



## **Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Policy**

### **All sporting organisations that make provision for children and young people and adults at risk must ensure that:**

- + The welfare of the member is paramount.
- + All members, 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 will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- + All staff and volunteers working in sport have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

### **Your Athlete Protection Policy Statement**

**Forth Valley Disability Sport** has a duty of care to safeguard all members involved in the organisation from harm. All members have a right to protection, and the needs of children with disabilities and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account.

**Forth Valley Disability Sport** will ensure the safety and protection of all members involved in the organisation through adherence to the Athlete Protection guidelines adopted by Forth Valley Disability Sport

### **Policy aims**

**The Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Policy is to promote good practice:**

- + Providing members with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of **Forth Valley Disability Sport**
- + Allow all volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific athlete protection issues.

### **Promoting good practice**

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 vulnerable groups in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with children, young people and adults at risk and may 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 member registers with the organisation having been subjected to child abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the player's self-esteem. In such instances the club must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the player receives the required support.

### **Good practice guidelines**

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

#### **Good practice means:**

- + Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- + Treating all young people/adults with a disability equally with respect and dignity.
- + Always putting the welfare of each player first.
- + Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with players (eg it is not appropriate for volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a member or to share a room with them).
- + Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering members to share in decision making.
- + 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. If it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the athlete is constantly moving, young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- + Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance.
- + Involving 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, always ensure parents, teachers, coaches or officials work in pairs.
- + Ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away for the day or night, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- + Ensuring that at tournaments or residential events, adults should not enter player's rooms or invite players into their 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 adults with a disability – 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.

- + Keeping a copy of social media, text and or email conversations.
- + Requesting written parental consent if club officials are required to transport members in their cars.

### **Practices to be avoided**

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (eg the member sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a player up at the end of a session), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the member's parents/carers.

### **Otherwise, avoid:**

- + Spending excessive amounts of time alone with members away from others.
- + Taking or dropping off a member to an event.

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

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

- + Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- + Share a room with a member.
- + Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- + Allow members to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- + Make sexually suggestive comments to a member, even in fun.
- + Reduce a member to tears as a form of control.
- + Allow allegations made by a member to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- + Do things of a personal nature for a child or adult with a disability that they can do for themselves.
- + Invite or allow members to stay with you at your home unsupervised.
- + Bullying or private messaging on social media or text.

**NB** It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for members, particularly if they are young or have a disability. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the members involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a member to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

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

**If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the member are informed:**

- + if you accidentally hurt a member
- + If he/she seems distressed in any manner
- + if a member appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- + if a member misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

### **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 sports people with a disability in vulnerable positions. All organisations should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the Athlete Protection Officer.

Video 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 such films should be stored safely.

### **Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers**

Forth Valley Disability Sport recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

#### **Pre-selection checks must be included the following:**

- + All volunteers/staff should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- + Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- + All applicants must be, or be prepared to be a member of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme.
- + Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- + Evidence of identity should be provided (eg passport or driving licence with photo).

### **Interview and induction**

**All staff and volunteers will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All staff and volunteers should receive formal or informal induction, during which:**

- + A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full (including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures).
- + Their qualifications should be substantiated.
- + The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- + They should sign up to Forth Valley Disability Sport Code of Ethics and Conduct.
- + Athlete protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified.

### **Training**

**In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help volunteers to:**

- + Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.

- + Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- + Respond to concerns expressed by any member.
- + Work safely and effectively with all members.

**Forth Valley Disability Sport requires:**

- + Coaching staff to attend a recognised 3-hour good practice and child protection awareness training workshop, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of a positive culture towards good practice and child protection.
- + Non-coaching staff and volunteers to complete recognised awareness training on child protection.
- + Relevant personnel to attend In Safe Hands training course to receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person.
- + Relevant personnel to undergo national first aid training (where necessary).
- + Attendance of update training when necessary. Information about meeting training needs can be obtained from **Scottish Disability Sport, Sports Coach UK, Children 1st** and **sportscotland**.

**Responding to allegations or suspicions**

It is not the responsibility of anyone employed or volunteering with Forth Valley Disability Sport in a paid or voluntary capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

Forth Valley Disability Sport will assure all volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a member.

**Where there is a complaint against a member of staff/volunteer 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 the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

**Action**

**1. Concerns about poor practice:**

- + If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- + If the allegation is about poor practice by the Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the relevant officer who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

## **2. Concerns about suspected abuse:**

- + Any suspicion that a member has been abused by either a volunteer or employee should be reported to the Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the member in question and any other member who may be at risk.
- + The Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department which may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- + The parents or carers of the athlete will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- + The Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Officer will deal with any media enquiries.
- + If the Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to an identified member of the committee who will refer the allegation to social services.

### **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.

You should report any concerns to the Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Officer who will communicate with the relevant people.

### **This includes the following people:**

- + the parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- + the person making the allegation
- + social services/police
- + the alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

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

### **Internal enquiries and suspension**

- + The Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete 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 Forth Valley Disability Sport Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a 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 Forth Valley Disability Sport 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 member should remain of paramount importance throughout.

### **Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse**

- + Consideration should be given to the kind of support that members, parents and members of staff may need. Use of help lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. Children 1<sup>st</sup> Scotland can be contacted by members by calling Child Line on 0800 1111. Parents/Carers also have the opportunity to access support by calling Parent Line on 0808 800 2222.
- + Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

### **Allegations of previous abuse**

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (eg by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff/volunteer who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, the organisation should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside sport, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) (Scotland) Act 2007.

### **Action if bullying is suspected**

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.

### **Action to help the victim and prevent bullying in sport:**

- + Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- + Encourage all members to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- + Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- + Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- + Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- + Report any concerns to the Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Officer or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

### **Action towards the bully(ies):**

- + Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).

- + Inform the bully(ies)'s parents.
- + Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- + Provide support for the victim's coach.
- + Impose sanctions as necessary.
- + Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- + Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- + Inform all Forth Valley Disability Sport members of action taken.
- + Keep a written record of action taken.

### **3. Concerns outside the immediate sporting environment (eg a parent or carer):**

- + Report your concerns to the Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Officer, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.
- + See 4. below for the information social services or the police will need.
- + If the Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete 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 Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- + Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Officer should also report the incident to Scottish Disability Sport's Child Protection Officer. The governing body should ascertain whether or not the person/(s) involved in the incident play a role in Scottish Disability Sport and act accordingly.
- + Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.
- + See 4. below regarding information needed for social services.

### **4. Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse:**

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- + The member's name, age and date of birth.
- + The member's home address and telephone number.
- + Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own 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.
- + A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- + Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- + The member's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- + Have the parents been contacted?
- + If so, what has been said?
- + Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- + If the member was not the person who reported the incident, has the member been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- + Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.



+ Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

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If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact social services or the police direct, or the **Childline Helpline** on **0800 1111**.

**Declaration**

On behalf of Forth Valley Disability Sport , we, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of the Athlete Protection Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.

Signed:

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(nb One of the signatories should be the Forth Valley Disability Sport Athlete Protection Officer)

**Name:**

**Name:**

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**Position within** Organisation:

**Position within** Organisation

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**Date:**

**Date:**

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