



Hertfordshire Cheetahs Safeguarding young persons and vulnerable adult policy

Introduction

The Club is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for every child, young person and vulnerable adult participating in Club activities.

Key Principles

In this policy the term Vulnerable individual applies to all young persons and vulnerable adults

- A young person is defined as an individual up to 18 years of age
- A vulnerable adult is defined as an individual at risk between 18-25 years of age
- The welfare of all members is of paramount importance at all times, and should be sought for all persons irrespective of any Protected Characteristics (as defined in the Club's Equality & Diversity Policy)
- All adults and persons in position of responsibility will be provided with appropriate training and information to ensure that the welfare of children and vulnerable adults is protected at all times

Key Terms

Each of the terms listed below are to be considered forms of "Abuse" for the purposes of this Policy:

Abuse of Trust means the indoctrination of a Vulnerable Adult as to a particular view in respect of certain subjects, including but not limited to politics, religion, sexuality and drugs/ cheating.

Child Abuse means the harm caused to those under the age of 18, most often brought upon them by those adults they trust.

Emotional Abuse refers to occasions where an individual fails to exercise due care and attention, or otherwise threatens, shouts or humiliates a Vulnerable Individual so as to limit their self confidence and/ or self-esteem. Emotional Abuse may also be deemed to occur if the Vulnerable Individual's efforts or progress is not recognised appropriately.

Neglect refers to occasions where a responsible individual fails to meet the adequate needs of a Vulnerable Individual, such as the provision of food, water or appropriate clothing. Neglect may also be deemed to occur if the individual fails to leave a Vulnerable Individual with appropriate supervision, or exposes them to extreme temperatures or conditions.

Physical Abuse refers to occasions where an individual deliberately inflicts injuries on a Vulnerable Individual, or where an individual fails to prevent physical injury being inflicted upon a Vulnerable Individual. Physical Abuse may also be deemed to occur if the nature/ intensity of training serves to disregard a Vulnerable Individual's physical capacity, or predisposes the Vulnerable Individual to an injury resulting from fatigue or over-exertion.

Sexual Abuse refers to occasions where an individual abuses a Vulnerable Individual to satisfy their own sexual desires. Sexual Abuse may include forcing a Vulnerable Individual to partake in sexual activities, inappropriate touching or exposure to pornographic material.

Identifying Abuse

Dealing with any form of Abuse is rarely straightforward. Abuse may manifest itself in a Vulnerable Individual's disturbed behaviour or through a physical injury. However, there are many situations in which the signs of Abuse will not be clear-cut and decisions about what actions to take may be difficult.

The following identifiers are provided for reference only, but should provide a baseline to inform Members of the Club as to the warning signs of potential Abuse:

- uncharacteristic changes in the Vulnerable Individual's behaviour, attitude and/ or commitment, e.g., becoming quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of anger;
- gossip between players, parent or coaches on the sideline or post-training;
- atypical bruising or injury;
- signs of discomfort or pain;
- reluctance to remove tracksuit, shower, or change with teammates;
- uncharacteristic unkemptness or damaged clothing;
- extreme weight loss;
- nervousness when approached;
- a visible fear of interaction with adults (particularly in relationships where one would normally expect closeness/ familiarity);
- avoidance of a particular coach or set of individuals;
- inappropriate sexual awareness or commentary;
- Vulnerable Individuals who arrive unaccompanied or who are discouraged from engaging with others; and
- reluctance to return home.

The identifiers listed above are non-exhaustive. The presence of one or more does not constitute proof that Abuse is occurring.

The Club (and its Members and Coaches) are not responsible for establishing whether Abuse has or is occurring. However, the Club (and its Members and Coaches) are responsible for reporting suspected Abuse to the appropriate persons.

Club roles for Identifying, Preventing and Reporting Abuse

Members must work together to ensure the effective implementation of this Policy.

The Club undertakes to:

- Appoint a designated Welfare Officer through a vote of the Club's Members (as at the date of this Policy, Mrs Fiona Dickins); and a second named individual (as at the date of this policy, Mr Don MacIntyre)
- Ensure all persons on the Club Committee are appropriately trained and aware of their ongoing responsibilities in respect of this Policy and the treatment of suspected Abuse; and
- Maintain confidentiality and discretion at all times, particularly in respect of any Vulnerable Individual and person accused or suspected of Abuse.



The Welfare Officer undertakes to:

- Ensure all adults with access to Vulnerable Individuals have a BAFA-sanctioned DBS-check; and follow good practice guidelines
- Ensure this Policy is kept up to date and propose any amendments to the Committee and Members in the appropriate forum;
- Receive and advise upon reports from Members in respect of any welfare issues, including suspected Abuse; and
- Initiate appropriate action in response to a report, ensuring all concerned have been contacted while maintaining transparency about the process throughout.
- Share this policy with parents and all members of the club
- Provide training opportunities for adults working with young persons and vulnerable adults

Guidelines for Responding to Complaints/ Suspected Abuse

STEP 1 - LISTEN AND REASSURE

Do:

- Maintain calm and refrain from immediate inappropriate action.
- Reassure the Vulnerable Individual that they are not to blame and confirm that you appreciate how difficult it must have been to confide.
- Listen carefully and believe the Vulnerable Individual's side of the story, ensuring they are aware you are taking them seriously.
- Limit the number of persons the Vulnerable Individual repeats the accusation to. This may prevent discrepancies in accounts should the accusation reach legal proceedings and prevents a false or inaccurate accusation causing unnecessary damage.
- Actively limit the number of questions you ask. It is often more appropriate to nod and acknowledge the Vulnerable Individual's account. If you need to ask questions, ensure they are open-ended (i.e., not leading-questions which typically lead to a "yes" or "no" response). Several Abuse cases have failed to prosecute on the basis of leading questions posited by the responsible adult.
- Ensure you clearly understand what the Vulnerable Individual has relayed to you.
- Ensure you contact the Welfare Officer as quickly as possible and relay the information as accurately as possible.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.

Do Not:

- Panic. Irrespective of what may or may not have occurred – the Vulnerable Individual's decision to disclose their information to you should be seen as a positive step.
- Make promises you cannot keep. Explain calmly that you may have to tell other people what is happening in order to resolve it, whilst being sure to maintain the upmost confidentiality.
- Ask the Vulnerable Individual to repeat their story unnecessarily.



- Delay your reporting or withhold any information
- Take matters into your own hands.

STEP 2 – RECORD

- Do your utmost to record what the Vulnerable Individual has told you both legibly and accurately.
- Be sure to note on what date, at what time and to whom the disclosure was made. The relevant authorities will ask for a statement from the person to whom the disclosure was made.

STEP 3 – INVOLVE AND INFORM THE RELEVANT PERSONS

- Once you have accurately completed your written record, immediately inform the Welfare Officer for determination as to the most appropriate action.
- Should you be dissatisfied with the Welfare Officer's handling of the incident, or if the allegations are made against the Welfare Officer or someone close to them, you should contact another Member of the Committee as soon as possible.
- The Welfare Officer/ Committee Member will subsequently contact Social Services/ the Police, as appropriate. A clear record should be kept as to: (i) the person reporting the incident; (ii) the officer responding to the report; and (iii) the date and time of the incident being logged with the relevant authority.
- If circumstances dictate, and so as to avoid unnecessary delay, you may need to contact Social Services/ the Police yourself.
- Should you be unsure of who to call, or indeed how to say it, please use the NSPCC's freephone service on 0800 800 500 for further advice.

Guidelines for the Club's Welfare Officer

Where a report or allegation is relayed to you, you must determine whether the incident constitutes Abuse or poor practice so as to determine the best course of action.

If you believe Abuse may have occurred:

- Compile a comprehensive written report pertaining to the allegations or suspicions.
- Report the incident to Social Services, using Hertfordshire MASH team's golden number (see appendix A) or the Police.
- Maintain confidentiality.

If you believe the allegation is a result of poor practice:

- Compile a comprehensive written report pertaining to the allegations or suspicions.
- Provide the report to the Chairperson (where appropriate) and the Coaches' Representative (where appropriate).



Guidelines for Promoting Good Practice

Instances of Abuse can be limited by the promotion of good practice throughout the Club and British American Football more broadly. The below provides a non-exhaustive list of policies designed to encourage good practice within the Club.

Use of Photography and Video Cameras

- Coaches may use cameras and video recorders as a training aid. It is the responsibility of the Head Coach for each squad to ensure that all such film is used only for training purposes, and that is safely and properly stored. Where film is no longer of use for training, it should be deleted.
- Photographs may be taken by or on behalf of the Club (or other regulated American Football organisation) for use in publicity or in the press. Members are deemed to have consented to having their photographs taken and used for this purpose only.
- Parents and/ or guardians of Vulnerable Individuals should inform the Club if they would prefer for images of their Vulnerable Individual to be excluded from publicity/ press articles.
- It is the responsibility of the Head Coach for each squad to inform the opposition if photographs or video film is being taken of any game or combined session.
- Any other person wishing to use cameras and video recorders must declare their interest in writing, stating their name, address, the team/ entity/ person they are associated with and the reason for the use of the camera/ recorder.

Bullying

- Bullying may occur between Vulnerable Individuals, and is especially prevalent amongst children. The Club ask all Members to be vigilant in adopting the Club's anti-bullying stance and ensure that everyone understands bullying, howsoever manifested, will not be tolerated.
- Incidents of bullying should be taken seriously and should be investigated. The Club and Coaches are encouraged to promote a culture which encourages Vulnerable Individuals to report instances of bullying to someone in authority (and preferably to the Welfare Officer).

Team Management/ Travel

- Each Head Coach and the Club has a duty of care to all athletes when travelling to and from Club-sanctioned events. The Head Coach (or his/ her representative) should always travel with a full list of contact telephone numbers for each Vulnerable Individual on the team.
- The Head Coach and Club should also seek express permission of the parent/ guardian of each Vulnerable Individual (including information pertaining to any special instructions, dietary requirements and allergies).

APPENDIX A- Hertfordshire MASH team golden numbers

Advice for Early Years, Childcare Providers
and other Professionals

Children have a right to be cared for and protected and protecting them is everyone's responsibility

If you know of a child who is being
neglected or abused – it's simple...

Recognise, Respond and Refer

Report it now to Children's Services,
on **0300 123 4043**

Safeguarding Children



What should you do if you suspect an adult is being abused or neglected?

If you or someone you know is being
abused or neglected please contact
Health and Community Services on:
0300 123 4042.

Or for adults receiving mental health
services please contact Hertfordshire
Partnership Foundation Trust,
on **0300 777 0707**.

If there is immediate danger to life,
risk of injury or if a crime is being
committed dial **999**. If there is no
immediate risk but a police response is
required as soon as practicable due to
the seriousness of the incident and / or
potential loss of evidence then dial **101**.



All information will be treated as
confidential although there may be
occasions when some information
needs to be shared when it is in the
best interest of the adult at risk.

This information can be made
available on request in other
formats, including large print,
Braille, audio and other languages.



Safeguarding Adults at Risk

Working together to
protect adults at risk
of abuse or neglect

Hertfordshire
Safeguarding Adults Board



Appendix B: Code of Conduct for Working with Vulnerable Individuals

- Maintain public transparency and visibility. Avoid situations where you and a Vulnerable Individual are completely unobserved.
- Where groups are to be supervised in changing rooms, always ensure adults attend in pairs.
- Mixed teams should be accompanied by at least one male and one female adult.
- Volunteers and professionals must conduct themselves in accordance with the Club's Equality & Diversity Policy.
- Volunteers and professionals must place the wellbeing and safety of all Members, and in particular Vulnerable Individuals, above performance.
- All Coaches should hold a current and valid coaching qualification appropriate for their level of responsibility.
- Adults must ensure that the activities which they direct or advocate are appropriately tailored to the age, maturity and ability of the performer.
- Adults should always promote the positive aspects of American Football (e.g., fair play) and never condone rule violations or use of prohibited substances.
- Adults must consistently display high standards of personal behaviour and appearance.
- Adults should never overtly criticise athletes or use sarcasm where it may cause the Vulnerable Individual to lose self-esteem or confidence.
- Generally speaking, an adult should avoid:
 - o spending time alone with Vulnerable Individuals; and
 - o travelling alone with a Vulnerable Individual, however, should a situation arise where the above are unavoidable, the responsible adult should only proceed with the full knowledge and express consent of the Club and the Vulnerable Individual's parent/ guardian.
- Should an adult accidentally cause injury or distress to a Vulnerable Individual, or should a Vulnerable Individual misunderstand or misinterpret their actions, the adult concerned should report the incident as soon as possible to the Welfare Officer and the Vulnerable Individual's parent/ guardian.
- An adult should never:
 - o permit a Vulnerable Individual to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
 - o allow allegations made by a Vulnerable Individual to go unchallenged or unrecorded; or
 - o agree to meet a Vulnerable Individual alone.



Appendix C: Mitigating Risk and Dealing with Misconduct as a Vulnerable Individual

Misconduct refers to any form of unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour towards you or another member of the Club. These may include:

- inappropriate remarks; physical violence; and all forms of bullying

How to Mitigate Instances of Misconduct

- Listen to the advice of your parents/ guardian
- Avoid situations in which you are left alone with an individual.
- When leaving a group, inform someone of where you are going, why you are going, how long you are likely to be, and let them know once you have returned.
- Do not accept a lift should you feel unsafe or uncomfortable in any way.
- Do not tolerate bullying from any Member of the Club. How to Respond to Misconduct
- Immediately ask the culprit to stop doing whatever it is they are doing.
- Inform others present as to what has occurred. Take note of witnesses.
- Should the misconduct continue, report it to another official or adult as soon as possible.
- Inform the Welfare Officer of the incident.
- Inform your parents/ guardian of the incident.
- Keep a record of the date, time and location of the misconduct, together with a written record of what occurred and any witnesses.
- Ask any other Members who have suffered the same or similar misconduct to keep a similar record. How NOT to Respond to Misconduct
- Avoid "crying wolf" or making false accusations. Any incident will be treated with the upmost sincerity and severity.
- Avoid exaggeration and/ or embellishment. It will undermine your credibility.
- Do not ignore any behaviour which makes you uncomfortable.
- Do not delay when lodging a complaint, nor agree to hide or cover-up what occurred.
- Do not be afraid to inform your parents/ guardian, a teammate or the Club's Welfare Officer.

Appendix D: Checklist for Recording an Incident of Misconduct

- Name of Vulnerable Individual.
- Age of Vulnerable Individual.
- Names of the parents/ guardian of the Vulnerable Individual.
- Address and telephone number of the Vulnerable Individual (where available).
- An indication whether the complainant is reporting an incident in respect of which they are the victim, or whether the complaint is being made on behalf of another.
- Details as to the complaint, including:
 - o date and time of the incident; o location of the incident;
 - o parties involved; o witnesses; and o any specific details available.
- Note any physical signs of misconduct (e.g., bruises, behaviour, etc.).
- Note whether the Vulnerable Individual has been spoken to and whether a record has been kept.
- Note whether the Vulnerable Individual's parents/ guardian has been informed.
- Note who the alleged culprit is, and whether they are aware of the allegation.
- Note whoever else is informed of the misconduct, or your intention to report it.

