



## **Child Protection Policy**

The Hellingly Hound Dogs American Football Club ensures that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount
- all children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have 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
- all coaches/volunteers working in sport have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

N.B Coaches /volunteers are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred.

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### **Policy statement/aims**

The Hellingly Hound Dogs has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in the organisation from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. The Hellingly Hound Dogs will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines below

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

### **Policy aims**

The aim of the Hellingly Hound Dogs Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of us

- allow all coaches/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.
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## Promoting good practice

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

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.

When a child enters the club activity having been subjected to child abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. In such instances the club activity organiser must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

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## Good practice guidelines

All personnel are encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of a positive culture and climate.

### **Good practice means:**

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with players (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).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according to guidelines provided by the Coach Education Programme. Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child is constantly moving. Young people and their parents should always be consulted and their agreement gained.

- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible.
- Ensuring that at tournaments or matches, adults should not enter children's changing rooms.
- Being an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults - avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis*, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people in their cars.

### **Practices to be avoided**

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be 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.

### **Practices never to be sanctioned**

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- 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

### **Incidents that must be reported/recorded**

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the appropriate person and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- if you accidentally hurt a player
  - if he/she seems distressed in any manner
  - if a player misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.
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### Use of photographic/filming equipment at sporting events

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled sportspeople in vulnerable positions. As a Club we are vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the Club Child Protection Officer.

**Videoing as a coaching aid:** there is no intention to prevent club coaches and teachers using video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid. However, performers and their parents/carers should be made aware that this is part of the coaching programme and their consent obtained, and such films should be stored safely.

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### Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone at the Hellingly Hound Dogs to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities.

The Hellingly Hound Dogs will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- a criminal investigation
- a child protection investigation
- a disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

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## Reporting concerns about poor practice

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice the designated/Club Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by the Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to BAFANL Child Protection officer who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

## Reporting concerns about suspected abuse

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Club Child Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.

The Club Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police.

The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.

The Club Child Protection Officer should also notify the Child Protection officer at BAFANL who in turn will inform the BAFA Child Protection Officer who will deal with any media enquiries.

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## Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a **need to know** basis only. This includes the following people:

- the Club Child Protection Officer
- the parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- the person making the allegation
- social services/police
- the BAFANL / BAFA Child Protection Officer

Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

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## Enquiries and further action

### Internal enquiries and possible suspension

The Hellingly Hound Dogs Child Protection Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the Hellingly Hound Dogs Disciplinary Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled.

This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the Hellingly Hound Dogs Disciplinary Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

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## Bullying

Every child has the right to experience sport in a safe environment free from abuse and bullying.

The Hellingly Hound Dogs play an important role in creating a positive club ethos that challenges bullying by empowering young people to understand the impact of bullying, how best to deal with it and agree standards of behaviour.

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## Reporting concerns outside the immediate sporting environment (e.g. a parent or carer)

Report your concerns to the Club Child Protection Officer, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.

If the Club Child Protection Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact social services or the police immediately.

Social Services and the Club Child Protection Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.

Maintain confidentiality on a **need to know** basis only.