

Overton Harriers acknowledge the work of UK Athletics, and SEAA in the preparation of this document

## **INTRODUCTION**

Overton Harriers considers 'children' to be any individual under the age of 18 years. Throughout this document, Overton Harriers may also be referred to as 'the club'.

It is the policy of Overton Harriers to primarily safeguard the welfare of all children who are members of Overton Harriers or children who are invited to participate under the auspices of Overton Harriers. The welfare of children is seen to be to protect them from neglect, and physical, sexual and emotional abuse by members, helpers and others who are working under the auspices of Overton Harriers. This policy aims to make all members, helpers and others who are working under the auspices of Overton Harriers aware of possible child abuse occurring to children who are members of Overton Harriers or children who are invited to participate under the auspices of Overton Harriers outside the setting of the clubs environment.

Secondly, it is the policy of Overton Harriers to safeguard the interests of those adults who volunteer their services to the club to coach or assist children in progressing their athletics career.

## **KEY PRINCIPLES**

Anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child

The child's welfare is paramount

All children, irrespective of their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse

All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately

Working in partnership with children and their parents is essential for the protection of the child

Overton Harriers recognises the role of other institutions and its responsibility to work with other institutions in dealing with cases of possible child abuse, namely Her Majesty's Constabulary, Social Services Departments, UK Athletics, the AAA, the SEAA, and the Hampshire County AA

Overton Harriers recognises the rights of adult members and helpers of the club when dealing with possible cases of child abuse.

## DEFINITIONS

The term child abuse is used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults, and often by those they know and trust.

There are four main types of child abuse, though a child may experience more than one kind at any one time in his/her life.

**Physical abuse** – Occasions when parents, adults or other children deliberately inflict injuries on a child or knowingly do not prevent such injuries. It includes injury caused by hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning, biting, or using excessive force and giving children inappropriate drugs or alcohol, or poison, and attempts to suffocate or drown them. In athletics, physical abuse might also occur when the nature and intensity of training exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.

**Emotional abuse** – Occasions when adults fail to show children due care and attention, or threaten, use sarcasm, taunt or shout at a child, causing him/her to lose self confidence or self esteem and become nervous or withdrawn. These may also occur when an adult repeatedly ignores or fails to respond to a child's efforts or progress, or places the child under unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations constantly. Abusive situations may also occur if adults misuse their power over young people.

**Neglect** – Occasions where adults fail to meet a child's essential needs, such as adequate clothing, food, warmth and medical care. It also includes occasions where an adult leaves a child alone without proper supervision, or does not ensure that the child is safe, or exposes them to undue extremes of temperature, or risk of injury.

**Sexual Abuse** – Occurs when males and females use children to fulfil their own sexual needs. Examples include forcing a child to take part in sexual activity, fondling or exposure to pornographic material. This also includes suggestion that sexual favours can help, or refusal can hinder, a career.

## IDENTIFYING ABUSE

Dealing with child abuse is rarely straightforward. In some cases a child's behaviour, or an injury, may suggest that the child has been abused. In many situations, however, the signs will not be clear cut and decisions about what action to take can be difficult. It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, and the presence of one or more indicators is not proof that abuse is taking place. Similarly, there may not be any signs but you may just feel 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 follow through on any concerns.

## POSSIBLE SIGNS

Uncharacteristic changes in the child's behaviour, attitude and commitment e.g. becoming quiet and withdrawn, or displaying sudden outbursts of temper

Trackside gossip

Bruises and injuries untypical of the sport or injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent

Signs of discomfort and pain

Reluctance to remove a tracksuit or to shower

The child becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt

The child loses weight for no apparent reason

Nervousness is demonstrated when the child is approached or touched

Fear of particular adults – especially those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected

The child wishes to switch to another coach without a reasonable explanation

Inappropriate sexual awareness according to age including language and behaviour

Children who are always alone and unaccompanied and/or are prevented from socialising with other children

Children who are reluctant to go home

Inappropriate need by the child for closeness or attachment to a coach or another adult

## ROLES

In order to implement the policy statement everyone involved in the delivery of athletics must have a role to play. In terms of this statement, there are two key areas that have a definable role. These are as follows:

For effective implementation of this policy all deliverers of athletics must work in partnership, each with a role to ensure the protection of the children in their care.

#### THE ROLE OF THE CLUB

Adopt a Child Protection Policy

Adopt a Code of Conduct for all children and those working with children and young people

To appoint two Child Protection Officers

To accept that all Officers and Committee members have responsibilities in the area of child abuse and be prepared to respond to any indication of abuse

To be ready to amend bad practice

To implement legislative requirements in relation to Child Protection

To consider implementing any recommendations from any regional or national athletics bodies, relating to child abuse

To use discretion in respect of the confidentiality of both the person/s making the accusation and the person/s against whom allegations have been made

#### THE ROLE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

Introduce the Child Protection Policy within the club

To ensure that all club helpers/officials/coaches complete a volunteer application form

To ensure that all applicants and occasional 'parent helpers' complete a self-disclosure form

To obtain two references for each helper/official/coach

To reserve the right to make a confidential Police check on each applicant

To maintain a confidential file containing the completed forms

To inform members that confidential records are kept on a database as required by the Data Protection Act

To receive and advise on reports from other club members

To inform all club Committee members of appropriate information and developments, through a general committee meeting or otherwise, as soon as is practicable

To initiate appropriate action following consultation with at least two other club Committee members, including informing the relevant national athletics bodies

## RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGED INCIDENTS

### HOW TO BE AWARE OF POSSIBLE CHILD ABUSE

You may become aware of abuse in a number of ways:

A child may tell you

A third party may have reported an incident, or may have a strong suspicion

You may have a suspicion

### HOW TO DEAL WITH POSSIBLE CHILD ABUSE

If an allegation is brought to your attention, then pass on all the information to one of the senior coaches or committee member immediately, who should then adopt the following guidelines.

## WHAT TO DO

**Stay calm**– do not rush into inappropriate action

**Reassure the child**– that he / she is not to blame and to confirm that you know how difficult it must be to confide. Communication is at the child's pace without pressure being exerted

**Listen**– to what the child says and show that you take him / her seriously but the child should be clearly told that others will be informed

**Allow only one adult to talk to the child**– as any discrepancies in statements may lead to legal problems, although the presence of a witness would allow for notes to be taken and protection of the adult investigator

**Keep questions to a minimum**– use open ended questions i.e. those where more than a yes/no response is required. The law is very strict and abuse cases have been dismissed if it appears that the child has been led or words and ideas have been suggested

**Be sure to understand what the child has said**– record information so that you can pass it on to the appropriate agencies

**Maintain confidentiality** – making sure that information is only passed on to Committee members in the proper forum or to the appropriate external agencies

## WHAT TO RECORD

The child's name, address and date of birth

Date and time of the incident/s and/or nature of allegations

Your observations e.g. describe the behaviour and emotional state of the child and/or bruising or other injuries

The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how the bruising or injury occurred

An account of any action that you and/or the clubs Committee took as a result of your concerns e.g. comments made to the child; whether parents have been contacted

A statement as to whether the person writing the report is expressing his / her own concerns, or passing on those of someone else

You must sign and date your completed report

You should keep a copy of the report, ensuring that maximum confidentiality is maintained

At no time should you make any promises to the child, make the child repeat the story unnecessarily, delay reporting the problem. You should never take sole responsibility for the problem.

## **GUIDANCE FOR COACHES AND VOLUNTEERS**

When reports of misconduct or allegations are brought to your attention, a decision must be made as to whether the allegation made is abuse, or relates to poor practice. This decision should be made collectively by at least two other members of the Overton Harriers Committee but the Child Protection Officer/Welfare Officer would normally be responsible for carrying out the decision of those members.

If the allegation is abuse, the following process should be followed:

### REPORTING PROCEDURES

Parents should be informed to clarify initial concerns. It may be that something has happened, like a bereavement, which has caused the child to be unhappy. However, in circumstances where a child may be placed at a greater risk if such concerns were shared e.g. where the parent may be the abuser or not able to respond to the situation appropriately, parents should not be informed

Social Services and/or the Police should be contacted immediately, the number is in the phone book. A record should be kept of the name and designation of the official informed, together with the time and date of the call, in case future contact is required. If you want to talk things through to gain some advice, you can phone the NSPCC free helpline: 0800 800500. This operates 24 hours a day, every day. You do not have to give your name.

Confidentiality must be maintained.

At the conclusion of the case, the Child Protection Officer takes any appropriate action, including informing the appropriate national athletics agencies.

## **ADVICE FOR COACHES / MEMBERS / HELPERS / OTHER AD**

### GOOD PRACTICE

Do not spend amounts of time alone with children away from others

Do not take children on car journeys except in relation to matches or to and from training sessions, except with prior approval of the parents concerned

Do not take children to your home except where a parent is not available to receive their child on return

Do discourage over enthusiastic kisses and embraces

Do have another adult present when administering First Aid

Do report an incident, as soon as possible, where you accidentally hurt a child, cause distress in any manner, or the child appears to respond in a sexual manner to your actions or misunderstands something you have done

### BAD PRACTICE

Do not engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay

Do not share a room with a child

Do not permit or engage in any form of inappropriate touching

Do not permit children to use inappropriate language unchallenged

Do not make sexually suggestive comments or jokes to a child, even in fun

Do not allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon

Do not do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves

Do not agree to meet a child athlete on your own

However, it may be necessary for a volunteer to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or disabled. Such tasks should only be carried out with full understanding and consent of the parent. There is also a need in these instances to be responsive to the child's reactions – if a child is fully dependent upon you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible

## **ADVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

### WHAT IS INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR?

Very broadly, any form of unacceptable behaviour towards you such as sexual misbehaviour, physical acts, inappropriate remarks, suggestive gestures, pictures or other material, or some other forms of abuse such as physical violence.

### WHAT TO DO TO AVOID INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

Listen to the advice of your parents or guardian

Avoid being left alone with anyone

If you have to leave a group, tell someone where you are going, how long you are likely to be, and report to him / her when you return

Do not allow anyone to talk to you about something personal concerning yourself or them self if it has nothing to do with his / her job or work in sport. If he / she still persists, walk away and report it to someone in a senior position

Do not agree to meet anyone in your own time without informing another adult

Do not accept a lift from anyone if you will be the only passenger, unless you have informed another adult. Either refuse or insist that someone else goes along too. Do not accept a lift if you feel uncomfortable

Do not be over familiar toward those who work with you in athletics

Do not walk home alone at night

Be especially wary of parked cars with the engine running

### HOW TO RESPOND TO INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

Tell that person to stop at once

Tell others who may be present what happened

If others actually saw what happened, remember who they are so that they can be your witnesses

If the misconduct continues, tell that person again to stop at once and then leave if you can or shout for help. If you can't, report the matter as soon as possible to another official or adult

Tell your parents as soon as possible

Keep a record of the date, time and place and what happened, and make a list of any witnesses

If any member of your group or club claim to have suffered the same sort of experience, ask him / her to make a similar record

Ask any witnesses to do the same

Talk to your parents and decide to whom to make a formal complaint. You should at least report it to one of the coaches or volunteers at the club

#### WHAT NOT TO DO CONCERNING INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

Do not wrongly complain if nothing happened

Do not exaggerate if something did happen

Do not ignore behaviour that makes you uncomfortable

Do not keep to yourself what happened

Do not delay before complaining

Do not agree to hush up or hide what happened

Do not be afraid or embarrassed to tell your parents or a friend or the coaches