



## Safeguarding & Protecting Children / Young People in Sport Play Sport, Stay Safe

### A Guide for Parents / Carers

#### Introduction

Children / young people benefit greatly from taking part in sport and leisure activities, which give them the opportunity to be healthy and active, to have fun, to learn new skills and to make new friends.

We have produced this guide to help you find activities that your children will enjoy and where they will be safe from harm.

#### What questions should you ask?

A good club / organisation will welcome questions about their activities and issues around safety. All clubs / organisations should have a child protection policy that describes steps they have taken to keep children / young people safe.

#### Are staff / volunteers appropriately qualified?

All coaches / leaders should have up to date qualifications, which are recognised by the relevant regional / national Governing Body of Sport (eg, Football Association, England Netball) and are appropriate for the activity and level of ability being coached.

All staff / volunteers should have attended recognised training courses in child protection and health and safety.

#### Are the staff / volunteers suitable to work with children / young people?

All staff / volunteers should have gone through a proper recruitment process to assess their suitability to work with children / young people. This should include an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check undertaken within the last 3 years, reference check and an interview.

#### Are there formal Codes of Conduct?

All clubs / organisations should have written codes of ethics and behaviour and health and safety which outline expectations of good practice for anyone working with children / young people. An environment in which bullying, shouting, racism and/or sexism are allowed to take place is not acceptable. Clubs may also have codes of conduct for participants and for parents, carers and spectators that describe what is expected of them.

There should be a process for responding to breaches of the codes of conduct.

### **How can children and their parents voice their concerns ?**

All clubs / organisations should have a child protection policy outlining their procedures for dealing with poor practice and / or possible abuse. They should tell you where to go or what to do if you or your child has any worries.

Clubs / organisations should have a designated Child Protection / Welfare Officer as the first point of contact if you have any concerns,

If you are unhappy about the way your concern is dealt with, contact any of the organisations listed on the final page of this guide.

### **Would they be able to contact me in an emergency?**

A club / organisation should ask you to complete a registration form when your child joins. Emergency contact details and information about any medical conditions or special requirements your child may have should be included.

It is your responsibility to notify the organisation of any changes or preferred numbers for emergency contacts, should they be needed.

### **How does the club / organisation provide intimate care needs?**

In the case of very young children, or disabled children, you should check out arrangements and routine for toileting, changing and administering medication. You should discuss any specific requirements your child may have, and how these will be managed, when you first contact the club / organisation.

### **What happens if my child is involved in a trip or away fixture?**

You should be informed of arrangements for every trip, even short journeys. You should always be asked for your consent. Information should include arrangements for transport to and from the venue, equipment and refreshments required.

### **Does the club / organisation have a changing room policy?**

Clubs / organisations should make sure that a minimum of two adults of the same gender as the children are present when participants are being supervised in a changing room environment.

Boys and girls should have access to separate changing facilities.

Parents/ carers of children / young people with special needs should be consulted to discuss changing and assistance that may be required.

### **Does the club / organisation have a photography policy?**

Clubs / organisations often use photographs to promote activities and achievements and may use video as a coaching aid. A photography policy should be in place to protect against the inappropriate use of such images.

The club/organisation should explain how images will be used and ask you to give your written consent for photographs and / or video footage of your child to be taken.

If you are attending an event, the club organisation should ask you to register if you wish to take photographs and / or video footage on the day (whether using camera, video camera, mobile phone).

### **Does the club / organisation have a policy guiding the use of electronic communication and text messaging?**

Coaches / leaders should send emails or text messages to parents / carers rather than to children / young people directly. In some cases it may be considered acceptable to send emails or text messages to children of 11 years and over, but all communications should be copied to parents / carers as well as someone holding a recognised position of responsibility within the club / organisation.

### **Is the club / organisation working towards formal accreditation?**

You might see or hear reference to Clubmark (or other sports-specific accreditation schemes). Clubmark is a nationally recognised scheme that is actively promoted by Sport England and many Governing Bodies of Sport.

Clubmark recognises junior sports clubs that meet high quality standards and have succeeded in meeting a number of essential criteria of high quality sports clubs. Clubmark accreditation helps to empower parents / carers to choose a safe and friendly club for their children to enjoy and participate in sport.

### **When should you have concerns?**

Here are some examples:

- Activities where parents are discouraged from staying to watch or becoming involved
- Behaviour that encourages rough play, sexual innuendo or humiliating punishments
- Individuals who take charge and operate independently of club's / organisation's guidelines
- Individuals who show favouritism or personally reward particular children
- Encouragement of inappropriate physical contact
- Poor communication and lack of parental involvement, leaving you feeling uneasy and uninformed
- Children who drop out or stop going for no apparent reason

- Invitations for children to spend time alone with staff / volunteers, or even to visit their home

### How should you share your concerns?

You may feel reluctant to voice your concerns in case you are wrong or worried about the impact on your child, but if you are concerned you must take action.

- Speak to the coach or leader in charge. If you are not confident that they are the appropriate person, speak to someone in a position of authority such as the nominated Child Protection / Welfare Officer
- If you are unhappy about the response you receive, please contact the National or Regional Governing Body for the sport. If the sport is not covered by a Governing Body please contact Sport Islington for advice

If you have serious concerns about a child at risk of harm, immediately contact Islington's Children's Social Care Referral and Advice Team.

### Parents' Code of Practice – What will the club / organisation expect of you?

- Make sure your child has the correct equipment and clothing, including waterproofs / sun hat /sun cream, as appropriate
- Provide your child with a suitable drink
- Inform the coach or activity leader of any special requirements your child may have
- Inform them of any injury, illness or medical condition and make sure your child has the required medication to hand
- Provide them with emergency contact details and inform them immediately should these change
- Be punctual when dropping off and collecting your child
- If watching the session always be encouraging and respect all participants, coaches, officials, volunteers and other parents
- Take an active interest in your child's participation and progress in the activity or sport

### How could you get more involved in your child's team / club?

Junior sports clubs rely heavily on parents and other volunteers to provide and maintain the services they offer. Most clubs are run by a small number of volunteers and are extremely grateful for further support, especially from parents. Getting involved needn't mean a major commitment and there are many different ways that you could offer support, eg, club administration, refereeing, coaching, grounds maintenance or providing refreshments.

It is important that parents / volunteers are properly screened and are given the opportunity to gain the right skills, knowledge and qualification. Good clubs / organisations offer volunteer support and training programmes. Why not contact a member of your child's team / club and see how you can help.

## Contact information

For further information visit the web pages of:

**Islington Safeguarding Children Board**, [www.islingtonscb.org.uk](http://www.islingtonscb.org.uk)

**Sport Islington**, [www.sportislington.co.uk](http://www.sportislington.co.uk)

**To report a child in Islington at risk of harm:**

Phone 020 7527 7400 during office hours or 020 7226 0992 evenings / weekends

Email: [cscreferrals@islington.gov.uk](mailto:cscreferrals@islington.gov.uk)

*Thank you to Southwark Council for the use of their leaflet.*