

<b>POLICY STATEMENT</b>
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## ***CHILD PROTECTION***

The safety of all children is central to Barrow Borough Sports Council. It is the responsibility of Barrow Borough Sports Council to ensure that coaches, staff, members and volunteers are properly prepared to enable them to respond appropriately to any situation where a child may be at risk. We have a duty to pass on any concerns for the protection of children to the correct authority.

# CHILD PROTECTION GUIDANCE NOTES FOR BARROW BOROUGH SPORTS COUNCIL

## INTRODUCTION

"Child Abuse" is an emotive and disturbing subject for those who care for the well-being of young children. However, it is a reality and consequently people whose work brings them into regular contact with children need information and practical guidance to ensure that they are able to recognise possible signs of abuse and deal appropriately with their concerns.

It is hoped that this booklet will provide information which will enable staff to take appropriate action to safeguard the interests of the children with whom they are working.

It should be stressed that this is only an introduction to the subject and should not be viewed as a substitute for more detailed appropriate training.

This information should be read by all members, helpers and volunteers, as well as Managers and Management Committees.

### 1. What is Child Abuse?

The term "Child Abuse" covers a wide range of ill treatment of children from neglect, failure to provide care, rejection and persistent severe disciplining to acts of violence or sexual exploitation. Abuse may be committed by a range of people with a range of motives and can occur in any sector of society. In many cases it is committed by parents who were themselves abused or who are disturbed, under strain and unable to obtain the help they need. In other situations it can be committed in a wilful and deliberate way, sometimes by organised groups of people such as paedophiles. Child abuse always involves a hurt child and, unless corrected, may produce a damaged child who will carry the effects throughout their life. Child abuse can occur to a child of any age. However the under fives are

especially vulnerable and are the age group most likely to be permanently or fatally injured.

Child abuse can be broadly divided into four main categories although it must be remembered that each child's situation may fall into more than one category.

### **Physical Injury**

This includes any inflicted physical injury, from minor bruising and marks to beatings which may be life threatening including broken limbs and head injuries. The deliberate failure to prevent injury or suffering and a rare condition (Munchausen Syndrome by proxy), where a parent/carer deliberately poisons, suffocates or causes physical symptoms in a child to mimic a real illness to gain attention from medical personnel, come into this category.

### **Sexual Abuse**

This involves the sexual exploitation of children or adolescents. The abuser could be a parent/carer or any adult with whom the child is in contact. The term includes rape, intercourse, buggery, oral sex, fondling, mutual masturbation and involvement of children in pornographic activity or child prostitution.

Sexual curiosity in play involving children of the same age is recognised by professionals in childcare as part of the normal process of development. However, where a child's imaginative play has strong sexual emphasis and reveals knowledge that is inappropriate to the child's years, then abuse should be suspected.

### **Neglect and Failure to Thrive**

This involves the neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from danger, including cold and starvation. It includes failure to give a child the care that is needed for them to grow and develop and sustain good health such as an adequate diet and warm clothing.

In assessing whether a child is being neglected we have to bear in mind that within our society there are many cultural differences and attitudes towards childcare. We must be careful to respect individual differences and not to judge everyone by our own standards. However, if a child is suffering harm in any form then abuse is occurring.

### **Emotional Abuse**

This includes the failure to provide the love and support that a child needs to grow in self-esteem and develop a sense of self-worth. Where children are denied emotional and physical affection their development will be impaired.

Emotional abuse may take a number of forms – for example, a parent who is unable to hold or cuddle a baby or a parent who subjects a child to persistent ridicule or criticism. All forms of physical and sexual abuse contain a strong element of emotional ill treatment.

## **2. Child Protection in Cumbria**

The Child Protection system in Cumbria is administered by the Social Services Department on behalf of the Cumbria Child Protection Committee. This Committee has representatives from a variety of professions including Health Visitors, Doctors, Social Workers, Police, Probation and Education Department personnel who work together to prevent and deal with incidents of abuse.

The Committee has produced a set of procedures in the form of a handbook called the Child Protection Handbook. This defines the duties and responsibilities of all relevant people with respect to child abuse, as well as describing the process of how investigations should take place.

The handbook also describes procedures relating to the Child Protection Register and organisation of Case Conferences. Section E, Paragraph 12 describes the action which should be taken by workers in voluntary organisations. The handbook also

states that the child is the primary client, not the parent. The necessity to secure the safety and welfare of the child takes precedence over issues of confidentiality.

Whilst the above advice is clear, it is likely that coaches, staff or members will have a number of questions in their minds regarding the detail of how to respond in such situations. Because all situations are unique it is impossible to give hard and fast guidelines about how to act in each individual case. However, the next section will attempt to give some practical guidance to supplement the above paragraph.

### 3. **Further Guidance for Action**

#### **General Concerns about a Child**

In many situations doubts and suspicions regarding the abuse of a child grow gradually, - with an accurate picture only developing over a period of time. It is therefore important to be vigilant when suspicions are aroused. If you have concerns but are not sure whether a child abuse referral should be made, it is important that you know you can ring Cumbria Social Services for advice. You may be concerned that this will lead to heavy-handed action but this is unlikely to be the case. However, it may be that in reporting your concern, Cumbria Social Services will link this with similar concerns reported by other people who know the child, and act accordingly.

When a child is seen with any injury it is appropriate to make general enquires regarding the cause of the injury and to consider the plausibility of the explanation and whether it is appropriate to the child's age. If a child makes an allegation of abuse the child should be listened to carefully and sensitively. A careful record (dated and signed) should be made of what the child is saying. It is particularly important, however, that detailed questions are not asked by staff, but that the matter be referred to Social Services immediately.

Similarly, where a child reports that they have been sexually abused they should be listened to carefully and a record made as outlined above. Again, no attempt should be made to discuss

the matter further or question the parent/carer or the child, as this may prejudice subsequent enquiries. It is also very important that a child making an allegation of sexual abuse is not asked to repeat the allegation other than to Police/Social Services, nor should you attempt to gain detail or establish the truth or otherwise of the allegation.

Any allegation by a child that he/she has been abused should be taken very seriously even if the child later denies it or claims to have made up their original allegation. Children who have been abused have often been threatened about the consequences of reporting the abuse and they are often frightened and may want to take back what they have said.

### **Making a Referral to Cumbria Social Services**

If you are unsure about whether to refer, the best policy is to ring and discuss your concerns. Before you make the telephone call it is important to have all the notes and information available to hand. When you telephone Social Services you will initially be answered by the Customer Services Adviser. It is important to make it clear at this point that you wish to discuss a suspected child abuse case. You will then be put through to a duty Social Worker in the Children and Families Team that covers the geographical area in which the child lives. This person will take all the details and will be able to discuss with you any concerns you have about your immediate course of action with respect to the child. For example if the child's parent is due to collect them shortly you need to be clear about how to act.

Be sure to take the name of the person who you speak to. The Social Worker's first job will be to make a number of enquiries such as obtaining information from other professionals who are involved with the child's welfare. In terms of action, the response time will vary depending on the situation. You can expect to be kept informed. If this does not happen do not be afraid to phone back.

## **Informing the Parent/Carer**

When you have made a decision that you need to make a referral to Cumbria Social Services a major concern will be whether or not you should be telling the parent/carers at this stage. You can discuss this matter with the duty Social Worker who will be able to advise. The welfare of the child must be uppermost in your mind and a decision must be made according to the individual circumstances. You must take into account such factors as the severity of the suspected abuse and your relationship with the parents.

Whatever you decide the issue of talking to the parents about the action you have taken will not be easy. It cannot however be avoided and given that in many situations you will need to have an ongoing relationship with the parent, it is important for everyone especially the child involved, that it is dealt with as carefully as possible. Sometimes it helps if you tell the parent that the matter has had to be taken further because all injuries or concerns regarding young children are taken seriously as a matter of routine. You can also explain that you are working according to guidelines laid down for you by the Child Protection Committee

## **Looking After Yourself**

It must be stated that dealing with a child protection referral is very stressful and that you must not underestimate the level of personal strain and distress that it may cause you. It is important from the outset to establish support for yourself. Hopefully your immediate colleagues within your club will provide mutual support.

Always hold in mind that the action which you have taken has been for the welfare of the child and that the outcome will be the result of a carefully considered discussion involving all the professional people who have worked with the child.

## **What Happens Next**

Once you have given your information to Cumbria Social Services Department it is likely that you will not be required to take any further action. However, you may wish to read this next section in order to have some understanding of how things can develop.

The referral to Cumbria Social Services Department will lead to an investigation under Section 47 of the Children Act, which can result in a number of outcomes.

In the vast majority of cases the investigation will continue while the child remains at home and the co-operation of the parents is enlisted to ensure that when necessary the child's future safety and welfare are improved. In rare situations where the child is in immediate risk of harm, the Social Services Department may seek an Emergency Protection Order and remove the child to a safe place such as a foster home.

Some investigations lead to a Case Conference, which is a meeting of relevant professional people who share information about the child. Following such a conference a number of things could happen. One may be that legal proceedings are taken; another may be that parents require Social Worker support to provide adequately for the child and additional services may be arranged. In these situations a Social worker will be allocated who will be responsible for co-ordinating the services provided and a "Keyworker" will be named. Another outcome could be that the child is placed on the Child Protection Register. In these and other circumstances further Child Protection Case Conferences will take place at intervals to review the situation. In the rare circumstance where legal proceedings are taken, the Court may appoint an independent person to represent the child's interests. This person is called a Guardian Ad Litem and will interview all people who have relevant information that may help to make the right decision for the child's future.

### **Allegations of Abuse made against Staff**

Allegations are, on rare occasions, made against staff concerning ill treatment or abuse of children. It is important to understand that these would be investigated by the Social Services Department under the guidance of the Child Protection Procedures.

### **Conclusion**

Very young children are vulnerable. They rely on families for nourishment, comfort, safety, love and protection. All people who work with children have an essential role to play in identifying and handling appropriately, concerns regarding abuse. Taking appropriate action can be instrumental in transforming a potentially damaging situation into a more secure and positive future for the child.

# CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

## ***Children's rights.....***

Every child has a right to be loved and cared for, and to be safe and well, to be offered a good standard of education, to be protected from exploitation and to have opportunities for rest and play. (UN Convention Rights of the Child 1991)

## ***Parents' responsibilities.....***

Being a parent, in whatever circumstances, can be hard work as well as very rewarding. It is the responsibility of each parent to ensure that their child is safe, and that their needs are met. Barrow Borough Sports Council encourages the strengths of parents and promotes their emotional well-being to the ultimate benefit of their children.

## ***Barrow Borough Sports Council's policy.....***

Barrow Borough Sports Council believe that the safety and welfare of children is paramount; it is the responsibility of the organisation to ensure that coaches, staff, members and volunteers are properly prepared to enable them to respond appropriately to any situation where a child may be at risk. We have a duty to pass on any concerns for the protection of children to the correct authority.

## ***Staff and members' responsibilities.....***

- To be familiar with the Child Protection guidelines
- To attend training sessions about Child Protection
- To be clear that the welfare of the child must always take priority
- To have a responsibility to be vigilant and sensitive and to prioritise the protection of children
- To be aware of this policy and the procedures which ensure child protection
- To be familiar with relevant guidance literature such as the Cumbria Child Protection Handbook, or "Safe from Harm" (Code of

Practice for Safeguarding the Welfare of Children in Voluntary Organisations in England and Wales, 1993, The Home Office)

- To be familiar with your own relevant National Governing Bodies' guidelines

### ***Recruitment of Paid Staff and Volunteers .....***

- In order to ensure the health, welfare and safety of vulnerable adults and young people, staff and volunteers must be **COMPETENT** to do the job, and **SUITABLE**  
    **COMPETENCE** – may be a pre-requisite for the position and evidence of relevant experience, training and/or qualifications may be required. If not a pre-requisite, competence may be gained by relevant training.  
    **SUITABILITY** – checks (CRB disclosures, etc.) will be made on applicants who apply to work with and who will have regular access to vulnerable adults and young people

### ***Guidelines and Procedures.....***

- Any Barrow Borough Sports Council member who has concerns about the welfare of a child should immediately contact Chris Athersmith, who will then be responsible for taking appropriate action to inform those who will take steps to protect the child.
- In the absence of Chris Athersmith, the Social Services department, (01229 894860), should be contacted.  
    The Social Services Department has statutory responsibility for the protection of children. Under the Children Act 1989 the Local Authority has a **duty to investigate** when the Authority has 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area, is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.'  
    **Abuse** is defined as 'an act, or failure to act, by the person responsible for the care of the child. It may involve cruelty, exploitation, or neglect.'  
    It may take the form of **physical injury** – actual or likely, **neglect** – failure to protect a child from any kind of exposure to danger of any kind, **sexual abuse** – actual or likely sexual exploitation, and **emotional abuse** – emotional ill-treatment

or rejection. All abuse involves an element of emotional ill-treatment.

- Barrow Borough Sports Council staff and members should be clear that it is **not** their responsibility to investigate any allegation.
- Staff and members should ensure that a record is made of the factors which have given them cause for concern. A suggested format is attached.
- It is essential that all records are kept securely and are confidential.

### ***Do's and Don'ts when responding to the young person.....***

#### **Do**

- Believe what you are being told and acknowledge this
- Recognise how difficult this situation may be for the child and say so
- Reassure the young person that what has happened is not their fault and you are pleased they shared it with you
- Explain that abuse happens to many other people – not to minimise, but to reassure
- Remember the abuser is responsible
- Any body language of yours that expresses distaste may have to be explained to the young person
- Explain who you have to tell and why
- Involve a witness if possible
- If at all possible, you should consult with the parents of the young person, making them aware of your intentions to contact Social Services. However, your responsibility to the child is paramount and their well-being will always be your first concern

#### **Do Not**

- Agree to keep secrets
- Make promises you cannot keep

- Interrogate the young person with lots of questions – obtain the facts, which should be observable and not include speculation, interpretations or recommendations
- Doubt what is being said – it has probably taken a great deal of courage to speak out
- Make the young person feel responsible by inappropriate verbal and non-verbal responses
- Panic – listen to the child, then contact the designated person
- Make an individual decision not to refer

### ***NSPCC Helpline***

The NSPCC provides a free 24 hour child protection helpline, staffed by experienced social work counsellors, which provides confidential counselling, information and advice. The telephone number is 0800 800 500. If using the service, please state at the onset that you are an adult seeking advice and information so that your call can be directed to an appropriate person.

## CHILD PROTECTION RECORD SHEET

### **FACTS:**

Name of child:.....

Date of birth:.....

Parent's/carers details:.....

Child's address:.....

Relevant phone numbers:.....

Date of incident:.....

What is said to have happened or what has been seen:.....

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When this occurred:.....

Who was there at the time:.....

### **EXPLANATIONS:**

What was said by those involved:.....

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What did the child say?:.....

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### **OBSERVATIONS:**

Whether there is any actual evidence e.g. bruising, bleeding, changes in behaviour of child or parent:.....

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### **ACTIONS:**

Who has been told about the incident?:.....

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Whether parents have been advised of the action taken:.....

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