

RESPONDING TO SUSPICIONS OR ALLEGATIONS

It is not the responsibility of anyone working under the auspices of the ETTA, in a paid or voluntary capacity, to take responsibility or decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. However, there is a responsibility to protect children by informing the local club/league welfare officer and/or the ETTA Child Protection Officer. In an emergency where the child's welfare could be affected (this could occur if the suspicions related to the parent/carer of the child) all suspicions should be referred immediately to the local Children's Social Care services or the Police in order that they can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the child. As soon as realistically possible the ETTA's Child Protection Officer should also be informed of any actions taken.

Children's Social Care (formerly Social Services) has a statutory duty under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 to ensure the welfare of the child. When a child protection referral is made its staff has a legal responsibility to investigate. This may involve talking to the child and family and gathering information from other people who know the child. Enquiries may be carried out jointly with the police.

What to do if there are concerns:

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children, therefore, in most situations it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a young person seems withdrawn, they may have experienced bereavement in the family.

However, there are circumstances in which a young person might be placed at even greater risk if such concerns were shared (e.g. where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately). In these situations, or where concern still exists, any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to the local club/league welfare officer or the ETTA's Child Protection Officer as soon as possible and be recorded.

If you are concerned about the welfare of a young person or suspect that a young person has been, is being, or is likely to be abused, inform the club/league welfare officer, the leisure/sports centre manager or the ETTA Child Protection Officer.) It is the responsibility of the person informed to contact the local Children's Social Care services without delay. If this person is not available, or the concerns/allegations relate to this person, the person discovering or being informed of the abuse should immediately contact Children's Social Care or the police.

If you have serious concerns about the immediate safety of a young person contact the Police or Children's Social Care; record who you spoke to and tell your club/league welfare officer or the ETTA's Child Protection Officer what you have done. In these circumstances you do not have to give your name, but it is helpful if you do. Children's Social Care, together with the ETTA's Child Protection Officer, where appropriate, will advise about how and when parents and carers will be informed.

IF YOU ARE NOT SURE WHAT TO DO ADVICE CAN BE OBTAINED BY TELEPHONING:

**THE NSPCC (24 HOUR) FREEPHONE HELPLINE ON 0800 800500, OR
THE ETTA'S CHILD PROTECTION HELPLINE ON 01424 456211**

Records and Information

Information passed to Children's Social Care or the Police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record as follows:

- ✓ Name of young person, age and date of birth
- ✓ Address and contact details
- ✓ Whether the concerns/allegations are your own or somebody else's
- ✓ The nature of the concern/allegation
- ✓ What you have observed or heard
- ✓ A description of any visible bruising or other injuries

- ✓ The young person's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred
- ✓ Any times, dates or other relevant information
- ✓ A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay

Reporting the matter to Children's Social Care or the Police should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. Whenever possible referrals telephoned to Children's Social Care should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record should also be made of the name and designation of the Children's Social Care member of staff or police officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call in case any follow up is needed.