



## **Children and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy**

Belfast Harlequins Club is committed to practice that will protect children and vulnerable adults from harm. It is the Club's Policy

- to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm, while they are in the care of the Club, or persons employed and engaged by it,
- to take all reasonable steps to protect them from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment, and
- to respect their rights, wishes and feelings.

All adults involved in the activities of Belfast Harlequins Club are required to follow the Club's Code of Conduct. They must also be familiar with the steps to be taken in the event of becoming aware of, or suspecting or receiving allegations of abuse.

This Policy is part of the wider strategy for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Arrangements will be put in place for liaison with Social Services where potential child and vulnerable adults' abuse cases are identified so that maximum benefit can be obtained from available child and vulnerable adults' protection resources.

It is the object of the Club to assist in the prevention of abuse by the development of policies that encourage the identification of the problem and the implementation of procedures, which will ensure that action to deal with problems of this nature, can be taken by the appropriate authorities.

Anyone employed to work directly with children and vulnerable adults will be required to disclose all convictions, whether spent or not. Checks may be made on any adult who has not already been the subject of vetting.

Adults against whom allegations of abuse or harm to children have been made, which appear well founded, will be denied access to children in the course of Belfast Harlequins Club (BHC) activities, and will be subject to disciplinary action.

Children and vulnerable adults protection will be kept under regular review.

### **Definitions of Abuse**

What is child and vulnerable adults abuse?

Child and vulnerable adults abuse is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults and often by people they know and trust.

The following is an extract from Co-operating to Protect Children, volume 6 of the Children (NI) Order Regulations and Guidance, which provides guidance on inter-agency co-operation for the protection of children.

"Children may be abused by a parent, a sibling or other relative, a carer ( ie. a person who has actual custody of a child, such as a foster parent or staff member in a residential home), an acquaintance or a stranger, who may be an adult or a young person. The abuse may be the



result of a deliberate act or of a failure on the part of a parent or carer to act or to provide proper care, or both.

The abuse may take many forms:

## NEGLECT

The actual or likely persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

## PHYSICAL ABUSE

Actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

## SEXUAL ABUSE

Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. The involvement of children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate social taboos of family roles.

## EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Actual or likely persistent or significant ill treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment. This is where it is the main, or only form of abuse."

### Recognising and Responding to Abuse

Child abuse is not easy to recognise and it is understood that most sports leaders and responsible adults will not be expert. It is their responsibility to record and report their concerns the Child Protection Officer nominated by the sporting section.

It is **not** the responsibility of sports leaders to decide whether or not abuse has occurred but it is their responsibility to report.

You **must** refer: you **must not** investigate.

### Disclosure

It may happen that a child chooses to confide in a leader or a coach because of A close and trusting relationship which had developed. It is never easy to receive this information and there is no simple set of rules to follow. You should be guided by the following key points:

DO'S	DON'TS
Stay calm	Do not panic
Listen and hear. Give time	Do not promise to keep secrets
Believe	Do not ask leading questions
Reassure	Do not make the child repeat the story



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Record in writing	Do not start to investigate
Report	Do not delay
Record your report	Do not take sole responsibility
Maintain confidentiality	

The one thing you **MUST NOT** do is **NOTHING**.

## Confidentiality

Remember that you must never promise to keep information disclosed to you confidential. It may be in the best interests of the child, or a legal requirement, to report that information. However information relating to concerns should only be communicated on a “need to know” basis. Clear reporting procedures and lines of communication are provided within these guidelines.

## Recording

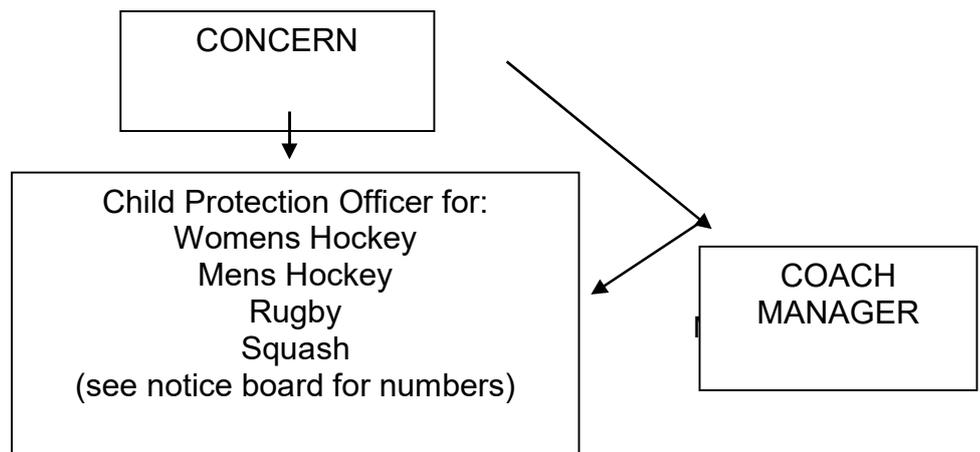
When recording allegations or suspicions of abuse, it is important to record the **facts** at the time of receiving information. A useful checklist includes:-

- name of child
- age
- parents names
- home address and telephone number
- whose concerns?
- Incident which prompted concern
- Any physical, behavioural signs
- Has the child been spoken to? By whom? What was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Details?
- Has anyone else been consulted?

## Reporting

All allegations or suspicions are to be referred immediately and directly to the Nominated Child Protection Officer for that sporting section, no matter how insignificant they seem to be, or when they occur.

No investigation or questioning should be undertaken. It is not the responsibility of those working in sport to decide that child abuse is occurring but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns.

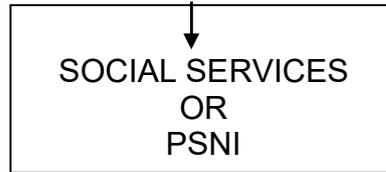




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## Recruitment and Selection Procedure

Those who have direct access to children or who are in direct contact with children playing sport will be carefully screened for their suitability to work with them.

### **Employees**

A **Personal disclosure form** will be requested from all applicants, providing information about any past criminal convictions, cautions or cases pending.

An **Interview** will offer the opportunity to check out the accuracy of the Information supplied on the application form, to expand the discussion around areas of interest and to fill in any gaps.

Two **References** will be sought from each applicant. Referees will be informed that the post entails substantial access to children and will be asked directly as to the applicants suitability for work with children.

**ACCESS NI – IDENTITY CHECK** may be accessed as a final procedure for those applicants who have been offered conditional posts. A long birth certificate may be required for this to prove identification.

### **Volunteers**

It is recognised by the BHC that a vast amount of time, energy and commitment to sport is provided by Volunteers, in fact without these people many activities simply would not take place. Volunteers are drawn from a wide range of people and undertake a wide range of tasks, in fact on some occasions, it may be possible that these people have greater access to children than the coach or manager. For this reason similar procedures to those outlined above may be adopted, though these will vary in approach and intensity according to the position and activity to be undertaken.

## Supervision and Support

All adults engaged in activities on behalf of the BHC should be aware of

- the current Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy and procedures,
- what is expected of them in terms of the Code of Conduct, and
- the procedure for reporting allegations or suspicions of child and vulnerable adults' abuse.

All adults must sign a copy of the Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy document showing that they have received, read and understood it.

A copy of this signed document will be retained by the BHC.



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The BHC will put in place

- arrangements to monitor coaching, and in particular some direct supervision of coaching should be provided for,
- opportunities will be provided for children/young people to meet with representatives of the BHC and to express their views on the general standard of sessions, and
- opportunities will be provided for staff and volunteers to express any concerns or anxieties.

## Code of Conduct

- Always be publicly open when working with children and vulnerable adults. Avoid situations where a coach/manager/leader and individual child and vulnerable adults are completely unobserved.
- If physical support is necessary, it should be provided openly. Care is needed as it is difficult to maintain hand position when a child or vulnerable adult is constantly moving. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be considered.
- Where possible, allow parents to take responsibility for their children and vulnerable adults in changing rooms. If groups are to be supervised in changing rooms, always ensure coaches/managers/leaders work in pairs. Encourage an open environment (ie. no secrets).
- Where there are mixed teams away from home, they should always be accompanied by a male and female leader.
- All must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treat everyone equally.
- All must place the well-being and safety of the performer above the development of performance.
- Adults must develop an appropriate working relationship with performers (especially children), based on mutual trust and respect. You must not exert undue influence to obtain personal benefit or reward.
- Performers must be guided and encouraged to accept responsibility for their own behaviour and performance.
- Members involved in coaching should hold an up to date Coaching Award or work directly with someone holding an award. Always make sure that you are working at a level commensurate with your coaching qualification.
- Adults should ensure that the activities which they direct or advocate are appropriate for the age, maturity, experience and the ability of the individual. There should be clarity as to the expectations of all involved (parents should be included where appropriate), a contact may be appropriate. Sessions should include progressions and there should be planning for future sessions.



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- Members should co-operate fully with other specialists (other coaches, officials, doctors, physiotherapists, umpires, referees) in the best interests of the performer. Ensure players know to inform the coach of any injury or illness.
- All adults should always promote the positive aspects of their sport (eg. Fair play) and never condone rule violations or the use of prohibited substances.
- Members should consistently display high standards of behaviour and appearance.
- Members should prepare players to respond to success and failure in a dignified manner and should be seen to do so themselves.

All members should be aware that it *does not make sense* to:

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children and vulnerable adults away from others
- Take children and vulnerable adults alone on a car journey, however short
- Take children and vulnerable adults to your home where they will be alone with you

If it should arise that such situations are unavoidable they should only take place with the full knowledge of someone in charge and/or a person with parental responsibility for the child or vulnerable adult.

If travelling to an event is necessary, make sure that written permission is given by the parents.

Be aware that normal car insurance *may not* cover the transportation of players to and from events.

Members should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay,
- Share a room with a child or vulnerable adult,
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching,
- Allow children or vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged,
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun,
- Allow allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon,
- Do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults, which they can do for themselves, and
- Invite or allow children or vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home supervised

## **EMERGENCY ACTION/ FIRST AID**

All Managers, Coaches and leaders should be prepared with an action plan in the event of an emergency.

This will include:

- Access to First Aid equipment



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- Telephone contact if the participant is a minor
- Telephone contact to the emergency services

An 'Accident Report Form" must be used to record accidents, injuries and any untoward event.

All accidents, injuries and any untoward event should be recorded on the Accident Report Form, along with a witness statement if thought necessary.

If you accidentally hurt a child or vulnerable adult, or cause distress in any manner, or the child or vulnerable adult, appears to respond in a sexual manner to your actions, or misunderstands, or misinterprets something you have done, report the incident to a colleague supported by a brief written report of the incident as soon as possible. Parents/carers should be informed of the incident.