



VALE RECREATION FOOTBALL CLUB

**CHILD PROTECTION
POLICY**

Child Protection Policy

VALE RECREATION FC

Vale Recreation FC firmly believes that children should be allowed to enjoy football without abuse of any kind. Football can have a powerful positive influence on children. Therefore all members should take on the responsibility of looking after children who want to play the game at our club.

Introduction

The Club aims to ensure that the necessary steps are taken to protect children who participate in football at the club and that football takes place in an environment that is safe and enjoyable.

The key principles that underpin this policy are:

- The child's welfare is paramount
- All children have a right to be protected from abuse regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious belief or sexual identity
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

Definition of Abuse

Child abuse is a term used to describe ways in which children or young people are harmed, usually by adults but increasingly by peers. Often these are people they know or trust. It refers to the damage done to a child's or young person's physical, mental or emotional health. Children or young people can be abused within or outside their family, at school and within the football environment. Abusive situations arise when adults or peers misuse their power over children or young people.

The five main forms of abuse are:

- **Physical abuse:** where adults physically hurt or injure a young person e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, and drowning. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute child abuse.

This category of abuse can also include when a parent/carer reports non-existent symptoms or illness deliberately causes ill health in a young person they are looking after. This is called Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.

In a sports situation, physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training disregard the capacity of the child's immature and growing body

- **Emotional Abuse:** the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve telling a young person they are useless, worthless, unloved, and inadequate or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. It may feature expectations of young people that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause a young

person to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the young person frightened or withdrawn.

Ill treatment of children, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse in sport may occur when the young person is constant criticised, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling and bullying.

- **Bullying** may come from another young person or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are three main types of bullying.

It may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

In sport bullying may arise when a parent or coach pushes the young person too hard to succeed, or a rival athlete or official uses bullying behaviour.

- **Neglect** occurs when an adult fails to meet the young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Refusal to give love, affection and attention can also be a form of neglect.

Neglect in sport could occur when a coach does not keep the young person safe, or exposing them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury.

- **Sexual Abuse** occurs when adults (male and female) use children to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing young people pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.

In sport, activities which might involve physical contact with young people could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over young athletes, if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing.

Identifying Abused Children

Children are reluctant to tell someone when they are being abused, so it essential that members are aware of the possible signals that a child's welfare or safety is being threatened. These signs include:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- Any injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- A child or adult expressing concern about the welfare of another child or young person.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- Sexual awareness that is inappropriate for the child's age.
- Being mistrustful of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Having difficulties in making friends.
- Loss of weight for no apparent reason.
- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt.

Taking Action

It is NOT the responsibility of the Club to decide whether a child is being abused. However, it IS the responsibility of any member to share concerns. The law points out that all members have a duty of care towards children and it also emphasises that everyone shares this responsibility for protecting children in the community.

If a child or young person informs you directly that he/she is concerned about someone's behaviour towards them, or you become aware through your own observations or through a third party of possible abuse occurring within a football setting, you should take the following actions:

- React calmly so as not to frighten them. Tell them they are not to blame and they were right to tell. Take what they tell you seriously.
- Ensure their safety. If the child or young person needs immediate medical treatment, take the child to hospital or call an ambulance. Inform doctors of the concerns and ensure that they are aware that this is a child protection issue.
- Avoid leading the child or young person and keep any questions to the absolute minimum necessary to ensure a clear understanding of what has been said.
- Reassure the child or young person, but do not make promises of confidentiality or outcome, which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments.
- Make a full record of what has been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible.
- Parents and guardians should only be contacted only after advice from social services.
- Report your concerns to the club child protection officer who will take matters further as necessary. If the child protection officer is not available, inform them when available.

In matters relating to child protection, inaction is NOT an option. You must act. Do not assume that somebody else will.

Any queries relating to these matters should be made to the Club welfare officer.

Best Practice for Club Coaches

In order to provide a safe and enjoyable environment for football, the club coaches should adopt the following standards of behaviour:

- Coaches must respect the rights, dignity and worth of each equally within the context of the sport.
- Coaches must place the well being and safety of each player above all other considerations, including the development of performance.
- Coaches must adhere to all guidelines laid down by the rules of The Football Association.
- Coaches must develop an appropriate working relationship with each player based on mutual trust and respect.
- Coaches must not exert undue influence to obtain personal benefit or reward.
- Coaches must encourage and guide the children to accept responsibility for their own behaviour and performance.
- Coaches must ensure that the activities they direct or advocate are appropriate for the age, maturity, experience and ability of players.
- Coaches should, at the outset, clarify with the player (and, where appropriate, their parents/guardian) exactly what is expected of them and also what they are entitled to expect from their coach.
- Coaches must co-operate fully with other specialists (e.g. other coaches, managers, officials, doctors) in the best interests of the player.
- Coaches must always promote the positive aspects of the sport (e.g. fair play) and never condone violations of the Laws of the Game, behaviour contrary to the spirit of the Laws of the Game or relevant rules and regulations of the use of prohibited substances or techniques.
- Coaches must consistently display high standards of behaviour and appearance.

Best Practice for Medical Treatment of Children

Anyone in the club involved in medically treating children should be aware of the following recommended standards of behaviour:

- It is recommended that no child or young person should be treated in any way in a situation where the child or young person is on his/her own in a treatment room with the door closed.
- It is strongly recommended that all treatment procedures should be 'open', i.e. the door remains open and parents/guardians are invited to observe treatment procedures. Where strict medical confidentiality is to be observed then the parents or guardian of the child or young person should be invited to attend.
- It is recommended that if treating an area of the body, which is potentially embarrassing to a child or young person (i.e. the groin) a suitable consenting adult acting as a chaperone, should be present.

- It is important to maintain medical confidentiality and patient dignity at all times.
- Prior to medical treatment being carried out on a child or young person, parental/guardian consent in written form must be sought where appropriate.
- It is recommended that all treatment procedures are explained fully to the child or young person and verbal consent is given before they are carried out.

General Guidelines in the Care of Children and Young People

It is possible to reduce situations in which abuse can occur and help protect club volunteers by promoting good practice.

- Always be public and open when working with children or young people. Avoid situations where a coach and an individual child or young person is completely unobserved.
- Always treat players in an open environment or, if treatment is required within a closed area, ensure parents/guardian are aware of this.
- Where appropriate, parents/guardian should take on the responsibility for their children or young person in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure coaches/managers work in pairs.
- Where there are mixed teams away from home, they should always be accompanied by a male and female coach/manager.
- When working with children or young players of the opposite sex, coaches/managers must agree with parent/guardian when, or if, it is appropriate to enter the changing area. It may be prudent to set a time, for example 10 minutes before a game, when the coach/manager could enter the room accompanied by parents/guardian, at least one of which must be of the opposite sex.

All Club members should also be aware that as a general rule it does not make sense to:

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with a child/young person.
- Take children or young people alone on car journeys, however short.
- Take children or young people to your home where they will be alone with you

If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation and/or the child's/young person's parent or guardian.

Recruitment

- While the vast majority of people who work with children are well motivated there is a need to be careful in the selection procedure to screen out those who are not suitable.

- In recruiting volunteers the following procedure should be carried out:
 - Confirm their identity through a Police Check
 - Ask how they think they can contribute to the development of the Club
 - Supply in writing any relevant skills or qualifications that maybe of benefit to their specific role within the Club
 - Ask for references and referees

Successful applicants will be at the discretion of the Committee and Club welfare officer.

Applicants should be made aware of the Club's ethos, Child Protection Policy and conduct code and running procedures at the Club

Summary

The ideals of Child Protection in football are to enable every child to participate in the sport in a safe environment. Adults should be 'role models' for children.

June 2008