

## Child Protection Basic Awareness

Clubs have a responsibility to safeguard and protect children in their care and there is legislation which set out those responsibilities, particularly under The Childrens Act 1989. Clubs must address the issue of having a Child Protection Policy within their normal procedures and ensure this is fully documented with records that prove regular assessment and staff training.

A Template for a Child Protection Policy is provided by Sport England (The copyright for the content of the Child Protection Policy is owned by NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU), which has given permission to Sport England for its reproduction) and this template is available with the following link:-

<http://www.sportengland.org/templatehchildprotectionpolicy.doc>

### **What is Child Abuse?**

Child abuse is difficult to define. There are many ways a child can be abused – the list is endless. It is not a new problem but nowadays we are better informed and able to recognize it and acknowledge it happens within our society.

The Children Act 1989 defined it as “*a child suffering, or being at risk of suffering **significant harm***” “**harm**” is defined as meaning ill-treatment or the impairment of health and development.

Abuse is categorised under four different headings. They are:-

- **Physical Abuse**
- **Emotional Abuse**
- **Neglect**
- **Sexual Abuse**

#### **Physical Abuse**

There are a range of indicators to look out for in helping to decide whether an injury is accidental or has been deliberately inflicted.

- Bruising Most accidental bruises occur on bony parts of the body. Damage to soft tissue eg thighs, buttocks, back and chest is less likely to happen accidentally. Outline bruising showing hand prints, belt marks etc should raise concerns as should fingertip bruising which could suggest grabbing or shaking.
- Burns & Scalds These are difficult to distinguish between accidental and deliberate. Clear outlines like cigarette burns are of concern and splash marks above the main area of the scald could suggest liquid has been thrown.
- Bite Marks Impressions of the teeth will be apparent. A difference in size between an adult and a child's bite is obvious.
- Fractures and Joint Injuries Caused by twisting or pulling limbs or by a direct blow. There will be pain and swelling over a bone or joint and associated bruising.
- Improbable Explanations Concerns should be raised if an injury does not match the child's explanation, or if the child's account is different to the parent/carers.

#### **Emotional Abuse**

This category identifies those children who are not physically hurt but who are brought up in an emotionally bruising environment. Their needs are often met with hostility, indifference or verbal abuse. They may be regularly ridiculed, shamed, humiliated, starved of affection or even subjected to constant threat of injury even if it never actually happens. Children who are treated in this way will

often have a very low self-esteem. Conversely, they may be obsessively good at the club, always anxious to receive praise for the things they do.

If a child has suffered any other form of abuse it is likely they will suffer a degree of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse is difficult to identify but there are some indicators to look out for:-

- Poor self-esteem or loss of confidence
- Depression/withdrawn behaviour
- Regressive behaviour eg wetting/soiling
- Over reaction to mistakes
- Drink, drug, solvent abuse
- Self harm or mutilation
- Neurotic behaviours eg rocking, hair twisting

### **Neglect**

Neglect of children can be very difficult to determine. Often value judgments are made on how **we** feel children should be cared without taking into consideration the family's personal circumstances.

Children have different levels of care, determined by culture, levels of income and other resources.

For example, if it is normal in your family to bath and put on clean clothes every day you may regard a child who is only given a bath once a week as neglected.

Abuse by neglect occurs if a child is not provided with the basic requirements necessary for survival; adequate food, clothing, warmth and medical care or failure to provide the necessary stimulation to sustain behavioural and emotional development.

Some possible indicators of neglect are:-

- Poor personal hygiene – unwashed hair and body
- Constant hunger and overeating when food is available
- Poor or inappropriate clothing
- Untreated illnesses or injuries
- Tired. Listless, pale and unkempt appearance

### **Sexual Abuse**

Most child victims are sexually abused by someone they know, either a member of their family or someone well known to them. Very little abuse is caused by strangers, because strangers very quickly become a friend to a child and their family and gain a position of trust. Child sexual abuse is more common than generally believed. Children who are sexually abused are often told by their abuser that they will be disbelieved and punished for lying, or permanently separated from their families or even killed if they disclose their abuse to anyone. They feel shame, guilt and are fearful of the consequences of "telling".

Some possible physical indicators of sexual abuse are:-

- Complaints of genital pain, bleeding or itching
- Bruises, scratches or bite marks on the body
- Difficulty in walking or sitting down

Some possible behavioural indicators of sexual abuse are:-

- Changes in behaviour
- Sexual awareness inappropriate to the child's age
- Mistrust of, or refusal to stay with familiar adults
- Eating disorders
- Self harming and mutilation
- Unexplained gifts or money

Deliberately exposing children or young people to pornographic materials via magazines, video films, photographs and the Internet is considered abusive as is allowing children to view sexual activity between adults.

### **CONCLUSION**

Lists of signs and symptoms are useful as indicators of possible abuse but cannot be relied on alone. Many injuries and behaviours can have entirely innocent explanation. One sign or symptom alone does not automatically suggest abuse is happening.