

Mentonians Basketball & Netball Club

Procedure for Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

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 or it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the child affected. In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a child says or indicates that he/she is being abused, you should: I've added the below as suggestions

- Separate the child from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, and it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared others, such as with their parent/carer, specific people in your organisation, or the police.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.
- Provide them with an Incident Report Form to complete, or complete it together, if you think the child is able to do this.
- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to the Association welfare officer, the police or child protection.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and provided to the Club President to be stored securely.

Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions.

Information should include the following:

- the child's name, age and date of birth
- the child's home address and telephone number
- whether or not the person making the report is expressing his/her concern or someone else's
- the nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- a description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- details of witnesses to the incident
- the child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said? has anyone else been consulted? If so record details has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.

Reporting a Concern

All suspicions and allegations **MUST** be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

The Club expects its members and staff to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child **IMMEDIATELY** with the person in charge and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

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As mentioned previously in this document, the Club's employees and volunteers 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.

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by an employee or a volunteer should be reported to the Club 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:

- we will refer the matter to the appropriate source (it might be Social services or Child First)
- the parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the external department
- the chair person of the Club will be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- if the Child Safety Person/s is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report will be made to the appropriate team manager who will refer the matter to the Club committee. – too many people involved. Perhaps just the Club President or Secretary
- Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such an allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures and have the matter reported to the relevant external department.