

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

1. Essentially, child protection is about safeguarding children i.e. anyone up to the age of eighteen years of age from abuse.
2. Child abuse is a term used to describe ways by which children can be harmed, usually by adults but increasingly so by their peers. It refers to the damage that can be caused to the physical and emotional health and well being of a youngster.
3. Any act, statement or conduct, which causes harm or poses a risk to a child, constitutes improper behaviour.
4. All children associated with Swansea City Football Club, i.e. players registered with the Centre of Excellence, trialists and scholars are entitled to expect and to receive the highest level of care from personnel at the Club. Anything less is unacceptable.
5. The child's welfare is, and must always be the paramount consideration
6. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and acted upon swiftly and appropriately.

The Football Association has defined FIVE categories of abuse.

### **NEGLECT**

Neglect takes place if adults fail to meet a child or young person's basic physical needs e.g. food, warmth and clothing. It refers to children being left alone, without supervision or where they are exposed to danger, injury or extreme weather conditions.

In a football environment, neglect could occur if children do not have proper supervision or are allowed or encouraged to play whilst injured. It could occur if a young person's particular health needs are disregarded before, during or after a game.

### **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

This occurs if people physically hit, shake or in some way deliberately hurt or injure a child. In a football environment it could happen where the raining methods are inappropriate for the developmental age of the child, or where he is allowed to play with an injury. It would clearly occur if a child / young person is hit or manhandled by those supervising the game or training session.

### **SEXUAL ABUSE**

This occurs if a child is used to meet another person's sexual needs. It includes any form of sexual behaviour with a child/ young person ( by an adult or another child), the use of sexually explicit language and jokes, inappropriate touching and exposure to pornographic material.

### **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

This includes frequent threatening, taunting or sarcastic behaviour. It can include also, racist or sexist behaviour and demeaning initiation ceremonies. Other children/ young people as well as adults can inflict it. Children who are being abused or bullied in any way will also experience emotional abuse.

In a football environment, coaches, parents emotionally abuse children/young people if they constantly criticise, abuse their power or impose unrealistic pressure to perform to a high standard, which is beyond the capability of the child.

## **BULLYING**

Bullying can be defined as:

Physical - hitting, kicking and theft.

Verbal - name calling, constant teasing, sarcasm, racist taunts, threats and gestures.

Emotional - tormenting, mobile text messaging, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring

Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.

Bullying can occur anywhere, but is more likely to happen where there is inadequate supervision. In football it is more likely to occur in the changing rooms, or on the way to and from the football field- but it can also take place at a training session or a fixture.

The bully in football can be a parent who is too demanding, a coach / manager who has a win . at-all-costs philosophy or a child who intimidates another. The victim is often weaker and less powerful.

You will note that the above categories of abuse are not mutually exclusive.

### **Signs and Indicators of Abuse.**

Children / young people are often reluctant to tell someone when they are being abused so it is essential that adults are aware of the possible signs that a child's welfare is being threatened. There is rarely a clear sign and you may have to piece together snippets of information and rely on your instinct that something does not seem quite right. You may have one piece of information that, when considered in conjunction with other pieces, forms a clear or clearer picture of abuse.

The damage inflicted by bullying can often be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress and anxiety to young people and can affect their health and development. There are a number of signs and indicators, which might lead one to suspect that a child/young person is being bullied.

1. Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration, becoming withdrawn and possibly depressed. A reluctance to go to training sessions or matches.
2. Emotionally up and down- moody, tearful, loss of confidence.
3. A decline in performance at school or in matches.
4. Physical signs such as feeling ill before training/matches . damaged clothes, bruising.
5. Becoming aggressive, especially towards younger children. Becoming disruptive or unreasonable
6. Loss of money, football clothing and other possessions.

If you suspect that a child is suffering or has suffered from abuse, you must act. Inaction is not an option.

Remember it is not your duty or responsibility to investigate any issue relating to child abuse. It is not your duty to decide if a child / young person is being abused- however it is your responsibility to share your suspicions/concerns.

The table on the next page shows some possible physical and behavioural signs of abuse. Some are very specific and explicit, while others are more general. You need to be careful as any one of these signs might have another plausible explanation, such as death of a family member, loss of a pet or a problem at school. You should, however raise your concerns if there is a combination of unexplained changes in behaviour over a period of time.

## **PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW IN RESPONSE TO CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS ABOUT CHILD ABUSE**

Child protection concerns, allegations and disclosures can arise when a child/young person informs you directly that they are concerned about someone's behaviour towards them be it within or outside a football setting. Concerns might also arise when you become aware through your observations or through a third party of the possible occurrence of abuse. Suspicions might often develop over time.

### **WHAT YOU SHOULD DO**

If a child complains to you about a child protection incident known as a disclosure the following procedures should be adopted.

React calmly so as not to frighten the child/young person.

Tell the person that he was right to tell and he is not to blame.

Take what the child says seriously.

Re-assure the child but do not make any promises regarding possible outcomes or confidentiality, which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments.

Avoid leading the child and keep questions to a minimum. Ask only what is necessary to ensure a clear understanding of what has happened.

Ensure the immediate safety of the child. In an emergency dial 999

If the child needs hospital treatment, take the child to hospital and inform doctors that this is a child protection issue.

In the event of suspicion of sexual abuse do not let the child bathe or shower as possible evidence might be destroyed.

Inform the parents immediately unless you have good reason not to. i.e. you suspect a parent is the abuser.

Record accurately any information given to you directly or that emanating from your own observations. This is essential as legal proceedings might ensue.

Report the concerns to the Club's Youth Development Child Protection Officer immediately.

If he is not available report your concerns directly to the F.A. / NSPCC Child Protection Helpline- 0808 800 5000 They will advise you what do next. Should you be advised to refer the matter to the Social Services or to the Police- formal referrals should be made within 24 hours or as soon as possible. Keep a record of the member of Staff ( Social Services) or Police Officer with whom you spoke. Record the time and the date.

In any case, you must inform the Club's Child Protection Officer of any action you have taken if you had been unable to contact him immediately a disclosure had been made to you, or if you had reported a concern to one of the above agencies. The Child Protection Officer will help you in completing any referral form that might need to be submitted.

Once you have expressed your concern and completed a referral form ( if that is deemed necessary) it is possible that you might not hear of any action that ensues. It is important to remember that your role is to refer and not to investigate and take action. That is the obligation of others.

The Social Services will decide whether the child is in need of help or whether the child is in need of protection.

The F.A. will decide whether a referral constitutes child abuse or bad practice. The action they might choose to take will depend on the nature and the severity of the referral.

### **SOME GUIDANCE ON CHILD IMAGES / PHOTOGRAPHS**

Photographs and images of children can sometimes be abused by falling into unscrupulous hands and find a way on to inappropriate websites.

The F.A. provides clear advice on photographing children. Such advice will help to avoid the following:

- The identification and locating of children in inappropriate circumstances which include:
  - 1) where a child has been moved from his family for his own safety
  - 2) where restrictions on contact with one parent exist
  - 3) in situations where a child may be a witness in criminal proceedings

The majority of images taken are appropriate and taken in good faith. If we take the following simple measures we can help to ensure the safety of children in football.

- The image of any child who is under care proceedings or any of the above, must not be placed in the public domain.
- Focus must be on an activity rather than the individual child.
- Those featured must be appropriately dressed i.e. vest/shirt and shorts
- Photographs with the full names of individuals must not be published without written consent.
- Images taken in dressing rooms are not permitted.