



Armada Network Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy Statement/aims

Armada Athletics Network has a duty of care to safeguard all children or vulnerable adults involved in any of its activities from harm. All children and vulnerable adults have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. The Armada network will ensure the safety and protection of all children and vulnerable adults involved in activities through adherence to the Protection guidelines adopted by all of its member clubs

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

Any person who is 18 years or older that may be at risk of abuse or neglect and who has any kind of disability, frailty or illness will be seen as a vulnerable adult.

Policy aims

The aim of the Armada Network Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy is to promote good practice providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of any of its member clubs and to allow all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

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



Good practice guidelines

All members clubs personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's and vulnerable adults welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create 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 UKA 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. 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, 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 children's rooms or invite children 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 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.



Good practice guidelines (continued)

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 or vulnerable adults away from others
- avoid taking or dropping off a child or vulnerable adults to an event or activity alone.

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 child or vulnerable adult.
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- allow children or vulnerable adults 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 or vulnerable adult
- do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves
- invite or allow children or vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

N.B. It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the players 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 child 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 the appropriate welfare officer and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- if you accidentally hurt a athlete
- if he/she seems distressed in any manner
- if an athlete appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- if an athlete 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 disabled sportspeople in vulnerable positions. All clubs should be 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.

Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers

All clubs are responsible for their own policies on recruitment and training of volunteers.

All qualified coaches and officials are required to be checked by the Criminal Records Bureau before a license is issued. All other volunteers are subject to the checks determined by their member clubs

The Network co-ordinator is employed by Plymouth City Council and is therefore subject to their policies and procedures on child protection in addition to this policy. Relevant personnel in the member clubs are 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.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in Armada, in a paid or unpaid capacity 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 Armada Network 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.

Action if there are concerns

1. 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 Clubs Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Welfare officer at England Athletics 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 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 relevant England Athletics Welfare officer who will deal with any media enquiries.

If a Club Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Armada Network co-ordinator 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. 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 Armada Network Co-ordinator and England Athletics Welfare Officer