

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST COACHES AND/OR VOLUNTEERS

This includes anyone working with young people in a paid or voluntary capacity (e.g. club volunteers or helpers, officials, team captains or managers, assistants in addition to qualified coaches).

Child abuse can and does occur outside the family setting, although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, it has occurred within table tennis. Recent statistics indicate that abuse, which takes place within a public setting, is rarely a "one off" event. It is crucial that those involved in table tennis are aware of the possibility and that allegations are taken seriously and appropriate action taken. People who harm children and young people will travel across countries, borders and sports.

The club/league welfare officer may be informed of situations where they are unsure whether the allegations constitute abuse or not and can be, therefore, unclear about what action to take. There may be circumstances where allegations relate to poor practice rather than abuse. If there is any doubt those responsible should always consult the ETTA's Child Protection Officer and seek advice from Children's Social Care or the NSPCC. It may be the particular allegation is one of a series of concerns which together could be significant or build a picture of behaviour giving cause for concern.

It is acknowledged that feelings generated by the discovery that a coach or volunteer has abused, or may be, abusing a child will raise concern amongst other coaches or volunteers, particularly in relation to the difficulties inherent in reporting such matters. It is important, however, that any concerns for the welfare of any child arising from the abuse or harassment by a coach or volunteer should be reported immediately. The welfare of the child must always be of paramount importance,

The ETTA will assure all coaches, volunteers, helpers, staff or officials that it will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports their concerns that a colleague has abused, or may be, abusing a child.

When there is a complaint there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation
- A child protection investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation

The results of the Police and Children's Social Care investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation.

What to do if there are concerns:

- ✓ If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, it may be dealt with as a misconduct issue or appropriate education and support may be put in place following advice and guidelines obtained from the ETTA's Child Protection Officer.
- ✓ If the allegation is about poor practice or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be referred to the ETTA Child Protection Officer who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.
- ✓ Any suspicion that a young person has been abused by either a coach or volunteer should be reported to the club/league welfare officer or the ETTA's Child Protection Officer who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the young person and/or any other young person who may be at risk.
- ✓ The club/league welfare officer and/or the ETTA's Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the Children's Social Care or the Police.
- ✓ The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the statutory agencies (Children's Social care or the Police).
- ✓ The club/league welfare officer must also notify the ETTA Child Protection Officer who will decide who will deal with any media enquiries and represent the ETTA at any strategy meetings..
- ✓ Every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.
- ✓ If the club/league welfare officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to ETTA Child Protection Officer, who will then be responsible for taking the action outlined above.

- ✓ The ETTA will make an immediate decision regarding any individual accused of abuse regarding their temporary suspension pending further Police and Children's Social Care enquiries.
- ✓ Irrespective of the findings of statutory agency enquiries, the ETTA will assess all individual cases under the appropriate misconduct/disciplinary procedure to decide whether an individual can be reinstated and how this can be handled sensitively. This may be a difficult decision particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any decision by the police. In such cases the ETTA will reach a decision based upon the available information, which could suggest that on the balance of probability, it is more likely than not the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should always remain paramount.
- ✓ The ETTA's Child Protection Officer will involve the ETTA's Child Protection Case Management Group in the making of all decisions regarding child abuse, poor practice, inappropriate behaviour and information obtained from criminal records bureau checks.

Consideration will be given regarding available support to the young person, the parents/carers/guardians, coaches, members and volunteers.

Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child by a coach or volunteer who is still working with children and young people). Where such an allegation is made the procedures given under the section 'Responding to Suspicions and Allegations' will be followed. This is important as other young people in table tennis, or outside the sport, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal records conviction for offences relating to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children, young people and vulnerable adults and is not welcome in table tennis.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned and gossiping or spreading rumours about any person involved in a child protection issue must be avoided (beyond giving information as part of a legitimate investigation process) as such behaviour can result in legal action. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis. This includes the following people:

- ETTA Child Protection Officer
- ETTA Chief Executive
- Club/League Welfare Officer
- Person making the allegation
- Children's Social Care/police
- Parents of the child - take advice from Children's Social Care or the Police if the parent/carer is the alleged abuser
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child) - take advice from the Police and Children's Social Care as to whom should approach the alleged abuser and what information they can be given