Section 3: Safeguarding Children – Recognising Poor Practice and Abuse

Employees and volunteers at the Youth Sport Trust are not expected to be experts at recognising child abuse. They do, however, have a responsibility to act if they have any concerns about the behaviour of someone towards a child and to follow the reporting procedure in this document.

3.1 What is Abuse?

Abuse may be the deliberate infliction of harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family, an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

All those involved in children’s sport have a responsibility to be able to recognise and respond to signs and indicators of child abuse. It is not always easy to recognise when abuse is taking place or has already taken place, however, the effects of abuse on children can be so damaging that, if not dealt with, it may follow the individual into adulthood.

When reading the information below, it is critical to remember that it is not the responsibility of those working/volunteering for the Youth Sport Trust to decide that child abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting them.

i. Physical Abuse

This occurs when an adult deliberately physically hurts or injures a child, or knowingly does not prevent such injuries occurring. It includes shaking, hitting, kicking, pulling hair, pulling ears, squeezing, burning, biting, scalding or suffocating.

Physical abuse may occur when:

- Excessive demands are made of children that exceed their physical capability.
- Drugs are used to enhance performance or delay puberty.
- The type and intensity of training disregards the capacity of the child’s underdeveloped body and predisposes the child to injury.

ii. Emotional Abuse

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 making the child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying) causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Emotional abuse may occur through:

- Constant over protection that prevents children from socialising.
- Bullying, shouting at or taunting of children.
- Ridiculing or intimidating children.
- Unrealistic pressure to meet high expectations.
- Doing things for children that they are capable of doing for themselves.
- Exposing a child to constant criticism, sarcasm or unrealistic pressure.
iii. **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

The activities may involve contact including penetrative acts or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as grooming children, involving children in looking at, or in the production of sexual images (including online or video), watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

In sport, physical touching may be an appropriate way of guiding or supporting a child through a skill. Touching must not be intrusive or disturbing. Some contact could be misinterpreted so follow these guidelines.

- If working in a specific sport, check the National Governing Body guidelines.
- Seek the performer's permission before providing any physical guidance or support.
- Confine contact to what is professionally necessary.
- Work in a public setting.

iv. **Neglect**

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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment), failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

Neglect may include:

- Leaving children alone and unsupervised.
- Exposing children to unnecessary risk or injury.
- Failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- Failure to provide access to adequate liquid refreshment during a sporting activity.

v. **Bullying**

Whilst bullying is not technically a type of child abuse Youth Sport Trust recognises that this is a serious issue in sport and society in general.

Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

Behaviour may be insulting, intimidating, humiliating, malicious (nasty), degrading or offensive. It produces uncomfortable, negative feelings for the person to whom it is intended. Bullying can have a devastating effect on a child’s self-esteem and destroy their confidence and concentration.
Bullying can be:

- Emotional: being unfriendly, excluding (emotionally and physically), sending hurtful text messages, tormenting, (e.g. hiding kit or equipment, threatening gestures)
- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist: racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual: unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic: because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Electronic: e.g. emails, texting, comments made on social networking sites

The competitive nature of sport makes it an ideal environment for the bully and all employees and volunteers must be vigilante in identifying peer to peer bullying.

Bullying in sport could be a parent who pushes their child too hard, or a child that actively seeks to make sport a difficult or unhappy experience for others.

Harassment is closely associated with aspects of bullying and occurs when an individual feels that they are subject to behaviour from others that is unacceptable to them.

Where anyone has concerns about a child or the behaviour of an adult towards a child this should be addressed immediately and a report forwarded to the Youth Sport Trust Lead Safeguarding Officer or referred directly to the Youth Sport Trust Lead Safeguarding Officer for their actions.

### 3.2 Additional vulnerabilities

Children with a disability or Special Educational Needs have the same rights to protection as any child. Some children with a disability or Special Educational Needs may be more susceptible to harm than other children because they may lack the mutual support and protection of a peer group, require higher degrees of physical care and support, have limited communication skills, find it difficult to resist inappropriate interventions or have a degree of dependency on a carer conflicting with the need to report harm or raise concerns.

Although the great majority of carers have the child’s best interests at heart, some will use their vulnerability as an opportunity to abuse. Sometimes it may be difficult to tell that a disabled child is being abused as people may think a child is behaving differently due to their disability, not realising that they are being abused.

When working with, or caring for, children with a disability or Special Educational Needs Youth Sport Trust will supply appropriate training and encourage employees and volunteers to seek advice to ensure they are safeguarded appropriately.

### 3.3 Recognising, Responding to, Recording and Reporting a Concern

The Youth Sport Trust has developed a process which allows individuals to recognise, respond, record and report any concerns or issues they may have relating to a child in our care.

If a child under 18 discloses a concern to an adult that they have been, or are being harmed then the receiver of the disclosure has an obligation to report this using Youth Sport Trust safeguarding procedures.
Reasons for taking appropriate action to report concerns
There may be a number of reasons an individual finds it necessary to report a concern. These include:

- In response to something a child has said
- In response to signs or suspicions of harm
- In response to allegations made against a member of staff or volunteer
- In response to allegations made about a parent, carer, or other person
- In response to bullying
- In response to a breach of code of conduct/poor practice
- Observation of inappropriate behaviour

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

It is important to note that even if an incident occurs outside the Youth Sport Trust environment, it should still be reported to the Youth Sport Trust if the adult or child concerned is involved with the Youth Sport Trust.

There are 4 steps involved in taking appropriate action – known as the 4 R’s. Each is essential.

- Recognising signs and indicators of abuse
- Responding to the disclosure/suspicion and/or allegation
- Recording the relevant information
- Reporting the relevant information

Step 1: Recognising – Signs and Indicators of Abuse

Recognising child abuse is not easy. It is important that signs of abuse are not ignored. Individuals working with children should be alert to general signs of possible abuse and be able to identify indicators of each type of abuse.

Indications that a child may be being abused may include:

- Changing their usual routine
- Unexplained changes in behaviour such as becoming very quiet, withdrawn or disruptive
- Becoming anxious or lacking in confidence
- Having possessions going missing
- Becoming aggressive or unreasonable
- Starting to stammer or stopping communicating
- Unexplained cuts or bruises or suspicious injuries
- Starting to bully other children
- Being frequently dirty, hungry or inadequately dressed
- Displaying sexual behaviour or using sexual language inappropriate for their age
- Difficulty in making friends
- Seeming afraid of parents/guardians
- Variations in eating patterns, including overeating or loss of appetite
- Excessive fear of making mistakes
- Being frightening to say what’s wrong

It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of some or all of these indicators, it does not necessarily mean abuse is taking place, but maybe indicative of a need to report concerns. If you have cause for concern do not take responsibility yourself but report
your concerns following Youth Sport Trust procedures so that other’s can decide what, if any, action should be taken.

**Step 2: Responding to a disclosure/suspicion/allegation**

If a child tells you they or another person is being or has been abused, or you witness or become concerned about someone’s behaviour you should:

- stay calm
- keep an open mind – do not make assumptions, judgments, show disgust or disbelief
- listen carefully and take what they say seriously
- let the child know that if what they tell you makes you at all concerned about them or someone else, you will have to pass the information on to someone who can help them
- tell them they are not to blame and that they have done the right thing by telling you
- keep questions to an absolute minimum, ask questions to clarify information only e.g start question with: tell me about, explain to me, describe
- reassure them and explain you have to share what they have said
- be very careful not to promise that you will keep the information to yourself
- report the concerns but do not decide if abuse has taken place
- make a record of everything said and any actions taken as soon as possible
- share with the child that you will need to pass the concern to the Youth Sport Trust Lead Safeguarding Officer in order to help the child

**Do not:**

- make promises or agree to keep information a secret
- make negative comments about the alleged abuser
- approach any alleged abuser to discuss the concern
- discuss the allegations with anyone who does not need have a need to know
- take sole responsibility
- delay in reporting the concerns
- ignore what has been disclosed

It should be noted that not all children are able to express themselves verbally. Communication difficulties may mean that it is hard for a child to explain or be understood. In addition, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the signs of abuse from the symptoms of some disabilities or conditions, in relation to the nature of an individual’s impairment. However, the welfare of the child is paramount and where there are concerns about the safety of a child, record what has been observed in detail and follow the procedures to report these concerns.

**Step 3: Recording the incident**

Wherever possible, any report must be made in writing using the Safeguarding Incident Report Form, which is included in the accompanying template section. The Safeguarding Incident Report form can also be found on the Youth Sport Trust website [www.youthsporttrust.org](http://www.youthsporttrust.org) or on the internal intranet.

Information must be accurate, complete and factual, including the name and contact details of the person reporting the incident.

*Confidentiality is critical*
Throughout the entire process confidentiality is vital. Every effort must be made to ensure confidentiality is maintained when an allegation has been made and is being investigated. Minimise the number of people that you share a concern with; information should only be shared on a “need to know” basis. This means only those individuals stated within the reporting structure who will be able to manage and resolve the situation and no-one else, unless directed by statutory agencies or the Youth Sport Trust Safeguarding Team.

Confidentiality is essential and it will ensure:

- the safety of the child involved
- action is taken to protect the child
- individuals involved in any complaint are protected from gossip and assumptions
- individuals who have a complaint against them receive fair treatment.

Sharing Information

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with the data protection laws i.e. information is accurate, relevant and secure.

The seven golden rules of information sharing are:

1. Remember the Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information but it provides a framework to ensure that personal information about a living person is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the person from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared. Seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. Seek advice if you are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person where possible.
4. Share with consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case.
5. Consider safety and wellbeing. Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and wellbeing of the person, and others who may be affected by their decisions.
6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure. Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up to date, is shared in a timely fashion and is shared securely.
7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to be shared or not. If you decide to share, record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.
Step 4: Reporting

It is acknowledged that the suggestion that a child has/is being abused can evoke strong emotions. It can be very difficult to hear suspicions of allegations but it is important that concerns are acted on. If indicators of abuse or a disclosure give you cause for concern, it is not your responsibility to decide if abuse is taking place but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns.

The Youth Sport Trust has clear procedures for reporting concerns. It is important that you follow the procedure detailed and fulfil your role in the process. If you become aware of any suspicions or concerns about the safety or welfare of a child, pass these on to the Youth Sport Trust Lead Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible. It is helpful to complete the Safeguarding Incident Report Form as this sets out the information which is useful. You should report as much detail as possible but avoid hearsay or assumptions. It is always better to check out your concerns with the Lead Safeguarding Officer and therefore avoid doing something you might later regret. The Lead Safeguarding Officer is responsible for implementing procedures should this be necessary.

The flowcharts on pages 13 and 15 illustrate the reporting process depending on whether the concerns are from within or outside the Youth Sport Trust.
What to do if you are concerned about the behaviour of any employee or volunteer of the Youth Sport Trust

Are you concerned about the behaviour of an adult in the Youth Sport Trust towards a child?

Does the child require immediate medical attention?

Yes

Call an ambulance and inform the doctor that there is a safeguarding concern

No

Report concerns to the Event Safeguarding Officer or relevant designated person who will complete a YST safeguarding report form and send to the YST Lead Safeguarding Officer

Initial assessment by the Youth Sport Trust Lead Safeguarding Officer, to include potential referral to statutory agencies

Information presented to the Case Management Group. Decision taken by them on appropriate course of action

No Case to Answer

Possible Abuse

Referral to Statutory agencies. Possible internal investigation in partnership with agencies

Possible Poor Practice

Referral to Statutory agencies. Possible internal investigation

Internal Investigation

Appropriate disciplinary procedure
Potential Outcomes
There are a number of potential outcomes from this process, this list is not exhaustive:

- no further action taken/no case to answer
- training, retraining or mentoring recommended
- warning
- investigation/criminal prosecution
- possible Youth Sport Trust investigation depending on outcome of statutory agencies’ investigation
- referral to statutory lists barring, or restricting, work with children

It is natural to be concerned about the potential implications of reporting concerns. These are natural responses, but remember that the safety and welfare of young people is paramount. Reported concerns will be dealt with professionally and confidentially.

Appeal
What to do if you are concerned that a young person is being abused outside the Youth Sport Trust environment (but that concern is identified through that child’s involvement with the Youth Sport Trust)

Are you are concerned that a child could be being abused outside the YST environment?

Does the child require immediate medical attention?

Yes

Call an ambulance and inform the doctor that there is a safeguarding concern

No

Report concerns to the Event Safeguarding Lead or YST Lead Safeguarding Officer who will refer the matter to the Local Authority (LA) Children’s Social Care Department or the Policy without delay.

If the Event Safeguarding Lead or YST Lead Safeguarding Officer is not available, refer the matter to LA Children’s Social Care Department (Social Services) or Police without delay.

Make a record of anything the child has said or what you have seen, if possible with dates and times.

Take advice from LA Children’s Social Care Dept (Social Services) or the Police whether it is appropriate to discuss the matter with parents.

Complete a YST safeguarding report form, copy it to the relevant external agency and the YST Lead Safeguarding Officer.

Does the child require immediate medical attention?

Yes

No
3.4 How Youth Sport Trust will respond to suspicions or concerns

Whistle Blowing
If there is a concern of the behaviour of an adult towards a child, it is important that you share your concerns with the Lead Safeguarding Officer. The Youth Sport Trust encourages and supports "whistle blowing" and will, where appropriate, notify the statutory agencies of any allegation and work in partnership with them. If statutory agencies are involved the Youth Sport Trust investigations will usually start once those agencies have completed their investigations and refer the case back to the Youth Sport Trust. The wellbeing of the child is central to any procedures involving these agencies.

Anyone who refers their concerns, in good faith, will be supported in doing so, knowing that their concerns will be treated seriously and managed sensitively and appropriately.

All information received and discussed will be treated in the strictest confidence and only shared with those individuals who will be able to manage and resolve the situation. On occasion it may be necessary to seek advice or inform the statutory agencies, e.g. Children’s Services and the Police.

The Whistle blowing policy should only be followed if the person raising the concern feels unable to follow the standard reporting procedures.

How to Raise a Concern
In the first instance individuals should raise a concern with the Lead Safeguarding Officer on 01509 226654 or email safeguarding@youthsporttrust.org. Individuals should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible and the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation.

Although the whistle blower is not expected to prove the truth of the allegation they will need to demonstrate to the Lead Safeguarding Officer that there are sufficient grounds for their concern.

If you believe you have not received a satisfactory response to your concern, or your concern is about the Youth Sport Trust Lead Safeguarding Officer you should contact the Corporate Services Director.

Incident Referral Process
As soon as the Youth Sport Trust Lead Safeguarding Officer receives written notification of an incident, allegation or disclosure they assume management of the case (provided it is not being dealt with by the police and/or Children’s Services/Local Authority Designated Officer [LADO]). The individual should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible and the reason why they are concerned about the situation.

The Lead Safeguarding Officer will manage the case in line with the Youth Sport Trust Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.

Those under investigation
Under this policy the Youth Sport Trust is committed, first and foremost, to protecting the interests of the child. Any concerns involving inappropriate behaviour of an adult towards a child will be taken seriously and investigated.
Individuals who are faced with an allegation will be informed of the procedures by the HR Department or the Lead Safeguarding Officer. Investigations are concluded as quickly as possible to ensure that those guilty of causing harm are dealt with expeditiously and those falsely or mistakenly accused are able to return to work or their role with reputation intact.

**Suspension from Youth Sport Trust**

Individuals may be suspended until investigations have been completed. Suspension is a neutral act intended to protect all parties whilst allegations are investigated.

Suspension may be imposed due to:
- receipt of serious allegations
- notification that an individual is subject to an investigation by the Police, Children’s Social Care or any other authority in relation to an allegation of offence
- receipt of information which suggests a person may pose a risk of harm
- failure to comply with any aspect of the Youth Sport Trust’s vetting procedures.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The Youth Sport Trust will not be liable to any suspended employee or volunteer for any loss of any nature arising as a result of or in connection with a temporary suspension.

Following any statutory services (e.g. Children’s Social Care or Police) investigation, the Youth Sport Trust will assess the available information to decide whether the individual can be reinstated to their role in the Youth Sport Trust. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence for the statutory services to act or obtain a conviction. In such cases the Case Management Group will reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on the balance or probability, it is more likely than not that the person poses a risk. Anyone suspended on a permanent basis must be referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service for consideration to appear on the appropriate Barred List.

The Case Management Group may decide that an individual should undertake certain actions such as further training or completing a new criminal record check.

HR will direct suspended individuals to a member of staff who will make contact with them, and support them through the period of their suspension and the outcome of the investigation.

**Appeals**

An employee or volunteer who is subject to a disciplinary sanction has the right of appeal. Anyone wishing to appeal must do so in writing, to be received by the Head of HR within the specified period (usually 14 days unless stated differently) of the notification being sent. The letter of appeal should set out clearly the grounds for appeal.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

During and following the conclusion of a case, members of the Case Management Group (CMG) will evaluate if changes need to be made to policies, procedures or guidance documents. All involved in a case are able to offer feedback so lessons can be learnt and safeguarding processes can be continually improved.
Support to individuals following an incident, allegation or complaint
Consideration should be given about the support that may be appropriate to children and other affected individuals such as parents, staff, volunteers and consultants. Use of expert helplines, support groups and meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process.

Thought should be given to the support that may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

A list of expert helplines and essential contacts can be found at the Youth Sport Trust website www.youthsporttrust.org or on the internal intranet.

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 young person but felt unable to say anything at the time). Where such an allegation is made, the Youth Sport Trust must follow reporting procedures because other children may still be at risk from the alleged perpetrator.

The subject of allegations outside of the Youth Sport Trust
If an employee of volunteer for Youth Sport Trust is the subject of relevant allegations outside of the Youth Sport Trust environment, the Youth Sport Trust may still be informed by the statutory services even if the allegations do not directly involve the Youth Sport Trust. This is to ensure that the welfare of young people remains the paramount concern. An individual may be suspended from their role with the Youth Sport Trust whilst the investigation is conducted – this should be seen as a neutral act to protect all involved.