

Born To Tri – affiliated to Triathlon England and British Triathlon Federation

Child Protection

Good Practice and Child Protection

1. Objectives of the British Triathlon Association

1.0 Introduction

Everyone who participates in Triathlon is entitled to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment and to be given the chance to experience the feelings of joy, challenge and achievement that are inherent to the sport. To ensure this, the British Triathlon Association (BTA) is committed to devising and implementing policies and procedures to ensure all those involved comply with the BTA code of good practice.

In addition, all young people are entitled to a duty of care and to be protected from abuse. Abuse can occur anywhere ? at home, at school, in the park and in sport. Sadly some people will seek to be in the company of children simply in order to abuse them. The BTA is committed to devising and implementing policies and procedures to ensure everyone in the sport accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means taking action to safeguard children and to report any concerns about their welfare. It is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place; this is the domain of child protection professionals; the social services and the police force.

This document sets out the BTA?s policies and procedures in fulfillment of its belief in and commitment to good practice and child protection.

1.1 Policy Statement

The British Triathlon Association (BTA) fully accepts its legal (Children?s Act, 1989) and moral obligation to provide a duty of care, to protect all children (and vulnerable adults) and safeguard their welfare, irrespective of age, any disability they have, gender, racial origin, religious belief and sexual identity.

In pursuit of this, the BTA is committed to ensuring that:

- The welfare of young people (and vulnerable adults) is paramount and children have the right to protection from abuse.

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- All young people who take part in Triathlon should be able to participate in a fun and safe environment
- It takes all reasonable practical steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and respects 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 BTA will implement suitable suspension, disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- All affiliated clubs are required to sign up to the BTA procedures for good practice and child protection that clearly state what is required of them.
- All employees and volunteers are carefully selected, informed about their responsibilities and provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and child protection procedures.
- High standards of behaviour and practice are demanded through compliance with BTA codes of conduct produced for coaches, team managers and volunteers
- Everyone knows and accepts their responsibilities and works together: parents, triathletes, coaches, team managers, volunteers and professional staff.

1.2 Terms and Abbreviations

The following terms and abbreviations are used in this document:

- Anyone under the age of 18 is considered to be a child/young person.
- All policies and procedures described refer to vulnerable adults as well as children.
- The term parent is used as a generic term to represent parents, carers and guardians.

ACPC: Area Child Protection Committee

BTA: British Triathlon Association

CPO: Child Protection Officer (of the BTA)

CWO: Club Welfare Officer (of the BTA affiliated club)

Section 2: Good Practice, Poor Practice and Abuse

2.0 Introduction

To provide young people with the best possible experience and opportunities in Triathlon, it is imperative that everyone operates within an accepted ethical framework and demonstrates exemplary behavior. This not only ensures that Triathlon makes a positive contribution to the development of young people and safeguards their welfare, but also protects all personnel from false allegations of abuse or poor practice.

It is not always easy to differentiate poor practice from abuse, albeit intentional or unintentional. It is not, therefore, the responsibility of employees or volunteers in Triathlon to determine whether or not abuse is taking place. It is, however, their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and to act if they have concerns about the welfare of a child.

This section will help you identify what is meant by good and poor practice and some of the indications of possible abuse. Guidance on what to do if you are concerned about poor practice or possible abuse is provided in Section 4.

2.1 Good Practice

The following principles should be adhered to by all personnel:

- Ensure experience of Triathlon is fun and enjoyable; promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying and never condone rule violations or the use of prohibited substances.
- Be an excellent role model, do not drink alcohol or smoke when working with young people.
- Treat all young people and vulnerable adults equally; this means giving both the more and less talented in a group similar attention, time, respect and dignity.
- Respect the developmental stage of each young person and place their welfare before winning, club or personal achievements. This means ensuring that the training intensity is appropriate to the physical, social and emotional developmental stage of the triathlete and that all BTA guidelines for training intensity and competition distances are followed. Ensure training and competition schedules are based on the needs and interests of the child, not those of the parents, coaches or club. Where, it is imperative that these coaches monitor the overall training intensity and recovery times. It is strongly recommended that where single discipline coaches are responsible for devising training schedules for a triathlete, a lead coach is nominated to take with responsibility for monitoring the overall training intensity and liaising with the other coaches.
- Conduct all coaching and meetings in an open environment; avoid one-to-one coaching in unobserved situations.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate relationship with athletes; it is inappropriate to have an intimate relationship with a young person. The BTA supports the Home Office guidelines that recommend that people in positions of authority should not have sexual relationships with 16-17 year olds in their care. One adult should never share a room with one young person. It is accepted that situations may occur where a number of young people and adults share a common sleeping area. Always ensure that parents' permission is gained in writing beforehand and athletes are given an opportunity in advance to discuss this, air any concerns and agree the logistics of the sleeping arrangements.

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- Build relationships based on mutual trust and respect in which young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and decision-making. Avoid situations in which the coach or team manager uses their position and power to dictate what the triathlete should and should not do.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people; if contact is required in teaching technique, follow the specific guidelines laid down by that sport governing body. Touching can be okay and appropriate as long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the athlete's permission has been given.
- Ensure separate changing facilities are available for junior and senior triathletes. Where supervision is required, involve parents wherever possible and ensure that adults work in pairs.
- Communicate regularly with parents, ensure they have a copy of the BTA Guidance for Parents leaflet, involve them in decision-making and gain written consent for travel arrangements. Secure their consent in writing to act in loco parents, if the need arises to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Be aware of any medical conditions, existing injuries and medicines being taken. Keep a written record of any injury or accident that occurs, together with details of any treatment given. Ensure you are qualified and up-to-date in first aid or that there is a someone with a first aid qualification in attendance.
- Keep up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance issues in Triathlon. Maintain your registration status with the BTA for this ensures adequate and continuous insurance cover.
- When triathletes travel away from home, ensure the guidance contained in the BTA Safe Away leaflet is followed. In particular, if mixed teams are taken away, ensure they are accompanied by a male and female member of staff and safeguard them from the potential of same gender abuse. Adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children on their own into their own rooms.

2.2 Poor Practice

The following is deemed to constitute poor practice and should be avoided by all personnel:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with one child away from the others.
- Avoid taking children to your home where they will be alone with you.
- Never engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Never share a room with a child.
- Never allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Never allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.

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- Never make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Never reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Never allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Never do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves
- Never invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of the person in charge, the BTA or the child's parents. If any of the following incidents should occur, you should report them immediately to another colleague, make a written note of the event and inform parents of the incident:

- If you accidentally hurt a triathlete.
- If a child seems distressed in any manner.
- If a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

2.3 Codes of Conduct

The BTA codes of conduct are based on adherence to the principles of good practice embodied in the preceding sections and in accordance with Government guidance¹, requiring all organisations involved with caring for young people or vulnerable adults to protect them against sexual activity within relationships of trust. As part of its BTA registration and incorporated insurance cover, coaches and managers are required to sign up to the Sports coach UK code of conduct. A code of conduct for club officials and volunteers can be found in Appendix A.

2.4 Photography

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled sports people in vulnerable positions. The BTA, therefore, requires that all personnel and event organisers adhere to the guidelines detailed in Appendix B.

2.5 Indicators of Abuse and Bullying

Definitions of what constitutes abuse and bullying are described in Appendix C. Indications that a child may be being abused include the following:

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- 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 the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else (a child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child.
- Unexplained changes in behavior (eg becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper).
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexually explicit behavior.
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Difficulty in making friends.
- Is prevented from socialising with other children.
- Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Loses weight for no apparent reason.
- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place.

Although anyone can be the target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons (eg being overweight, physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture). Although bullying often takes place in schools, it can and does occur anywhere where there is inadequate supervision (eg on the way to and from training, in the changing rooms). The competitive nature of Triathlon provides a potentially ideal environment for a bully to gain power over others. The bully might be:

- A parent who pushes too hard.
- A coach who adopts a win-at-all costs philosophy.
- A triathlete who intimidates inappropriately
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person.

Signs of bullying (dealing with bullying is dealt with in Appendix J) include:

- Behavioral 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

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- Physical signs such as stomach-aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing for example on food, cigarettes or alcohol
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

Section 3: Recruitment, Selection and Training

3.0 Introduction

To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with young people, the following steps should be taken when recruiting paid staff or volunteers in a full or part-time capacity:

3.1 Recruitment

Draw up a job description identifying roles and responsibilities and a person specification clarifying the required and recommended skills and qualities of an applicant. Where the job involves working with young people, specify the BT policy with regard to child protection and working with children.

3.2 Application

All applicants must complete an application form (see example in Appendix D) that includes:

- Name, address and National Insurance Number (to confirm identity and right to work)
- Relevant experience, qualifications and training undertaken
- Listing of past career or involvement in sport (to confirm experience and identify any gaps)
- Any criminal record
- Whether the applicants are known to any social services department as being an actual or potential risk to children or young people, a self-disclosure question to establish whether they have ever had action taken against them in relation to child abuse, sexual offenses or violence
- The names of at least two people (not relatives) willing to provide written references that comment on the applicant's previous experience of, and suitability for, working with children and young people (previous employer)
- Any former involvement with the sport
- The applicant's consent to criminal record checks being undertaken if necessary
- The applicant's consent to abide by the BT Code of Ethics for the position sought (eg coach, team manager)
- A statement explaining that failure to disclose information or subsequent failure to conform to the Code of Ethics will result in disciplinary action and possible suspension from the BTA.

3.3 Checks and References

A minimum of two written references should be taken up and at least one should be associated with former work with children/young people. If an applicant has no experience of working with children, training is strongly recommended. Written references should always be followed up and confirmed by telephone. If there are any concerns over the information supplied on the application form or from the referees, advice should be sought from the BTA CPO and one or more of the following checks should be undertaken:

- Check carried out with the following organisations that maintain information about individuals who are deemed to be unsuitable to work with children: Criminal Records Bureau (CRB in England and Wales), The Scottish Office (Social Work Services Group in Scotland) or The DHSS Pre-employment Consultancy Service (PECS in Northern Ireland).
- Criminal record check from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) in line with the Protection of Children Act (1999). These are now (from 2001) available free of charge to voluntary organisations.
- A police check. Under the terms of the Data Protection Act, individuals are entitled to request their own personal police check at their local police station. This may cost approximately Â£10.

3.4 Interview and Induction

All employees (and where possible volunteers) will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers should receive a 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 should sign up to the appropriate BTA code of conduct and good practice and child protection procedures
- Their child protection training needs should be confirmed (see section on training).

3.5 Training

While checks are a part of the process to safeguard children, training is required to help people to:

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- Analyse their own practice against what is deemed good practice in Triathlon and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse
- Deal with disclosure
- Work safely and effectively with children.

The BTA requires:

- All employees to undergo police checks and attend a recognised 3-hour good practice and child protection awareness training workshop to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of a positive culture towards good practice and child protection in Triathlon
- All affiliated clubs to appoint a Club Welfare Officer responsible for good practice and child protection, a person and job specification is provided in Appendix E; this officer must undergo a police check and attend a recognised 3-hour good practice and child protection workshop
- All coaches and team managers to receive training either through a recognised 3-hour good practice and child protection workshop or through a special element integrated into a workshop and complemented by self study and assessment using the sport coach UK home study pack
- All personnel (coaches, team managers, medics, event organisers, parents, club officials, senior club members, junior members) to receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the behavior of an adult towards a young person
- All coaches and team managers working with children to attend the BTA one-day top-up course on children that comprises good practice and child protection awareness training, guidance on child-centred coaching styles and information on child growth and development and its implications in Triathlon. All coaches strongly advised to gain a national first aid qualification.

3.6 Monitoring and Appraisal

All employees will annually receive formal feedback through an appraisal at which any issues over poor practice can be identified and addressed, training needs related to children can be identified and new goals set.

Following every junior training camp or team event, all team managers and head coaches will be required to provide feedback on the event, the provision made to safeguard children and the practice of all those involved (Appendix F).

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In addition, all junior participants will be required to complete anonymously a questionnaire that will ascertain their perceptions about the event (Appendix F). This will be collected by a nominated attendee (nominated by the CWO for club events and the BTA for national events), sealed in front of the group and returned to the CWO for club events and BTA personnel for national events. The same monitoring process is recommended for all senior events.

3.7 Complaints, Appeals and Disciplinary Procedures

The BTA's complaints and appeals procedures will be used to deal with any formal complaints and/or appeals (see Section 4.5/6 and Appendix I). Guidance on these procedures will be available to all team managers, coaches, affiliated clubs, registered members and parents.

Section 4: Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegations

4.0 Introduction

While it is not the responsibility of BTA personnel to identify abuse, it is their responsibility to report any concerns about the welfare of a child. These concerns may arise because:

- A young person discloses s/he is being abused
- Of the behavior of an adult towards a child
- Of a cluster of indicators observed in a child over a period of time.

All suspicions and disclosures must be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases of possible sexual abuse or where there is a misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgment about any action to take. Because of the multi-discipline nature of Triathlon, the reporting procedures adopted by the BTA have been linked as closely as possible to the procedures advocated by the British Cycling Federation, the Amateur Swimming Association and UK Athletics.

4.1 Child Protection and Club Welfare Officers

To ensure appropriate action is taken if there are disclosures or suspicions, the BTA:

- Has appointed and trained two employees to act as the designated national child protection officers (CPOs)
- Requires all affiliated clubs³ (whether or not they have junior sections or members) to recruit, appoint and train a designated club member to become the club welfare officer (CWO).

The roles and responsibilities of these two posts are outlined in Appendix E.

4.2 Reporting Procedures

Most children are abused by adults they know and trust; most sexual offenses take place in the home of either the offender or victim. The child might disclose this to a trusted adult (advice on dealing with this is provided in Appendix G) or you may notice signs that cause you concern.

However, abuse also takes place outside the family setting and some individuals who want to harm and abuse children will use sport as a way to gain access to them. In addition to sound recruitment, selection and training procedures, it is crucial that everyone involved in Triathlon is aware of this possibility, that all allegations are taken seriously, and clear and appropriate reporting procedures are promoted and followed if allegations are made or if they have any suspicions.

Any person with information of a disclosure, allegation or suspicion about the welfare of a child (poor practice or possible abuse) must immediately report this in one of the following ways.

If you are a part of an affiliated club, you should immediately inform the club's designated Club Welfare Officer who will refer the matter to the BT Child Protection Officers.

If you are working in schools as part of the school curriculum or an extra-curricular basis, you should inform the head teacher who will follow normal Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) procedures.

If you are working in a local authority facility, you should inform the LA Sports Development Officer or the manager of the facility, who will follow ACPC procedures.

If the concern involves personnel from other sports (eg the associated disciplines of cycling, swimming or athletics), you should inform the BTA CPO who will pass on the concern to their counterparts in the other organisation.

In any other situation or if the designated person is not available, or if concern is about that person or no action is taken, you should make direct contact with the BTA CPO.

If the BTA CPO is unavailable, you should take responsibility and seek advice from the NSPCC help line, the duty officer at local social services department or the child protection personnel at the nearest police station. Telephone numbers are in the local telephone directory. In these circumstances, you do not have to give your name but it is helpful if you can. The social services, together with the designated person in charge where appropriate, will decide how and when parents will be informed. As soon as possible, please also inform the BTA CPO and explain the action taken to date.

A summary of reporting procedures is provided in Appendix H.

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Where there is a complaint of abuse against an employee or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation:

Criminal - in which case the police are immediately involved.

Child protection - in which case the social services (and possibly the police) will be involved.

Disciplinary or misconduct - in which case the BTA will be involved.

4.3 Dealing with Alleged Abuse

While the BTA CPO and club CWOs will have received training, they are not child protection experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. If there is any doubt about whether or not the alleged behavior constitutes abuse, the concern must be shared with professional agencies that will be responsible for subsequent action:

- The social services has a statutory duty under The Children Act 1989, to ensure the welfare of children and work with the local Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) to comply with its procedures. They have a legal responsibility 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 enquiries often jointly with the police. You can obtain advice by telephoning the local social services department and speaking to the duty worker.
- The police also have specially trained child protection personnel to give guidance and advice, deal with concerns sensitively and effectively. If there is any possibility of a criminal offense having taken place, they will automatically become involved.
- The child protection agencies will also provide advice and they can be contacted via the NSPCC 24-hour free phone Help line on 0808 800 500.

NB: If there is any doubt, the allegation or incident must be reported; it may be just one of a series of other instances which together cause concern.

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a BTA employee or a volunteer should be reported to the BTA CPO, who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- The BTA CPO will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- The parents of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- The BTA CPO should also notify the Chief Executive who will decide who should deal with any media enquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings. Under Item 4.6 in

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the Articles of Association of the BTA4 and in relation to the Children and Young Persons Act (1933), specific powers of suspension are vested in the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive can:

- Impose an interim suspension based on the risk to the child, the serious nature of the allegation and the need to ensure a full investigation can be instituted
- Withdraw with immediate effect any BTA qualification
- Impose suspension from BTA events

There is a right of appeal to the Executive Board against the decision of the Chief Executive. The BTA CPO will make a full report to the BTA Disciplinary Committee. Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police, the BTA will assess all individual cases and determine if the person can be reinstated and how this can be handled sensitively. This decision must be made on the available information which could suggest that, on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child is paramount.

If the BTA CPO is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made directly to the Chief Executive who will then be responsible for taking further action.

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (eg by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children). Where such an allegation is made, the BTA will follow the same procedures and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside triathlon, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offenses related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act (1999).

NB: It is the duty of all BTA members to report any charge or conviction involving children.

4.4 Poor Practice

If the allegations are against BTA employees or volunteers and after consideration by the Club CWO and the BTA CPO, are clearly about poor practice, the allegation will be dealt with internally as a misconduct issue. The BTA CPO will determine whether the misconduct allegation:

- Should result in a written warning to the accused with a copy to the club CWO and a copy filed in a secure cabinet at the BTA Offices
- Is deemed to be very serious or a continuation of previously reported poor practice; in which case it will be reported to the BTA Chief Executive and referred to the BTA Disciplinary Panel who will determine further action.

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4.5 Dealing with Bullying

The same procedures should be adopted when dealing with allegations of bullying. For specific guidance on actions to prevent and deal with bullying, refer to Appendix J.

4.6 Disciplinary and Appeal Procedures

The BTA Executive Board shall appoint a Disciplinary Panel to consider all written reported breaches of the BTA Code of Good Practice and written reports of malpractice. On receipt of an allegation or complaint, the BTA member will receive notification in writing of the specific alleged offence and will have the:

- Opportunity to defend himself / herself, and be allowed a reasonable period to prepare their defence.
- Right to seek legal advice or another form of assistance or representation.
- Right of hearing before the panel at a time that will allow a full opportunity to present his/her defence and be represented
- Right of appeal to an Independent Appeals Panel appointed by an independent body such as the Sports Disputes Resolution Panel. Further details of the disciplinary and appeals procedures can be found in Appendix I.

4.7 Informing Parents

Wherever possible, personnel concerned about the welfare of a child should work in partnership with parents. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents to help clarify any initial concerns (eg if a child's behavior has changed, it is important to check if there is a reasonable explanation such as family upset or bereavement). However, there are circumstances in which a young person might be placed at even greater risk if concerns are shared (eg where a parent may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately). In these situations or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to the designated person as soon as possible. Advice and guidance should be sought from the local social services officer with respect to consulting with parents.

4.8 Records and Confidentiality

Information passed to the social services or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record