Take them seriously, don't ignore it
- Record accurately what you have been told
- Contact the relevant individual or organisation immediately to report your concerns (remember to keep a record of who you have spoken to). For further information please visit the 'Useful Contacts' section of our website.

When to Take Action

You should take action if;

- A child, young person or vulnerable adult tells you that they are being abused
- You suspect that abuse has taken place
- You think that the safety or welfare of a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at risk
- You have concerns that an individual has behaved inappropriately, or that a coach/leader has demonstrated poor practice.

Please remember that DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION, if you are worried DON'T IGNORE IT.

If you feel reluctant to voice your concerns in case you are wrong or worried about the impact on your child, you may wish to speak to other parents, or the leader in charge. If you are not confident that they are the appropriate person, speak to someone in a higher position of authority, or one of the organisations listed within the 'Useful Contacts' section of our website.

Reporting Your Concerns or Disclosures

Responding to concerns, complaints, allegations and disclosures;

If you need to make an allegation or disclosure of abuse, or have **serious concerns** about the safety of a child, young person or vulnerable adult, you should immediately contact **County Durham Social Care Direct** on **0845 8505010**.

If you have a concern that is **not serious** and does not require immediate action, your first point of contact would be the relevant club's/organisation's child protection officer/welfare officer. Alternatively, you may wish to speak to the activity organiser, or one of the national contacts listed for advice and support.

If you have a concern related to **poor practice**, please speak to the relevant activity organiser.

PLEASE NOTE; that if your concern is regarding something that takes place/took place **within a facility** e.g. a leisure centre, you should inform the facility in the first instance so that they can follow their own safeguarding policies and procedures.

Further Information;

For further information please visit the Useful Contacts section of our website, which contains the relevant contact details you can use if you need help or guidance.

The 'NSPCC' website in particular provides a lot of support and advice. You may wish to look at the NSPCC's 'Worried about a child? How you can protect children from abuse' leaflet, which gives some useful tips on what to do if you're concerned about the safety of a child.

Useful Contacts for Advice

Kidscape;

Provides information for parents on bullying and keeping children safe (send a large stamped self-addressed envelope). They also operate a bullying helpline for parents, Monday to Friday, 10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

2 Grosvenor Gardens,
London
SW1W 0DH
Tel: 020 7730 3300
Kidscape Website

Parents Centre;

Provides a range of information and resources for parents including information, support and advice in dealing with major issues affecting parents and their children.

Email: parentscentre@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Parents Centre Website**Parentline Plus;**

Parentline is the free confidential helpline run by Parentline Plus for anyone in a parenting role, including step-parents and those experiencing family change.

Unit 520 Highgate Studios,
53-79 Highgate Rd,
Kentish Town,
London
NW5 1TL

Helpline: 0808 800 2222

Parentline Plus Website**NSPCC;**

The NSPCC offers a wide range of leaflets and booklets for parents and carers. For a parenting pack, please send an A4 SAE (5 x 1st class stamps) to NSPCC Publications, Weston House, 42 Curtain Rd, London EC2A 3NH. You can also view these publications on the website.

Tel: 020 7825 2500 (please note that this is not the helpline number)

NSPCC Website**Bullying Online;**

Provides information for parents on a variety of bullying issues.

E-Mail: help@bullying.co.uk

Bullying Website**BBC Parenting;**

Provides information about bringing up children and generally keeping them out of harm's way.

BBC Parenting Website**Child Alert;**

Provides information on parenting topics and concerns, as well as access to child safety products and services.

Child Alert Website**Thinkuknow Website;**

The internet is integral to the lives of children of all ages. 'Thinkuknow' provides information for parents, guardians and carers to help them to understand more about what their child is doing online, exploring some of the specific dangers that children could face, and providing practical advice and guidance that should make the online experience safer for all.

Most importantly, there's also a place which anyone can use to report if they feel uncomfortable or worried about someone they are chatting to online.

Thinkuknow Website

If you have any questions on the information contained within this documents please contact Sandy Mitchell on 0191 301 8585 or sandy.mitchell@durhamcity.gov.uk

This guidance document has been adapted from the Tyne and Wear Sport, Safer in Sport Guidance for Parents