Safeguarding and protecting children in athletics GAC policy.

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Policy Objectives

Everyone who takes part in athletics is entitled to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment. Best practice in athletics benefits everyone the sport's governing bodies, coaches and officials, teachers, parents, carers and athletes. Most importantly, it ensures that children who choose to participate in athletics have a safe and fun experience.
Our objective is to build a safer future in athletics for all children under the age of 18 years.

All children are entitled to a duty of care and to be protected from abuse. Abuse can occur anywhere. Athletics is committed to devising, implementing and updating policies and procedures to promote best practice when working with children and to ensure that everyone in the sport understands and accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means taking action to report any concerns about their welfare. It is not the responsibility of athletics to determine whether or not abuse has taken place, this is the domain of the child protection professionals.

Policy Statement

In line with UK Athletics Limited, England Athletics Limited, Welsh Athletics Limited, Scottish Athletics Limited and Athletics Northern Ireland, GAC 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 club is also governed by of the Prevention of Discrimination (Guernsey) Ordinance, 2022, which prevents discrimination on the basis of disability, race, carer status, sexual orientation, religion or belief. The club will continue to ensure it is run in accordance with the rules and regulations set out in the 2022 Ordinance to ensure it remains a welcoming and open community, free from discrimination.

• 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 in athletics understand and accept their responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

In order to meet this obligation GAC 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 are able to participate in a safe and fun environment.

• Respect and uphold the rights, wishes and feelings of children.

• Recruit, train and supervise their employees and volunteers to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect young people from abuse, and themselves from false allegations.

• Require staff/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.

EQUALITY

GAC endorse the principle of equality and will strive to ensure that everyone who wishes to be involved in athletics (in all its disciplines and forms):

• 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 or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, religion, race, socio-economic status or sexual orientation

• can be assured 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.

Safeguarding

The Islands Safeguarding Children Partnership (ISCP), Child Protection Guidelines are to be followed by all people in Guernsey and Alderney who come into contact with children, through their work, whether they are paid or unpaid.

These guidelines are available on: http://iscp.gg

This policy gives information for all staff/volunteers on what action to take when there is knowledge or suspicion that a child may be at risk of harm through abuse or neglect and includes

- Role and responsibilities
- Best Practice/poor practice
- Recognising abuse
- Making a referral
- Flowchart

Roles and Responsibilities

All coaches/volunteers who come into contact with children through their work, whether they are paid or unpaid, need to be able to identify when a child's welfare or safety may be compromised.

Most parents/carers may experience difficulties from time to time, for a whole range of reasons. There are times when difficulties may significantly impact on the welfare of their children. It is vital that coaches/volunteers should have the ability to recognise when a child is in difficulties, and know when and how to refer the family to appropriately trained individuals. Coaches who have concerns but are unsure of how to deal with them should discuss these with the club welfare officer. Alternatively, advice is available from the MASH (Multi Agency Support Hub) social worker who is available from Monday to Friday, 8.45am to 5pm on 723182. If the situation is urgent outside of these hours, the Emergency Duty Social Worker can be contacted on 725241. If you think a child might be in immediate danger, please call the Police on 999. Contact the club welfare officer at the earliest opportunity so they can support you with your concerns.

Best Practice, Poor Practice and Abuse

To provide everybody with the best possible experience and opportunities in athletics it is important that everyone operates within an accepted ethical framework and demonstrates exemplary behaviour.

This section will help you identify what is meant by best and poor practice and some of the indications of possible abuse. Guidance on what to do if you are concerned about poor practice or possible abuse is provided in the final section.

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 and never sharing a room on your own with a child,

• 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.

• A coach taking a group of children away to a weekend event on his/her own.

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 appears to be sexually aroused by your actions

• If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Recognising Abuse

There are 4 main categories of abuse but these often overlap, with the abused child suffering more than one type. These are:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Neglect
- Emotional

It must be noted that, whilst indicators are frequently found in instances of child abuse, they are not proof that abuse has occurred. Conversely, the absence of such indicators does not mean that abuse has not occurred. Some indicators are highly suggestive of abuse, others less so. No list of indicators can be complete, and it is important in every case to consider the child's experience of living in his/her family and the other things that are happening in his/her life. If a child has suffered one kind of abuse, the likelihood of suffering another kind is increased.

Indicators

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, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Sexual Abuse – involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including sexual exploitation, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. vaginal, anal or oral sex) or non- penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in a sexually inappropriate ways.

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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. 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).
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

Emotional – 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 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 over protection 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 causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse in involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Abuse may occur in a family or an institutional or community setting. The perpetrator may or may not be known to the child.

Please refer to NICE guideline CG89, entitled '**When to suspect child mistreatment**'. To access the online version of this go to:
www.nice.org.uk/CG89

RECORDING A CONCERN •

Make a note of what the child or young person has said using his or her own words as soon as practicable. If the information is from someone else or an organization, note full details and obtain contact information from them. If you do not have immediate access to the Submit a Safeguarding Concern tab, make notes and write down the following detail:

• The child's name and date of birth (if known)
• How the report was made (in person, second hand by someone else, observation)
• Where and when the report was made (date/time/location)
• Use the child's own words – do not try to edit or make it sound polite or less concerning
• What the nature of the concern is
• Description of any visible injuries or behaviours (do not examine the child)
• Details of any witnesses
• What the child's view is – bear in mind the abuse may be something the child is not conscious of; it could be normal to them

Making a Referral Due to a Child Protection Concern

The ISCP have produced a leaflet 'What should I do when I am concerned about a child?' Online information is available on: http://iscp.gg

If you believe that a child is at immediate risk of harm you should phone the police on 999. If you worried that a child has suffered or is about to suffer from serious harm you need to discuss this with the club welfare officer they will decide if we need to make a referral to the MASH during office hours on telephone number 723182, outside of office hours telephone the Emergency Duty Social Worker on telephone 725241.

If you are concerned but unsure of whether a child is at risk of suffering from serious harm, discuss your worries with the club welfare officer. You can also seek advice from the MASH team or the Emergency Duty Social Worker if they are not available. Your concerns should be recorded.

