



# How to recognise signs of abuse

## For Club Welfare Officers and Club Safeguarding Officers

### Signs of abuse

A child may be being abused or bullied if they:

- Change their usual routine;
- Begin to be disruptive during sessions;
- Become withdrawn anxious or lacking in confidence;
- Have possessions going missing;
- Become aggressive or unreasonable;
- Start stammering or stop communicating;
- Have unexplained cuts or bruises;
- Start bullying other children;
- Are frequently dirty, hungry or inadequately dressed;
- Display sexual behaviour inappropriate for their age;
- Seem afraid of parents or carers;
- Do not want to attend training or club activities, or even leave the club;
- Stop eating and/or;
- Are frightened to say what's wrong.

One of these signs on its own is very unlikely to be an indicator of abuse. However, cumulatively they should be taken seriously. Members of the staff and



volunteers need to be aware of these possible signs and always report any concerns to the CSO.

## Types of abuse

There are four main types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional and neglect.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Examples of physical abuse in sport include extreme physical punishments; forcing a child into training and competition that exceeds the capacity of his or her immature and growing body or limitations of a disability; assaulting a person; or where the child is given drugs to enhance performance or in the case of a child, delay puberty.

Sexual abuse involves forcing a child to take part in sexual activities, which may involve inappropriate touching, penetrative or non-penetrative sexual acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual photographic or online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional abuse is the persistent maltreatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on their development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed. These may include interactions that are beyond the child developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing them from participating in normal social interaction. Emotional abuse may involve a child seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another as well as serious bullying, causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may also occur alone. Examples of emotional abuse in sport include subjecting children to constant criticism, name-calling, and sarcasm or bullying. It could also include their regular exclusion from an activity, non-selection for a team, failing to rotate squad positions or more subtle actions



such as staring at or ignoring a child . Putting players under consistent pressure to perform to unrealistically high standards is also a form of emotional abuse.

Child neglect is a form of child abuse, and is a deficit in meeting a child's basic needs, including the failure to provide adequate health care, supervision, clothing, nutrition, housing as well as their physical, emotional, social, educational and safety needs. A child may be left hungry or dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, medical or health care. A child may be put in danger or not protected from physical or emotional harm.

An individual may abuse or neglect a child directly or may be responsible for abuse by failing to prevent another person harming that child.

Bullying is an additional type of abuse often encompassing aspects of the other four categories.