

# BF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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## Introduction

British Fencing believes that:

- the welfare of any child is paramount
- anyone, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity has 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

British Fencing recognises that members of clubs/organisations, whether they are staff or volunteers, are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred, and therefore they have put in place a structure that will support them and most importantly protect the child

Everyone in British Fencing has a duty of care to safeguard children involved in activities from harm. Everyone has a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. British Fencing will do their utmost to ensure the safety and protection of all everyone involved in any fencing activity whether that is at clubs, events competition, trips, activity sessions or anywhere else that fencing takes place. With this in mind a series of policies and procedures have been put in place to support and create guidance for everyone.

## Definitions

**A child** is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

**Position of Trust** – refers to anyone with a position of responsibility over a child.

Sexual offences legislation states that any sexual activity involving children under 16 is unlawful. The primary motivation for legislation that addresses the abuse of positions of trust is the need to protect young people aged 16 and 17 who, despite reaching the age of consent for sexual activity, are considered to be vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, in defined circumstances.

The law defines specific roles and settings where sexual activity between 16 and 17 year olds and those in positions of trust, responsibility or authority constitutes a criminal offence. Examples of specific roles include: - teachers, connexions personal advisors, foster carers. Examples of specific settings include: - educational institutions, residential care homes, hospitals, youth offender institutions.

At this time, sport is not specifically included in the definition of position of trust, although some people working in sport may be operating in schools or other locations and therefore come under the legislation. Under British Fencing's Child Protection Policy, any person in a position of trust having a sexual relationship with a young person under 18 would be deemed to be in breach of the code of conduct

**Regulated Activity** - this includes anyone who is undertaking unsupervised activity in: teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children, or providing advice / guidance on well-being,

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or driving a vehicle only for children. It also includes people who are working in "specified places" – for example schools, children's homes, childcare premises, but not those who are supervised volunteers. In both instances this only covers instances where the activity is done regularly by the same person, ie once a week or on 4 or more days in a 30 day period or overnight.

### Definitions of Abuse

There are four main types of abuse. These are:

**Physical Abuse** – this 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.

Examples of physical abuse in sport may be when a child is forced into training and competition that exceeds the capacity of his or her immature and growing body; or where a child is given drugs to enhance performance or delay puberty.

**Sexual Abuse** – involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non- penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

In sport, coaching techniques that involve physical contact with children can potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. The power of the coach over young performers, if misused, may also lead to abusive situations developing.

**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 conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.

It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, 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.

Examples of emotional abuse in sport include subjecting children to constant criticism, name calling, and sarcasm or bullying. Putting them under consistent pressure to perform to unrealistically high standards is also a form of emotional abuse.

**Neglect** – 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing or shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical harm and emotional harm or danger

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- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care – givers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

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

Examples of neglect in sport could include: not ensuring children are safe; exposing them to undue cold or heat, or exposing them to unnecessary risk of injury.

### **Policy aims**

The aim of our Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice. British Fencing will do this by a number of means including:

- providing children, young people with appropriate safety and protection
- allowing all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific issues
- promoting good practice

### **Promoting good practice**

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions. British Fencing recognises that it is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with our judgement about the appropriate action to take. By having a strong framework in place, we believe that this will reduce the judgements that people have to make.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

British Fencing hopes that a child who has been subject to abuse outside of fencing will find the support that they need with an aim of the crucial role of improving their self-esteem. British Fencing will work with the appropriate agencies to ensure that they receive the required support.

### **Good practice guidelines**

Everyone should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. With this in mind, we expect everyone involved in fencing to follow the following common sense guidelines.

British Fencing expect people when working with children to:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- Treat everyone equally, and with respect and dignity
- Always put their welfare first. This is way more important than winning or achieving goals
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them)
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust that empowers them to share in the decision-making process
- Make sport fun, enjoyable and promote fair play
- Ensure that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly. Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the fencer is constantly moving. Fencers,

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and if appropriate carers and/or their parents should always be consulted and their agreement gained

- Keep up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport
- Involve parents/carers wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, we will always ensure supervisors work in pairs
- Ensure that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. British Fencing recognise, however, that same gender abuse can also occur
- Ensure that at tournaments or residential events, adults should not enter anyone's rooms unaccompanied or invite children into their rooms
- Be an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol while "on duty"
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of our fencers - avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will
- Secure parental/carers consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given
- Request written parental consent if officials are required to transport young people in their cars

British Fencing will do their best to avoid the following. British Fencing knows that there are times when these are unavoidable. If this happens, then it will be done with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the child's parents. For example, a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session:

- avoid spending time alone with children away from others
- avoid taking or dropping off a child to an event or activity.

British Fencing will not allow or condone the following to happen. No one should:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- share a room with a child
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child
- do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves
- invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

British Fencing knows that sometimes it may be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for someone, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents/carers and the fencer involved. These tasks may include situations where they are helping to dress or undress a fencer, where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities.

British Fencing expect a person carrying out these tasks to:

- be responsive to a person's reactions
- talk with them about what is happening and give choices where possible
- avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which they are not appropriately trained

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## **Safeguarding Disabled Fencers**

Research has shown that disabled children are up to 4 times as likely to be abused as a non-disabled child. Deaf and disabled children may be especially vulnerable to abuse for a number of reasons including:

- increased likelihood of social isolation
- fewer outside contacts than children without a disability
- dependency on others for practical assistance in daily living (including intimate care)
- impaired capacity to resist, avoid or understand abuse
- speech and language communication needs may make it difficult to tell others what is happening
- limited access to someone to disclose to
- particular vulnerability to bullying

British Fencing will take particular care to protect their more vulnerable participants in fencing and take action if any information is given to us relating to a disabled participant

## **Reporting and Recording an incident**

If any of the following occur, this should be reported immediately to the Club's Welfare Officer and the incident recorded. Parents of the child should be informed if:

- a fencer is accidentally hurt by a coach, volunteer or official
- if he/she seems distressed in any manner
- if a player appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- if a player misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

If you suspect abuse or poor practice then you must inform the club's Welfare Officer and provide them with a written report. This must be accurate and a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. It should include the following:

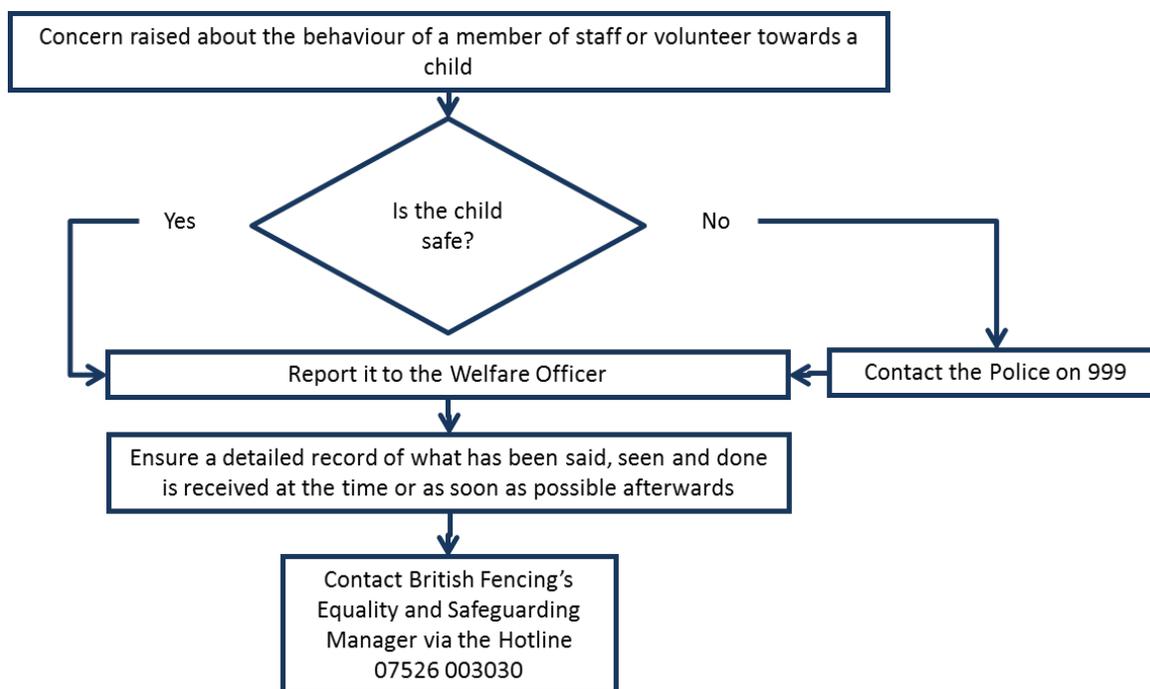
- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child
- The child's home address and telephone number
- Are these your concerns or those of someone else
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay and as far as possible use the child or words
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents/carers been contacted?
- If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, have they been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details

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- Where possible referral to the police or Children's Social Care should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded

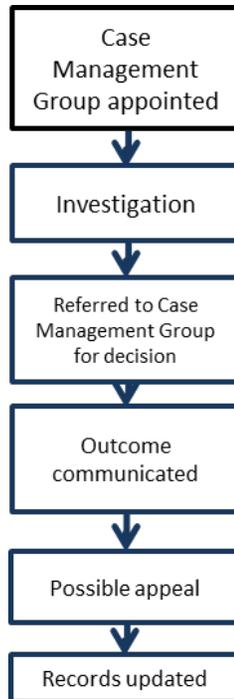
The first point of contact for any concerns of abuse should be to the Welfare Officer. Depending on whether the allegations arise from within fencing (ie about a coach or volunteer within a club) or is a concern from outside of fencing (ie about a relative or family friend) what happens next is slightly different. The flow diagrams below show the reporting process

### Concerns within Fencing



Once a concern is logged with British Fencing, in most instances, the case will be handed to a Case Management Group to decide on the best course of action. The Case Management Group may at any point refer the case to the statutory services or to British Fencing's Disciplinary Panel.

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## Concerns from Outside of Fencing

