



Child

Welfare Policy

Colchester Gladiators American Football Club

This Child Welfare Policy is for any individual 18 years and over who may have access to anyone under the age of 18.

Introduction

It is the policy of the Colchester American Football Academy and Colchester Gladiators American Football Club to ensure that every child or young person is able to participate in a fun and safe environment and be protected from neglect and physical, sexual and emotional abuse whilst in our care.

The key principles that underwrite this policy are:

- Anyone under the age of 18 years old should be considered as a child for the purpose of this document
- The child's welfare is paramount
- All children whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin or religious beliefs have the right to protection from abuse
- To ensure that adults working with children are also provided protection and are aware of the best practice so they can be protected from wrongful allegations
- Working in partnership with children and their parents/carers is essential for the protection of the child

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use sarcasm, taunt or shout at a child causing him/her to lose self confidence or self esteem and become nervous or withdrawn.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.

Identifying Abuse

Dealing with child abuse is rarely straightforward. In some cases a child's disturbed behaviour, or an injury may suggest that the child has 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'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 becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt
- The child 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 wishes to switch to another coach without a reasonable explanation
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Children who are always alone and unaccompanied and/or are prevented from socialising with other children
- Children 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 child abuse is occurring, but it is a responsibility to follow through on any concerns.

Roles

For effective implementation of this policy all Club members must work in partnership, each with a role to ensure the protection of the children in their care.

The role of the club will be as follows:

- To appoint one Child Welfare Officer
- 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 and the accused

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

- To ensure that all adults who have access to or responsibility for children have completed and returned a British American Football Association Self-Declaration form.
- To ensure this Child 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 child welfare issues.

Responding to Complaints and Alleged or Suspected Incidents

Abuse may become apparent in a number of ways:

- A child 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 the child – that they are not to blame and confirm that you know how difficult it must be to confide
- Listen and believe - to what the child says and show that you take them seriously
- Allow only one adult to talk to the child - 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 the child's 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 has been led or words and ideas have been suggested
- Ensure that you clearly understand what the child has said - so that you can pass it on to the appropriate agencies
- Consult with the Child 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 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 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

Once you have completed your report you must ensure that the Child Welfare Officer in your club is informed so a decision can be made as to the most appropriate action.

If you are unhappy with the Child Welfare Officer's handling of the incident or the

allegations are made specifically against this individual you should contact the person in charge immediately and make a record of this - this person might be the Club Chairperson or another Officer of the Club. The person in charge shall then contact the Social Services and/or the Police immediately. A record of the same name and designation of the official informed, together with the time and date of the call should be kept, in case future contact is required.

In all cases - do not delay - if you cannot contact the persons above immediately, you must contact the authorities (police and/or social services).

If you are unsure what to do advice can be obtained from the NSPCC freephone helpline 0800 800 500 or contact your local social services department.

Guidance for the Designated Child Welfare Officer

When reports of misconduct or allegations are brought to your attention a decision must be made as to whether the allegation made is abuse, or related to poor practice.

If the allegation is **abuse**, the following process should be followed:

- Make a full report of any allegations or suspicions
- Report to the person in charge (definition as above) or the Local Social Services Department immediately and make a record of this
- Confidentiality must be maintained

If the allegation relates to **poor practice** the following process should be followed:

- Make a record of the allegations

Promoting Good Practice

By promoting good practice throughout the Club and in the wider context of the sport it is possible to reduce situations for the abuse of children. The Club should have a policy that ensures children are protected and kept safe from harm and everyone should know what to do if there are concerns about abuse and where the procedures are kept.

The appointment of a Child Welfare Officer is key in this process and will be encouraged to promote good practice throughout the Club and by ensuring everyone is aware of his or her responsibilities.

In addition to the procedures described above it is the Child Welfare Officer's responsibility to ensure that all Club volunteers complete the appropriate forms. In particular, all volunteers have to complete and return a BAFA Self-Declaration form, but may also have to be prepared to subject themselves to Criminal Records Bureau vetting.

Use of photography and video recorders

The coaching staff, as a training aid, may use cameras and video recorders. It is 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 regulatory American Football organizations 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. Parents and/or guardians of children should inform the Club if they prefer that photographs of their children may 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

There is a possibility that bullying may occur between children and all involved in the sport are encouraged to be aware of this possibility Clubs are encouraged to adopt an anti-bullying policy and ensure that everyone understands bullying will not be tolerated in any form. Clubs must be prepared to take the problem seriously and investigate any incident and decide on appropriate action, also ensuring that children are able to report the instance of bullying (either to themselves or team members) to someone in authority, preferably the Child Welfare Officer.

Team Management/Team Travel

Implicit within this Policy is the Duty of Care that a Head Coach and/or the Club has to its young 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 the children 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.

Monitoring of the Policy

It will be the responsibility of the Child Welfare Officer to monitor the policy by:

- Keeping records of all allegations of poor practice and their outcomes
- Keeping records of cases of abuse brought and their outcomes
- Requesting feedback on a regular basis about the ease of implementation and the effect of the policy

Appendix A: Code of Conduct 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. 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 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 amounts of time alone with children away from others
- Take children alone on car journeys, however short
- Take children to your home if they will be alone with you
- 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's parents/carer.

If you accidentally hurt a child, or cause distress in any manner, or the child misunderstands, or misinterprets something you have done, report the incident as soon as possible. Parents/carers should also be informed of the occurrence.

You should never:

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

Appendix B: 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 your 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 Child Welfare Officer
- 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 Child Welfare Officer

Appendix C: Checklist for completing record of concern

- ✓ Name of child
- ✓ Age
- ✓ Parents name(s)
- ✓ Home address (and phone number if available)
- ✓ Is the person making the report expressing their own concerns or passing on those of somebody else? If so, record details.
- ✓ What has prompted the concerns? Include dates, times etc of any specific incidents.
- ✓ Any physical signs? Behavioural signs? Indirect signs?
- ✓ Has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- ✓ Have the parents been contacted? If so, what was said?
- ✓ Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so, record details.
- ✓ Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.