The Inspire Group
Safeguarding Children & Child Protection Policy
2026/27

Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy

Introduction

Everyone who participates in The Inspire Group sessions is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. The Inspire Group have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for children and young people, staff and volunteers provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

The Inspire Group is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone in sport accepts 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.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of The Inspire Group and to allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues. Our policy is regularly revised and follows the guidelines of our local authority and those set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026).

A child/young person is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children's Act 1989)

Policy Statement

The Inspire Group is committed to the following:

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.
- all children/young person, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in sport in a fun and safe environment.
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children/young person 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.
- The Inspire Group employees who work with children/young people will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, and will be provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and safeguarding procedures.

- working in partnership with parents and children is essential for the protection of children/young people.

Monitor and review the policy and procedures

The implementation of procedures should be regularly monitored and reviewed. The safeguarding should regularly report progress, challenges, difficulties, achievements gaps and areas where changes are required to the management committee. The policy should be reviewed annually or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

Promoting Good Practice

Introduction

To provide children/young people with the best possible experience and opportunities in sport everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework as outlined in our team handbook. It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of employees or participants in sport to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child, as explained in section 4.

This section will help you identify what is meant by good practice and poor practice.

Good Practice

- All personnel should adhere to the following principles and action:
- always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- make the experience of sport fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying.
- treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity.
- always put the welfare of the young person first, before winning.
- maintain a safe and appropriate distance with players (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).

- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the young person's consent has been given.

- Involve parents/cares wherever possible, e.g. where young people need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms always ensure parents, coaches etc work in pairs.

- request written parental consent if foundation officials are required to transport young people in their cars.

- gain written parental consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g. overnight stays.

- ensure that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff.

- ensure that at away events adults should not enter a young person's room or invite young people to their rooms.

- be an excellent role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.

- always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.

- recognising the developmental needs and capacity of the young person and do not risk sacrificing welfare in a desire for foundation or personal achievements. This means avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.

- secure written parental consent for the foundation to act in loco parentis, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises.

- keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given, using organisation accident report forms.

Poor Practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by all personnel:

- unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others.
- taking young people alone in a car on journeys, however short.
- taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you.
- sharing a room with a young person.
- engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- allowing young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- making sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun.
- reducing a young person to tears as a form of control.
- allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- do things of a personal nature that the young person can do for themselves.

It is the policy of The Inspire Group that staff are prohibited at all times from allowing children/young people to travel within them in cars. In the case of a transport issue staff have permission to use an approved transport service to provide taxi's for young people should this be agreed with parents/carers.

If during your care you accidentally hurt a young person, the young person seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions and/or if the young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

Defining Child Abuse

Introduction

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 young person regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

There are four main types of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, bullying 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 of its 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.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse: where adults physically hurt or injure a child/young person e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning. Giving children/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 deliberately causes ill health in a child/young person they are looking after. This is call Munchauser's syndrome by proxy.

- In a sports situation, physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training disregard the capacity of the child's/young persons immature and growing body

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

- Ill treatment of children/young people, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

- Emotional abuse in sport may occur when the child/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.

Sexual Abuse : occurs when adults use children/young people to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing children/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/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.

Bullying: may come from another 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 three 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 form the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

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

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

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/young person 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/young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them.
- another young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a child/ young person.
- unexplained changes in a child/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 adult's, 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 frequents 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 The Inspire Group to decide that child abuse is occurring. It IS their responsibility to act on any concerns.

Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment at Sporting Events

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people. All clubs should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the organisations safeguarding lead.

All parents and performers should be made aware when coaches use video equipment as a coaching aid.

Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

Introduction

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in The Inspire Group in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However there is 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 child/young person. This applies BOTH to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within The Inspire Group and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

This section explains how to respond to allegations/suspicions.

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 section 3 of this document, it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the child/young person affected.

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

- stay calm so as not to frighten the child/young person.
- reassure the child/young person that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell.
- listen to the child/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 safeguarding cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child/young person has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify.
- inform the child/young person that you have to inform other people about what they have told you.
- safety of the child/young person is paramount. If the child/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 safeguarding issue
- record all information.
- report the incident to the safeguarding lead and designated safeguarding lead in the relevant agency i.e. school.
- Under no circumstances should Inspire staff discuss or investigate any concerns with each other. The only point of report is the safeguarding lead.

Reporting the Concern

In the instance in which a Safeguarding concern is raised - staff are expected to follow this flowchart in order to report the issue.

Staff member is made aware of a safeguarding concern about a child/children.

In the case of the child/children being in immediate harm - staff should take responsibility to contact emergency searches.

Staff member records the information about the incident in their Google Workspace Report that is submitted at the end of the session.

Upon submission of this report the staff member should flag an issue to the DSL and line manager

Designated Safeguarding Lead will investigate the issue and determine what action will be taken.

In the case of further action being taken, the DSL will contact LADO/Police/Other statutory bodies to action the concern.

Designated Safeguarding Lead will go back to the member of staff to report how the concern has been dealt with and what the final outcome is.

If the nominated safeguarding lead 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 in your local directory and on the back of your staff ID card.

As mentioned previously in this document the The Inspire Group 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

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/young people 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/young people.

Concerns about a member of staff or allegations of a safeguarding issue about a member of staff

This again should be reported to the safeguarding lead who will immediately seek advice from the LADO. See contacts at the end of policy.

Confidentiality

Every effort should 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:

- The safeguarding lead.
- The parents of the child/young person.
- The person making the allegation.
- Social Services/police.
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Recruiting and Selecting Personnel with Children/Young People

Introduction

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

The safer recruitment of staff and volunteers is the first step to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. As an employer, The Inspire Group expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. In order to help safeguard and promote the welfare of everyone in its care, The Inspire Group is committed to a thorough and consistent Safer Recruitment policy

Controlling Access to Children/Young People

- 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.

- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children/young people 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.
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- They will confirm receipt and understanding of the Team Handbook, containing all relevant safeguarding and behavioural expectations.

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/young person.
- Work safely and effectively with children/young people.

The Inspire Group 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 safeguarding 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 safeguarding.
- 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 child/young person
- All coaches, trainee coaches and leaders should have an up to date first aid qualification.

NSPCC helpline
0808 800 5000

SAFEGUARDING ESSENTIAL CONTACTS - Walsall
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Designated Officer (DO)

https://forms.walsall.gov.uk/Electronic-Multi-Agency-Referral-Form

LADO
Belinda Crowshaw
Telephone: 01922 652322
lado@walsall.gov.uk

Role of Designated Safeguarding Lead for The Inspire Group

- Advise and support the rest of the team in building a positive safeguarding culture.
- Receive safeguarding concerns connected to The Inspire Group and offer immediate management.
- Make referrals to key safeguarding agencies (eg social services or police) where necessary.
- Keep all policies, procedures and practises in line with the highest standards and best practise.
- Line manage DDSL's and wider safeguarding team and lead progress/monitoring meetings with this team.

Designated Safeguarding Lead for The Inspire Group
Julie Clarke
07846265189
julie@inspire-group.co.uk

Role of Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead for The Inspire Group

- Advocate the work of the DSL and support the rest of the team in building a positive safeguarding culture.
- Receive safeguarding concerns connected to The Inspire Group and offer immediate escalation to DSL.
- Make referrals to key safeguarding agencies (eg social services or police) where necessary and in immediate need.
- Support DSL to keep safeguarding policies, procedures and behaviours are up to date.
- Carry out training and guidance for the rest of the team alongside DSL.

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead for The Inspire Group
Josh Edwards
07584300712
josh@inspire-group.co.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead for The Inspire Group
Joe Clarke
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Declaration
On behalf of The Inspire Group we, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of the Safeguarding Children & Child Protection Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.



Julie Clarke
Designated Safeguarding Lead



Josh Edwards
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead



Joe Clarke
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

POLICY DATE OF REVIEW
02/09/2026

NEXT SCHEDULED REVEIW
01/09/2027