



# Safeguarding Policy - RFL

## 1. Introduction

Under Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004

*"Voluntary organisations and private sector providers play an important role in delivering services to children. They should have the arrangements described in paragraph 4 of this chapter in place in the same way as organisations in the public sector, and need to work effectively with the LSCB. Paid and volunteer staff need to be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, how they should respond to child protection concerns and make a referral to local authority children's social care or the police if necessary".*

This policy sets out how we as an Amateur Rugby Club set out to achieve this.

Ashton Bears ARLFC know we all share a responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people (*any children under the age of 18 or vulnerable adult*), that all members of the community can help to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people if they are mindful of their needs, and willing and able to act if they have concerns about a child's welfare.

We recognise that for children high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and clear lines of communication with a trusted adult helps prevention. We also recognise that abuse does take place in sport.

Ashton Bears ARLFC are committed to ensuring that all coaches, volunteers, users and parents within Ashton Bears ARLFC are aware of the duty to act on their concerns and follow local safeguarding procedures approved by the RFL (Rugby League Football) and WSCB (Wigan Area Safeguarding Children's Board).

This policy applies to all coaches, committee and volunteers of Ashton Bears ARLFC and its associated community.

**At Ashton Bears ARLFC we understand, as defined in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015' we all have a duty to:**

- Protect children from maltreatment
- Prevent impairment of children's health or development
- Ensure that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Undertake that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully

**Ashton Bears ARLFC Commitment to safeguard:**

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are listened to
- Ensure that all volunteers know who the Club Welfare Officer is and their role.
- Raise the awareness and understanding of abuse, ensuring that reporting procedures will further safeguard children, young players, coaches and all within our club
- Ensure there are reporting procedures in place if abuse is suspected
- Ensure that children know that there are adults in Ashton Bears ARLFC who they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.
- Provide an environment, activities and opportunities which equip children with the skills they need to stay safe from abuse.
- Treat each child as an individual, entitled to dignity and respect.
- Promote the safety of children in all aspects of Ashton Bears ARLFC work.



#### **4. The Rugby Football League (RFL)**

The RFL is committed to working in partnership with all agencies to ensure that information and training opportunities are available to ensure and promote best practice when working with children. Adopting best practice will help to safeguard these participants from potential abuse as well as protecting coaches and other adults in positions of responsibility from allegations of abuse. The RFL Safeguarding Policy and Implementation Procedures will allow children to excel in a safe environment and transmit a reassuring signal to parents that will positively impact on participation

Every child who plays or otherwise participates in Rugby League should be able to take part in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from abuse. This is the responsibility of every adult involved in rugby league.

- The RFL recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children by protecting them from physical, emotional or sexual harm and from neglect or bullying.
- The RFL is committed to working to provide a safe environment for all children to participate in the sport to the best of their abilities for as long as they choose to do so.
- The RFL recognises that all children have a right to be protected from abuse irrespective of their age, gender, culture, disability, race, faith, religious belief and/or sexual orientation. The child's welfare is paramount and will be put before other considerations such as winning matches or the success and achievement of adults or clubs or representative teams.
- The RFL recognises that abuse and poor practice does take place in sport and that raising awareness and understanding of the main forms of abuse and poor practice and encouraging reporting if abuse or poor practice is suspected, will further safeguard children participating in Rugby League.

#### **5. Recognising Possible Abuse**

In addition to Ashton Bears ARLFC, the RFL and WSCB Safeguarding Procedures, Ashton Bears ARLFC have particular regard to the Department of Health, Home Office and Department for Education and Skills joint publication, *'What To Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused'*. This document is available within the club.

Ashton Bears ARLFC will ensure that the CWO is trained every two years (as good practice) and the rest of the volunteers are trained every three years, in order that they can recognise signs of possible abuse or neglect and will know what to do if they suspect a child is suffering harm.

The CWO will endeavour to source additional training to ensure that all volunteers are competent to recognise signs of abuse. You should make sure that you are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect, that you question the behaviour of children and parents/carers and don't necessarily take what you are told at face value.

Children can be harmed in a number of ways. Abuse can be physical, sexual and emotional, or it can take the form of neglect. Children sometimes suffer more than one type of abuse at a time.

##### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

Physical abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. Physical abuse can also occur outside of the family environment.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of physical abuse:

- Children with frequent injuries
- Children with unexplained or unusual fractures or broken bones
- Children with unexplained: bruises or cuts; burns or scalds; or bite marks

### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

Although the effects of emotional abuse might take a long time to be recognisable, practitioners will be in a position to observe it, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunity express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.

Emotional abuse may involve serious bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of emotional abuse:

- Children who are excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong
- Parents or carers who withdraw their attention from their child, giving the child the 'cold shoulder'
- Parents or carers blaming their problems on their child
- Parents or carers who humiliate their child, for example, by name-calling or making negative comparisons

### **Sexual abuse and exploitation**

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child. You should be aware that many children and young people who are victims of sexual abuse do not recognise themselves as such. A child may not understand what is happening and may not even understand that it is wrong. Sexual abuse can have a long-term impact on mental health.

Sexual abuse 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 clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch 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 commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual abuse:

- Children who display knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age
- Children who use sexual language or have sexual knowledge that you wouldn't expect them to have
- Children who ask others to behave sexually or play sexual games
- Children with physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy.

**Child sexual exploitation** is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. Child sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online. A significant number of children who are victims of sexual exploitation go missing from home, care and education at some point.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual exploitation:

- Children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation
- Children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- Children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant
- Children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
- Children who misuse drugs and alcohol
- Children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late
- Children who regularly miss school or education or don't take part in education.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter. It is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development.

Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse. It is important that practitioners remain alert and do not miss opportunities to take timely action. However, while you may be concerned about a child, neglect is not always straightforward to identify.

Neglect may occur if a parent becomes physically or mentally unable to care for a child. A parent may also have an addiction to alcohol or drugs, which could impair their ability to keep a child safe or result in them prioritising buying drugs, or alcohol, over food, clothing or warmth for the child. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal drug or alcohol abuse.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of neglect:

- Children who are living in a home that is indisputably dirty or unsafe
- Children who are left hungry or dirty
- Children who are left without adequate clothing, e.g. not having a winter coat
- Children who are living in dangerous conditions, i.e. around drugs, alcohol or violence
- Children who are often angry, aggressive or self-harm
- Children who fail to receive basic health care
- Parents who fail to seek medical treatment when their children are ill or are injured

Ashton Bears ARLFC will strive to create an atmosphere in which children feel able and safe to talk about their worries and fears. We will listen carefully to anything children want to tell them. They will:

- Not ask leading questions
- Not promise to keep the matter secret
- Not attempt to investigate a situation themselves

You might also have concerns about a child's safety because of the way he or she is behaving.

Whether suspicions arise through disclosures children make or as a result of observations, the member of staff concerned must:

- Make a written note, on the incident referral form signed, date and timed of what was said or seen.
- Refer the matter immediately to the CWO.

You will be aware of the possibility that their records might have to be used as evidence in court, and must therefore be aware of the need to distinguish fact from opinion.

### **6. Making Referrals to Social Care**

The CWO will refer all cases of suspected abuse to Social Care **immediately**. Where practicable, the CWO will inform parents of the referral before it is made, or at least as soon as possible afterwards if

contact cannot be made with them quickly. The only circumstances in which a parent will not be informed of a referral are if it is considered:

- The child might be at greater risk of harm as a result
- Such action might impede a criminal investigation
- The child might be victim of fabricated or induced illness

Referrals of suspected abuse or neglect would be made by telephone to the Child in Need Duty Team (CiNDT) on 01942 828 300.

## **7. Confidentiality**

Information on safeguarding issues will only be shared within-Ashton Bears ARLFC with those who need it in order to ensure the safety of the children concerned.

All records of child protection concerns and referrals are kept in a locked cabinet.

Only one child protection file will be kept on a child and will contain, on the inside front cover, a maintained chronology of events. No other information of a child protection matter will be kept anywhere else in the Club

Well-kept records are essential. All must ensure they record information as soon after an event as possible.

## **8. Supporting Children and young people**

We recognise that a child who is abused or witness's violence may feel helpless and humiliated, may blame themselves, and find it difficult to develop and maintain a sense of self worth. We recognise that our club can offer a form of enjoyment and stability in the lives of children who have been abused or who are at risk of harm.

We accept that research shows that the behaviour of a child in these circumstances may range from that which is perceived to be normal to aggressive or withdrawn.

Ashton Bears ARLFC will support all children by:

- Encouraging self-esteem and self-assertiveness, through the training as well as our relationships, whilst not condoning aggression or bullying.
- Promoting a caring, safe and positive environment.
- Liaising and working together with all other support services and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children.

## **9. Supporting Staff**

We recognise that volunteers and coaches within the club who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm, or appears to be likely to suffer harm may find the situation stressful and upsetting. We will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the CWO and to seek further support as appropriate.

## **10. Volunteer/ Coach Recruitment (see Safer Recruitment Policy)**

Before confirmation of appointment, all coach and volunteers who apply to work at Ashton Bears ARLFC will be subject to a rigorous recruitment process to ensure, as far as possible, their suitability to work with children. References will be taken up and they will be required to give evidence of their qualifications and details of previous experience.

As part of this recruitment process, all potential staff will be required to declare any criminal record. Disclosure & Barring Service checks will be undertaken. No one will be employed if it is considered they are unsuitable to work with children.

All volunteers are informed of the designated name(s) and the Ashton Bears ARLFC's policy for the protection of children:

- During their first induction Ashton Bears ARLFC
- Through the provision of a copy of this policy
- Through inductions
- Information on relevant notice boards
- Whole staff training or club meetings

All volunteers need to be alert to the signs of harm and abuse. They should report any concerns, if not immediately, as soon as possible that day to the CWO. If in any doubt they should consult still with the CWO.

### **11. Allegations against Ashton Bears ARLFC Volunteers and Coaches**

All coaches and volunteers should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child. It is always advisable for interviews or training with individual children or young people to be conducted in view of other adults. Coaches should never be alone in a changing room with their team.

Any allegation made against a coach or volunteer at Ashton Bears ARLFC will be taken very seriously and will be referred immediately by the CWO to the L.A.D.O. (refer to Wigan's procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against adults who work with children).

The allegation will not be investigated by Ashton Bears ARLFC, other than to establish the facts. The L.A.D.O. will liaise with Social Care and the Police to determine if the allegation should be investigated internally or dealt with by Social Care / Police.

### **12. Conclusion**

The aim of these procedures is to ensure that all the children and young people accessing Ashton Bears ARLFC are safe and free from harm. If they are considered to be at risk of / have suffered abuse or neglect, Ashton Bears ARLFC will take the steps described to minimise the risk or protect them from further harm.

In all its work to safeguard children, Ashton Bears ARLFC will need to work in partnership with other agencies and parents.