

Recognising Poor Practice and Abuse



Poor practice and abuse

Child abuse can and does occur inside and outside the family environment. It is not always easy, even for experts, to determine where abuse has occurred. Staff and volunteers in hockey are not experts in recognition. However, all adults working within hockey have a duty of care to be vigilant and respond appropriately to suspicions of poor practice, abuse or bullying. This does not mean that it is your responsibility to decide if a situation is poor practice, abuse or bullying but it is your responsibility to report your concerns.

What is abuse?

Abuse is a description of ways in which children and young people can be harmed by individuals, often those they know and trust. There are five recognised forms of abuse:

1. Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. This occurs when individuals persistently fail to show young people due care with regard to their emotional welfare, when a young person may be constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted, or be subjected to sarcasm and unrealistic pressures. There may also be over protection, preventing young people from socialising, or bullying to perform to high expectations. The young person may lose self-confidence and may become withdrawn and nervous.

In a hockey situation, emotional abuse may occur when coaches, volunteers or parents:

- ▶ provide repeated negative feedback
- ▶ repeatedly ignore a young player's efforts to progress
- ▶ repeatedly demand performance levels above the young player's capability
- ▶ over emphasise "a win at all costs" ethic.

2. Abuse by neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development, i.e. where a young person's essential needs for food, warmth and care (both physical and emotional) are not met.

In a hockey situation neglect may occur when:

- ▶ young players are left alone without proper supervision
- ▶ a young player is exposed to unnecessary heat or cold
- ▶ a young player is not provided with necessary fluids for re-hydration
- ▶ a young player is exposed to an unacceptable risk of injury.

3. Physical abuse

This occurs when individuals, including other young people, deliberately inflict injuries on a child or young person, or knowingly do not prevent such injuries. It includes injuries caused by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, squeezing, biting or using excessive force. Physical

harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child. It also occurs when young people are given alcohol, or inappropriate drugs, or there is a failure to supervise their access to these substances.

In a hockey situation physical abuse may also occur when:

- ▶ young players are exposed to exercise/training which disregards the capacity of the player's immature and growing body
- ▶ young players are exposed to overplaying, overtraining or fatigue
- ▶ any person exposes young players to alcohol and gives them the opportunity to drink alcohol below the legal age or fail to supervise access to alcohol
- ▶ young players are provided with or encouraged to take prohibited substances including performance enhancing drugs.

4. Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to act in sexually inappropriate ways.

In a hockey situation sexual abuse may occur when:

- ▶ an adult uses the context of a training session to touch young people in an inappropriate sexual way
- ▶ coaches, managers or volunteers use their position of power and authority to coerce young players into a sexual relationship
- ▶ coaches or managers imply better progression of the player in return for sexual favours.



5. Bullying

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Young people could be bullied by adults or other young people. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

- ▶ **emotional**
being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding equipment, 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

In a hockey situation, bullying may occur when:

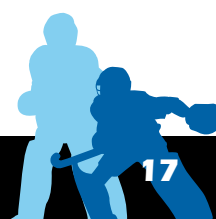
- ▶ young players are deliberately excluded from activities by coaches or other players
- ▶ young players are unreasonably forced to do things that they do not want to do
- ▶ young players are subjected to physical, verbal, emotional or sexual abuse
- ▶ young players are subjected to abuse due to their race or sexuality.

Signs and symptoms

Indications that a young person may be being abused can be difficult to recognise even for the experienced.

There are signs which could alert you to the fact that a child might be being abused, and these include:

- ▶ unexplained bruising or injury particularly in unusual places
- ▶ an injury for which the explanation seems to be inconsistent
- ▶ unexplained sudden changes in behaviour (i.e. withdrawing, very quiet, sudden outbursts of temper or emotion)
- ▶ inappropriate sexual awareness or language or engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- ▶ a young person is being prevented from socialising with other young people or has difficulty making friends
- ▶ when a young person is distrustful of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected, (i.e. parents, coach, family friend)
- ▶ when a young person displays variations in eating patterns (i.e. over eating or loss of appetite)
- ▶ loss of weight for no apparent reason (the child may be trying to make himself/herself less sexually attractive)
- ▶ the young person becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt



- ▶ something another young person has said which suggests a young person is being abused
- ▶ the young person describes an act or behaviour that appears to be abusive.

See the section on bullying for signs and symptoms of bullying.

Other signs and symptoms may include when the young person:

- ▶ doesn't want to attend training or club activities
- ▶ changes their usual routine
- ▶ begins being disruptive during sessions
- ▶ becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- ▶ comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- ▶ has possessions "go missing"
- ▶ becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- ▶ starts stammering
- ▶ attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- ▶ cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- ▶ has unexplained cuts or bruises
- ▶ comes home starving (money/lunch has been stolen)
- ▶ is bullying other young people or siblings
- ▶ stops eating
- ▶ is frightened to say what's wrong.

This list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these symptoms is not proof that abuse has taken place, but it should raise concerns. Changes in behaviour can be caused by changes at home or school, for example bereavement. Parents need to inform coaches and club volunteers if this is the case as a child's behaviour may be affected.

It is NOT your responsibility to decide if a situation is poor practice, abuse or bullying, but it IS your responsibility to report your concerns to the Club Welfare Officer.

What is poor practice?

Poor practice is behaviour which contravenes the Safeguarding and Protecting Young People in Hockey policies, procedures and good practice guidance. Such behaviour could be intentional or accidental.

This includes behaviour which contravenes:

- ▶ England Hockey's Code of Ethics and Behaviour*
- ▶ England Hockey's Equity Policy*
- ▶ England Hockey's Policy on Anti-Bullying (pages 12–13)
- ▶ England Hockey's Policy on Safeguarding and Protecting Young People in Hockey (pages 6–7), procedures (Section 2) and good practice guidance (Section 3).



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*Document available online at www.englishockey.co.uk/safe

