

'KEEPING KIDS SAFE' THE COACH, OFFICIAL & VOLUNTEERS GUIDE TO CHILD PROTECTION IN HOCKEY

Hockey can have a very powerful and positive influence on people – especially young people. Not only can it provide opportunities for enjoyment and achievement; it can also develop valuable qualities such as self-esteem, leadership and teamwork. These positive effects can only take place if sport is in the right hands – in hands of those who place the welfare of all young people first and adopt practices that support, protect and empower them.

The reality is that abuse does take place in sport and in some cases coaches/helpers have been convicted. However, much positive work is in progress, including the England Hockey guidelines in this leaflet, to ensure that a safer sport environment is created for all young people. These guidelines will help you as coaches, volunteers and officials to be aware of the good practice that you are expected to provide in relation to a child's involvement in hockey.

The guidelines are also relevant to carers of disabled adults involved in hockey and Zone Hockey. Although all adults and children, regardless of impairment, may be vulnerable at certain times of their lives, disabled people are sometimes even more vulnerable and therefore their risk of abuse is higher.

ACCEPTABLE PRACTICE, POOR PRACTICE OR ABUSE?

Is it OK to push young players so hard that they are physically sick?

This may be deemed acceptable if it occurs occasionally with elite players. However, it may constitute poor practice and even abuse, if it occurs frequently and/or is accompanied by distress.

WHAT SIGNS MIGHT REGISTER CONCERN?

Everyone has a moral and even legal responsibility to support and care for young people/disabled adults, not only while they are involved in club activities but also if they suspect abuse is taking place elsewhere. There are physical and behavioural signs that might give rise to concerns about the welfare or safety of young players. Some examples include:

- ◆ unexplained bruising or injuries and reluctance to talk about them
- ◆ unexplained changes in behaviour – becoming aggressive, withdrawn or unhappy
- ◆ something said by a young player or peer
- ◆ a change observed over a long period of time (e.g. the player losing weight or becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt)
- ◆ sexually explicit behaviour and language

These signs are indicators, not confirmation of abuse. However, if you notice any of these signs regularly or more than one sign, you should record and report your concerns.

Abuse may result from various causes through the misuse of power by adults or peers:

- ◆ **Neglect** (e.g. lack of food, warmth, supervision, attention, love and affection). In hockey, this may result from a failure to ensure players are safe, free from risk of excessive cold, heat or injury.
- ◆ **Physical abuse** (e.g. hitting, shaking, squeezing, biting, burning). In hockey, this may result if the nature or intensity of the training is inappropriate for the capacity of the player; or where drugs or alcohol (specifically

with U18's) are advocated or tolerated.

- ◆ **Sexual abuse** (e.g. any form of sexual behaviour between an adult and a young person or the use of pornographic material). In hockey, this may be the result of coaches or older players involving young/disabled players in any form of sexual activity (e.g. sexual language, touching or relationships).
- ◆ **Emotional abuse** (e.g. wherever there is any other forms of abuse as well as the withholding of love or affection, overprotection, frequent use of shouting or taunts). In hockey, this may occur if players are subjected to constant criticism, bullying (by coach, parents or peers), taunting or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations.

WHAT DO YOU DO IF A CHILD IS DISTRESSED BY ANOTHER PERSON'S BEHAVIOUR?

In some cases it is hard to distinguish between poor coaching practice and abuse. Coaches must do everything within their power to ensure their coaching practice is beyond reproach.

If you are worried, remember it is not your responsibility to decide if abuse is taking place **but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it.** If a child tells you about someone's behaviour (e.g. an adult or another young person) which he/she finds disturbing, always:

- ◆ stay calm and reassure the child – ensure he/she is safe, feels safe and does not feel to blame for what has happened
- ◆ listen carefully, show and tell the child that you are taking what is being said seriously
- ◆ be honest, explain that you will have to tell someone else to help stop the behaviour that is distressing
- ◆ make a note of what was said as soon as possible after the event
- ◆ maintain confidentiality – only share the information on a need-to-know basis, and if it will help the child
- ◆ gain medical attention immediately if required and if appropriate contact the police or social services

WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT SOMEONE'S BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS A CHILD/CHILDREN?

WHO IS DRIVING YOUNG PEOPLE HOME?

The club/organisation should make travel arrangements for young people in consultation with parents/guardians. Ensure that parents know who will be driving their children home or away and that they are happy with this. Ideally you should ask parents to give written consent for their children to travel with club officials.

It is your responsibility to act if you are concerned about the behaviour of an adult towards a child or if you feel a child or disabled adult is being bullied:

- ◆ Always follow the EH child protection procedures.
- ◆ Report your concerns with full details to the club/organisation Child Welfare Officer (or someone you can trust) – it is then the responsibility of that person in charge to act.
- ◆ If the person in charge is not available, the concerns are about him/her, or you do not feel appropriate action has been taken; you must contact the social services or the police. Both organisations have specialist units trained to deal with these situations and their numbers are in the telephone book.

AS COACHES/VOLUNTEERS/OFFICIALS YOU ARE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE 'BEST PRACTICE' FOR A CHILD'S INVOLVEMENT IN HOCKEY

CAN YOU PROMISE NOT TO TELL ANYONE?

If you suspect a child is being abused, you will have to report your concerns in order for the abuse to be investigated and stopped. Never make promises you cannot keep.

And... 'Best Practice' means that you:

- ◆ always put the welfare of each player first
- ◆ treat all young/disabled persons equally, and with respect and dignity
- ◆ build balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empower players to share in the decision-making process
- ◆ work in an open environment
- ◆ adhere to the EH Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct
- ◆ do not subject players to bullying, humiliating comments or sarcasm
- ◆ maintain appropriate boundaries to prevent intimate and sexual relationships developing with players (avoiding horseplay, sexually suggestive comments and action)
- ◆ make sport fun and enjoyable, and promote fair play
- ◆ keep up to date with coaching/officiating knowledge, skills, qualifications and insurance
- ◆ get to know the players and involve their parents/carers wherever possible
- ◆ behave as excellent role models – this includes not drinking alcohol or smoking in the company of young people
- ◆ give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- ◆ recognise the development needs and capacity of players (e.g. avoid excessive training and competition, not pushing them against their will) should avoid private locations – taking children to their homes/sharing overnight rooms with young people.

Please refer to the complete England Hockey Child Welfare Pack

SHOULD I REPORT MY CONCERNS STRAIGHT AWAY?

If you are concerned about the welfare or safety of a child, you must report your concerns to the HE Child Protection Officer or an expert. If you are unsure what to do or need reassurance, seek advice from the NSPCC (0800 800 500), the police or social services.

for further advice and information



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