



Guernsey Table Tennis Association

GOOD PRACTICE  
AND  
CHILD PROTECTION GUIDE

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**From the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2005 the Guernsey Table Tennis Association Reviewed its Child Protection Policy. This policy will ensure that Table Tennis takes all necessary steps to promote a safe atmosphere for all those children and young people involved in Table Tennis. All those currently involved with Table Tennis with significant contact with children will be required to give an assurance that they have no previous criminal convictions that could put children at risk. This information is strictly confidential except for the legal obligation of reporting child abuse.**

# 1.Introduction

The aim of this guide is to ensure that all GTTA coaches and volunteers are fully aware of:

## **Their responsibilities with regard to Child Protection by:**

- Safeguarding and promoting the interests and well being of children with whom they are working.
- Taking all reasonable practical steps to protect children from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment.
- Respecting children's rights, wishes and feelings.
- Providing children with positive sporting experiences.

## **GTТА Policies which:**

- Offer safeguards for children, coaches and volunteers.
- Help maintain high standards of professionalism and good practice.
- Provide support, appropriate training and adequate supervision of coaches and volunteers, to enable them to work together, with parents, coaches and other organisations to ensure the welfare and needs of the children remain paramount.

Child abuse is a very emotive and difficult subject. However, since it is the accepted responsibility of every coach to protect children from abuse. It is not an issue that can be ignored.

Abuse can and unfortunately does occur in sporting environments. Some individuals actively seek this medium with children in order to harm them. Everyone working within Table Tennis be it in paid or voluntary capacity has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of children and preventing their abuse.

Coaches have regular contact with children and are important links in identifying situations that may suggest abuse has or is occurring.

The GTTA, as an organisation that deals with children through coaching and competition, has a moral obligation to ensure it provides the highest possible standard of care.

**As a coach/volunteer remember you should:**

- Treat all individuals in sport with respect at all times.
- Not discriminate on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, colour, disability, sexuality, age, occupation, religion or political opinion.
- Not condone, or allow to go unchallenged any form of discrimination.
- Not publicly criticise or engage in demeaning descriptions of others.
- Be discreet in any conversation about players, coaches or any other individuals.
- Communicate with, and provide feedback to players in a manner that reflects respect, care and understanding.

## 2. Types of Abuse

**Neglect-** Examples Include:

- Failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing.
- Constantly leaving children alone or unsupervised.
- Failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- Refusing to give children affection and attention.

**Example in sport:**

Neglect in a sport situation could include a coach failing to ensure that children are safe and comfortable, or exposing them to undue cold or to unnecessary risk of injury.

**Physical Abuse** – Examples Include:

- Shaking or Throwing
- Poisoning, burning or scalding.
- Biting, suffocating or drowning.
- Drugs and Alcohol.

**Example in Sport:**

In a sport situation it may occur if the nature and intensity of training exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.

**Sexual Abuse** –Adults or children of both gender-using children to meet their own sexual needs. This could include.

- Full sexual intercourse.
- Masturbation
- Oral Sex
- Anal intercourse
- Fondling.
- Showing pornographic material.

## **Examples in Sport:**

- If physical contact is essential for safety reasons, formal guidelines should exist. Absence of guidelines or the failure of the coach to follow them may result in sexual abuse going unnoticed.
- Alternatively, failure to explain the need for physical contact may result in concerns that sexual abuse is taking place.
- Some people use sporting events to take inappropriate photographs or videos of young children.

**Emotional Abuse** – Children that have suffered Neglect, Physical or sexual abuse would also have suffered some level of emotional abuse. Children of all ages can be emotionally abused such as through:

- Imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations on them.
- Making them feel worthless, unloved or inadequate.
- Making them feel frightened or in danger.
- Shouting or threatening or teasing them.
- Overprotecting them or conversely failing to give them the love and affection they need.

## **Example in sport:**

- Constant criticism, name calling, sarcasm, bullying, racism or unrealistic pressure. In some cases this may come from parents, coaches/volunteers or other players.
- Personal information in the wrong hands can be upsetting.

**Bullying and Harassment** – Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour usually repeated over a period of time and may include:

- Verbal, written or physical. Such as name calling, sarcasm and racist taunts, threats and gestures.

- Unwanted Physical contact, graffiti, stealing or hiding personal items.
- Victims are typically sensitive or insecure.

**Example in Sport:**

- A parent who pushes their children too hard.
- A coach/volunteer who shouts at or humiliates children.
- Children who actively seek to make sport a difficult or unhappy experience for others.

### **3. The Effects of Abuse**

As a result of Abuse, children may

- Die – clearly the most serious effect.
- Suffer pain and distress
- Develop behavioural difficulties, such as becoming angry and aggressive.
- Experience a developmental delay (physically, emotionally and mentally)
- Experience school related problems (loss of concentration, even refusing to go)
- Develop low self esteem
- Suffer depression or inflict self-harm, sometimes leading to suicide attempts.
- Become withdrawn or introverted.
- Suffer temporary or even permanent injury.
- Become involved with drugs.

Adult survivors of abuse typically say that their childhood experiences have made them feel guilty and worthless. They may have blamed themselves for what happened which in turn led to anxiety, depression and difficulty forming relationships.

If help is not provided they may abuse a child in the future.

## 4. Recognition of Abuse

Coaches/Volunteers are not experts in recognising abuse. Therefore any suspicions or concerns should be discussed with the person in charge (Head coach, club official, head teacher or sports centre manager)  
Some indications children are being abused could be:

### Neglect

#### Physical signs

Constant hunger  
An unkempt state  
Loss of weight  
Inappropriate dress

#### Behavioural signs

being tired  
Not attending school  
Having few friends  
Regularly unsupervised

### Physical

Unexplained bruising/marks  
Cigarette burns  
Bite marks  
Scolds  
Broken bones

Aggressive behaviour  
Flinching when approached  
Withdrawn behaviour  
Covering parts of body  
Fear of going home

### Sexual

Pain/bleeding in the genital area  
Vaginal discharge  
Stomach pains  
Pregnancy  
Sexual transmitted disease

Eating disorders  
Substance abuse  
Extra money  
Sexual knowledge/language  
Running away from home  
Having nightmares  
Bed wetting

### Emotional

A failure to grow  
Speech disorders  
Physical development  
Emotional development

Neurotic behaviour  
Self harm  
Fear of making mistakes

### Bullying/Harassment

Stomach or headaches  
Sleeping difficulty/bed wetting  
Shortage of money  
Scratching/bruising  
Loss of possessions

Reduced concentration  
Withdrawn or depressed  
Clingy and tearful  
Reluctant to attend school  
A drop in performance

## Summary

The indicators outlined above are very important, but even if children display all these signs, it does not necessarily mean they are being abused. **It is not the responsibility of coaches/ volunteers to decide if abuse is taking place.** However it their responsibility **to act if there are any concerns.**

### 5. Responding to the child

It will have taken a lot of courage for a child to tell you about abusive behaviour and it is crucial that you take this into consideration when responding to a child's disclosure, following this guide will help you to act in an appropriate manner:

- Do not panic – react calmly so as not to frighten the child.
- Acknowledge that what the child is doing is difficult, but they are right to confide in you.
- Reassure the child they are not to blame.
- Be honest straight away and tell the child you cannot make promises that you will be unable to keep.
- Make sure from the outset, you can understand what the child is saying.
- Do not promise that you will keep the conversation a secret. Explain that you will need to tell other people and that you will need to write things down.
- Listen and believe the child; take them seriously.
- Do not allow your shock or distaste to show.
- Keep any questions to a minimum, but clarify any facts or words that you do not understand.
- Avoid closed questions.
- Do not probe for more information than is offered.
- Encourage the children to use their own words.
- Do not make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
- End the disclosure and ensure that the child is either being collected or is capable of going home on their own.
- Do not approach the alleged abuser.

## 6. Recording the Disclosure

Once the child has left, make an accurate written record of what was said, on the Record of Disclosure form, which is available in the GTTA office. Ask any member of the management committee for the form.

Once you have completed the written record:

- Sign and date it
- Notify the GTTA Child Protection Officer or the GTTA President or if he is not available the Vice President.
- Provide a copy for the above personnel.

## 7. Responding to suspicions or allegations

It is not the responsibility of anyone working under the auspices of the GTTA in a paid or volunteer capacity to take responsibility or decide if abuse is taking place. However, there is a responsibility to protect children in order that appropriate agencies can then make enquiries and take necessary action to protect the child.

**The Services for Children and Young People** on the island has a duty to ensure the welfare of the child. When a child protection referral is made, their staffs have a legal responsibility to investigate.

This may involve talking to the child and family and gathering information from people who know the child. Enquiries may be carried out jointly with the police.

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 child seems withdrawn they may have had bereavement in the family.

However there are circumstances in which a child 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 person in charge as soon as possible and recorded.

It is the responsibility of the person in charge to inform **The Services for Children and Young People** without delay. If the person in charge is not available the person discovering or being informed of the abuse should immediately contact **The Services for Children and Young People**. In these circumstances you do not have to give your name but it is helpful if you do. **The Services for Children and Young People**, together with the person in charge, where appropriate will decide how and when parents or carers will be informed.

### **8. Allegations against coaches/volunteers**

The person in charge may be informed of situations where he/she is unsure about whether the allegation constitutes abuse or not, and is therefore unclear about what action to take. There may be circumstances where allegations are about poor practice rather than abuse, but those responsible should always consult senior colleagues and gain advice from **The Services for Children and Young People** if there is any doubt. This is because it may be just one of a series of other instances which together cause concern.

It is acknowledge that feelings generated by the discovery that a coach or volunteer is or may be, abusing a child, will raise concerns among other coaches or volunteers. This includes the difficulties inherent in reporting such matters. However, it is important that any concerns for the welfare of the child arising from abuse or harassment by a coach or volunteer should be reported immediately.

**The GTTA will assure all coaches and or volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith reports their concerns that a colleague is or may be abusing a child.**

Where there is a complaint against a coach or volunteer, there may be Three types of investigation

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

## **What to do if there are concerns**

- If following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, The GTTA will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by a coach or volunteer should be reported to the Child Protection Officer, GTTA President or Vice President who will refer the allegation to the Services for Children and Young People who may involve the Police.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Services for Children and Young People.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.
- GTTA will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further enquires.
- Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to children, parents, coaches and volunteers.
- The welfare of the child should always remain paramount.

## **9. Reporting Suspected Child Abuse.**

The GTTA Child Protection Officer, President or Vice President on receipt of any suspected abuse must immediately telephone:

**The Services for Children and Young people** and ask for the Duty Officer of the intake team at Edward T Wheadon House.

Telephone **713444** **between** 08.30am and 16.45pm.

Emergency out of Hours Number for the Duty Officer:  
Telephone **701088**

## **10. Code of Conduct**

**The code is based around the four key Principles described below:**

### **Rights**

In order to respect and champion the rights of every individual to participate in sport, you should:

- Provide choices for individual players in your sport.
- Provide an environment in which children are free from fear or harassment.
- Recognise the rights of players to be treated as individuals.
- Encourage players to confer with other coaches or experts if the need arises.
- Promote the concept of a well-balanced lifestyle for players both within and outside of the sport.

### **Relationships**

As a coach/volunteer you must develop relationships with children and others that are based on, openness, honesty, mutual trust and respect. You should always:

- Consider your behaviour; do not engage in behaviour that constitutes any form of abuse.
- Promote the welfare and best interests of your players, even if this means letting another professional take over.
- Avoid sexual intimacy with players at all times and under any conditions, including immediately after the coaching relationship has ended.
- Empower players to be responsible for their own decisions.
- Clarify the nature of the coaching services being offered to players.
- Communicate and cooperate with other organisations and individuals in the best interests of your players.

## **Responsibilities: personal standards**

As a coach/Volunteer you are in a position of considerable influence. You therefore need to demonstrate and set high moral and ethical standards.

You should always:

- Be fair, honest and considerate to players and others in your sport.
- Project an image of health, cleanliness and functional efficiency.
- Be a positive role model for players at all times.

## **Responsibilities: professional standards**

To maximise benefits and minimise the risks to players, coaches/volunteers should:

- Attend Courses
- Gather essential information
- Keep abreast of new developments.
- Maintain professional level of coaching.
- Make use of educational opportunities.

## **Summary**

Good coaching practice involves:

- Promoting safe and correct practice in relation to:
  - Physical Environment
  - Other Players
  - Umpires, officials etc.
- Accepting professional responsibility for your actions
- Making a commitment to provide a high quality of service.
- Providing a positive benefit to society of sport.
- Acknowledging that sport is a developing profession and that it is important to exchange knowledge and best practice tips.
- Working towards coaching qualifications at different levels.

## **11. Promoting Good Practice**

All children have a right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect. False accusations of abuse are rare. However, the GTTA is committed to help safeguard children, coaches, volunteers, parents and the sport. The GTTA's policy of good practice includes monitoring the following areas:

- All coaches/volunteers working with juniors will complete a personal disclosure form, which is designed to elicit any criminal information about an applicant, which could deem him/her unsuitable. Failure to disclose information will result in exclusion from the GTTA.
- A consent form will be signed by the applicant for permission to make police checks.
- All coaches/volunteers must attend the GTTA's 2 Hour presentation on Good Practice and Child Protection.
- All coaches/volunteers must read the Sports Coach UK booklet "Protecting Children".
- All coaches/volunteers must hold an Emergency First Aid certificate.

## **12. Code of Conduct for Sports Coaches**

Coaching as an emerging profession, must demonstrate at all levels a high degree of honesty, integrity and competence.

The need for coaches to understand and act on their responsibilities is of critical importance to sport, as is the need to protect the key concept of participation for fun and enjoyment as well as achievement.

This is implicit within good coaching practice and promotes a professional image of the good practitioner.

This code of conduct defines all that is best in good coaching practice.

*Code of Conduct for sports coaches (2001)*

## 13. Coaches Do's & Don'ts

It is possible to reduce situations of possible abuse and to protect coaches/volunteers by promoting good practice. The following are examples of care to take when working in Table Tennis:

### **DO's**

- Always be publicly open when working with children.
- Avoid situations where a coach and individual child are unobserved.
- Where possible allow parents to take on responsibility for their children in changing rooms.
- If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms, always try to work in pairs.
- Encourage an open environment. ( ie no secrets)
- When mixed teams are away on a trip away from home they must always be accompanied by a male and female coach/volunteer.
- Treat everyone equally and with respect and dignity.
- Be an excellent role model.
- Ensure a safe environment.
- Make Table Tennis fun and enjoyable.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback.

## **Don't**

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Take children alone on car journeys, however short.
- Take children to your home where they will be alone with you.
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child.
- Make any form of physical contact unless absolutely necessary, if you have to, explain what you are doing and do it openly with other adults around.
- Engage in inappropriate touching.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or acted upon.

If cases arise when these situations are unavoidable, they should only occur with the full knowledge of the parents.

## 14. A Useful Guide

