



JUNIOR TOUCH  
CHAMPIONSHIPS

# Junior Touch Championships RECOGNISING ABUSE

In our World, everyone has the right to be safe

# Foreword

This document is the Protecting Young People Abuse and Poor Practice Guidance for the Junior Touch Championships. It shall be followed by all members of the organisation, its event participants, event participating National Touch Associations and spectators. It shall be promoted by those in positions of leadership.

## Appendices

This document must be read in conjunction with:

1. JTC Protecting Young People Policy
2. JTC Protecting Young People Guidance
3. JTC Protecting Young People Procedures
4. JTC Protecting Young People Poor Practice

# Abuse and Poor Practice

## Recognising Abuse

Children and young people can be abused either through someone inflicting harm, or equally failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can be carried out by someone known to the child or (more rarely) by a complete stranger, and by men, women or other young people. It is not always easy to recognise abuse, especially as many of the indicators can have other reasonable explanations.

Abuse in all of its forms can affect a child at any age and its impact can be so damaging that, if not treated, it may follow the individual into adulthood. It is important that everyone understands what constitutes abuse, indicators of abuse, what to do, and where to seek advice if abuse is suspected or alleged.

The Children Act 2004 provides the following definitions of abuse.

### Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Leaving a young person feeling that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person is considered as emotional abuse. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on young people. It may involve causing young people frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of young people. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child though it may occur alone.

It is worth noting that denying a young person to express their ideas or suppressing their opinion is a form of emotional abuse.

Within sport examples of emotional abuse may include:

- continually diminishing a child's efforts;
- placing intolerable pressure on a child to train and/or win;
- imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations on a child.

### Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the young person's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Neglect in a sport may occur if the responsible adult failed to adequately look after children in their care, leading them to be placed at risk of harm for example by consistently failing to ensure the use of appropriate protective equipment or clothing suitable to adverse weather conditions. This is especially true for squads who train during winter months, or indeed summer.

### Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a young person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms, of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after.

In sport an example of physical abuse could include:

- provision of performance enhancing drugs;
- forcing a child into a physically exhausting and painful training regime;
- designing an intensity of training that fails to consider the capacity of the child's immature and growing body;
- hitting or slapping a child as a form of punishment.

### Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. It may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Examples of sexual abuse include:

- physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts;
- non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities; or
- encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

In sport, activities which might involve physical contact with children could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power and influence of the coach over young athletes, if misused, may lead to sexually abusive situations developing. There have been a significant number of sexual abuse cases in sport, many of which have involved coaches, both male and female, who have manipulated the child and abused their position of trust.

### Abuse of a Position of Trust

A relationship of trust exists where an adult, by virtue of their role, is in a position of power or influence over a young person (e.g. coaches, managers, referees, volunteers and medical staff). The Sexual Offences Act (2003) states that it is a criminal offence for a person in a position of trust defined within the scope

of the Act, to engage in any sexual activity with a person over sixteen but under the age of 18 with whom they have a relationship of trust, irrespective of whether the young person has ostensibly consented to the relationship. Although the law does not currently apply to coaches and others involved in sports clubs, the JTC Trust considers that it is completely unacceptable for anyone to engage in sexual activity within a relationship of trust.

It must be stressed that it is always the responsibility of the adult to ensure that his or her conduct is acceptable. Appropriate boundaries in all relationships of trust must be maintained and adults must not behave in a manner that would encourage any attraction to develop. However, in the event that a young person displays signs of attraction to the adult within the relationship of trust, this must be reported to the NTA Welfare Officer. If appropriate, the adult may need to remove themselves from the relationship of trust.

### 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:

- Injuries which are not consistent with an explanation.
- Injuries which go untreated
- Reluctance to change for practice / training; or a reluctance to be involved at training.
- The young person gives an inconsistent account
- Use of sexual phrases or words.
- Having a significantly older boyfriend / girlfriend.
- Sharp changes in emotional well-being.
- Eating disorders/ frequently hungry or overeating.
- Severe sleep disturbances or frequently tired
- Sudden underachievement
- Frequently dirty and poorly clothed.

Parental behaviours may also indicate child abuse. Parent – child interactions when being dropped off to / picked up at training may also provide clues. The above list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators should not be accepted as proof that abuse is taking place. It is not the responsibility of those involved in the JTC Trust to decide that child abuse is occurring. However it is everyone's responsibility to be vigilant and act on any concerns.

## Bullying

The JTC Trust operates a staunch anti-bullying policy as part of its wider commitment to child protection.

Bullying may be perpetrated by another young person or group of people, or by 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. Bullying can be split into the following categories:

- Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding belongings, threatening gestures)
- Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments

- Homophobic - because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber - all areas of internet, such as email & internet chat room misuse, mobile threats by text messaging & calls. Misuse of associated technology, e.g. camera & video facilities

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

Signs of bullying include:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go to 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.