

**HAYWARDS HEATH HARRIERS
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

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HAYWARDS HEATH HARRIERS CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. Introduction

High profile court cases involving the abuse of children by adults able to exert influence over them are featured in the media on a regular basis. This quite rightly results in constant re-evaluation of the relationships between adults and the children in their care.

Sport provides an arena for young people not only to advance their physical skills but also to develop both socially and emotionally but is regrettably not exempt from accusations of abuse and the Club must ensure that sufficient safeguards are in place.

Parents and young people place a great deal of trust in the Club, its officials and helpers and that trust is well founded. However it is important that young people and their parents can be assured that the Club is providing a safe, wholesome and developmental environment. They also have a right to be reassured that the Club has a procedure in place to ensure that any failures of the system are managed in the child's interest. It is with this in mind that the Club, its Management Committee and Coaching staff fully endorse the policy and procedures that follow.

2. Policy Statement

All children and young people irrespective of their age, maturity, attitude, culture, gender, language, racial origin or religious belief have a right to protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation. The Club, recognising that wrongful accusations can do much harm, will fairly, impartially, discretely and confidentially investigate any suspicion or actual allegation that abuse, neglect or exploitation is or has been undertaken by any person associated with the Club. The Club will also fully co-operate with a young person's home, school, community and other statutory bodies to ensure the welfare of our young athletes.

3. Child Protection Officer

3.1 Appointment

Haywards Heath Harriers has a Child Protection Officer who is appointed by the Committee. The Child Protection Officer will only be appointed following an appropriate police check. If the post becomes vacant and a suitable volunteer is not forthcoming, the Management Committee will appoint one of its own members to the post no later than three committee meetings from the vacancy occurring.

3.2 Duties

- a) The Child Protection Officer will be responsible for maintaining this policy and implementing any future amendments within the club.
- b) When required, assimilate any written guidance that may be provided by other agencies, e.g. Social Services, Athletics Governing Bodies, into this policy or procedure.
- c) Attend training courses, seminars and other functions as necessary to improve expertise.
- d) Maintain the Club's record of volunteers/coaches/officials. (see Appendix A)

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- e) Receive and advise on reports of, or suspicions of abuse from any source, in particular the Club's young athletes and junior members, their parents or other club members, (the term club member in this instance is used in the widest possible context encompassing any person whether an actual club member or not who participates in any activity organised by the club).
- f) To initiate action where appropriate including if necessary the involvement of qualified professionals.
- g) Maintain the security of any confidential information received giving access to other agencies as necessary e.g. Social Services, Police.

3.3 Guidance

Guidance for the Child Protection Officer is contained in Appendix B.

4. Advice

- a) A code of practice for those within the Club working with young people is contained in Appendix C.
- b) Advice for our young people on how to avoid misconduct by others and what to do about it is given in Appendix D.

5. The Club's Responsibilities

The Club has responsibilities to both young people and the adults working with them. These are to:

- a) Appoint a Child Protection Officer if necessary should a vacancy occur as outlined in paragraph 3.1
- b) Support the Child Protection Officer in attending any local or regional course organised by sports governing bodies or others on the practical implementation of this policy and any other aspect of his / her duties.
- c) Respond to any concerns having recognised that all Club officials, the Management Committee and all other adult members are responsible for the welfare of our young people and those working with them.
- d) Exercise the highest degree of discretion and confidentiality for both the person(s) making an accusation and the person(s) against whom the allegations are made.
- e) Recognise that it is the Club's duty to refer any concerns to parents, social services or police as appropriate.

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- f) Refuse help from someone who has been convicted of abuse, and require that all volunteers, coaches and officials complete the form contained in Appendix A. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children (reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999).
- g) Have a process at Management Committee level including an appeals procedure to deal with complaints concerning poor athletic practice as distinct from alleged abuse.
- h) Give every assistance to and encourage volunteers to obtain recognised coaching qualifications.
- i) Ensure that adequate insurance including that for all coaches / volunteers is held by the Club or other sports body to which the Club is affiliated.

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Appendix A

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

Sport in general and this Club in particular is conscious of the very valuable part played by volunteers. We are delighted to have the offer of your help. We ask you to complete this form so that we are best able to use your experience and help.

SURNAME

FORENAMES

ADDRESS

.....

.....

POST CODE TELEPHONE DAY

EVENING

SPORT QUALIFICATIONS/COURSES ATTENDED/PASSED

.....

.....

.....

EXPERIENCE

Those who help a club often have experience in their work, recreational pursuits, studies and other sports which could be of great help to the Club. We would be grateful if you could list any which may assist the Club.

.....

.....

**I AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE RULES OF SPORT GOVERNING BODIES AND THIS CLUB, AND
CONFIRM THAT I HAVE NEVER BEEN CONVICTED OR COME TO THE NOTICE OF THE
POLICE FOR ANY OFFENCE AGAINST A PERSON UNDER THE AGE OF 18.**

Signed Date

For Club Use

Date of Police check:

Result:

Date letter of acceptance/decline sent:

Head Coach/Chairman signature:

September 2004

1. Introduction

There are a number of ways that you may become aware that all is perhaps not as it should be. A child may tell you, a third party may report on suspicions or actual incidents, or, you may have seen an incident or have strong suspicions yourself. When you receive reports or suspicions of possible misconduct, a decision will be made as to whether or not it is justified, and if so, whether it relates to poor athletic practice or more seriously to abuse. Arriving at the final decision is not always easy or straightforward and what follows is offered as guidance to help reach that conclusion.

2. Definitions

2.1 Children/Young People

The Children Act of 1989 defines a child as being a person under the age of 18 years. When reading this policy the ages of children, child, young people or young person have not been used in their strictest sense, but each is used to define anyone under the age of 18 years.

2.2 Abuse

Abuse which is caused not only by those who actually perpetrate it, but also by those who fail to prevent, condone, minimise or tolerate it comes in many guises:

- a) Physical - caused when adults or other children deliberately inflict injury on a child or knowingly fail to prevent such injury. This category includes supplying children with alcohol or inappropriate drugs, and can arise when the nature and intensity of training exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.
- b) Emotional - caused when adults fail to show due care and attention, or threaten, use sarcasm, taunt or shout at a child causing him/her to lose self-esteem, self confidence and to become nervous and withdrawn. This type of abuse may also occur when an adult repeatedly ignores or fails to respond to a child's efforts or places the child under unrealistic pressure to perform up to the adult's high expectations.
- c) Neglect - arises when adults fail to meet a child's essential needs for clothing, warmth, food, shelter and medical care. This category also includes leaving a child without proper supervision or in circumstances which places the child at risk of injury, (It is important that the Club does not ask our volunteer adults to undertake tasks that are unsafe).
- d) Trust - Where young people are indoctrinated with attitudes towards drugs, training, cheating, or social, political and religious views which are unacceptable to the young athletes family, community, this Club or the rules of sport.

- e) Sexual - Occurs when adults of either sex use children to fulfil their own sexual needs. It also includes suggestions that sexual favours can help a career or refusal hinder it.

3. Identification of Abuse

Dealing with child abuse is rarely straightforward. In some cases a child's disturbed behaviour or an injury may suggest that a problem might exist. In many situations however, the signs may not be clear cut and decisions will need to be carefully considered.

- a) the appearance of obvious bruising, or a youngster showing signs of distress is often the first indicator that something is amiss, but frequently victims of abuse become skilled in hiding such signs and consequently their suffering becomes less apparent.
- b) uncharacteristic changes in the child's behaviour, attitude or commitment, inappropriate need of the child for closeness and attachment to his/her coach or other adult may all suggest some problem.
- c) fear of particular adults, especially someone with whom a close relationship would normally be expected, or, an unexplained request to change coach or helper or track side gossip may all lead to some concern.
- d) children who become increasingly unkempt, are reluctant to return home, or who are always alone and unaccompanied and/or prevented from socialising with their peers also need to be considered.
- e) when ill treatment seems nothing to do with the Club, exceptional care must be exercised about voicing allegations and advice should be sought.

It must never be assumed that the presence of one or more of the above is actually proof that abuse is taking place. Each at best is only an indicator that all may not be well, but it can provide the kick start needed to initiate discrete and tactful probing by the Child Protection Officer. Similarly, no outward signs may be present, yet the experienced Child Protection Officer may feel that something is wrong.

4. Dealing with Complaints

This advice applies to any adult placed in the situation where a child comes to them, not just the Child Protection Officer.

- a) Listen to what the child is saying and show that he or she is being taken seriously.
- b) Reassure the child he or she is not to blame. Make it clear that you realise how difficult it must be to confide.
- c) Communicate at the child's pace, do not place undue pressure on the child to rush.

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Appendix B

- d) Ideally, this first contact with the child should be on a one to one basis. The presence of other adults can cloud the issue should discrepancies arise if and when formal statements are required.
- e) Keep questions to a minimum. Use open ended questions which elicit more than a yes or no answer. For example, ask "what have you done since breakfast this morning" rather than "did you go out tonight".
- f) On no account must you lead the child. The law is very strict and should the final outcome be a court appearance, if the child appears to have been led, or words or ideas suggested to him or her, the case could end up being dismissed.
- g) Ensure that you clearly understand what the child has said. If at all possible make notes as the conversation proceeds or as soon as practicable after, as memory cannot always be relied on.
- h) Explain to the child what steps you intend to take having heard their account.
- i) Stay calm, do not rush into inappropriate action.
- j) If you feel that talking a problem through will help or need advice the NSPCC free phone help line is 0800 800 500. You do not have to identify either yourself or the Club, and the service operates 24 hours per day, 365 days of the year.
- k) Produce a report as soon after the conversation as is practicable. The report should include:
 - 1) Child's name, address and date of birth.
 - 2) Date, time and nature of the incident.
 - 3) The child's own account of what happened.
 - 4) Your observations on the behaviour and emotional state of the child along with any obvious injuries.
 - 5) An account of any actions you undertook and comments/advice made to the child. State whether or not the parents/carers have been informed at that stage. (See section 5a before making any approach to the parents/carers)
 - 6) A statement as to whether or not concerns expressed in the report are your own or those of a third party.

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Appendix B

- 7) Signature, date and your contact details.
- 8) Do not:
 - a) Ignore what has been disclosed.
 - b) Make promises you cannot keep.
 - c) Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily.
 - d) Delay.
 - e) Take sole responsibility for further action.

If the report has been produced by an adult other than the Child Protection Officer, then it must be passed to the Child Protection Officer for further action. Only when an unacceptable delay will arise for example when the Child Protection Officer is on holiday should another suitably trained member of the Club initiate subsequent action.

5. When it appears Abuse has taken place.

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

- a) Parents / carers should be informed to clarify initial concerns. This must be undertaken carefully as it may transpire that some personal concern of the young person e.g. the bereavement of a close family member has caused the unhappiness. However, in circumstances where a child may be placed at a greater risk if such concerns are shared with the parents / carers, they should not be informed.
- b) Social Services and / or the Police should be contacted immediately. Social Services are located at Bognor Regis Health Centre, West Street, Bognor Regis, telephone 01243 852700 and the Police have a Child Protection Team based at Haywards Heath Police Station, telephone 0845 607 0999 or Sussex Police at Lewes on 01273 475432.
When making such a call make a note of what was said by both the official contacted and yourself and their name and designation should it become necessary to make further contact in the future.
- c) At the conclusion of the case you should take any appropriate action in regard to informing the Club Secretary or Chairman and the sport's governing body.

6. When it appears poor athletic practice has taken place:

- a) You should refer the matter immediately to the Club Secretary or Chairman for consideration if appropriate by the Club's Management Committee.
- b) Should you not be able to resolve the matter satisfactorily within the Club, the regional association should be informed.

7. Allegations of Previous Abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child by a member of the Club who is still currently working with children). Where such an allegation is made, the Club should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside sport, may be at risk from this person.

8. Bullying

The same procedure relating to suspicions or allegations should be followed if bullying is suspected. All settings in which children are provided with services or are living away from home should have rigorously enforced anti-bullying strategies in place.

9. Action to Help the Victim and Prevent Bullying in Sport:

- a) Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- b) Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately).
- c) Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately, and take action to ensure the victim is safe.
- d) Talk to the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- e) Inform the bully's parents and impose sanctions as necessary.

**HAYWARDS HEATH HARRIERS
CODE OF PRACTICE FOR CLUB OFFICIALS,
COACHES & VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

Appendix C

The advice contained in this Code of Practice is designed to give the Club's adult members as much protection against allegations / suspicions of abuse as possible. The Club's Management Committee therefore expect that all adults within the Club will adhere to these Codes to ensure the best possible outcomes and success for both young people and those working with them.

1. Respect the rights, dignity and worth of everybody and treat them with equality.
2. Place the well being and safety of the performer of any age above the development of performance. Guidelines and training manuals issued by the sport should be followed.
3. Always be publicly open when working with young people. Avoid situations where one adult and a single child are completely unobserved.
4. If physical contact is necessary for example to demonstrate a particular facet of technique, then it should be done openly. Coaches and volunteers should be aware that parents in general are becoming increasingly sensitive about other adults touching their children.
5. If possible, parents should be asked to supervise their own children in changing rooms. Where this is not possible, the ideal is for adults to work in pairs with their gender appropriate for the group being supervised.
6. When mixed teams compete away from home, for example at "The English Schools", they should always be accompanied by at least one male and one female supervisor.
7. Coaches and volunteers should ensure that the activities which they are directing / advocating / participating in are appropriate to the age, maturity and ability of the performer. Observe any rules set out in the sport's current rule book.
8. Volunteers without a coaching qualification, should be seen to be clearly working under the direct supervision of an appropriately qualified person.
9. Always promote the positive aspects of sport, e.g. fair play, and never suggest the use of, or condone, bad sportsmanship, rule violations or drugs.
10. Display high standards of personal behaviour and appearance.
11. Only criticise athletes of any age in a constructive and friendly way. Language and / or actions which may cause young children to lose self esteem or confidence should never be used.
12. In a multi racial/religious/ability society, be aware of the particular needs, customs and cultural requirements of disabled athletes and those from ethnic minorities.

