



**SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN IN ATHLETICS**

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## **OVERVIEW**

AIS Athletics' approach to Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Athletics is characterised by an ethos of vigilance, respect, integrity, and control processes.

The values of AIS are:

- We operate with integrity.
- We deliver quality performance through innovation and continual improvement.
- Respect is shown to everyone we deal with
- We all have accountability

## **POLICY OBJECTIVES**

Duty of care All organisations and individuals, including clubs, coaches, paid staff, volunteers, and club officials, have a duty of care to safeguard children when they are participating in athletics activities under their auspices. These best practice guidelines are maintained by the with a view to promoting the adoption of good and consistent safeguarding practices to ensure that children have a safe experience. These guidelines identify what needs to be done by organisations and individuals to demonstrate their duty of care. Best practice in athletics benefits everyone - the sport's clubs, 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. All children are entitled to be protected from abuse. Abuse can occur anywhere. AIS 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 includes taking action to respond to, record and report any concerns about their welfare.

## **POLICY STATEMENT AIS ATHLETICS**

AIS fully accept their legal and moral obligations to meet their duty of care to all children and to safeguard their welfare, irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, religion or belief, sex or gender and sexual orientation.

Key principles:

- 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 organisations and individuals involved in athletics understand and accept their responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

In order to meet safeguarding obligations:

- Provide and enforce procedures to safeguard the wellbeing of all participants and protect them from abuse. Policies and practices must, as a minimum, meet the requirements set out in this guidance. Ensure all children who take part in athletics can participate in a safe and fun environment.
- Respect and uphold the rights, wishes and feelings of children.
- Recruit, train and supervise their employees and volunteers to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect young people from abuse, and themselves from false allegations.
- Require staff/volunteers to adopt and abide by AIS's 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.
- Designate a person in the organisation who is responsible for ensuring that all appropriate DBS checks are completed.
- Review policies regularly.

## **BEST PRACTICE, POOR PRACTICE AND 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.

*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
- Treating children 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.
- 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 child/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 child's welfare, it also protects clubs and individuals 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 including horseplay.
- 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 a child athlete:

- is accidentally hurt;
- appears distressed in any manner;
- appears to be sexually aroused by the actions of another; or
- misunderstands or misinterprets the actions of another.

Then the incident should be reported immediately to another colleague/volunteer, a written note must be made of the incident and parents and/or appropriate adults informed. The Club Welfare Officer should also be informed.

## **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 insofar 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 says 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 bullying<sup>2</sup> 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 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); failing to protect a child from

physical and emotional harm or danger; ensuring adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensuring 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 particularly 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. Organisations and individuals 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, always ask: "Would this be acceptable if the child were not disabled?"

## **RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND TRAINING**

AIS is committed to providing a safe environment for children in our organisation and the requirements and processes set out below will assist to ensure that best practice is followed. All reasonable steps must be taken at all levels within the sport to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working in athletics, especially with children.

### **Recruitment**

Advertising of roles, whether paid or volunteer roles, will reflect:

- This 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.

### **Application Process**

must ensure that all applicants complete an application form that includes:

- Name and address.
- Confirm identity and right to work.
- Relevant experience, qualifications and training undertaken.
- Career history and/or involvement in sport (to confirm experience and identify any gaps).
- All applicants who have or are seeking to undertake a supervised role or responsibility in relation to children in athletics must complete a self-declaration form to establish whether they are known to Children's Social Care (social services) as posing an actual or potential risk of harm to children or whether they have ever had action taken against them (criminal/civil/disciplinary) that might indicate that they are unsuitable to work with or have responsibility for children. All applicants who have or are seeking to undertake regulated activity in athletics must complete a criminal record check (enhanced level DBS)
- A minimum of two written references will be taken up. Where the applicant is to work with children, at least one reference will be associated with former work with children or young people. Referees (not relatives) should provide written references that comment on the applicant's previous experience of, and suitability for, work with children. Applicants should be asked to provide consent to clarify information with referees. One reference should be from paid employment or education and the other reference should be in a sporting capacity, ideally in a role similar to the one they are applying for. If an applicant has no experience of working with children then they will be given appropriate training.
- Any former involvement with athletics. Recruitment selection and induction of staff and volunteers Interviews and induction Where appropriate, formal interviews will be used and a record of the interview will be made. All staff and volunteers will undergo a formal or informal induction process during which 14 safeguarding policies and practices will be shared.

When assessing a candidate's suitability, clubs and organisations should:

- Consider their relevant qualifications and experience.
- Establish if they have previously undertaken a role working directly with children.
- Explore their attitude and commitment to safeguarding.
- Establish if they have ever been prevented from having a role which involved contact with children.
- Test their safeguarding awareness with the use of hypothetical examples.

When making recruitment decisions, clubs and organisations must consider:

- The application form.
- The interview.
- All qualifications and experience.
- References.
- The outcome of the DBS check.

### **Training**

All staff and volunteers who work with children undertake relevant training on a three-yearly basis in child / safeguarding procedures, procedures for taking children away and sources of education and training. For all coaches and volunteers with roles in relation to children this should include attendance at a recognised direct delivery safeguarding workshop.

### **Monitoring and appraisal**

Clubs and organisations must ensure that all staff should be given the opportunity to receive regular feedback through observed practice, appraisal or informal feedback to identify training needs and to set goals. Concerns about misconduct, poor practice or abuse, however, must be acted on as they arise. Appropriate support will be offered to those who report concerns/incidents or complaints.

## **RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES, SUSPICIONS AND ALLEGATIONS**

Concerns may arise due to:

- A child 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. How to respond to a disclosure

DONT:

- Speculate or make assumptions.
- Probe for more information than is offered
- 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.

Reports for misconduct 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 because of the concerns.
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion, or hearsay.

Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

There will be appropriate steps to ensure that the child (and parents, appropriate adults) is provided with appropriate professional support (e.g. help lines and support groups).

It will also be ensured that the person under consideration is offered appropriate support.

## **A YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO CHILD PROTECTION**

You have rights – Sport should be fun.

You should feel safe and enjoy your sport.

You can't do this if you feel unhappy – if someone is bullying or abusing you.

When do you know if something is wrong?

Something is wrong if someone:

- Touches you or does anything in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Does anything that makes you feel lonely, worried, unsafe, hurt or embarrassed! If you are being bullied or abused, it is not your fault.

If this is happening, try to:

- Be firm and tell the person to stop – make a lot of noise to attract attention.
- Get away from the situation quickly, go to a public place to find help or call the police
- Tell your parents / carers, or an adult you can trust what has happened as soon as possible, so they can help you.
- Keep a record of the date, time and place, what happened, how you felt and the name of anyone who may have seen what happened.

### **To keep safe always:**

- Tell someone you can trust so they can help you.
- Trust your instincts about the people you meet
- Avoid being alone or with just one other person.
- Travel with a friend, avoid traveling in someone else's car by yourself.
- Avoid going to other people's homes by yourself.
- Carry a mobile phone, a phone, card or some spare change. If any of the above happens to you, do not wait for it to happen again, act immediately