

# **HARBOROUGH AC**

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

Harborough AC have adopted a child protection policy as detailed below. The Club has adopted the UK Athletics Welfare Policy and Procedures. All our coaches and volunteers have signed up to the policy, are subject to CRB checks and it is the wish of the club that all those working with children under 18 years of age will attend a Child Protection Workshop.

**If you have any concerns regarding an athlete, Katy Kenyon is the first contact. Her phone number is 01858 465542**

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT**

- Harborough AC's aim is to encourage the full participation of all children and young people in our activities. In doing so, our first priority is their welfare and safety from all abuse.
- We will work in partnership – enabling, valuing, listening and responding to the wishes and views of children, young people and parents. We encourage parental involvement in the supervision of training sessions and competition, in all aspects of club activities.
- We want all our young members to feel happy and at ease. We will do all we can to ensure that those taking part in our club activities are safe.
- We have appointed two Child Protection Officers within the club and we have established procedures to ensure the aims of our policy are achieved and maintained. They are : -

David Oram  
**Welfare Officer**  
**01536 712505**

Katy Kenyon  
**Welfare Officer**  
**01858 465542**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The sport of athletics provides a major service for many adults and young people.

Young people can gain much from the sport, not only in advancing their physical skills but also providing many opportunities for social and emotional development. Parents and children place a great deal of trust in the club, its officials and helpers. Overwhelmingly, this trust is well-placed. However, it is important that children 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 procedures in place to ensure

this, as well as managing, in the child's interest, any failures of the system. It is in this very positive spirit that the sport sets out this policy.

1. The policy of the sport of athletics is to promote the welfare of all children and young people and protect them from neglect, exploitation and abuse.
2. Anyone under the age of 18 is a young person. (S)He may be a young child, but there is a wide range of maturity and attitudes; however, all are potentially vulnerable.
3. The child's welfare is paramount and everyone in the sport has the right to protection from abuse whatever their age.
4. All children, irrespective of their age, culture, ability, gender, sexual identity, language, racial origin or religious belief have the right to protection from abuse.
5. Suspicions and allegations need to be investigated and acted upon by people well qualified to do so. Dealing with abuse requires tact, and the ability to communicate and to gather and weigh evidence, as well as knowledge of possible remedies. Wrongful accusations can do much harm.
6. The welfare of young athletes requires that clubs and other athletic bodies work in partnership with the child's home, school and community and, when necessary, make use of and fully cooperate with social services and/or the police.
7. The human rights of officers, coaches, athletes and volunteers facing allegations will be embodied in disciplinary and appeals procedures.

## SCOPE

All people involved in Harborough AC need to respond to four main dimensions of athlete welfare and protection by : -

- Recognising and referring to the appropriate agency anyone who has been subjected to poor practice, abuse or misconduct by someone else, whether inside sport (by another athlete or coach) or outside sport (such as the family or peer group);
- Observing and encouraging good practice when working with athletes in order to avoid perpetrating poor practice, abuse or other types of misconduct;
- Taking precautions to avoid false allegations against themselves;
- Safeguarding the good name and integrity of the sport of athletics.

*The 'golden rule' for all involved in athletics in relation to welfare and protection is that it is not your responsibility to judge whether or not a welfare violation has taken place, but it is your responsibility to act on any concerns you may have.*

# WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Abuse is caused not only by those who actually perpetrate it; but also by those who fail to prevent, condone, minimise or tolerate it.

1. **Physical abuse.** Occasions where adults or other children deliberately inflict injuries on a child or knowingly do not prevent such injuries. This includes giving children alcohol or inappropriate drugs. In athletics, physical abuse might also occur when the nature and intensity of training or competition exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.
2. **Emotional abuse.** When adults fail to show due care and attention or threaten, use sarcasm, taunt or shout at a child causing him or her to lose self-confidence, self-esteem and 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 to the adult's high expectations. Abusive situations may also occur if adults misuse their power over young people.
3. **Neglect.** Where adults fail to meet the child's essential needs for clothing, food, warmth and medical care. This also includes leaving a child without proper supervision or placing the child at risk of injury. Neglect in athletics is the failure to provide adequate help and care to young athletes. As most adults in the sport are volunteers it is important that the club does not require or encourage them to carry out tasks which they cannot carry out safely or for the benefit of all concerned.
4. **Sexual abuse.** Occurs when males or females use children to fulfil their own sexual needs. It also includes suggestions that sexual favours can help, or refusal hinder a career.
5. **Abuse of trust.** Where young people are indoctrinated with attitudes to training, drugs and cheating, or social, political and religious views which are unacceptable to the young athlete's family, community or the rules of the sport.

## 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 may exist. In many situations however, the signs may not be clear-cut and decisions will need to be carefully considered.

1. Where ill-treatment seems nothing to do with the club, those concerned for a youngster's welfare need to be exceptionally careful with their allegations and should seek advice.
2. Sometimes there are obvious bruises, or a youngster shows distress, but often victims learn to hide signs and their suffering is not obvious.

3. Uncharacteristic changes in the child's behaviour, attitude or commitment, inappropriate need by the child for closeness and attachment to coach or other adult may suggest some problem.
4. Fear of particular adults (especially those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected), a wish to switch to another coach or helper without reasonable explanation or track-side gossip may lead to some concern.
5. 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.

This list is far from exhaustive and the presence of one or more is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. Similarly there may not be any signs, yet the experienced adult may just feel that something is wrong.

**It is not the responsibility of those working in athletics to decide that child abuse is occurring but it is a responsibility to refer on any concerns.**

Concerns for abuse should not lead to the breaking of sound relationships which coaches, team managers and other club helpers form with those in their charge. Such relationships often give help which a family or school cannot provide by itself. Such relationships should not be broken lightly, but they must remain within accepted bounds.

## **ROLES**

For effective implementation of a policy, all deliverers of athletics must work in partnership to ensure the safety of children in their care.

### **THE CLUB HAS : -**

Formally adopted this policy and support and strengthened it by : -

1. Appointing two Welfare Officers, one of each gender, and publicising their contact details.
2. Supporting the Welfare Officers in attending any local or regional course organised by athletics or for sporting clubs on the practical implementation of the policy.
3. Accepting that all officers, the committee and all adult members have responsibilities in this area and being prepared to respond to any concerns.
4. Exercising the highest degree of discretion and confidentiality for both the person making any accusation and the person(s) against which allegations have been made.
5. Recognising that it is the club's duty to refer any concerns to parents, social services or police as appropriate.

6. Ensuring that the club needs to know if the would-be helper has been convicted of abuse, and has the right to refuse help from someone who has been so convicted.
7. Having a clear method of dealing, at committee level, with complaints about poor athletic practice as distinct from alleged abuse. This provision should include an appeals procedure.

**THE WELFARE OFFICERS SHALL : -**

1. Introduce and implement the policy within the club.
2. Undertake any training that may be provided and receive any written guidance that may be provided by athletics, sport in general or social services.
3. Provide information to members of the club on this issue, or provide training where appropriate.
4. Ensure that all club volunteers/officials/coaches sign up to the policy and have been CRB-checked.
5. Receive and advise on reports from club members.
6. Initiate action when appropriate. Dealing with complaints of abuse usually requires training and the ability to rise above emotional involvement and revulsion. The involvement of qualified professionals as soon as serious concerns have been identified is important.
7. Keep confidential information on any matters referred and make them available to the governing body, social services or police as necessary.

**Recruitment of New Coaches, Helpers, etc.**

8. Ensure all new applicants for membership of the club as an adult, complete an application form. This is to reduce the risk of an adult gaining access to young people for an improper or sexual relationship.

**THE GOVERNING BODY SHALL : -**

1. Provide support and guidance for Welfare Officers and clubs.
2. Co-operate with other bodies in providing training.
3. Keep a list of qualified persons who have been convicted in a Court of Law of offences against children or young persons.
4. Consider under its normal disciplinary procedures any matters referred to it by clubs or local athletic administrative bodies, under this code concerning athletic bad practice.

5. Monitor the policy and amend it to make it more effective and take account of any changes required by legislation.

## **THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

1. The Club Management Committee may nominate a group responsible for the overseeing of an allegation of abuse, by a member of the club, on another member. This group should consist of at least three persons, not including a Welfare Officer for the club.
2. The group would have the power to permanently exclude any member from the club where sufficient evidence is available to support such exclusion.
3. The committee could insist on further coach education being attended by the person responsible, where it is shown that the incident occurred due to inappropriate training methods.
4. The safety of the child is paramount. The Committee have the responsibility to ensure good practice is used in all aspects of the club.
5. The Committee will ensure that all details of persons convicted of sexual offences and child abuse offences are passed to the relevant governing body.
6. The Committee will allow an appeal against exclusion at a time and date designated, within 28 days of the exclusion decision. This appeal can be presented in written form or in person. The relevant governing body will be notified of the result of the appeal.
7. The Committee will ensure that where a report of bad practice or child abuse came to the attention of the club, it will be investigated or referred to the appropriate organisation, eg, the Police.

## **GUIDANCE FOR THE WELFARE OFFICERS.**

When reports of possible misconduct are brought to your attention, a decision must be made as to whether the allegation made is abuse, or relates to poor athletic practice.

### **IF THE ALLEGATION APPEARS TO BE ABUSE : -**

1. Parents/carers should be informed to clarify initial concerns. This must be done carefully and it may be that some personal concerns, e.g. bereavement, has caused this unhappiness. However, in circumstances where a child may be placed at greater risk if such concerns were shared with the parents, they should not be informed.

2. Social services and/or the police should be contacted. Their numbers are in the phone book. In addition, notes of the call and a designation of the official informed should be made in case future contact becomes necessary.
3. If you want advice, or to talk a problem through, telephone the NSPCC free helpline which is 0800 800 500. This operates 24 hours every day. You do not have to give your name or club.
4. At the conclusion of the case the Welfare Officer takes any appropriate action in regard to informing the club or governing body.

#### **IF THE ALLEGATION RELATES TO POOR ATHLETIC PRACTICE.**

1. The Welfare Officer should refer the matter immediately to a special meeting of the appropriate club sub-committee.
2. Should the matter not be resolved satisfactorily within the club the matter should be referred to the regional association.

#### **CODE OF PRACTICE FOR PEOPLE WORKING IN ATHLETICS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN.**

1. These guidelines are designed to ensure the best possible outcomes and success for children and to protect adults working to assist the athletic development of young people in their care.
2. All should respect the rights, dignity and worth of all and treat everyone with equality.
3. All should place the well-being and safety of the performer above the development of performance. They should follow guidelines and training manuals of the sport and ensure that they are adequately insured by the club or otherwise.
4. Always be publicly open when working with young people. Situations where an adult and an individual child are completely unobserved should be avoided.
5. If physical contact is necessary, it should be done openly. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about other adults touching their children and coaches should be aware of this.
6. Where possible, parents should take responsibility for the children in changing rooms. If groups are to be supervised in changing rooms, always ensure that adults work in pairs and that gender is appropriate.
7. Where mixed teams compete away from home they should always be accompanied by at least one male and female adult.
8. Volunteers should hold appropriate qualifications in coaching, leadership, officiating, etc., otherwise they should be clearly working

under the direct supervision of an appropriately qualified person. All volunteers must be actively encouraged to obtain the appropriate qualification.

9. Adults should ensure that the activities which they direct or advocate are appropriate to the age, maturity and ability of the performer. Observance of the sports rules as set out in the current rule book is required.
10. Adults should always promote the positive aspects of their sport, e.g., fair play and never condone rule violations, bad sportsmanship or use of prohibited substances.
11. Adults should consistently display high standards of personal behaviour and appearance.
12. Adults should only criticise athletes constructively and in a friendly fashion. Language or actions which may cause the child to lose self-esteem or confidence should never be used.
13. Adults should be aware of the particular needs, customs and cultural requirements when working with disabled athletes or young people of differing racial or religious backgrounds from the majority of the club community.
14. **All should be aware that in general, it does not make sense to :-**
  - spend amounts of time alone with children away from others;
  - take children alone on car journeys, however short;
  - take children to your home.

If such situations are unavoidable they should only take place with the full knowledge and consent of the parent/carer and the club.

**15. You should never :-**

- Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games;
- share a room with a child;
- permit or engage in any form of inappropriate touching;
- permit children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- make sexually suggestive comments/jokes to a child, even in fun;
- allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, and not recorded or not acted upon;

- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves. However, it may be necessary to do things of a personal nature for children if they are very young or disabled. Such tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/carer;
- agree to meet an athlete on your own;
- encourage over-enthusiastic kisses or embraces.

If you accidentally hurt a child, or cause distress in any manner, or the child appears to respond in a sexual manner to your actions or misinterprets something you have done; report the incident to a colleague supported by a brief written report of the incident as soon as possible. Parents/carers should be informed of the occurrence.

### **DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS.**

An adult may become aware of abuse/poor practice in a number of ways. A child may well tell you, a third party may report incidents or suspicions or you may have seen an incident or have strong suspicions.

#### **DO**

Stay calm, do not rush into inappropriate action.

Reassure the child he or she is not to blame and make it clear that you know how difficult it must be to confide. Communication should be at the child's pace, without pressure.

Listen to what a child is saying and show that you take him/her seriously. Do not bring in any other adults in this stage - any discrepancies in statements may lead to legal problems.

Keep questions to a minimum. Use open-ended questions, i.e., those where more than a 'yes' or 'no' is required. The law is very strict and cases may be dismissed, if it appears a child is being led, or words or ideas suggested.

Explain to the child what steps you intend to take having heard their account. Ensure that you clearly understand what the child has said and record it as soon as possible after the conversation.

Complete an Incident Report Form in all cases.

#### **Your report should include : -**

1. Child's name, address and date of birth.
2. Date, time and nature of incident.
3. Your observations of the behaviour and emotional state of the child and any obvious injuries.
4. The child's own account of what happened.
5. An account of any action you took and comments/advice made to the child. You should state whether parents/carers had been informed.

6. A statement as to whether the report is expressing your own concerns or passing on those of someone else.

Sign and date the report and refer it to a Welfare Officer, so that a decision can be made as to the most appropriate action. Keep a copy and ensure maximum confidentiality is maintained.

### **Do not**

1. Ignore what has been disclosed, or make promises you can't keep;
2. Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily;
3. Delay taking action;
4. Take sole responsibility for further action.

### **ADVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ON HOW TO AVOID MISCONDUCT BY OTHERS IN ATHLETICS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.**

Misconduct is very broadly any form of unacceptable behaviour towards you such as sexual misbehaviour, physical acts, inappropriate remarks, suggestive gestures, showing pictures or other material, or physical violence.

### **HOW CAN I AVOID SUCH MISCONDUCT?**

1. Listen to the advice of your parents.
2. Avoid being left alone with anyone.
3. If you have to leave a group, tell someone where you are going and how long you are likely to be gone.
4. Do not allow anyone to talk to you about something personal concerning yourself or themselves if it has nothing to do with their job or the sport. If they persist, walk away and report it to someone in a senior position.
5. Do not agree to meet anyone in your own time without informing another adult.
6. Do not accept a lift from anyone if you are the only passenger, unless you have informed another adult. Either refuse or insist someone else goes along with you. Do not accept a lift if you feel uncomfortable.
7. Do not become over-familiar towards those who work with you in athletics.
8. Do not walk home alone at night.
9. Be especially wary of parked cars with the engine running.

## **IF MISCONDUCT HAPPENS WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?**

1. Tell that person to stop at once.
2. Tell others who may be present what happened.
3. If they actually saw what happened, remember who they are so that they can be your witnesses.
4. If the misconduct continues, tell that person again to stop at once then leave if you can or shout for help. If you can't, report the matter as soon as possible to another adult or official.
5. Tell your parents as soon as possible.
6. Keep a record of the dates, time and place and what happened; make a list of any witnesses.
7. Ask any witnesses to do the same.
8. If any member of your group or club claim to have suffered the same sort of experience, ask them to make a similar record.
9. Talk to your parents and decide to whom to make a formal complaint. You should at least report it to your club's Welfare Officers.

### **What you should definitely NOT DO**

1. Do not complain if nothing happened.
2. Do not exaggerate if something did happen.
3. Do not ignore behaviour that makes you uncomfortable.
4. Do not keep to yourself what happened.
5. Do not delay before complaining.
6. Do not agree to hush up what happened.
7. Do not be afraid or embarrassed to tell your parents, or friend or the club's Welfare Officers.