

# Harwich Runners Junior (HRJ) Child Protection Policy

April 2021

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## **Policy Objectives**

Everyone who competes for the club is entitled to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment. To ensure this Harwich Runners Junior (HRJ) is committed to establishing and implementing policies and procedures to ensure a safe athletics environment.

Best practise in athletics benefits everyone- the sport's governing bodies, 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 athletes up to the age of 17 years.

HRJ is committed to devising, implementing and updating policies and procedures to promote best practice when working with children and to ensure that everyone involved with HRJ understands and accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means taking action to report any concerns about their welfare.

## **1. Policy Statement**

HRJ fully accepts the legal and moral obligations to provide a duty of care, to protect all children and safeguard their welfare, irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, religion or belief, sex or gender and sexual orientation.

- 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 individuals involved with HRJ understand and accept their responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

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In order to meet this obligation HRJ will adopt a Child Protection Policy and Codes of Conduct and enforce procedures to safeguard the well being of all participants and protect them from abuse.

- Appoint Child Protection Officer(s).
- Ensure all children who are involved with the club are able to participate in a safe and fun environment.
- Respect and uphold the rights, wishes and feelings of children.
- Recruit, train and supervise their volunteers to adopt best practise to safeguard and protect children from abuse, and themselves from false allegations.
- Require volunteers to acknowledge, adopt and abide by the 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.
- To implement legislative requirements in relation to child protection
- Review policies and procedures regularly (i.e. to comply with any national legislative or regulatory changes).

## **2. Terms and Abbreviations**

**CPO** - The designated Child Protection Officer for the Club

**DBS** - Disclosure and Barring Service

**NGB** – National Governing Body

**EA** – England Athletics, The National Governing Body for athletics in England

**UKA** – The National Governing Body for athletics in the United Kingdom

A Child is anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means children and young people throughout. The fact a child has reached 16 years of age, living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody, does not change his or her status or entitlement to protection under the Children Act 1989.

Disabled children may be more vulnerable and at greater risk of all forms of abuse. The presence of multiple disabilities increases the risk of both abuse and neglect. Some of the common factors that can lead to increased vulnerability include social isolation, communication and learning difficulties or disability, lack of understanding of boundaries, need for assistance with personal care and more likely target for bullying and abuse. Children with disabilities have the same rights to protection as any other child and clubs working with these children need to be especially alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse and have strategies in place to ensure all children are able to raise concerns.

## **3. Best Practice, Poor Practice and 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

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- If you have to meet or coach one child ensure that it is conducted in an open environment, and where full parental/carer's consent and emergency contact details have been provided.
- If you are travelling alone with a child gain appropriate consent beforehand, avoid consistently having one child alone with you in the car and never share a room on your own with a child,
- Challenging bullying, harassment, foul or provocative language or controlling behaviour that could upset children or reduce them to tears.
- Never ignoring bullying by parents, coaches or children. Listening to and supporting the child being bullied.
- Maintaining an appropriate relationship with children; this means fair treatment, with respect and avoiding favouritism.
- Being friendly and open and ensuring that relationships are appropriate for someone in a position of power and trust.
- Respecting all athletes and helping them to take responsibility for their own development and decision making.
- 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 athlete and that consent for contact has been given by the child and appropriate parental consent.
- Being appropriately 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 developmental stage of each athlete. Adopting best practice not only ensures the child's welfare, it also protects you 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 any of the following incidents should occur you should report them immediately to another colleague, make a written note of the event and inform parents and/or appropriate adults of the incident and inform the CPO

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- If you accidentally hurt a child athlete
- If a child appears distressed in any manner
- If a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

## **Abuse**

Abuse can occur wherever there are children

There are four main types of abuse:-

**Physical abuse** may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, 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 say 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 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 or not 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); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

## **Working with children with a disability**

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. Practitioners 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

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stress and difficulties of caring for a disabled child. When suspecting abuse, practitioners should always ask: "Would this be acceptable if the child were not disabled?"

#### **4. Procedures for the recruitment and training of volunteers.**

All reasonable steps will be taken by HRJ to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from volunteering with the club, especially for those who will be working with children:

##### **Training**

The club will provide relevant awareness sessions / training on a three yearly basis in child / safeguarding procedures, procedures for taking children on (overnight) trips and access to sources of education and training.

A job and person specification for the role of Club Child Protection Officer should be readily available as a separate document.

##### **Monitoring and appraisal**

All volunteers 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 will be acted on as they arise. Appropriate support will be offered to those who report concerns/incidents or complaints.

#### **5. Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegations**

##### **Dealing with Concerns and Allegations**

Any person with information of a disclosure, allegation or concern about the welfare of a child must immediately report this in one of the following ways.

In the first instance report any concerns to the Club's Child Protection Officer(s), see the club website for relevant details. The CPO will liaise with at least one other member of the Club's Committee to pursue the correct course of action. If abuse is suspected this will entail contacting social services, if poor practice is suspected then this will be dealt with by reference to the club's internal procedures, including reference to the club's Board and provision of further training (see above).

Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Information should be handled and disseminated on a *need to know basis only*.

##### **Complaints Appeals and Disciplinary procedures**

UKA and the home country National Governing bodies have disciplinary and appeals procedures, all of which are available on the England Athletics website.

UKA also licence coaches and officials under a specific licensing scheme with their own Terms and Conditions. The documents relevant to licence application, disciplinary and appeal procedures are available as separate documents via the England Athletics Website

##### **References:**

Please refer to the club's website for further information regarding Club rules, Disciplinary Procedures, Codes of Conduct and contact details of club officers.