

# Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy & Procedures

## **PURPOSE AND AIM OF THE PROCEDURES -**

These procedures apply to everyone in the organisation who has contact with children and young people. This includes all sports coaches (employed & self-employed), tutors and volunteers, but it also involves administrators and office based staff who come into contact with children and their families in a less direct fashion. An example of this could be registering children when they arrive for a school holiday activity.

## **A description of the different categories of abuse -**

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm, it commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a young person regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

The main types of abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and bullying. The abuser may be a family member, someone the young person encounters in residential care or in the community, including sports and physical activities. Any individual may abuse or neglect a young person directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another people harming the young person. Abuse in all of its forms can affect a young person at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated may follow the individual into adulthood Young people with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse had occurred.

## **Physical abuse -**

Where adults physically hurt or injure a young person e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, and drowning. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute child abuse. In a sport or performing arts situation, physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training disregard the capacity of the young person's immature and growing body.

## **Sexual abuse -**

This occurs when adults (male and female) use young people to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing young people pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse. In sport or the performing arts, activities which might involve physical contact with young people could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over young athletes, if misused, may lead to abusive situations.

## **Emotional abuse -**

The persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the young person's emotional development. It may involve telling a young person they are useless, worthless, unloved or inadequate. It may feature expectations of young people that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause a young person to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the young person frightened or withdrawn. In sport or the performing arts this may occur when the young person is constantly criticised, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling and bullying.

### **Neglect -**

This occurs when an adult fails to meet the young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the young person's health or development. Examples of this could be: failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. In sport or the performing arts this could occur when a coach does not keep the young person safe, or exposing them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury.

### **Bullying -**

This may come from another young person or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are four main types of bullying. It may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments). In sport or the performing arts bullying may arise when a parent or coach pushes the young person too hard to succeed, or a rival athlete or official uses bullying behaviour.

### **How to recognise the signs of abuse -**

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a young person is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent.
- The young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them.
- Another young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person.
- Unexplained changes in a young person's behaviour e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness or engaging in sexually explicit behaviour.
- Distrust of adult's, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Difficulty in making friends.
- Being prevented from socialising with others.
- Displaying variations in eating patterns including over eating or loss of appetite.
- Losing weight for no apparent reason.
- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt.
- Over-tiredness.
- Suicidal threats or behaviours.
- Displaying frequent unexplained minor injuries.
- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go training or enter competitions.
- An unexplained drop off in performance.
- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes.
- A shortage of money or frequents loss of possessions.

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indications is not proof that abuse is taking place. It is NOT the responsibility of those working for Fitness In to decide that child abuse is occurring. It IS their responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting any incident to the Fitness In Safeguarding Officer as well as completing an Incident Report Form.

### **How to respond to signs or suspicions of abuse -**

Fitness In staff may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. Fitness In staff may see it happening, may suspect it happening because of signs that have picked up on, or may have it reported by someone else or directly by the young person affected.

### **How to respond to allegations of abuse against a member of staff, other worker or volunteer -**

When an allegation is received, the member of staff being told, must tell the Fitness In Safeguarding Officer immediately, and give them a copy of the written report. If this allegation has been received within a school setting, then the School Safeguarding Officer must be informed also.

Depending on the situation, Fitness In reserve the right to immediately suspend staff if it is deemed appropriate. Any suspicion, allegation or incident should be reported to the Fitness In Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible and recorded. It is the responsibility of the Fitness In Safeguarding Officer to inform the Local Authority Social Care Team without delay if deemed appropriate. Where there is a complaint against a member of staff or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation.

- Criminal: in which case the police are immediately involved.
- Child protection: in which case the social services (and possibly) the police will be involved.
- Disciplinary or misconduct: in which case Fitness In will be involved.

### **How to respond to allegations of abuse against someone not working in the group -**

This may be a parent or carer, another child, school teacher or anybody else. When an allegation is received, the member of staff being told, must tell the Fitness In Safeguarding Officer immediately, and give them a copy of the written report. If this allegation has been received within a school setting, then the School Safeguarding Officer must be informed also. It is the responsibility of the Fitness In Safeguarding Officer to inform the Local Authority Social Care Team without delay if deemed appropriate. If the child is believed to be in immediate danger, the Police must be called straight away.

Please refer to the section 'Reporting the Concern' below for more details.

**Fitness In Safeguarding Officer:** Matt Walker

**Office:** 020 8659 5535

**Email:**

Alternatively, call Fitness In's Company Director, Carrie Perkins on 07921 678 816

### **Individual Local Authority Social Care Team Phone Numbers:**

**Lewisham:** 020 8314 6000

**Greenwich:** 020 8921 3172 / 020 8854 8888

**Southwark:** 020 7525 1921 / 020 7525 5000

**Bromley:** 020 8464 4848 / 020 8461 7373

**Lambeth:** 020 7926 6010 / 020 7926 6583

Any other borough's number can be found on their website, under 'Health & Social Care'.

### **How to respond to a child telling you about abuse -**

- When a young person reports directly to a Fitness In member of staff, it is particularly important for the member of staff to respond appropriately. If a young person says or indicates that they are being abused, staff should:
- Stay calm so as not to frighten the young person.
- Reassure the young person that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell.
- Ensure the immediate safety of the child or young person.
- Take what the child or young person says seriously.
- Listen to the young person, showing that you are taking them seriously.
- Keep questions to a minimum so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. (The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the young person has been led and ideas have been suggested when questioning). Only ask questions to clarify.
- Re-assure the child or young person but do not make promises of confidentiality or outcome, which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments.
- Inform the young person that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the young person this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- Inform the parents/carers immediately unless -you have specific reason not to, e.g. the child has named the parent/carer as the abuser. If this is the case then contact the designated person. If they are unavailable contact local Children's Services or the Police for guidance.
- Safety of the young person is paramount. If the young person needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection issue.
- Record all information on the Incident Report Form.
- Report the incident to the Fitness In Safeguarding Officer.

### **How information will be recorded -**

Include how information should be recorded and by whom, time-scales for passing it on, and where it should be stored confidentially. To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions.

### **Information should include the following:**

- The young person's name, age and date of birth.
- The young person's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's.
- The nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information.
- A description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The young person's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.

### **Reporting the concern -**

All suspicions and allegations MUST be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague.

It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take. If the situation should arise within a school setting, the Fitness In member of staff MUST tell the School Safeguarding Officer, as well as the Fitness In Safeguarding Officer. They will then decide together on a course of action, and who & what agencies should be told. If the situation should arise during an independent Fitness In activity, then the Team Leader should tell the Fitness In Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible. They will then make a judgement as to what agencies should be informed.

- If it is felt that the child is in immediate danger, you must call 999 and call the Police.
- Fitness In will refer the matter to the Local Authority Social Care Team.
- The parent/carer of the young person will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- The Managing Director should be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings if needed.
- If applicable, the HR Manager should notify the relevant sport's governing body.
- If the Fitness In Safeguarding Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Managing Director or an appropriate member of senior management team who will refer the matter to the Local Authority Social Care Team.

### **Confidentiality policy -**

The legal principle is that the "welfare of the child is paramount".

Privacy and confidentiality should be respected where possible but if doing this leaves a child at risk of harm then the child's safety has to come first. Remember: Legally, it is fine to share information if someone is worried about the safety of a child. Not everyone needs to know when a concern or worry is raised. This respects the child's, family's and/or staff's rights to privacy. Only people who need to know should be told about it. Otherwise there might be gossip and rumours or other people may be genuinely concerned. It is fine to say that a concern has been raised and it is being dealt with following our procedures.

### **It is not child protection but I am still concerned -**

Sometimes concerns about a child may not be about abuse. You may be concerned that a child or family need some help in making sure all the child's needs are met to address a particular problem. Examples of this might be where a child is suffering because of poverty, getting into trouble in the community, or has a disability and needs extra help. In these instances you can get them help by using the Common Assessment Framework.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a way of working with children and young people which is being used all over England. If a child or young person needs extra support for a particular need, a CAF form is filled in and an action plan is made to decide on the best way of supporting them. This could be support with learning, or something else, such as a social or emotional matter. The idea is that the child and parents and carers have the chance to say what they would like to happen and to explain what is working well for them and where they would like support. If you have a concern, the Local Authority Information Sharing Team will be able to guide you.

### **Good practice -**

By promoting good practice the occurrence of abuse of young people should be reduced and this should also protect Fitness In staff, thus reducing the likelihood of allegations arising. All personnel should adhere to the following principles and action:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- If in the scenario of a 1:1 (mentoring) situation, give some thought before the meeting to the venue and environment where the meeting will take place. Avoid private, closed places; instead meet in an open, transparent space. If privacy is needed, make sure that the room/office has windows and is situated in a natural walkway. Always inform a colleague of your meeting.
- Make the experience of your session fun and enjoyable.
- Promote fairness, confront and deal positively and pro-actively with bullying, harassment or any other inappropriate behaviour.
- Treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity.
- Always put the welfare of the young person first.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with children & young people (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a young person).
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the young person's consent has been given.
- In extreme cases where a young person is becoming a danger to either themselves, other pupils or you; to be judged lawful the force of restraint used must be in proportion to the consequences it is intended to prevent.
- Keep up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport.
- Never transport a young person unless in an emergency, in this case it is the coach's responsibility to contact the young person's parents, carers and Manager before they transport the young person. If this incident does occur then transport the young person in the back seats of the car.
- Be an excellent role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Do not undertake any medical treatment on a young person, unless qualified to do so.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given. This should be written on an Accident form.

### **Use of photographic / filming equipment -**

There is evidence that some people have used sporting activities/events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled sports people in vulnerable positions. Therefore Fitness In is committed to adhere to the appropriate guidelines detailed below.

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### **Recording images of young people -**

There have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to young people through the use of photographs on web sites and publications. Therefore, the following guidelines must be followed:

- All young people featured in photographs/recordings must be appropriately dressed for the activity they are undertaking.
- The photograph/recording should ideally focus on the activity, where possible images of young people should be recorded in small groups.
- Fitness In staff will still be allowed to use video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid and means of recording special occasions with the written consent of parents/carers/young person.
- Care should be taken in the dissemination and storage of the material.

### **Publishing images of young people -**

If a photograph/recording is used, personal details of young people such as e-mail address, home address and telephone numbers should never be revealed. Parental/guardian permission should always be received to take and use an image of a young person. This ensures that parents/carers are aware of the way the image of their child is representing the sport, activity or Fitness In as an organisation.

- A Parent/Carer photography permission question is included within the Participant Registration Form and can be distributed at the beginning of the season/programme.
- Where a story concerns an individual, (e.g. their selection for representative side, triumph over adversity) particular attention should be paid to ensuring permission is gained from parent/carer and young person to use a photograph/recording and relevant details.
- In order to guard against the possibility of a young person under a court order appearing on a website, the simultaneous streaming of images onto a website is not recommended. Delayed streaming also provides an opportunity for the editing of inappropriate clips (e.g. disarranged clothing). If video/film clips are delivered from your own server, that material can be downloaded.
- Apply an increased level of consideration to the images of youngsters used on websites. Simple technology features such as watermarking may dissuade third parties from using or attempting to access controlled imagery.

### **The use of photographic / filming equipment by the media -**

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people. Therefore, the following guidelines will be followed:

- If professional photographers are commissioned or the press is invited to a sporting activity or event, it is important to ensure they are clear about expectations of them in relation to the welfare of young people.
- The photographer/camera person must have bona fide identification and be able to produce it on request.
- Participants and parents must be informed that a photographer/camera person will be in attendance at an event and ensure that they give written consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs.
- Fitness In will not allow unsupervised access to participants or one to one photo sessions at events/activities.
- Fitness In will not approve/allow photo sessions outside the event/activity.