



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Rebel Runners – Medway “The club” believe that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard their welfare.

We recognise:

- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount;
- All children and young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- Working in partnership with children and young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting the child/young person’s welfare.
- Every child/young person has the right to live free from abuse

The purpose and aim of this child protection policy and procedure is to provide guidance regarding the standards of conduct and behaviour that the club expects from its members and committee. For the purpose of this policy and procedure the terms ‘child/young person’ and ‘children’ are used to mean any individual (s) aged 0 – 18 years.

Rebel Runners – Medway provides a social running group that is England Athletics “EA” affiliated. This policy and procedure applies to all members of the club, the committee or anyone working on behalf of the club. This policy and procedure is based on a commitment to equality and diversity, individual human rights and anti-discriminatory practice.

This policy has been written on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act (1989)
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child (1991)
- Data Protection Act (1998)
- Sexual Offences Act (2003)
- Children Act (2004)
- Protection of Freedoms Act (2012)
- Relevant government guidance on safeguarding children e.g. *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2013)

Rebel Runners – Medway seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- Valuing each child/young person including listening to and respecting them;
- Having clear child protection guidelines;
- Recruiting volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made;
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with volunteers;

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- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and child/young person as appropriate;
- Providing effective management and leadership for volunteers through meetings, support and training.

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child/young person. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child/young person either directly by inflicting harm, or indirectly by failing to prevent harm. A child/young person may be abused in a family, institution or community setting by those known to them or more rarely by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, by another child or children.

Recognising abuse is not easy. It is not The Club's responsibility to decide whether or not abuse has taken place or if a child/young person is at significant risk of harm from someone. However, we do have a responsibility and duty to act in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take necessary action to protect a child.

Definitions of Abuse

Definition of Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) defines this as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

'Working Together' further states that safeguarding children is **everyone's responsibility**.

Categories of Abuse

'Working Together' defines four types of child abuse:

Physical Abuse – may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

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. Some level of abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child. Though it may occur alone, it may involve:

- Conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person;
- It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another;
- It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children;

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- Not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate;
- Interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability as well as over protection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in everyday social interaction.

Sexual Abuse – involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

The activities may involve:

- Physical contact including assault by penetration, e.g. rape or oral sex or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing;
- Non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse, (including via the internet).

Neglect – is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or physical needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur:

- During pregnancy;
- As a result of maternal substance abuse.

Once the child is born, neglect may involve failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Provide effective medical attention;
- Ensure adequate supervision
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment;
- Respond to a child's basic emotional needs.

Bullying – is deliberate, hurtful behaviour usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. The damage inflicted by the bullying can frequently be underestimated and can cause considerable stress to children to the extent that it affects their health and development, or at the extreme, cause them significant harm, (including self-harm).

The three main types of bullying are:

- Physical, e.g. hitting, kicking, theft;
- Verbal, e.g. racist, homophobic remarks, threats, name calling;
- Emotional, e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group.

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Recognising the Signs of Abuse

Physical Abuse

Most children will collect cuts and bruises as part of the rough and tumble of daily life. Injuries should always be interpreted in light of the child's medical and social history, development stage and the explanation given. Most accidental bruises are seen over bony parts of the body, e.g. elbow's, knees, shins, and are often on the front of the body. Some children however will have bruising that is more likely to have been inflicted than accidental. Important indicators of physical abuse are bruises or injuries that are either unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given, or visible on the 'soft' parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, e.g. cheeks

A delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause of concern, although this can be more complicated with burns, for example, as these are often delayed in presentation due to blistering taking place sometime later.

The physical signs of abuse may include:

- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body;
- Multiple bruises – in clusters, often on the upper arm, on the outside of the thigh;
- Cigarette burns;
- Human bite marks;
- Broken bones;
- Scalds with upward splash marks;
- Multiple burns with a clearly demarcated edge;
- Any apparent discomfort or pain associated with any movement.

Changes in behaviour that can indicate physical abuse include:

- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation;
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts;
- Flinching when approached or touched;
- Reluctance to get changed, for example, in hot weather;
- Depression;
- Withdrawn behaviour;
- Running away from home;
- Bullying or physical aggression towards others seen as more vulnerable;

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- Aggressive play with toys.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure as there are often no outward physical signs. There may be a developmental failure to thrive and grow although this will usually only be evident if the child puts on weight in other circumstances, for example, when hospitalised or away from the parents' care.

Children that appear well cared for may be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may receive no love, affection or attention from their parents or carers. Emotional abuse can also take the form of children not being able to mix or play with other children.

Changes in behaviour that can indicate emotional abuse include:

- Challenging or repetitive behaviours, e.g. aggression, self-harm, sulking, hair twisting, rocking;
- Being unable to play;
- Fear of making mistakes;
- Sudden speech disorders;
- Fear of a parent being approached regarding their behaviour;
- Developmental delay in terms of emotional progress;
- Use of inappropriate language or the repetition of derogatory statements.

Sexual Abuse

Adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs, abuse girls and boys of all ages including infants and toddlers. Usually in cases of sexual abuse it is the child's behaviour that may cause you to become concerned, although physical signs can be present. In all cases children who tell about sexual abuse want it to stop. It is therefore important that they are listened to and taken seriously. It is important to remember that it is not just adult men who sexually abuse children – there are an increasing number of allegations of the sexual abuse of children against women, and sexual abuse can be perpetrated by other children or young people.

The physical signs of sexual behaviour may include:

- Pain or itching in the genital area;
- Bruising or bleeding near the genital area;
- Sexually transmitted disease;
- Vaginal discharge or infection;
- Stomach pains;
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down;
- Pregnancy.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:

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- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn;
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people;
- Having nightmares;
- Running away from home;
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or development level;
- Sexual drawings or language;
- Bedwetting;
- Eating problems – overeating or anorexia;
- Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts;
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anybody about;
- Substance or drug abuse;
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money;
- Not being allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence);
- Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults.

Neglect

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise yet some causes have a more lasting and damaging effect on children.

The physical signs of neglect include:

- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children;
- Constantly dirty or having poor personal hygiene;
- Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight;
- Inappropriate clothing for the conditions.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect may include:

- Complaining of being tired all the time;
- Not requesting medical assistance, and/or failing to attend appointments;
- Having few friends;
- Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised.

Bullying

Bullying is not always easy to recognise as it can take on a number of forms. A child may encounter bullying attacks that are:

- Physical – pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, and other forms of violence or threats;
- Verbal – name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing;
- Emotional – tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating and being excluded.

Persistent bullying can result in:

- Depression;
- Low self-esteem;
- Shyness;

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- Poor academic achievement;
- Isolation;
- Threatened or attempted suicide.

Signs that a child may be being bullied can be:

- Coming home with cuts and bruises;
- Torn clothes;
- Asking for stolen possessions to be replaced;
- Losing dinner money;
- Falling out with previously good friends;
- Being moody and bad tempered;
- Wanting to avoid leaving their home;
- Aggression with younger brothers and sisters;
- Doing less well at school;
- Sleep problems;
- Anxiety;
- Becoming quiet and withdrawn.

These definitions and indicators are not meant to be definitive but only serve as a guide to assist you. It is important to remember that many children may exhibit some of these indicators at some time and that the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that it is occurring. There may be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as a death, or the birth of a new baby in the family, or relationship problems between parents/carers.

How to Respond to Signs or Suspicions Abuse

The primary concerns at all times will be the welfare and well-being of the child or young person – the “welfare of the child is paramount”. Rebel Runners Medway have a Welfare Officer who is responsible for receiving concerns about the safety and welfare of children, making decisions about what action needs to be taken and contacting and liaising with other agencies involved in safeguarding children, including Children’s Social Services.

If there is a genuine belief that abuse has taken or is taking place, then in all cases, it must be reported at the earliest opportunity to either of the following people:

Name	Position	Email address
Dan Gower-Smith	Welfare Officer	welfare-rebelrunners@outlook.com
Lorraine Ruminski	Chair	clubchair-rebelrunners@outlook.com

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The Club Secretary or Welfare Officer will make the necessary reports to the most appropriate external agency. The external agency could be one of the following:

- The Duty Social Work team in the local authority,
- The police
- Children's and Families Departments
- NSPCC national 24 hour Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000
- Childline on 0800 1111.

If any member has any concerns at all that a child is at risk of harm or abuse, it must be raised immediately. If any member has any concerns that a child is at risk of immediate harm, or is in obvious need of medical attention, the emergency services – the police and/or an ambulance must be called.

In all cases, a clear written record should be made as soon as possible, documenting clearly what the concerns are, what action was taken and by whom. Anonymity can never be guaranteed when reporting concerns, but information is only to be shared on a 'need to know' basis.

How to Respond to a Child Disclosing Abuse

If a child or young person discloses to a team member that they have been abused or harmed by another person either recently or at some point in the past, you should listen to what she/he has to say; the emphasis should be on listening rather than asking questions. The persons disclosing abuse may ask for the information to go no further. However, you will need to explain that you can not keep any disclosure of abuse confidential and you will need to discuss the information given with the Welfare Officer. The information must not be shared with any other club members or the media. A press statement will be agreed by the committee if required.

Home Office guidelines suggest the following steps for any initial disclosure/allegations of abuse:

- Listen to the child rather than ask questions;
- Do not stop a child who is freely recalling significant events;
- Remain calm, and do not give the child the impression that what they have said is shocking or upsetting;
- Make a report of the discussion as soon as possible, taking care to record the timing, the setting, the people present, as well as the content of what was said, quoting wherever possible the words used by the child;
- Record any subsequent relevant events that happen and any action that has been taken;

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Evidence

It is important that any physical evidence of abuse is not inadvertently destroyed. Wherever possible, the known scene of an incident should not be disturbed. Clothes should not be changed or washed. If you suspect oral sex has occurred, eating, drinking, smoking and brushing teeth could destroy evidence. Therefore, encourage the person not to have any food or drink until after a medical examination. The individual's wishes must be respected in all circumstances. If the person insists on changing their clothes, keep them separately and do not wash them.

Evidence may be destroyed through washing or bathing and in these circumstances the person should be encouraged not to bathe until after a medical examination, but again the individual's wishes in this matter must be respected. These issues need to be dealt with sensitively and discreetly so as not to cause further trauma.

Medical treatment

If the person has physical injuries and requires immediate medical attention, the nearest Accident and Emergency facilities should be used. Any medical staff treating the person should be informed that abuse is suspected. In all cases the individual's welfare must be your first consideration.

Dealing with Bullying

Bullying will not be tolerated by Rebel Runners – Medway within any of its activities and social media sites. Members should report the suspicion of bullying of any child/young person immediately. Members should follow the guidance contained above in all cases, including if a child discloses that they are the victim of bullying.

Situations when the alleged abuser is a member of the club

The club may make a decision to suspend membership of the alleged perpetrator if it is believed that other members are at risk of abuse. The suspension will be without prejudice and the decision will be made after an initial gathering of facts about the case.

In all cases this decision will be the responsibility of the Welfare Officer in conjunction with one other committee member. The member will be informed of the decision to suspend the membership via phone and confirmation will be sent in writing.

Following an investigation by the club it may be necessary to permanently remove membership from a member. In the event that this is required, a meeting will be arranged with the member affected, the Welfare Officer and an Executive committee member. The reason for the decision will be explained in full and a letter will be sent following the meeting.

Information Sharing and Confidentiality

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Members and volunteers may find themselves wishing to or being asked to share information of a confidential nature about a child/young person. If this happens, advice should be sought from either the Club Secretary or the Welfare Office.

Sexual Contact

All members should understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their contact with children. Intimate and/or sexual relationships between children and people post 18 years of age is not acceptable. Sexual activity does not just refer to physical contact; it may also include non-contact activities such as encouraging children to engage in, or watch, sexual activity or the production of pornographic material.

Members should not have any form of communication with a child which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative, i.e. verbal comments, letters, notes, electronic email, phone calls, texts, physical contact. Members must not make sexual remarks to, or about a child and must not discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, children. Members should take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to speculation and must be aware that their attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when they are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

Gifts, Rewards and Favouritism

It is acknowledged that there are occasions when the child, parent/guardian may want to give a small token of appreciation to an member or as a thank you, which is acceptable. Adult members giving gifts to a child/young person must be aware that the giving of gifts can be misinterpreted by others as a gesture of favouritism, or to bribe, or groom a child.

Social Contact and Social Media

Rebel Runners – Medway recognises the role that social media and social networking play in everyday lives, and the opportunities it presents. We are committed to promoting the responsible use of social media and social networking by all members and seek to minimise actions and consequences that may be harmful to the reputation of the Rebel Runners – Medway. Please read the Code of Conduct policy and procedure.

We require written consent from a parent/guardian prior to using pictures or videos of a child/young person. This consent can be revoked at any time by the child/young person or adult/guardian.

General guidance

All members should avoid situations where they are alone with a child/young person. Ideally, there should be a second person or someone of the opposite sex present; this precaution is to protect all parties. Physical contact between an adult member and a child/young person should be avoided. There are instances when it is necessary, eg to demonstrate a stretch or when administering First Aid, but such contact should remain impersonal so there is no risk of it being misinterpreted and should be avoided when alone with a child/young person.

Infatuation

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Members should discourage a child/young person from becoming infatuated with them. Situations where a participant develops a 'crush' on an adult need to be handled sensitively. While it is important not to encourage a participant with a crush, the adult should be aware of the damage caused by rejection. If an adult thinks a child/young person is developing a crush they should discuss it with any committee member or the Welfare Officer so they do not have to deal with the situation alone.

Application form

All members are required to complete an application form. However, members under the age of 18 years age are required to have a parent/guardian to sign the form prior to attending any runs. Where a child/young person does not have parent/guardian consent, they will not be able to road run and when taking part in off road running must wear a hi-vis jacket at all times.

Contact with the police

It must be recognised that the pressure or thought of Police involvement may cause some people stress. If this is the case, every effort must be made to provide the appropriate support and advice.

The right to be protected from harassment

The club's first priority is in ensuring the safety and welfare of its members. However, we do recognise that on occasions false allegations are made. Members will be protected from the harassment of such allegations from members or a third party. All such incidents will be treated seriously but in a sensitive manner.

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