

# **HASTINGS RUNNERS**

## **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD'S WELFARE**

There is a legal and moral duty to report any concerns about a young or vulnerable person. The Association of Running Clubs (ARC) will support anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concern that a person is, or may be abusing a young or vulnerable person, even if that concern is shown to be unfounded.

The following guidelines apply whether or not the young or vulnerable person is involved in running. You must follow the ARC procedures for any concerns that are related to your running club activities.

Concerns may arise because:

- A young or vulnerable person informs you directly that he or she is concerned about someone's behaviour towards them.
- You become aware, through your own observations or through a third party, of possible abuse occurring.

Most suspicions of abuse follow observation of changes in the young or vulnerable person's behaviour, appearance, attitude or relationship with others. Your suspicions may develop over time.

Where the concern does not involve individuals in club activities, the matter should be reported to local Social Services or the local Police.

### **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 Welfare Officer(s); see the club website for relevant details. The CWO will liaise with at least one other member of the Club's Executive 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 and provision of further training.

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

### **What to do if a young or vulnerable person discloses to you**

If a young or vulnerable person informs you directly that they are concerned about someone's behaviour towards them, this is known as a disclosure. The person receiving the disclosure should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the young or vulnerable person.
- Tell the young or vulnerable person that he or she is not to blame and he or she was right to inform.
- Take what the young or vulnerable person says seriously.
- If the young or vulnerable person needs immediate medical treatment, take them to hospital or telephone for an ambulance, inform doctors of concerns and ensure that they are aware that this is a young or vulnerable person protection issue.
- Ensure the immediate safety of the young or vulnerable person.
- Avoid leading the young or vulnerable person and keep any questions to the minimum. Ask only what is necessary to obtain a clear understanding of what has been said.
- Re-assure the young or vulnerable person but do not make promises of confidentiality or outcome. This might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments.
- In the event of suspicion of sexual abuse do not let the young or vulnerable person bathe or shower until given permission to do so. Washing can destroy valuable evidence.
- Inform the parents/guardians immediately unless you have specific reason not to e.g the young person has named the parent/guardian as the abuser. If this is the case then contact the designated person. If they're unavailable contact local Social Services or the Police for guidance.

### **ARC Reporting Procedures**

Whether informed directly by a young or vulnerable person, via a third party, or through your own observation at your club activities, you should follow the ARC Procedures outlined below:

- Ensure the immediate safety of the young or vulnerable person.

- If the young or vulnerable person needs immediate medical treatment, take them to hospital or telephone for an ambulance, inform doctors of concerns and ensure that they are aware that this is a young or vulnerable person protection issue.
- Report the concerns to the designated person for young or vulnerable person protection , unless the concern is about the designated person (see below). If the designated person is not available, or the concern is about this person, report your concerns directly to the local Social Services, the local Police or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline.
- These agencies will advise you whether a formal referral to Social Services is necessary and what further action you might need to take. If you are advised to make a formal referral make it clear to Social Services or the Police that this is a young or vulnerable person protection referral.

All Police Forces have dedicated Child Protection Teams (CPTs) which deal with allegations of abuse within the family setting and by people in a position of trust. In a real emergency dial 999 .

Remember if the concern is about someone involved within your club and you are unable to contact the designated person, then you should inform the ARC CPO and let them know what action, in line with ARC procedures, you have taken.

### **Distinguishing between young or vulnerable person abuse and poor practice**

Concerns identified as young or vulnerable person abuse will fall within the following five categories:

- Physical Abuse. A young or vulnerable person is physically hurt or injured by an adult or an adult gives alcohol or drugs to a young person.
- Neglect. A child's basic physical needs are consistently not met, or they are regularly left alone or unsupervised.
- Emotional Abuse.
- Persistent criticism, denigrating or putting unrealistic expectations on a young or vulnerable person.
- Sexual Abuse. An adult or peer uses a young or vulnerable person to meet their own sexual needs.
- Bullying.

- Persistent or repeated hostile and intimidating behaviour towards a young or vulnerable person.

Incidents of poor practice occur when the needs of young and vulnerable people are not afforded sufficient priority with the result that their welfare is affected. Some examples are:

- When insufficient care is taken to avoid injuries (e.g. by excessive training or inappropriate training for the age, maturity, experience and ability of the young people).
- Giving continued and unnecessary preferential treatment to individuals and regularly or unfairly rejecting others (e.g. singling out and focusing on the more talented runners).
- Ignoring health and safety guidelines.
- Allowing abusive or concerning practices to go unreported (e.g. a coach who ridicules and criticizes runners after a poor race).

Please note:

- The judgement about whether an incident is one of young or vulnerable person abuse or poor practice may not be able to be made at the point of referral, but only after collection of relevant information.
- The majority of poor practice concerns can be dealt with by the club, but the ARC CPO can be consulted for support and guidance.
- All young or vulnerable person abuse will be dealt with by ARC (in conjunction with the statutory agencies).

## **Dealing with possible poor practice in a running club setting**

You become aware of a poor practice and/or possible abuse situation.

- Stay calm.
- If young or vulnerable person is present reassure him or her they are not to blame
- Don't make promises of confidentiality or outcome.
- Keep questions to a minimum.
- Is the concern poor practice or young or vulnerable person abuse?

- Contact the CWO who will either follow club procedures for a first report of poor practice, complete and submit the ARC Information and Referral Form to the ARC CPO for information only; or seek advice from ARC CPO.