

SWANSEA HARRIERS ATHLETICS CLUB



Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Athletics Policy Document

This is the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy of UK Athletics, Welsh Athletics, Scottish Athletics, England Athletics and Northern Ireland Athletics. This policy has been formally adopted by Swansea Harriers Athletics Club.

Introduction

Everyone who takes part in athletics is entitled to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment. To ensure this Athletics in the UK which encompasses UK Athletics Limited, England Athletics Limited, Welsh Athletics Limited, Scottish Athletics Limited and Athletics Northern Ireland is committed to establishing and implementing policies and procedures to ensure a safe athletics environment.

Best practise 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. (In Scotland this extends until the individual's 19th birthday).

All children are entitled to a duty of care and to be protected from abuse. Abuse can occur anywhere. With over 250,000 children involved in athletics in the UK and 100,000 adults involved, the chances are very real that there are some individuals abusing their power over children in athletics.

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

UK Athletics Limited, England Athletics Limited, Welsh Athletics Limited, Scottish Athletics Limited and Athletics Northern Ireland 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 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.

Within Swansea Harriers, the Child Protection and Welfare Officers are:

Lynne Brier

Ian Griffiths

In order to meet this obligation Swansea Harriers will:

- Provide and enforce procedures to safeguard the wellbeing 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 volunteers to adopt best practise to safeguard and protect young people from abuse, and themselves from false allegations.
- Require volunteers to 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 this policy on an annual basis.

A Child is anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means children and young people throughout. The fact a child has reached 16 years of age, living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody, does not change his or her status or entitlement to protection under the Children Act 1989.

Disabled children may be more vulnerable and at greater risk of all forms of abuse. The presence of multiple disabilities increases the risk of both abuse and neglect. Some of the common factors that can lead to increased vulnerability include social isolation, communication and learning difficulties or disability, lack of understanding of boundaries, need for assistance with personal care and more likely target for bullying and abuse. Children with disabilities have the

same rights to protection as any other child and clubs working with these children need to be especially alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse and have strategies in place to ensure all children are able to raise concerns.

Best Practice, Poor Practice and Forms of 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 Section 6.

Best Practice

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.
- 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 fellow club member, 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.

Abuse

Abuse can occur wherever there are children

There are four main types of abuse:

- **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 the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

- **Emotional abuse** 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 in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express his/her views, deliberately silencing him/her or 'making fun' of what he/she say or how he/she communicates. 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 overprotection 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 (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, which especially applies to when a child shares a protected characteristic e.g. racist, sexual or homophobic bullying² or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
- **Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
- **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. 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); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Disabled children are vulnerable to abuse and are at least three times more likely to be abused than non-disabled children. Those working with them must be aware of this and willing to acknowledge their concerns. There can be a tendency to make allowances for families with sick or disabled children. Practitioners may over identify with the child's parents/carers and be reluctant to accept that abuse or neglect is taking or has taken place, or seeing it as being attributable to the stress and difficulties of caring for a disabled child. When suspecting abuse, practitioners should always ask: "Would this be acceptable if the child were not disabled?"

Recruitment, selection and training.

All reasonable steps will be taken at all levels within the sport to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working in athletics, especially with children

Recruitment

Recruitment of all new volunteers within Swansea Harriers will reflect:

- Safeguarding children and welfare policy
- The responsibility of the role
- The level of experience or qualifications required
- A positive stance on all aspects of welfare and safeguarding children

Volunteers / Applicants

All volunteers or applicants who have or are seeking to undertake a voluntary or paid role and responsibility in relation to children (regulated position) in Athletics must complete a criminal record check (enhanced level DBS). In some cases, especially in relation to paid employment within the club, an applicant may expect to be interviewed and produce two written character references.

Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegations

While it is not the responsibility of UKA, the Home Countries governing bodies, volunteers or club members to decide whether a concern constitutes abuse, it is

their responsibility to report any concerns about the welfare of a child. These concerns may arise due to:

- An individual disclosing that they are being abused.
- The behaviour of an adult towards a child.
- A number of indicators observed in a child over a period of time.

Responding to a Disclosure

Don't

- Probe for more information than is offered.
- Speculate or make assumptions.
- Show shock or distaste.
- Make comments about the person against whom the allegations have been made.
- Make promises or agree to keep secrets.
- Give a guarantee of confidentiality.

All suspicions and disclosures must be reported appropriately. It is acknowledged that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases of possible sexual abuse or where there is a misplaced loyalty to a colleague.

Safeguarding Children Club Welfare Officers

To ensure that appropriate action is taken if there is a disclosure, statutory referral from the police, children's services, adult services or suspicions, UKA has trained an employee to act as the designated child protection lead officer (CPLO) and Welsh Athletics has identified staff members with responsibility to act as safeguarding officers. To achieve Clubmark affiliation, clubs are required to train and appoint at least one designated club member to become the Club Welfare Officer (CWO). Within Swansea Harriers the CWOs are:

Lynne Brier

Ian Griffiths

Reporting a Disclosure, Allegation or Concern

Any person with information of a disclosure, allegation or concern about the welfare of a child must immediately report this in one of the following ways.

If you are part of an affiliated club, you should immediately inform the club's designated Club Welfare Officer (CWO) who will refer the matter to UKA's CPLO or Welsh Athletics Child Protection/ Lead Welfare Officer.

In any other situation or if the designated person is not available, if the concern is about that person or no action is taken, you should contact the UKA CPLO or Welsh Athletics Child Protection/ Lead Welfare Officer. Their details can be found on their websites, or by contacting UKA or Welsh Athletics directly.

If the UKA CPLO nominated deputy or Welsh Athletics CPO/ LWO is unavailable, you should take responsibility and seek advice from either Social Services, NSPCC helpline (0808 800 5000) or the local police child protection unit.

Where there is a complaint of abuse against an employee or volunteer there may be three types of investigation:

- Criminal: in which case the police are immediately involved.
- Safeguarding children: in which case the social care services (and possibly the police) will be involved.
- Disciplinary or misconduct: where it relates to coaches and officials UKA will be involved in other matters it will rest with Welsh Athletics.

Civil proceedings may also be initiated by the alleged victim of misconduct or abuse, or his/ her family, or by persons wrongly accused.

Records of investigations should be securely kept in an approved format for up to three years at least.

Dealing with Concerns and Allegations

Club Welfare Officers are not necessarily safeguarding children experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. If there is any doubt about whether or not the alleged behaviour constitutes abuse, the concern must be shared with professional agencies that will be responsible for subsequent action.

Any suspicion that an individual has been abused by a volunteer or employee within athletics will be reported by the Club Welfare Officer to the UKA / Welsh Athletics CPLO, who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the individual in question and any other individual who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- The UKA/ Welsh Athletics CPLO will refer the allegation to the appropriate social care services department who may involve the police or go directly to the police if out of hours.

- The parents of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social care services department.
- The UKA/ Welsh Athletics CPLO will also notify the Chief Executive who will decide who should deal with any media enquiries.
- The UKA/ Welsh Athletics CPLO and/or the Chief Executive can impose an interim suspension based on the risk to the child, an assessment of the seriousness of the allegation and the need to ensure a full investigation can be instituted.
- The UKA/ Welsh Athletics CPLO will also make a full report to a UKA Case Management Panel. Irrespective of the findings of the Children's Social Care (social services) or the Police, UKA will assess all individual cases and determine if the person can be reinstated and how this can be handled sensitively. This decision must be made on the available information, which could suggest on the balance of probability; it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child is paramount.

Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences relating to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children at Swansea Harriers Athletics Club.

Poor Practice

If the allegations are against an employee or volunteer and after consideration are clearly about poor practice, the allegation will be dealt with by the relevant home country (Welsh Athletics), under their disciplinary procedures as a misconduct issue.

Dealing with Bullying

The same procedures should be adopted when dealing with allegations of bullying. For specific actions to prevent and deal with bullying please refer to the separate bullying policy document.

Disciplinary and Appeal Procedures

UKA has a general disciplinary policy and separate policies relating to coaches and officials. England Athletics have their own policy and procedures the other home countries have adopted the UKA policy and procedures as their own. All the documents are contained within the web based manual and easily available on the UKA website under governance/policies.

Records and Confidentiality

Always follow the reporting procedure set out above. Your reports should be factual and include where possible:

- The referrer's and/or the child's name, address and date of birth.
- The date and time of the incident.
- The facts about the allegation or observation.
- Your factual observations e.g. describe the behaviour and emotional state of the alleged victim, and note any marks, bruising or other injuries.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what happened using the exact words if possible.
- Details of any witnesses.
- Any times, dates or other relevant information.
- Any action that was taken as a result of the concerns.
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A copy of this information must be sent to the UKA and / or Welsh Athletics CPLO.

Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

Information will be stored in a secure cabinet in line with data protection laws, with access available only to designated welfare staff.

This policy was formally adopted by the committee of Swansea Harriers in April 2017 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.