

West Lancashire Fencing Club

Child Protection - Procedures and Guidelines

Introduction

West Lancashire Fencing Club has drawn up these guidelines using British Fencing's guidance and they will be updated in line with British Fencing's Child Protection Policy and Procedures. West Lancashire Fencing Club believes that the welfare of children/vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to protecting children/vulnerable adults from abuse. Everyone in fencing - administrators, club officials, coaches, parents, friends, and children/vulnerable adults themselves - can help.

Abuse can occur anywhere there are children/vulnerable adults - at home, at school, in the park, or even the fencing club. Sadly, there are some people who will seek to be where children are simply in order to abuse them. We believe that everyone at West Lancashire Fencing Club has a part to play in looking after the children/vulnerable adults with whom we are working. This is both a moral and arguably a legal obligation. The Children Act 1989 indicates that anyone who has the care of children/vulnerable adults should "*do what is reasonable in all circumstances for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the child's / vulnerable adult's welfare.*"

These child protection procedures stem from the following principles:

- **The child's/vulnerable adult's welfare is the first consideration**
- **All children/vulnerable adults, regardless of age, any disability they have, gender, racial origin, religious belief and sexual identity have a right to be protected from abuse.**

We know that if the procedures are to help to protect children/vulnerable adult, everyone involved in fencing needs to see and discuss them.

A full copy of British Fencing's Child Protection Policy and Procedures can be found on their website at www.britishfencing.com and it is also available from BF Headquarters.

Finally, please remember West Lancashire Fencing Club will support anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concerns that a child/vulnerable adult is at risk of, or may actually be, being abused.

British Fencing's Procedures and Guidelines were produced in conjunction with Sport England.

British Fencing has an ongoing commitment to the safety and protection of children in Fencing.

Comments and suggestions on how this service can be improved are welcomed.

British Fencing wishes to acknowledge the assistance provided by the Amateur Swimming Association, Sport England, National Coaching Foundation and NSPCC in the production of its Guidelines and Procedures.

BRITISH FENCING 1 Baron's Gate, 33-35 Rothschild Road, London W4 5HT Telephone 0208 742 3032

What is Child Abuse?

It is generally acknowledged that there are four main types of abuse:

Physical Abuse Physical Abuse is just what the term implies - hurting or injuring a child/vulnerable adult, for example by hitting or shaking them. It should be borne in mind, however, that certain bruises are fairly common when fencing, but they might also occur if a child/vulnerable adult is forced to train beyond his/her capabilities. Bullying is likely to come into this category.

Sexual Abuse Sexual Abuse occurs when a child/vulnerable adult knowingly takes part in something which meets the sexual needs of the other person or persons involved - it could range from sexually suggestive comments to full intercourse.

Emotional Abuse Emotional Abuse occurs when a child/vulnerable adult is not given love, help and encouragement and is constantly derided or ridiculed or, perhaps even worse, ignored. Conversely, it can also occur if a child/vulnerable adult is over-protected. It is present in the unrealistic expectations of parents and coaches over what a child can achieve. Racially and sexually abusive remarks constitute emotional abuse and it can be a feature of bullying.

Neglect Neglect usually means failing to meet children's/vulnerable adults' basic needs such as food, warmth, adequate clothing, medical attention etc. It could also mean failing to ensure they are safe or exposing them to harm or leaving the unsupervised in potentially dangerous situations such as unsupervised 'sword in hand' training.

Some Indications

Recognising child abuse is not always easy - even for experts. The examples listed below are not a complete list and they are only indicators - not confirmation:

- **The child/vulnerable adult says that she or he is being abused, or another person says they believe (or actually know) that abuse is occurring;**
- **The child has an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent;**
- **The child's behaviour changes, either over time or quite suddenly, and he or she becomes quiet and withdrawn, or alternatively becomes aggressive;**
- **The child/vulnerable adult appears not to trust adults, for example a parent or coach, with whom she or he would be expected to have, or once had, a close relationship, or does not seem to be able to make friends;**
- **He or she becomes increasingly neglected-looking in appearance, or loses or puts on weight for no apparent reason;**
- **The child/vulnerable adult shows inappropriate sexual awareness for his/her age and sometimes behaves in a sexually explicit way.**

Bear in mind that physically disabled children/vulnerable adults and children/vulnerable adults with learning difficulties are particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them.

If you have concerns about the welfare of a child/vulnerable adult.

Please remember, it's not your responsibility to decide whether a child/vulnerable adult is being abused but we are asking you to act on your concerns. Make a detailed note of what you've seen or heard but don't delay passing on the information.

If you are a member of the fencing club, the parent/carer or the friend of a member, you should:

- Tell a **club official** such as the **club secretary, chairperson, coach or any committee member**, or at an event a member of the Directoire Technique – unless, of course you suspect them of being involved;
- Contact the BF Child Protection Officer via British Fencing headquarters

or call one of the following:

- **NSPCC Help Line (Tel: 0800 800 500)** – Telephone Help Line for adults who are concerned that a child has been abused, and counselling for adults and children who have been abused.
- **ChildLine (Tel: 0800 1111)** – Confidential telephone advice for children/vulnerable adults who are being abused or are at risk.
- Your local Social Services telephone number, available from the local phone book, including out of hours Duty Social Worker

If you are a **club officer** or **organiser** you can:

- Talk to the child's/vulnerable adult parents/carers about the concerns if you think there may be an obvious explanation such as a bereavement or pressure from their studies/exams;
- Ring any of the above numbers;
- Contact your local **Social Service** Department or, in an emergency, the **Police**.

If you're working with fencers away from home, at a training camp, perhaps, or at a national/international competition – tell the **team manager** or the **chief coach**.

If you're working with the school – tell the **head teacher**.

Again please remember to make a detailed note of what you've seen or heard but don't delay passing on the information.

NB. You should also write to British Fencing to advise them of your concern and to whom you have reported it. Address the letter to:

The Child Protection Officer, c/o British Fencing,
1 Baron's Gate, 33-35 Rothschild Road, London W4 5HT

If, however, despite the action you've taken, you feel that the situation hasn't changed, or that nothing has been done, please contact any of the numbers given above and talk to them about your concerns.

If a child/vulnerable adult tells you that he or she is being abused

- Stay calm;
- Don't promise to keep it to yourself;
- Listen to what the child/vulnerable adult say and, please, take it seriously;
- Only ask questions if you need to identify what the child/vulnerable adult is telling you - don't ask the child/vulnerable adult about explicit details;
- Make a detailed note of what the child/vulnerable adult has told you but, as advised in the previous section, please don't delay passing on the information.

Good practice which can help to prevent Child Abuse

- Avoid situations where teacher/coach/club official and child are alone. West Lancashire Fencing Club acknowledges that occasionally there may be no alternative - for example, a child may fall ill and have to be taken home. We would stress, however, that one-to-one contact must never be allowed to occur on a regular basis. Further guidance on this issue is contained in the *British Fencing Code of Ethics*.
- If it is necessary to do things of a personal nature for children/vulnerable adults who are young or disabled, make sure you have another adult accompanying you. Get the child's/vulnerable adult's consent if at all possible and certainly get consent from the parent/carer. Let the child/vulnerable adult know what you are doing and why.
- Parents/carers and/or nominated club officials will be responsible for children/vulnerable adults in changing rooms and equipment store.
- Teachers/coaches/club officials should work in pairs if classes or groups of children have to be supervised in the changing room.
- Ensure that mixed groups are always accompanied by male and female teachers/coaches/club officials.
- Don't allow any physically rough or sexually provocative games, or inappropriate talking or touching by anyone, in any group for which you have responsibility.
- At competitions, be aware of people who don't appear to be relatives or friends of children who are fencing but, nevertheless, seem to spend a lot of time videoing or photographing them, particularly if they are not authorised. Report these incidents to the organisers or the Centre management/Organisers immediately.
- When organising a competition all parents/relatives and friends and bona fide press photographers should be required to register with the organisers. The organisers should be responsible for monitoring all photography to ensure compliance with British Fencings guidance.