

# Welfare and Safeguarding Policy

## Introduction

This policy is for the information of everyone in our club working with children and/or vulnerable adults, as well as our players, coaches and parents.

Anyone under the age of 18 years old should be considered as a child for the purpose of this document.

## Policy statement

We acknowledge our duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and/or vulnerable adults and we're committed to ensuring our safeguarding practices reflect statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and British American Football Association requirements.

This policy recognises that the welfare and interests of children and/or vulnerable adults are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, gender, religion or beliefs, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or socio-economic background, all children and/or vulnerable adults:

- Have a positive and enjoyable experience of sport at the Kent Exiles in a safe and child friendly environment.
- Are protected from abuse whilst participating in American Football or outside of the activity.

The Kent Exiles American Football Club acknowledges that some children, including disabled children and young people or those from ethnic minority communities, and/or vulnerable adults can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

As part of our safeguarding policy the Kent Exiles will:

- Promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and/or vulnerable adults.
- Ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children, young people and/or vulnerable adults.
- Ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual(s) who raise or disclose the concern.
- Ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored.
- Prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals.
- Ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation.

The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved with the Kent Exiles American Football Club. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.

### **Monitoring**

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, or in the event of changes in legislation and/or government guidance.

Signed

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Chairman

Kent Exiles American Football Club

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Date

## **Club Best Practice**

We operate using the following good practice throughout the Club.

### **Recruitment of coaches and volunteers**

All Coaches of teams with young people under the age of 18 must undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (formerly a CRB check) to ensure they don't have a known history of harmful behaviour.

All coaches in the Club (regardless of the age group they work with) are required to:

- Hold a minimum of a British American Football Coaching Association Level 1 coaching qualification.
- Ensure they are registered and insured with the British American Football Association to undertake training sessions.

### **Use of photography and film**

The coaching staff, as a training aid, may use cameras to record training and games and play back film. It's the responsibility of the Head Coach to ensure that all such film is used only for training purposes, that is safely and properly stored, and that it is disposed of when no longer of any use.

Photographs may be taken by or on behalf of the Club or other British American Football Association registered American Football organisations for use in publicity on the internet or in the press. In all cases the Club will ensure that the name and photograph of any child never appear together in such a way that the child may be identified, unless permission is granted by said child's parent/guardian.

When completing club joining forms, parents/guardians of children are asked to inform the Club if they prefer that photographs of their children are never used for publicity. It is the responsibility of the Head Coach to inform the opposition in any game if photographs or video film is being taken of the game. Any other person wishing to use cameras and video recorders must declare their interest in writing, stating their name, address, who they are with and the reason for the use of the camera/recorder.

### **Bullying**

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable. We adopt an anti-bullying policy and ensure that everyone understands bullying will not be tolerated in any form. We are prepared to take the problem seriously and investigate any incident and decide on appropriate action, also ensuring that children and/or vulnerable adults are able to report the instance of bullying (either to themselves or team members) to someone in authority, preferably the Deputy Child Welfare Officer for the team.

## **Team Management/Team Travel**

Implicit within this Policy is the Duty of Care that a Head Coach and/or the Club has to its athletes when travelling to events. The Head Coach (or his representative) should always travel with a full address list and contact telephone numbers for all players within the team and the permission of the parent/guardian of each child (the inclusion of special instructions, dietary requirements and allergies is also extremely useful). This will allow the Head Coach to take the necessary action in the event of an emergency.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

All Club members have a role to ensure the protection of children and/or vulnerable adults. The role of the club will be as follows:

- To appoint one Club Welfare Officer for the club.
- To appoint deputy Child Welfare Officers for each club team with players under 18 years of age and/or vulnerable adults who undertake day-to-day responsibility for ensuring best practice is followed within their team.
- To accept that all Officers and Committee members have responsibilities in this area and be prepared to respond to any indication of abuse.
- To be ready to amend bad practice.
- To maintain confidentiality of the child, vulnerable adult and any accused parties.

The role of the Club Welfare Officer within the Club will be as follows:

- To ensure that all adults who have regular access to or responsibility for those under 18 years of age and/or vulnerable adults undertake the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to ensure they don't have a known history of harmful behaviour.
- To ensure this Club Welfare Policy is kept up to date and propose to the Club Management Committee and AGM and changes which may be required.
- To receive and advise on reports from other club members.
- To initiate action, ensuring all appropriate persons have been contacted.
- Everyone has a responsibility to maintain awareness and openness with regard to Club Welfare issues.
- Responding to Complaints and Alleged or Suspected Incidents.

The role of the Deputy Club Welfare Officer for each team will be as follows:

- To be a point of contact within their team for players and parents on child and/or vulnerable adult protection issues.
- To be aware of best practice with regards to working with children and/or vulnerable adults and ensure this is followed within their team on a day-to-day operational basis.
- Escalate complaints and alleged or suspected incidents to the Club Welfare Officer.

## **Appendix 1 - Definitions**

The term child abuse is used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults and often by those they know and trust.

There are four main types of child abuse, though a child may experience more than one kind at any one time in his/her life.

*Physical Abuse* – Occasions when parents, adults or other children deliberately inflict injuries on a child or knowingly do not prevent such injuries. It includes injury caused by hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning, biting or using excessive force, and giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison, and attempts to suffocate or drown them. Physical abuse may also be deemed to occur if the nature and intensity of training disregards the capacity of the child's immature and growing body, or predisposes the child to injury resulting from fatigue or overuse.

*Emotional Abuse* – Occasions when adults fail to show children due care and attention or threaten, use sarcasm, taunt or shout at a child causing him/her to lose self-confidence or self-esteem and become nervous or withdrawn. These may also occur when an adult repeatedly ignores or fails to respond to a child's efforts or progress, or places the child under unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations constantly.

*Neglect* – Occasions where adults fail to meet a child's essential needs, such as adequate clothing, food, warmth and medical care. It also includes occasions where an adult leaves a child alone without proper supervision, or does not ensure that the child is safe, or exposes them to undue extremes of temperature or risk of injury.

*Sexual Abuse* – Occurs when males and females use children to meet their own sexual needs. Examples include forcing a child to take part in sexual activity such as sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse, fondling or exposure to pornographic material. This also includes suggestions that sexual favours can help (or refusal can hinder) a career.

There is also the abuse of trust, where children are indoctrinated with attitudes to training, drugs and cheating, or social, political and religious views which are unacceptable to the child's family, community or rules of the sport.

The inappropriate use of photographic material taken at sporting events is an area of abuse that is increasing and all those involved within the sport should be aware of this.

All forms of bullying, both verbal and physical from other children is also a form of abuse and there is a requirement for all within the sport to ensure that there are sufficient mechanisms to allow children to report instances of bullying.

## **Appendix 2 - Identifying and reporting abuse**

Dealing with abuse is rarely straightforward. In some cases a child or vulnerable adult's disturbed behaviour or an injury may suggest that they have been abused. In many situations however, the signs will not be clear-cut and decisions about what action to take can be difficult.

Possible signs include:

- Uncharacteristic changes in the child or vulnerable adult's behaviour, attitude and commitment e.g. becoming quiet and withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- Sideline gossip.
- Bruises and injuries not typical of the sport or injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- Signs of discomfort and pain.
- Reluctance to remove tracksuit, or shower.
- The child or vulnerable adult becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.
- The child or vulnerable adult loses weight for no apparent reason.
- Nervousness when approached or touched.
- Fear of particular adults - especially those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- The child or vulnerable adult wishes to switch to another coach without a reasonable explanation.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Children or vulnerable adults who are always alone and unaccompanied and/or are prevented from socialising with others.
- Children or vulnerable adults who are reluctant to go home.

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, and the presence of one or more indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place.

It is not the responsibility of those working in the Club to decide that abuse is occurring, but it is a responsibility to follow through on any concerns.

## **Appendix 3 – Identifying abuse and what to do if an allegation is brought to your attention**

Abuse may become apparent in a number of ways:

- A child or vulnerable adult may tell you.
- A third party may have reported an incident or may have a strong suspicion.
- You may have a suspicion.

If an allegation is brought to your attention:

### **Step 1 - Listen and Reassure**

#### **DO**

- *Stay calm* - do not rush into inappropriate action.
- *Reassure them* – that they are not to blame and confirm that you know how difficult it must be to confide.
- *Listen and believe* – to what they say and show that you take them seriously Allow only one adult to talk to the child or vulnerable adult – discrepancies in statements may lead to legal problems.
- *Keep questions to a minimum* – in many cases it may be more appropriate to nod and acknowledge their account. If you must question then use open ended questions i.e. those where more than a yes/no response is required. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed if it appears that the child or vulnerable adult has been led or words and ideas have been suggested.
- *Ensure that you clearly understand what the child or vulnerable adult has said* – so that you can pass it on to the appropriate agencies.
- *Consult with the Club Welfare Officer* - ensuring that you communicate all the information quickly and accurately.
- *Maintain confidentiality.*

#### **DO NOT**

- *Panic.*
- *Make promises you cannot keep* – explain that you may have to tell other people in order to stop what is happening whilst maintaining maximum possible confidentiality.
- *Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily.*
- *Delay.*
- *Take sole responsibility for further action.*

## **Step 2 - Record**

Record what the child or vulnerable adult has said and/or your concerns legibly and accurately. Please note that when a disclosure is made, it is the person to whom the disclosure is made that the relevant authorities (police and/or social services) will come to for an account of what was said. This first-hand account is of primary importance.

## **Step 3 - Involve the appropriate people**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in a club/organisation to decide whether or not child abuse or abuse of a vulnerable adult has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities.

Any suspicion that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused should be reported to the Club Welfare Officer, who should refer the allegation to the relevant sport national governing body safeguarding officer who will refer it on to Children's Services who may involve the police.

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice the Club Welfare Officer should deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by the Club Welfare Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately, it should be reported to the national lead safeguarding officer for the organisation who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

Remember: if you think a child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger call the police. Immediate advice and support is always available from the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.

## **Appendix 4 – Bullying**

Bullying will not be tolerated. As a Club we take bullying seriously. Children and parents should be assured that they would be supported if bullying is reported. All Club officials and coaches working with under 18's or vulnerable adults should have an understanding of what bullying is, and what they should do if bullying arises.

### **What is bullying?**

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim. Bullying can be:

- *Emotional* – being unfriendly, excluding (emotionally and physically) sending hurtful text messages, tormenting, (e.g. hiding spikes/clothing, threatening gestures).
- *Physical* – pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.
- *Racist* – racial taunts, graffiti, gestures.
- *Sexual* – unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.
- *Homophobic* because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality.
- *Verbal* – name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.

NB – these are just examples and not an exhaustive list of the various actions that can be construed as bullying.

### **Why is it important to respond to bullying?**

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Athletes who bully need to learn different ways of behaving. This Club has a responsibility to respond promptly, and effectively, to issues of bullying.

### **Signs and symptoms**

A child or vulnerable adult may indicate by signs or behaviour that he, or she, is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child or vulnerable adult:

- Says he/she is being bullied.
- Is unwilling to go to Club sessions.
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence.
- Feels ill before training sessions.
- Comes home with clothes torn or athletics equipment damaged.
- Has possessions go “missing”.
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully).
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises.
- Is frightened to say what's wrong.
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above.

In more extreme cases;

- Starts stammering.
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares.
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable.
- Is bullying others.
- Stops eating.
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away.

These signs and behaviours may indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

### **Procedures**

- Report bullying incidents to the deputy Club Welfare Officer for the child or vulnerable adult's team, or a member of the Committee.
- In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be referred to The British American Football Association's Welfare officer by the Club Welfare Officer for advice.
- In cases of serious bullying, parents/guardians should be informed and asked to come in to a meeting, to discuss the problem.
- If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted.
- The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly.
- An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour.
- If mediation fails and the bullying is seen to continue, the Club will initiate disciplinary action.

## **Appendix 5: Club best practice for people working with children**

To ensure that all forms of abuse are prevented and to help protect people who work with young athletes the following guidelines should be followed:

- Always be publicly open when working with children and/or vulnerable adults. Avoid situations where you and an individual child are completely unobserved.
- If groups are to be supervised in changing rooms, always ensure that adults work in pairs.
- Where mixed teams compete away from home at least one male adult and one female adult should always accompany them.
- Volunteers and professionals must respect the rights and dignity and worth of all and treat everyone with equality.
- Volunteers and professionals must place the well-being and safety of the child or vulnerable adult above the development of performance.
- Coaches should hold a current coaching qualification.
- Adults must ensure that the activities, which they direct or advocate, are appropriate to the age, maturity and ability of the performer.
- Adults should always promote the positive aspects of their sport (e.g. fair play) and never condone rule violations or use of prohibited substances.
- Adults must consistently display high standards of personal behaviour and appearance.
- Adults should never overtly criticise athletes or use sarcasm where it may cause the child to lose self-esteem or confidence.

Everyone should also be aware that as a general rule it does not make sense to:

- Spend time alone with children and/or vulnerable adults away from others.
- Take children and/or vulnerable adults alone on car journeys, however short.
- Take children and/or vulnerable adults to your home if they will be alone with you.
- Engage in one-to-one contact with children and/or vulnerable adults using social media.

If it should arise that such situations are unavoidable they should only take place with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the Club/governing body and/or the child or vulnerable adult's parents/guardian.

If you accidentally hurt a child or vulnerable adult, or cause distress in any manner, or the child or vulnerable adult misunderstands, or misinterprets something you have done, report the incident as soon as possible.

Parents/guardians should also be informed of the occurrence.

You should never:

- Permit children and/or vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Allow allegations made by a child and/or vulnerable adults to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Agree to meet a young athlete on your own.

## **Appendix 6: Advice for young people on how to avoid misconduct by others in sport and what to do about it.**

### **What is misconduct?**

Any form of unacceptable behaviour towards you such as inappropriate remarks, physical violence and all forms of bullying.

### **What you can do to avoid such misconduct?**

- Listen to the advice of your parents.
- Avoid being left alone with anyone.
- If you have to leave a group tell someone - where you're going, why you are going, how long you are likely to be, and report to them when you return.
- Do not agree to meet anyone on your own at any time, without informing another adult.
- Do not accept a lift if you feel unsafe.
- Do not tolerate any form of bullying from team mates or any member of the club.
- If misconduct happens what should you do?
- Tell that person to stop at once.
- Tell others who may be present what happened.
- If they actually saw what happened remember who they are so they can be your witnesses.
- If the misconduct continues, then you must report the matter as soon as possible, to another official or adult.
- Tell the Deputy Club Welfare Officer for your team.
- Tell your parents as soon as possible.
- Keep a record of the date, time and place and what happened, and make a list of any witnesses.
- If any of your group or club mates have suffered the same sort of experience, ask them to make a similar record.
- Ask any witnesses to do the same.

### **What you should definitely not do:**

- Do not wrongly complain if nothing happened.
- Do not exaggerate if something did happen.
- Do not ignore behaviour that makes you uncomfortable.
- Do not keep to yourself what happened.
- Do not delay before complaining.
- Do not agree to hush up or hide what happened.
- Do not be afraid or embarrassed to tell your parents, a friend or the Club Welfare Officer.

## Appendix 7: Checklist for completing record of concern

Name of Individual \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Parents name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Home address \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

Is the person making the report expressing their own concerns or passing on those of somebody else? If so, record details.

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What has prompted the concerns? Include dates, times etc of any specific incidents.

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Any physical signs? Behavioural signs? Indirect signs?

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Has the child or vulnerable adult been spoken to? If so, what was said?

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Have the parents been contacted? If so, what was said?

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Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so, record details.

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Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.

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**FORM COMPLETED BY**

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT

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SIGN

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE