



# BRISTOL MOTOR CLUB CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND GUIDELINES

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## Foreword

The Motor Sports Association has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that its members and affiliates provide the highest possible standard of care when given responsibility for young people.

The Child Protection Policy and Guidelines recognises the responsibility of all those involved in Motor Sport (professional and volunteers) to safeguard and promote the interests and well being of the children and young competitors with whom they are working.

By raising awareness and understanding of the main forms of abuse, and by establishing appropriate procedures if abuse is suspected, young drivers, marshals, and all other young people working within Motor Sport will be further safeguarded.

## Bristol Motor Club Policy Statement

- The welfare of young people is our primary concern. As defined in the Children Act 1989, anyone under 18 years of age is considered a child for the purposes of this document.
- All children whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of inappropriate behaviour will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- It is the responsibility of the child protection experts to determine whether or not abuse has taken place but it is **everyone's responsibility to report** any concerns.

**NB** Throughout this document the term **parents** is used generically to include carers and guardians.

*The policy also applies to adults with disabilities and to other vulnerable people.*

## What is child abuse?

It is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults, and often by those whom they know and trust. It refers to the damage done to a child's physical or mental health. Children can be abused within or outside their family, at school or in a sports or community environment. Child abuse can take several forms:

**Neglect** includes situations in which adults:

- Fail to meet a child's basic physical needs (e.g. for food, warm clothing, essential medication).
- Neglect might also occur if a member or official fails to ensure that children are safe or are exposed to undue cold or risk of injury.
- Persistently leave children alone and unsupervised.

**Physical abuse** where adults or other children:

- Physically hurt or injure children (e.g. by hitting, shaking, squeezing, biting or burning).
- Give children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison.
- Attempt to suffocate or drown children.
- Physical abuse might also occur when the nature and intensity of sports training exceeds the capacity of a child's immature and growing body.

**Sexual abuse** occurs when adults (male or female) or other young people use young people to satisfy their own sexual needs. This could include:

- Full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, fondling.
- Showing children pornographic books, photographs or videos, or taking pictures for pornographic purposes.
- Training routines which involve physical contact (e.g. supporting or guiding children) may create a situation where sexual abuse can go unnoticed. Abusive situations may also occur if adults misuse their power over young people.

**Emotional abuse** can occur in a number of ways. For example, where:

- There is persistent lack of love or affection.
- There is constant overprotection which prevents children from socialising.
- Children are frequently being shouted at or taunted.
- There is neglect, physical or sexual abuse.
- Emotional abuse in sport might also include situations where parents or coaches subject children to constant criticism, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations.

**Bullying**, which may be described as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. The bully may often be another young person.

Although anyone can be a target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons - being overweight, physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture.

## Recognising abuse

It is not always easy to spot when children have been abused even for the most experienced carers. However, some of the more typical symptoms, which should trigger your suspicions would include:

- 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.
- Sexually explicit language or actions.
- A sudden change in behaviour (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper).

- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- A change observed over a long period of time (e.g. the child losing weight or becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt).
- A general distrust and avoidance of adults, especially with whom a close relationship would be expected.
- An unreasonable reaction to normal physical contact.
- Difficulty in making friends or abnormal restrictions on socialising with others.

It is important to note that a child displaying some or all of these signs, or behaving in a way which is worrying, does not necessarily mean that the child is being abused. Similarly, there may not be any signs, you may just feel something is wrong.

If you are worried, it is NOT your responsibility to decide if it is abuse, but IT IS your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it.

## **Guidelines for the prevention of abuse**

This section offers advice to everyone working within the sport to help them do all they can to protect children from abuse.

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important not to allow these feelings to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A reliable and informed coach, official or volunteer who has regular contact with young people may be an important link in identifying cases where a young person needs protection.

All members, volunteers, parents, and paid or licensed officials working within the sport, should demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate within sport:

### **Good Practice means:**

- Always working in an open environment, e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging a culture of openness and honesty.
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance from young people (e.g. It is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Being an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol, nor using inappropriate or bad language in the company of young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.

- Involving parents/carers wherever possible.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according to guidelines provided by the MSA. Young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults - avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing parental consent in writing to acting *in loco parentis*, if the need arises to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Awareness of any medicines being taken by participants, or existing injuries.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people in their cars.

**You should never:**

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allow children to use bad or inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Let allegations a child makes go unchallenged or unrecorded; always act.
- Do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves.

However, if an emergency situation arises that requires this type of assistance, parents should be fully informed, and assistance should only given with the full consent and understanding of parents. In such situations, it is important to ensure that all members or volunteers are sensitive to the child and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

If medication or treatment has to be administered in the absence of a parent or guardian, medical consent should be obtained; this includes hospitalisation.

These procedures would help to protect the club from accusations of neglect.

## **Club Child Protection Officer (CCPO)**

**Bristol MC's CCPO is Richard Marsh, 07786 068830, r\_marshy22@yahoo.co.uk**

The appointment of a Club Child Protection Officer helps to ensure that the MSA Child Protection Policy works in practice. He is the first point of contact for anyone in the club (member, non-member, volunteer, paid or licensed official, parent or young person) who has a concern about poor practice or possible abuse by adults working with children. The Child Protection Officer is approachable and has a child-focused approach. He is not necessarily a child protection 'expert'; that role belongs to the statutory agencies (Police and Social Services).

## What to do if abuse is alleged

### Always:

- Stay calm - ensure the child is safe and feels safe.
- Show and tell the child that you are taking what s/he says seriously.
- Reassure the child and stress that s/he is not to blame.
- Be honest, explain you will have to tell someone else to help stop the alleged abuse.
- Make a note of what the child has said as soon as possible after the event.
- Maintain confidentiality - only tell others if it will help protect the child.

### Never:

- Rush into actions that may be inappropriate.
- Make promises you cannot keep.
- Ask inappropriate questions, which may jeopardise any impending police investigation.
- Take sole responsibility - consult someone else (the person in charge or someone you can trust) so you can begin to protect the child and gain support for yourself.

## What to do if abuse is suspected outside the club environment?

If a young person informs you directly that he or she is being abused **outside** the club environment (i.e. at home or some other setting away from the sport), or if you become aware of possible abuse through your own observations (see section headed 'Recognising Abuse'), or through a third party, you should REACT IMMEDIATELY

- Ensure the safety of the young person - if the young person needs immediate medical treatment, take the young person to hospital or call an ambulance, inform doctors of your concerns and explain that it is a child protection issue.
- Without delay contact the Club Child Protection Officer, Richard Marsh, on 07786 068830, who will follow the reporting procedures detailed below. If he is unavailable or cannot be contacted, then you should proceed as follows yourself:

### Reporting Procedures

- Seek advice immediately from the local Social Services or Police who will advise on the action to be taken, including advice on contacting parents. Expert advice can also be provided by the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or Childline on 0800 1111.
- Make a full and factual record of events utilising the Incident Referral Form and forward a copy of the recorded information as directed by the Social Services and/or Police, also to the local Club Child Protection Officer and to the MSA Child Protection Coordinator at MSA Head Office (see last page).
- If the individual being accused is from within the MSA environment, the MSA Child Protection Coordinator will consider suspension of the individual concerned following contact with the Social Services or Police. The case will be referred to the MSA Child Protection Committee following completion of the Police/Social Services investigation.

## **Might taking action make things worse?**

It is never easy to respond to a young person who tells you that they are being abused, and you may feel upset and worried yourself. Taking appropriate action takes courage but it may protect a young life.

One thing is certain - *you cannot ignore what you've been told*. The effects of abuse on children can be devastating, especially if children are left unprotected or do not receive help to cope with the abuse. The most serious effect is that children can and do die as a result of abuse. They can develop behavioural difficulties, problems at school, and they can become depressed and withdrawn. Some of these problems, if left untreated, can persist into adulthood.

Make sure that you are offered adequate support by discussing the matter with your local Club Child Protection Officer or the MSA Child Protection Coordinator.

## **Aftermath**

Consideration should be given to what support may be appropriate to young people, parents and club members who have been affected. Use of Helplines, support groups and open meetings may help the healing process. The British Association of Counselling Directory may be a useful resource, and is available from the British Association of Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby, CV21 2PJ. Tel 01788550899. Fax 01788 562189. Email: bac@bac.co.uk <http://www.bac.co.uk>

## **Recording information**

When recording information, it is important that you do not extend the process of gathering information about an allegation, into beginning an investigation. Unnecessary interviews with child complainants could prejudice the integrity of evidence that may eventually have to be presented in court.

There are particular problems with regard to gaining information from children with limited communication skills. Care should be taken that appropriate means are used to find out what the allegation is about without "leading" the child.

The environment for recording information needs to be considered carefully. Try to ensure that you are in sight of another adult, but that your conversation won't be overheard. You also need to be careful about physical contact during an interview because it may not be what the child wants. The rule is to let the child initiate any actions and to remain positive and supportive throughout.

## **Essential Contacts**

### **Bristol Motor Club : Club Child Protection Officer**

**Richard Marsh**                      **07786 068830**                      **r\_marshy22@yahoo.co.uk**

Your first point of contact for advice or guidance, or to discuss or report any instances or allegations of child abuse that come to your notice.

### **Motor Sports Association Head Office : MSA Child Protection Co-ordinator**

**Allan Dean-Lewis**                      **01753 765 073**                      **adean-lewis@msauk.org**

A further contact if you need support, advice or guidance. Any instances of child abuse should be reported to the Co-ordinator by sending him a copy of the Incident Referral Form. He is also the person to contact if the individual being accused is from within the MSA environment.