Bicester Athletic Club Safeguarding and Protecting Children/Vulnerable Adult Policy

Introduction

Everyone who takes part in athletics is entitled to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment. To ensure this Bicester AC is committed to establishing and implementing policies and procedures to ensure a safe athletics environment.

Best practice in athletics benefits everyone and ensures that children (everywhere in this policy, where 'child' or 'children' are referred to, this also includes vulnerable adults) who choose to participate in athletics have a safe and fun experience.

Our objective is to build a safer future in athletics for all children.

All children are entitled to a duty of care and to be protected from abuse. Abuse can occur anywhere. Bicester AC is committed to devising, implementing and updating policies and procedures to promote best practice when working with children and to ensure that everyone in the sport understands and accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means taking action to report any concerns about their welfare. However it is not the responsibility of Bicester AC to determine whether or not abuse has taken place; this is the domain of the child protection professionals.

Policy Statement

Bicester AC's Obligations

Bicester AC fully accepts its legal and moral obligations to provide a duty of care, to protect all children, to 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 in athletics understand and accept their responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer of the club.

In order to meet this obligation Bicester AC will:

– Provide and enforce procedures to safeguard the well-being of all participants and protect them from abuse.

– Ensure all children who take part in athletics are able to participate in a safe and fun environment.

– Respect and uphold the rights, wishes and feelings of children.

– Recruit, train and supervise coaches, officials and other volunteers to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect young people from abuse, and themselves from false allegations.

– Require coaches, officials and volunteers to adopt and abide by their 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.

– Review policies regularly.

Best Practice, Poor Practice and Abuse

To provide everybody with the best possible experience and opportunities in athletics it is important that everyone operates within an accepted ethical framework and demonstrates exemplary behaviour. 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 it is conducted in an open environment, and where full consent and emergency contact details have been provided.

– If you are travelling alone with a child gain appropriate consent, avoid consistently having one child alone with you in the car and never sharing a room on your own with a child,

– Challenging bullying, harassment, foul or provocative language or controlling behaviour that could upset individuals or reduce them to tears.

– Never ignoring bullying by parents, coaches or children. Listening to and supporting the person being bullied.

– Maintaining an appropriate relationship with children; this means treating people fairly, 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 individual and appropriate parental consent.

– Being 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 development stage of each athlete.

Adopting best practice not only ensures the individuals welfare, it also protects coaches and officials from possible wrongful allegations.

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 Club Welfare Officer.

– 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 or scalding, drowning, 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 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. 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. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Recruitment of officials and coaches

All reasonable steps will be taken at all levels within the Club to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working within the club, especially with children

Our process of recruiting new volunteers to the club will reflect:

– Our safeguarding children and welfare policy

– The need for all volunteers to complete a criminal record check (enhanced level DBS check)

Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences relating to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children.

Training of Volunteers

All volunteers who work with children are expected to undertake relevant training on a three yearly basis in child / safeguarding procedures, procedures for taking children away and sources of education and training.

Complaints Appeals and Disciplinary procedures

The Club has a disciplinary and appeals procedures, which is available as a separate document to this policy.

Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegations

While it is not the responsibility of Bicester AC, volunteers or club members to decide whether a concern constitutes abuse, it is their responsibility to report any concerns about the welfare of a child. These concerns may arise due to:

– An individual disclosing that they are being abused.

– The behaviour of an adult towards a child.

– A number of indicators observed in a child over a period of time.

When responding to a concern raised about the welfare of a child the Club will not:

– Probe for more information than is offered.

– Speculate or make assumptions.

– Show shock or distaste.

– Make comments about the person against whom the allegations have been made.

– Make promises or agree to keep secrets.

– Give a guarantee of confidentiality.

All concerns, suspicions and disclosures should be reported appropriately to the Club Welfare Officer, who will ensure that appropriate action is taken.

Reporting procedures

Any person with information of a disclosure, allegation or concern about the welfare of a child must immediately report this by informing the club's designated Club Welfare Officer (CWO) or in the rare event that he or she is not available, to the club Chairman, who will refer the matter to UKA's Welfare Officer and to the local child safeguarding authority in Oxford.

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a volunteer there may be three types of investigation:

– Criminal: in which case the police are immediately involved

– Safeguarding children: in which case the social care services (and possibly the police) will be involved

– Disciplinary or misconduct: where it relates to coaches and officials UKA will be involved.

If there is any doubt about whether or not the alleged behaviour constitutes abuse, the concern will be shared with professional agencies that will be responsible for subsequent action.

The club will also ensure that:

– The parents of the child are contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social care services department.

– UK Athletics is requested to impose an interim suspension based on the risk to the child, an assessment of the seriousness of the allegation and the need to ensure a full investigation can be instituted.

Poor Practice

If the allegations are against a volunteer and after consideration are clearly about poor practice, the allegations will be dealt with by the Club under its disciplinary procedures as a misconduct issue.

Dealing with Bullying

The same procedures will be adopted when dealing with allegations of bullying.

Confidentiality and Professional Support

Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Information obtained by the club will be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

Anyone reporting his or her concern about a colleague's practice or concerns about the welfare of a child can do so safely in the knowledge that they too will be supported by the club. The club will take appropriate steps to ensure that the victim (and parents, appropriate adults) are provided with appropriate professional support (e.g. Help lines and support groups). It will also ensure through the appropriate allegation, disciplinary and appeals procedures that the accused is offered appropriate support.

Don't keep it to yourself

If you think you are being abused, or have been in the past, it's really important to tell an adult you trust. This isn't easy. You may feel worried about what will happen if you do. Here are some other reasons why you may not want to tell anyone:

– The abuser may have told you to keep quiet and not to talk to anybody

– They may have threatened you about what might happen to you or your place in the team if you tell

– They may have made threats about your friends or family

– They may have said "No one will believe you" or "No one will do anything if you tell"

– You may feel guilty that you didn't stop the abuse happening

– The person may be someone who everyone in your sport looks up to – perhaps including your parents

– You may not want to let your parents down

– You may even think the problem will go away if you ignore it.

Don't let any of these things stop you getting help. By telling someone, you can stop the abuse. You'll also be helping to protect other children from the abuser.

– Tell an adult you trust as soon as possible. This could be: a parent or someone else in your family; another member of staff at your athletics club; a teacher or school counsellor; your doctor or school nurse.

– The club has a Welfare Officer. Tell them about your worries.

– Contact one of the child protection helplines. They will know who can help you in your area.

– Make sure you are not alone again with the person who has tried to harm you. Remember your rights!

We all believe that children have the right to enjoy sporting activities in safety.

For further help and advice, visit www.childline.org.uk **Telephone: 0800 1111**

Email: childprotection@uka.org.uk Telephone: 0161 223 4246.

Call the police in an emergency (999) non-emergency (101)

NSPCC 0800 800 5000

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