**Recognition of Poor Practice, Abuse and Bullying**

Child abuse can occur both within the sports setting and outside of it. It can be very difficult to determine whether or not a child has been abused. The staff and volunteers in Rounders, whether in paid or voluntary capacity, are not experts at such recognition. However, they do have a responsibility to act if they have any concerns about the behaviour of someone (an adult or another young person) towards a young person and to follow the procedures in this document.

**Poor Practice**

Allegations may relate to poor practice where an adult’s or another young person’s behaviour is inappropriate and/or may be causing concern. In the application of this policy, poor practice includes any behaviour that contravenes Rounders England Code of Practice, infringes an individual’s rights and/or is a failure to fulfil the highest standards of care. Poor practice is unacceptable in Rounders and will be treated seriously and appropriate actions will be taken.

**Abuse**

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or institution or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult, or another child or children.

**Definitions**

There are different types of child abuse. They are defined in the UK Government guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018* as follows:

1. Physical abuse
2. Emotional abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Child sexual exploitation
5. Neglect
6. Extremism
7. County Lines
8. Child criminal exploitation

Bullying is not defined as a form of abuse in *Working Together* but there is clear evidence that it is abusive and will include at least one, if not all of the defined categories of abuse. For this reason, it has been included in this document.

Full definitions can be found below.

**Indicators of Abuse**

Indicators that a young person may be being abused include the following:

* 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;
* An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent;
* The young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her;
* Someone else (a young person or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another young person;
* Unexplained changes in behaviour (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outburst in temper);
* Inappropriate sexual behaviour especially for their age;
* Encouraging sexually explicit behaviour;
* Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected;
* Has difficulty making friends;
* Is prevented from socialising with other young people;
* Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating and loss of appetite;
* Loses weight for no apparent reason;
* Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It should be recognised that this is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. A good working relationship with the parent will help to identify any concerns that a young person maybe experiencing e.g. family bereavement. It is not the responsibility of those working in Rounders to decide that child abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns.

We acknowledge that child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them 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 children and young people in order to harm them.

When a young person enters the team, having been subjected to child abuse outside the sporting environments, sport can play a crucial role in improving the young person’s self-esteem. In such cases the team must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the young person receives the required support.

**Definitions of 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. An example of signs of physical abuse at a Rounders session could be that the coach notices a young person consistently wearing long sleeved clothes in hot weather when the other participants are wearing T-shirts and shorts.

**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 or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child’s developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. An example of this is if a child fails to attend a session following cyber bullying. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

**Sexual Abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include 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). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

**Child sexual exploitation** is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

**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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, it may involve a parent failing to:

* Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment) for example having pumps instead of trainers or football boots for an outdoor session.
* protect a child from physical or emotional harm or danger
* ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers)
* ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
* It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

**Extremism** goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable – including the young – by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society. Extremism is defined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 as the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.

**County Lines:** As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office, a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of ‘deal line’. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

**Child Criminal Exploitation:** As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office, where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.