



# **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**Version 2.0**

**1<sup>st</sup> October 2021**

## Version Control

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date Effective</b>	<b>Summary of changes</b>	<b>Reviewed by</b>
1.0	March 2018	Creation of Child Protection Policy	Rachel Berney (Head Coach), Peter Frazier, LAA Welfare Officer
2.0	October 2021	Housekeeping changes, revisions to reflect expansion of club activities, review against UKA / EA policies etc	Rachel Berney (Head Coach), David Wilks (Athlete Mentor / Welfare Officer)

# **1 Child Protection Policy**

All children and young athletes (as defined as a person under the age of 18 in the Childrens Act 1989) participating in athletics at Leamington Athletics Academy (LAA) are entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment, where their rights are respected, and their needs met. LAA has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that everyone involved with the club play their part to safeguard and protect children from harm.

## **1.1 Policy Statement**

The aim of the Child Protection policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of LAA. LAA coaches (including sports leaders) and volunteers involved with LAA are collectively committed to protecting all children and young people in our care from poor practice, abuse and exploitation.

LAA is committed to devising and implementing policies, so all involved in the club accept their responsibilities to safeguard children and young people from harm and abuse. This means to follow procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

This policy operates in conjunction with the relevant government policies and legislation regulating the protection of children and young people. Where necessary, we will work with appropriate external partners to ensure best practice is implemented and maintained.

## **1.2 Application**

Safeguarding and protecting children and young people is everyone's responsibility, not just the obligation of LAA's head coaches. This policy therefore applies to all those who work or volunteer with LAA.

Those who work with children / young people as part of LAA activities will be recruited with regard to their suitability for the role, will be subject to the appropriate checks and will be provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and child protection procedures

## **1.3 Monitor and review the policy and procedures**

The Child Protection policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or following a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation occurs. Responsibility for review sits with the LAA Welfare Officer(s) and LAA Head Coaches.

Progress, challenges, difficulties, achievements gaps and areas requiring change will be discussed with LAA's Head Coaches and management.

## 2 Key Principles

To provide children with the best possible experience and opportunities as part of LAA, this policy is based on the following key principles, with all coaches, volunteers and individuals involved in LAA expected to adhere to these principles.

- The welfare of the child or young person is paramount
- All children / young people, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in athletics at LAA in a fun and safe environment
- The protection and wellbeing of children and young people in our care is everyone's responsibility
- All reasonable steps will be taken to protect children / young people from harm, discrimination, and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- All suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- All those who work or volunteer with LAA and who work with children / young people will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, will be subject to the appropriate checks and will be provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and child protection procedures. Further detail can be found in Appendix 3.
- Will work in partnership with parents and children / young people and other organisations where required is the best way to ensure the protection of children and young people in the care of LAA.

### 2.1 Implementation of Key Principles

To implement this policy and make sure all children and young people in the care of LAA are kept safe, everyone involved with LAA will

- Make athletics at LAA fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying and challenge / change poor practice
- Treat all children and young people equally and with respect and dignity, putting the welfare of children and young people first in all circumstances.
- Promote an environment where all concerns can be raised without fear of victimisation or reprisal
- Appoint a club Welfare Officer and ensure all who work with / for LAA attend a relevant child safeguarding training course every 3 years
- All coaches (including sports leaders) and volunteers will work in an open environment encouraging open and transparent communication. They will avoid private or unobserved situations.

- All coaches will maintain a safe and appropriate distance with our young athletes (children and young people).
- Unnecessary physical contact with children and young people in the care of LAA will be avoided. Where any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly, transparently and with the consent of the child or young person. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive, disturbing nor secretive and the child or young person's consent has been given
- All involved with LAA will be expected to act as an excellent role model and includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children young people
- All feedback will be enthusiastic and constructive, avoiding solely negative criticism
- Child and young person welfare will not be sacrificed for LAA or personal achievement. The developmental needs and capacity of the child and young person will come first. This means avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will
- Written parental consent will be secured for LAA to act in loco parentis in relation to permission for emergency first aid and / or other medical treatment should the need arise
- A written record of any injury that occurs will be kept by LAA, along with details of any treatment given. These may be shareable with parents / carers and any other agencies as may be required.
- Parents / carers will be involved wherever possible and encouraged to take responsibility for their own child / young person where supervision is required e.g., competitions, changing rooms etc. Where groups are requiring LAA supervision e.g., LAA trips / events, supervision should be undertaken by a mix of coaches and parents whenever possible
- Where a child or young person is accidentally hurt, seems distressed in any manner, and/or if the young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, any such incident will be reported to the Head Coach(es) as soon as possible and a written note made. Parents / carers will be informed of the incident.

### **Protection outside of standard training sessions**

- Written parental consent must be requested where LAA coaches / volunteers are required to transport young people in their cars. Transport should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/care and the young person involved.
- Written parental consent must be requested for any significant travel arrangements e.g., overnight stays or LAA events such as the LAA residential trip
- Where mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- Adults are not permitted to enter a young person's room or invite young people to their rooms

## **2.2 Poor Practice to be avoided**

For the avoidance of doubt, the following are considered as poor practice and should be avoided by all who work for and with LAA:

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with children and young people away from others
- Taking children and young people alone in a car on journeys, however short
- Taking children and young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- Sharing a room with a child or young person
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allowing or engaging in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allowing a child or young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child or young person, even in fun
- Reducing a child or young person to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a child or young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature that the child or young person can do for themselves

## **3 Types of concern**

This policy addresses the following forms of harm, with more information set out in the following sub sections

- Practice Concerns
- Wellbeing Concerns
- Child Abuse

### **3.1 Practice Concerns**

A practice concern is a behaviour that falls short of abuse, but which nevertheless harms or places a child / young person at risk or has a negative / adverse effect on the safety or well-being of children.

It includes any behaviour, act, omission by those working with and for LAA that may contravene this policy and in particular, Codes of Conduct.

This policy promotes healthy and positive relationships with those in the care of LAA. This policy also therefore addresses any practice that may be considered an abuse of a position of trust.

Further examples of practice concerns may include (as per the UKA Child Safeguarding Policy) but are not restricted to:

- Coaches (including sports leaders) and volunteers who continually break rules, ignore best practice guidelines or breach LAA's code of conduct
- Individuals engaging in behaviours and practices that are known to be risk factors in cases of abuse
- Continuing with a session or activity where there is heightened risk to the group or athletes' wellbeing and safety
- Coaches leading activities for which they are not trained, insured or licensed
- A coach / volunteers not responding appropriately to a child wellbeing or protection concern

### **3.2 Wellbeing Concerns**

It is acknowledged that participation in sports can support and promote a child's / young person's wellbeing. Those individuals working with / for LAA are often significant roles models and trusted people in the lives of children and young people. They are therefore well placed to identify when a child's / young person's wellbeing is, or at risk of, being adversely affected and therefore able to act in the child or young person's best interest.

Where wellbeing concerns are identified, these should be reported to the LAA Welfare officer and LAA Head Coaches. Concerns might include:

- The revealing that a child or young person is worried, anxious or upset about something either within or outside of LAA
- A change in behaviour, demeanour or developmental progress
- Concerns over the impact of a particular incident or event
- Concerns for physical or mental health

### 3.3 Child Abuse

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. It commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a child or young person regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

There are four main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect**. The abuser may be a family member, someone the young person encounters in residential care or in the community, including sports and leisure activities. Any individual may abuse or neglect a young person directly or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming the young person.

Abuse in all forms can affect a young person at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated may follow the individual into adulthood

Young people with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse had occurred.

Further detail on the four types of abuse can be found in Appendix 1.

### 3.4 Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment at LAA

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people. All coaches, sports leaders and volunteers should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the LAA Welfare Officer (s).

All parents and performers should be made aware when coaches use video equipment as a coaching aid and written parental / carer consent should be obtained for the use of any imagery etc

## 4 Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

It is not the responsibility of anyone working with or for LAA to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. There is however a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the young person.

This applies **BOTH** to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within LAA and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

More detail on how to respond to allegations or suspicion of abuse can be found in Appendix 2.

**In all cases if you are not sure what to do, you access further advice by calling the NSPCC hotline on 0808 800 5000**



## **4.1 Confidentiality**

Every effort will 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:

- LAA Welfare Officer(s)
- LAA Head Coach(es)
- The parents of the child
- The person making the allegation
- Social Services/police
- UK Athletics Welfare Officer
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

Advice should be sought from social services on the approach of any alleged abuser. All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

## **4.2 Internal Inquiries and Suspension**

The LAA welfare officer(s) in conjunction with the Head Coach(es) 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, LAA 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; especially where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, LAA will reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on the 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.

## **5 Recruiting to work with/for LAA**

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. This applies equally to paid staff and volunteers, both full and part time. To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and young people, LAA will take the following steps when recruiting:

- Controlling access to children and young people.
- Ensure appropriate interview and induction processes are followed

- Ensure that all individuals working for / with LAA are appropriately trained and DBS checked

Further detail on the above points can be found in Appendix 3.

## Appendix 1: Child Abuse: Further Information

There are four main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect**. The abuser may be a family member, someone the young person encounters in residential care or in the community, including sports and leisure activities. Any individual may abuse or neglect a young person directly or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming the young person.

### 1.1 Types of Child Abuse

- **Physical Abuse:** where adult(s) physically hurt or injure a child or young person e.g., hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning. Giving child, or 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 or deliberately causes ill health in a young person they are looking after. This is called Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.

In an athletics situation, physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training disregards the capacity of the child's immature and growing body to cope with that training.

- **Emotional Abuse:** the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or young person, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's or young person's emotional development. It may involve telling a child or young person that they are useless, worthless, unloved, inadequate or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. It may feature expectations of children and young people that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause a child or young person to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the child or young person frightened or withdrawn.

Ill treatment of children and young people, 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 child, 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 four 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 also arise when a parent or coach pushes the child or young person too hard to succeed, or a rival athlete or official uses bullying behaviour.

**Neglect** occurs when an adult(s) fails to meet the child or young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's or young person'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 child or young person safe or exposing them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury.

- **Sexual Abuse** occurs when adult(s) (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 children and 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 children and 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.

## 1.2 Indicators of Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- an injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent
- the child or young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- another child or young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person
- unexplained changes in a child or young person's behaviour, e.g., becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- inappropriate sexual awareness
- engaging in sexually explicit behaviour

- distrust of adults, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- difficulty in making friends
- being prevented from socialising with others
- displaying variations in eating patterns including over-eating or loss of appetite
- losing weight for no apparent reason
- becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

Signs of bullying include:

- behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go training or competitions
- an unexplained drop off in performance
- physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, bingeing e.g., on food, alcohol or cigarettes
- a shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indications is not proof that abuse is taking place. It is **NOT** the responsibility of those working in and for LAA to decide that child abuse is occurring.

It **is** their responsibility to act on any concerns.

## **Appendix 2: Additional Information regarding the receipt and reporting of possible abuse**

### **2.1 Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse**

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed in Appendix 1 of this document or it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a child or young person says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

- **stay calm** so as not to frighten the child or young person
- **reassure** the child or young person that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- **listen** to the child or young person, showing that you are taking them seriously
- **keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify
- **inform** the child or young person that you must inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the child or young person that this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- **safety of the child** is paramount. If the child or young person needs urgent medical attention, call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection issue
- **record** all information
- **report** the incident to the LAA welfare officer and Head Coach (if appropriate)

### **2.2 Recording Information**

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording, you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions.

Information should include the following:

- the child's or young person's name, age and date of birth
- the child's or young person's home address and telephone number
- whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's
- the nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- a description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc and any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- details of witnesses to the incidents
- the child's or young person's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred
- Whether the parents been contacted and details of any subsequent conversation
- Anyone else consulted and details of any conversation
- has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details

## 2.3 Reporting the Concern

All suspicions and allegations **MUST** be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

LAA expects its coaches (including sports leaders), volunteers and members to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child **immediately with the Head Coach** in charge and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

If the LAA Welfare Officer(s) is not available, you should take responsibility and seek advice from the NSPCC helpline, the duty officer at your local social services department or the police. Telephone numbers can be found locally.

As mentioned previously in this document, LAA are not child protection experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations must be shared with professional agencies that are responsible for child protection.

Social services have a legal responsibility under The Children Act 1989 to investigate all child protection referrals by talking to the child and family (where appropriate), gathering information from other people who know the child and making inquiries jointly with the police.

**NB: If there is any doubt, you must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidences, which together cause concern**

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by an employee or a volunteer should be reported to the LAA Welfare Officer and / or the Head Coach who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- A referral to the social services department
- Contacting the parent/carer of the child as soon as possible following advice from the social services department
- Notifying the Head Coach and the LAA Chairman to process any queries and enquires and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- The LAA welfare officer(s) should also notify the relevant sport governing body
- If an LAA welfare officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Head Coach and the LAA Chairman.

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures and have the matter reported to social services. This is because other children in the sport, or outside it, may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children.

## **2.4 Concerns outside the immediate Sporting Environment (e.g., a parent or carer)**

If concerns are raised pertaining to issues / circumstances outside of LAA, you must:

- Report your concerns to the LAA welfare officer
- If the LAA welfare officer is not available, the person being told or discovering the abuse should contact their local social services department or the police immediately
- Social Services and the LAA welfare officer will decide how to inform the parents/carers
- The LAA welfare officer should also report the incident to UK Athletics (UKA) as the Governing Body. UKA The Governing Body should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the organisation and act accordingly
- Maintain confidentiality on a 'need to know' basis



## **Appendix 3: Recruiting individuals to work with / for LAA**

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. This applies equally to all individuals who work / volunteer with and for LAA, both full and part time. To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and young people, LAA will take the following steps when recruiting:

### **Controlling Access to Children**

- All staff and volunteers should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about the applicants past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from the applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau in the form of a DBS check.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children should be obtained. These references MUST be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo)

### **Interview and Induction**

All employees and volunteers will be required to undertake an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees 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, preferably via England Athletics
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified
- They should sign up to LAA's Code of Conduct
- Child Protection Procedures are explained, and training needs identified e.g., basic child protection awareness

### **Training**

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

- Analyse their own practice against what is deemed 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 and/or abuse
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child
- Work safely and effectively with children

LAA requires:

- All staff and volunteers who have access to children to undergo an enhanced DBS check
- All employees, volunteers, coaches, welfare officers and team managers to undertake relevant child protection training or undertake a form of home study, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of positive culture towards good practice and child protection
- All staff and volunteers to receive advisory information outlining good/bad practice and informing them what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person
- A qualified first aider to be present on site at all times