

Protecting Children & the Vulnerable Policy of the English Bowls Umpires Association

Introduction & Policy Statement

The English Bowls Umpires Association (hereafter referred to as the EBUA) recognises its responsibilities to establish policies which promote and encourage their members to adopt the highest possible standards of care towards children and vulnerable people participating in the Sport of Bowls.

The EBUA believes that everyone has a duty of care, both legally and morally, towards children and vulnerable people with whom they have contact, and to safeguard and protect them from abuse.

Both qualified Umpires and umpires under training need to be informed about and be able to recognise the different forms of abuse. They should also know what precautions or steps should be taken for its prevention and what action to take if an incident occurs.

The aim of this document is to establish the EBUA policy on the protection of children and vulnerable persons and to provide guidelines to assist umpires to understand and fulfil their obligations within the context of umpiring the Sport of Bowls.

It generally follows recommendations published by the Home Office, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Sport England and other concerned bodies.

Additionally, it follows the recommendations of the National Joint Policy of the English Bowling Association, the English Indoor Bowling Association, the English Women's Bowling Association & the English Women's Indoor Bowling Association.

It is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to all aspects of protecting children and the vulnerable but is a summary of those elements which are considered relevant to the umpire's role within the Sport of Bowls.

Where the term "child" or "children" appear in this document, it is assumed to include "vulnerable people"

The EBUA will appoint a Child Protection Officer (C.P.O.) to give guidance to the EBUA executive on issues concerning children and vulnerable persons and advise on appropriate action. It is the responsibility of the EBUA executive to act appropriately on this advice.

The Child Protection Officer will also investigate, or cause to be investigated, all complaints in this area where EBUA members are involved.

Principles

The following principles form the basis of the policy and the guidelines contained within this document:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- Each child, irrespective of age, gender, religion, race or disability has the right to protection from abuse.
- Allegations and suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Each child has the right to be safe and to be treated with respect and dignity.
- Umpires shall have recourse to any allegations made against them

What is Child Abuse?

The term child abuse is used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults, often by people they know and trust. Both boys and girls are at risk of abuse and to the damage which it does to their physical &/or mental health.

Child abuse can take many forms and may occur within or outside the family, at school, &/or within a social or sporting environment.

Forms of abuse

Sexual molestation is the most widely publicised form of abuse, but is not the only way in which children are harmed. Physical and emotional abuse, as well as neglect, makes up the four main recognised categories of abuse.

Use of Photographs

A potential risk to children is the inappropriate use of photographs or images.

- Never use a photograph containing images of children without the written approval of the parents or guardians.
- If the athlete is named, avoid using the photograph.
- If the photograph is used, avoid naming the athlete.
- Always seek the approval of the athlete before using their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way their image is to be used to represent the sport.

Recognition of abuse

A situation where child abuse has occurred or may occur is not easy to recognise, even by those experienced in this field. It is acknowledged that umpires and the general bowling fraternity are not experts at such recognition.

It is not their responsibility to decide whether abuse is occurring but they are expected to be vigilant and act on any concerns by being prepared to report and discuss any concerns about a child's welfare with the appropriate persons.

Known indicators of abuse which an umpire may meet include:

- Something a child says
- Unexplained or suspicious bruising or injuries
- Sexually explicit language or behaviour

Acting on something a child says

If a child says or indicates that he/she is being abused, it is important that the person receiving the information stays calm so that they can:

- Ensure that the child is, and feels, safe
- Tell and show the child that what they are saying is being treated seriously
- Reassure the child that he/she is not to blame.
- Be honest and explain that it will be necessary to tell someone else.
- Obtain medical help if the child needs immediate attention.
- Write a full report of what the child has said as soon as possible after the event, with copies to the appropriate Child Protection Officer or Club Secretary and the EBUA C.P.O.
- Maintain confidentiality and only tell others if it will protect the child

On no account should that person rush into actions that may be inappropriate, nor make promises that are unlikely to be kept, nor should they ever take sole responsibility; they should consult the C.P.O. or Club Secretary so that they can begin to protect the child and gain support for themselves.

If the C.P.O. or Club Secretary is not available, advice can be obtained in confidence by telephoning the 24 hour NSPCC free phone helpline: **0800 800 500**

Bullying

Although falling under one or more of the main forms of abuse, the frequency with which bullying occurs amongst children and within peer groups can lead to it being overlooked and not immediately recognised as bullying.

Bullying behaviour may be:

- Physical - involving violence. E.g. hitting, kicking or other unwelcome contact.
- Verbal – threats, tormenting, name-calling, racist remarks etc.
- Emotional – exclusion from activities, teasing, persistent rumours

But whatever form it takes, there are recognisable common features:

- The bully is always stronger and more powerful than the victim
- There is deliberate hostility and aggression towards the victim
- The victim suffers pain &/or distress.

Volunteer Personal Disclosure & References

Anybody may have potential to abuse children in some way and it is essential that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that unsuitable people are not allowed to become umpires which would inevitably allow them to work with any children, albeit remotely.

It is therefore important that checks are made as to the suitability of those volunteering to become umpires and hence become involved with children and they should be asked to complete a voluntary disclosure form. This form, together with any references, should be considered confidential and retained securely by the EBUA Secretary.

This form should be destroyed when the person is no longer a member of the EBUA

Good Practice

Being involved with children puts people in a position of trust, where they are contributing to the child's education. Their behaviour and attitude may be copied and repeated away from the club.

For their own protection, adults must not allow themselves to be drawn into any act or behaviour which is capable of being misunderstood, or which they may, on reflection, be ashamed.

ALWAYS

- Provide an example you wish to be followed.
- Treat everyone with respect.
- Respect a child's right to personal privacy.
- Recognise that someone else may misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Exercise caution, especially in sensitive times of counselling.
- Report any concerns that you may have about a child.

NEVER

- Spend time alone with children, away from others. Ensure another adult is present.
- Take children alone in a car on journeys, however short.
- Take children to your home.
- Allow ridiculing or bullying by peers or team colleagues etc.
- Make suggestive remarks or gestures
- Show favouritism to any individual or team.
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts.
- Try to investigate any concerns personally
- Rely on your "good name" to protect you
- Believe that "it could never happen to me!"

They should make it a rule not to engage in or allow:

- Horseplay, or rough, physical or sexually provocative games.
- Inappropriate touching of any form
- The use of inappropriate language unchallenged
- Sexually suggestive comments, even in fun
- Do things of a personal nature which the child can do for itself.
- Allegations a child makes to go unchallenged or unrecorded.

In the event that a child is accidentally hurt, the incident should be reported as soon as possible to the Club/County Secretary and an accident report completed.

Similarly, any occasion that the child seems distressed or misunderstands or misinterprets something that has been done should be reported.