



Child Protection

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Everyone involved in the club has a responsibility to care for and protect any child who participates in football, from undue harm, at all times.

Child abuse involves conduct which puts children at risk of harm and takes a number of different forms, including:

- physical abuse (e.g., deliberately hurting [hitting, punching], providing alcohol or drugs, or training that exceeds child's development or maturity)
- sexual abuse (e.g., sexual acts or threats, inappropriate touching or conversations)
- emotional abuse (e.g., ill-treating by threats, humiliation or intimidation)
- neglect (e.g., not providing child with basic necessities [food, drink, clothing], failing to protect a child from foreseeable risk of harm or injury).

Abuse is usually against the law. We will take measures to protect children involved in our club from harm.

The club will do all it can to create:

- fun, enjoyment, and sense of satisfaction for the participant
- an opportunity to be with friends
- purposeful and challenging activities
- a sense of achievement, learning and improvement
- positive competition
- a sense of being cared about and listened to
- opportunities for all children to participate and develop
- an environment that encourages involvement in decision making

For further information and support review the clubs "Guidelines for Working with Children" publication. Any further help please contact the club Secretary or Volunteer Coordinator.

If you receive a complaint relating to child abuse, you need to know that:

- all allegations of child abuse should be referred to the club's secretary
- an allegation of serious or criminal abuse requires urgent action – contact the Police immediately

- less serious/urgent allegations should be actioned within 24 hours.
- although incidents may seem minor, they may represent ‘the tip of the iceberg’ and must be reported
- a club’s responsibilities do not end with reporting a suspicion of harm.

Different procedures are required when there is a suspicion of harm against a child – in how a complaint is received, to meet mandatory reporting requirements and to ensure that any investigation by the Police or child protection authority is not compromised.

The following steps will help you respond to an allegation of child abuse:

Step 1: Clarify basic details of the allegation

- Listen and be supportive.
- Reassure the child that what has occurred is not their fault:
- be honest and explain that other people may need to be told in order to stop what is happening
- avoid suggestive or leading questions – ask the child “What happened?” and “Then what happened?”
- If another person makes the complaint ask the person to: explain their reasons for suspecting abuse (observation, injury or other) ;provide the names and contact details of all people involved, including witnesses.

Step 2: Report allegations of a serious or criminal nature

- Report any incident of a serious or a criminal nature to the Police
- If the child’s parent/s are suspected of committing the abuse, report the allegation to the Police or relevant government agency.

Step 3: Protect the child and make sure the alleged offender is not victimized

- Take action to ensure the child’s/children’s safety (e.g., move the alleged offender to a non-child related position, supervise the alleged offender or remove/suspend them from their duties while the matter is being investigated).
- Make sure the individual accused of the offence is not victimised. If they’re stood down make it clear that this does not mean the person is guilty and that a proper investigation will be undertaken before decisions are made.

Step 4: Clarify the allegation

- Further clarify and investigate allegation (if requested to do so). Provide information and assist in investigations as appropriate.
- The Police may undertake an investigation. They may also request that the Regional or National sporting organisation undertake their own investigation (this should be done by an independent person with appropriate investigative expertise).

- The club should provide information and assist with the investigation as appropriate.
- Individuals/clubs should not try to investigate the incident themselves.

Step 5: Undertake disciplinary action

- Implement any disciplinary action recommended by the Police, or Regional/National sporting organisation. The action should be immediate.

Step 6: Record all information

- Appropriate record-keeping is very important in these matters.

Step 7: Review and evaluate