

# **HASTINGS RUNNERS**

## **BEST PRACTICE; POOR PRACTICE & ABUSE**

### **Best Practice**

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

Best practice 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 under the age of 18 years.

The Club 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 the Club understands and accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means taking action to report any concerns about their welfare.

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 that it is conducted in an open environment, and where full parental/ guardian'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 CWO.

- 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 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."

- **Procedures for the recruitment and training of volunteers**

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

- The club will provide relevant awareness sessions / training on a three yearly basis in child / safeguarding procedures, and access to sources of education and training.
- A job and person specification for the role of Club Welfare Officer is available as a separate document.
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- 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.