



GUIDELINES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS IN SPORT, LEISURE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

Introduction

Children, young people and vulnerable adults have a lot to gain from sport, leisure and outdoor recreation. Their natural sense of fun and spontaneity can blossom in positive sporting, play and outdoor environments. Sport, leisure and outdoor recreation provides an excellent medium in which children, young people and vulnerable adults can learn new skills, become more confident and maximize their own unique potential. As a staff member, coach, official or volunteer you have a major role to play in supporting people to participate in sport, leisure and outdoor recreation activities.

Becoming a staff member, coach, official or volunteer can be a very rewarding experience but you also need to be aware of your responsibilities for protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults as well as yourself.

These guidelines will help you to understand your responsibilities although it should be noted that they are not a substitute to attending an appropriate training course in Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults.

Sport, play or informal recreation of one kind or another is something which the majority of children, young people and vulnerable adults naturally tend to enjoy. Nurturing this in the most appropriate way will not only enable children to learn new skills but will also help to keep them fit, active, healthy and happy, no matter what their level of ability is. It is the role of staff, coaches, officials and volunteers to ensure that everyone can participate in a fun, safe and supportive environment.

Definitions used in these guidelines

- Vulnerable People – Children, Young People or Vulnerable Adults
- Child/Children/Young People – a person aged under 18 years of age
- Vulnerable Adult – “a person who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation” (taken from “No Secrets”)
- Adult – a person aged 18 years or over
- Abuse – “...is a violation of an individuals human and civil rights by any other person or persons” (No Secrets)
- Designated Person – A person with specific safeguarding designated responsibilities
- Lead Officer – A person with overall responsibility for safeguarding within a department or organisation.
- Club Welfare Officer – A person with specific safeguarding designated responsibilities
- Strategy Meeting –
- NGB – National Governing Body of Sport e.g. The Amateur Swimming Association

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Information on poor practice, physical contact and use of control

Guidance on poor practice

Poor practice includes any behaviour that contravenes the sportscoachUK or respective NGB Code of Ethics and Conduct, or a Local Authorities policies on protecting children and vulnerable adults. Poor practice will be addressed through retraining and / or disciplinary procedures (those of the relevant organisation for paid employees) as is deemed appropriate.

The following practices should be avoided except in emergencies:

- Avoid spending time alone with children, young people & vulnerable adults away from others
- Avoid taking children, young people & vulnerable adults on car journeys, however short on your own

If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or group, the organisation you work for or the child's parents. For example, 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 the session.

The following practices should always be avoided:

- Never engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Never share a room with a child, young people or vulnerable adult
- Never allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Never allow children, young people or vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Never make sexually suggestive comments to a child, young person or vulnerable adult, even in fun
- Never allow allegations to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Never do things of a personal nature for a child, young person or vulnerable adult that they can do for themselves
- Never invite or allow children, young people or vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home unsupervised
- Never give gifts or rewards to children, young people and vulnerable adults unless it is part of an agreed policy for supporting positive behaviour or recognizing particular achievements
- Never seek to have any social contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults or their families, unless the contact has been agreed with senior managers

Guidance on physical contact

It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for vulnerable people, particularly if they are young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents/carers. 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 the case if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact such as lifting or assisting a vulnerable person to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Guidance on use of control and physical intervention

The use of physical intervention should, wherever possible, be avoided. It should only be used to manage a vulnerable person's behaviour if it is necessary to prevent personal injury or to prevent serious damage to property or in what would reasonably be regarded as exceptional circumstances. When physical intervention is used it should be undertaken in such a way that maintains the safety and dignity of all concerned. The scale and nature of any physical intervention must be proportionate to both the behaviour of the individual to be controlled and the nature of the harm they may cause. Minimum necessary force should be used. The use of unwarranted physical force is likely to constitute a criminal offence.

If a staff member, coach, official or volunteer accidentally hurts a vulnerable person, he/she seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something you

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have done, report any such incident as soon as possible and make a full report of it to the relevant designated person. Parents/carers should also be informed of the incident.

Different types of abuse

Abuse in all its forms can affect a vulnerable person of any age. The effects can be so damaging that they may follow an individual throughout life (and in some cases cause them to abuse other people themselves).

It should be noted that vulnerable people attending sports, leisure and outdoor recreation activities may be the subject of abuse outside of that activity and that all employees and volunteers have a responsibility to take appropriate action if they suspect such abuse.

Some examples of different type of abuse are provided below.

Physical abuse

This is where adults (or other young people) physically hurt or injure other people. Hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning and biting are all forms of physical abuse. Giving vulnerable people alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison is classified as physical abuse. Likewise asking vulnerable people to undertake a physical task that is beyond their capabilities may be classified as physical abuse.

Sexual abuse

Males and females can both be abused by adults (and sometimes other young people) who use vulnerable people to meet their own sexual needs. This might be full intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse or fondling. Showing vulnerable people pornographic magazines or videos is also a form of sexual abuse as is taking photos of vulnerable people in inappropriate positions. Some sport, leisure and outdoor recreation activities which necessitate the physical support of vulnerable people, could potentially create situations where sexual abuse goes unnoticed.

Sexual relationships between staff, coaches, volunteers etc and their charges (even if above the age of sexual consent) are to be discouraged as the coach is clearly in a position of power. To engage in such a relationship is a breach of the SportsCoach UK code of conduct and therefore would result in the beginning of disciplinary proceedings. Sexual relationships between staff, coaches, officials, volunteers etc and their charges of under the age of sexual consent are illegal.

Emotional abuse

Persistent lack of love and affection damages vulnerable people emotionally. Being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted can make a vulnerable person very nervous and withdrawn. Making racist or homophobic comments are both forms of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse in sport and leisure activities may occur if vulnerable people are subjected to constant criticism, name-calling, sarcasm, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations consistently.

Neglect

This is where a person's basic needs, such as the provision of food or warm clothing, are not met. Emotional neglect, where an adult fails to, or refuses to give their love and affection to those in their care, can also take place. Examples of neglect in sport and outdoor recreation could include a teacher, coach or supervisor not ensuring that the people in their care are safe, exposing them to undue cold, heat and unnecessary risk of injury, or providing insufficient appropriate supervision (e.g. in changing rooms).

Bullying

Another type of abuse is where the abuser may be a young person (or an adult), for example in the case of bullying. The competitive nature of sport makes it an ideal environment for those who bully, but bullying can also happen during play schemes and environmental volunteering situations. Girls, boys and adults bully others, although it can be more conspicuous in boys. Although bullying often takes place in schools 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 in the changing rooms. Those who bully come from any background regardless of class, race or culture. Some have experienced excessive physical punishment, some little affection, others overindulgence, some have been victims or are going through difficult times, while some just bully because the opportunity presents itself. Although anyone can be the target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps

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anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons - being overweight or physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, or due to their sexual orientation (hidden or assumed), faith or culture. It should be noted that those who bully can also be parents/carers, for example a parent who pushes too hard or the coach who adopts a win at all costs philosophy.

Financial or material abuse

This includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with Wills or property, or the misappropriation of property or benefits. It also includes the withholding of money or the unauthorised or improper use of a person's money or property, usually to the disadvantage of the person to whom it belongs. Staff, coaches, officials and volunteers borrowing money or objects from a vulnerable person would also be considered to be abuse.

Identification signs of possible abuse

Recognising abuse is not easy, even for individuals who have experience of working with vulnerable people on a regular basis. Warning signs which may alert you to the possibility of abuse can include:

- A vulnerable person reporting to you that they are or have been abused
- Unexplained bruising, cuts or burns on the vulnerable person, particularly if these are parts of the body not normally injured in accidents
- An injury which a parent or carer tries to hide, or for which they might have given different explanations
- Changes in behaviour of the vulnerable person, such as suddenly becoming very quiet, tearful, withdrawn, aggressive or displaying severe tantrums
- Loss of weight without a medical explanation
- An inappropriately dressed or ill-kept individual who may also be dirty
- Sexually explicit behaviour, for instance playing games and showing awareness which is inappropriate for a child's age
- Continual masturbation, aggressive and inappropriate sex play
- Running away from home, attempted suicides, self-inflicted injuries
- A lack of trust in adults, particularly those who would normally be close to the vulnerable person
- Disturbed sleep and nightmares
- Eating problems, including over-eating or loss of appetite
- Lack or loss of money or belongings

Remember, the above signs do not necessarily mean that a vulnerable person has been abused. If you are concerned about the welfare of a vulnerable person, you must act. Do not assume that someone else will help; they might not. Remember that the vulnerable person's welfare is paramount and this must be the most important consideration at all times.

What to do?

Should you have a concern regarding a vulnerable person then you should follow these steps.

Step 1: Listen!

Listen carefully to any complaint or allegation by the vulnerable person, tell and show them that you are taking them seriously.

If a vulnerable person's behaviour or your observations give rise to concern, then talk to them sensitively to find out if there is anything worrying them.

Keep questions to a minimum, only asking questions to clarify what has been said so that you can pass on this information to professionals who are trained and experienced in investigating possible abuse.

Acknowledge how difficult it may have been for the vulnerable person to share this with you and reassure them, stressing they are never to blame.

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Stay calm: don't make promises which you may not be able to keep. It is particularly important that you do not promise that you will keep what they say confidential. It is in the vulnerable person's best interests that you consult with others and pass on the information to an appropriate professional.

Don't take sole responsibility: consult a designated person so that together you can begin to protect the vulnerable person by referring the concerns to the appropriate agencies, and also so that you can get some support for yourself in what could be a difficult situation.

As soon as possible after talking with the vulnerable person, make a written record of what was said (use the vulnerable person's own words and phrases), how they were behaving and what you did in response.

Note that not all vulnerable people are able to express themselves verbally. Communication difficulties may mean that it is hard for them to complain or be understood. However, where there are concerns about the safety of a vulnerable person, record what has been observed in detail and follow the procedures described to report these concerns.

Step 2: Sharing concerns with parents/carers

There should always be a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about vulnerable people in their care. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to the parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, 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. If having spoken to a vulnerable person's parent or carer your concerns persist, then contact the designated person and make a written record of your concerns.

Note that there are circumstances when it is not appropriate to share concerns with parents and carers. Under these circumstances a vulnerable person might be placed at even greater risk if concerns are shared (e.g. where there are indications that the parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or may not be 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 designated person as soon as possible and recorded in writing.

Step 3: Making a Referral

Remember that it is not your responsibility to decide if abuse to a vulnerable person has occurred, but it is your responsibility to take action by reporting your concerns in accordance with these guidelines.

Inform a designated person, who will take responsibility for seeking any additional advice and for contacting the local Children's Stay Safe Team, Vulnerable Adult Protection Team or the Police, who are all trained to deal with such situations and have the necessary legal power to protect the vulnerable person.

If the designated person is not available and concerns for the vulnerable person remain, then you should contact the local relevant organisation yourself.

The agency receiving your referral will take responsibility for ensuring that appropriate investigations are undertaken and that the vulnerable person is protected. However, the designated person within your organisation should follow up your referral in writing within 24 hours. A copy of the referral must be sent to the designated person unless it is about them (if this is the case then contact the Lead Officer).

What should be contained within your referral?

When making a referral it is important that you have accurate information available and have thought through your concerns. However, the lack of availability of some of the information below is not a reason to delay the referral.

Factual information about the vulnerable person

- Name/s and date of birth/age
- Ethnicity
- Disability (if any)

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- Home address
- Names of those who hold parental responsibility

Factual Information about the suspected/alleged abuser

- Names and contact details (if known)
- Relationship to vulnerable person

Factual information about you

- Name/s and contact details
- Your connection to the vulnerable person
- Your involvement
- Is the vulnerable person aware that you are making this referral?

Source and nature of concerns

- Is it something you have seen?
- Is it based on the concern of another, if so, whom?
- Is it based on the vulnerable person's behaviour, an injury, something that the person has said?
- Has this concern developed over time or just today?
- What evidence do you have to support your concern? This may include what the vulnerable person has said to you directly. If so, are you aware if the vulnerable person has also spoken to anyone else?
- Whom do you believe to be the source of harm/potential harm to the vulnerable person?
- Are there other vulnerable people in the family about whom you have concerns?
- In your opinion does the vulnerable person need immediate protection?

Forward the referral and any other recording (in writing) to the relevant designated officer within 24 hours. Refer to the list of contact numbers within the next section.

Ensure that senior staff in your organisation are informed that a referral has been made, if they are not already aware, and that any other procedures of your organisation are followed.

Step 4: Confidentiality and follow-up

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, normally to the following people.

- The designated person
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation
- Children's Social Care / Adult Protection Team / Police
- Lead Child Protection Officer for the NGB (if child specific)
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the abuser is a child)*

**The Children's Social Care or Adult Protection Team should always be consulted on who should approach the alleged abuser/s.*

Keep in contact with the designated officer to ensure that your referral has been dealt with and is being investigated. The designated officer should keep you updated on the action they have taken and any outcomes or further involvement required from you.

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ESSENTIAL HELPLINES - SEEKING ADVICE & MAKING REFERRALS

If you are operating in a community sports club you should contact your Club Welfare Officer or National Governing Body Welfare Officer in the first instance; these can be found on the specific sports governing body websites. If working within a local authority leisure centre or facility you should contact the Designated Officer within your facility/location in the first instance before contacting the people listed below. If no-one is available then please use the relevant numbers below:

	Children & Young People	Vulnerable Adults
Telford & Wrekin	<p>Phone: Local Authority Lead Child Protection Officer 01952 382017 Children's Social Care 01952 385700</p> <p>Stay Safe Team 01952 385700 Out of hours 01952 676500</p> <p>Website: Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children's Board www.telfordsafeguardingboard.org.uk</p>	<p>Phone: Telford & Wrekin Adult Protection Team 01952 385680 Out of hours contact: 01952 676500</p> <p>Website: Telford & Wrekin Adult Protection www.telford.gov.uk search for Vulnerable Adults</p>
Shropshire	<p>Sports Development: Designated Officer 01743 255085</p> <p>Leisure Centres: Designated Officer - North 01691 659349 Designated Officer - Central 01743 281570 Designated Officer - South 01746 713193</p> <p>Outdoor Recreation: Designated Officer 01743 255914</p> <p>General contacts: Stay Safe Team 03456 789008 Out of hours 03456 789040</p> <p>Website: Shropshire Safeguarding Children's Board www.shropshire.gov.uk/childprotection.nsf</p>	<p>Phone: Shropshire Adult Protection Team 0345 6789005</p> <p>Website: Shropshire Adult Protection www.shropshire.gov.uk search for Adult Protection in Shropshire</p>
Other useful contacts &	Police Public Protection Unit	

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websites	Emergency Police Contact (24 hours)	08457 444888
	NSPCC Child Protection Helpline www.nspcc.org.uk	0800 800 500
	ChildLine Helpline www.childline.org.uk	0800 1111
	NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit www.thecpsu.org.uk	0116 234 7200
	Energize Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin County Sports Partnership www.energizestw.org.uk	