

Anti-Bullying Policy

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Foreword

This document is part of a wider scheme developed by Scottish Handball Association (SHA) to safeguard and protect specifically SHA Academy players from harm and to recognise the responsibility to promote safe practice and to protect children from discrimination, abuse and exploitation, and as such should be considered in conjunction with the:

- SHA Child Protection Policy
- SHA Safe In Care Guidelines
- SHA Equality Policy

SHA recognise its duty of care and responsibility to safeguard all its members from harm and hence is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment, so they can participate in handball in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Harassment, Victimisation or Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and SHA is committed to take action to investigate and respond to any alleged incidents.

SHA in addition to other policies and procedures will promote and implement this Anti-Bullying Policy and will require all Academy members to sign up to it. Each SHA club will formally adopt a version of this policy or otherwise incorporate their own anti-bullying policy and procedures into their club's constitution, consistent with the strong ethos and strict procedures of the SHA policy.

Definitions:

Harassment

Harassment may include bullying behaviour, and it refers to bad treatment that is related to a protected characteristic, such as age, sex, disability, race, gender, religion or sexual orientation.

More specifically, the law defines it as 'unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.'

It can include behaviour that individuals find offensive even if it's not directed at them, and even if they do not have the relevant protected characteristics themselves.

Victimisation

Victimisation broadly refers to bad treatment directed towards someone who has made or is believed to have made or supported a complaint under the Equality Act.

It includes situations where a complaint hasn't yet been made but someone is victimised because it's suspected they might make one.

If an individual gives false evidence or makes an allegation in bad faith, then they are not protected from victimisation under the Act.

Bullying

Bullying may be seen as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time (but may also be a one-off occurrence) where it is difficult for those experiencing bullying to defend themselves. Bullying is defined as follows: 'Bullying is both behaviour and impact; the impact is on a person's capacity to feel in control of themselves. This is what we term as their sense of 'agency'. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour happens face to face and online' (respectme, 2015).

Bullying is a form of unacceptable behaviour, but not all unacceptable behaviour can be considered bullying. Bullying usually has three key elements:

- It is often (but not always) repeated behaviour that happens over a period of time
- It involves an imbalance of power
- It is intentionally hurtful behaviour

There are many various forms of bullying, and they can include:

- **Emotional:** being unfriendly, excluding (emotionally and physically) sending hurtful text messages, name calling, using sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and emotional torment through ridicule, humiliation or the continual ignoring of individuals
- **Physical:** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- **Discrimination:** racial taunts, graffiti, gestures, homophobic comments, jokes about disabled people and other prejudice-based bullying
- **Verbal:** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- **Cyberbullying:** using technology i.e. mobile phones or the internet (social networking sites, chat rooms, instant messenger, tweets) to post of derogatory or abusive comments, videos or images. Those enacting bullying behaviours may no longer rely on being physically near to the young person

Reasons for being bullied

Any child can be bullied just by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Sometimes the exact things that can make the individual accepted in one environment can make them a subject of bullying in another.

Individuals who have a 'protected characteristic', such as disability, derive from ethnic minorities, young people who are gay or lesbian, or those with learning difficulties are more vulnerable to this form of abuse and are more likely to be targeted by those enacting bullying behaviours. Please refer to SHA Equality Policy to learn more.

Environments for bullying

Both girls and boys can exhibit bullying behaviour. Although bullying often takes place in schools research shows it can and does occur in any setting where there is inadequate supervision or a culture that allows it to continue. It can occur on the way to and from school, at a sporting event, in the playground, online or in the changing rooms.

Characteristics of bullying behaviour

Those who bully come from all walks of life; they bully for a variety of reasons and may even have been subject to bullying behaviour themselves. Typically, those who bully can have low self-esteem, be excitable, aggressive or jealous. Crucially, they have learned how to gain power over others and there is increasing evidence to suggest that this behaviour will have a long term detrimental effect on the person displaying the bullying behaviour inhibiting their emotional development and possibly leading to criminal behaviour.

The effect of competition

The competitive nature of the sport of handball can unfortunately make it an ideal environment for bullying behaviour. The bullying behaviour can be by:

- A parent who pushes too hard;
- A coach who adopts a 'win-at-all costs' philosophy;
- An athlete who intimidates inappropriately;
- A club official who places unfair pressure on a person;
- A spectator who shouts abuse.

Symptoms of being bullied

The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to young people, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm). There are a number of signs that may indicate that a young person or disabled adult is being bullied:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotional ups and downs, reluctance to go to school, training or sports club;

- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing for example on food, alcohol or cigarettes;
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

Prevention

SHA expects that each participant, coach, volunteer or official will:

- respect a need for, and rights to, a sport environment where safety, security, praise, recognition and opportunity for taking responsibility are available for every handball participant
- respect the feelings and views of others
- recognise that everyone is important and that our differences make each of us special and hence should be valued
- show appreciation of others by acknowledging individual qualities, contributions and progress
- be committed to the early identification of bullying, and prompt and collective action to deal with it
- ensure safety by having rules and practices carefully explained and displayed for all to see
- report incidents of bullying they see. Everybody in the SHA, be that a member, coach, official, or volunteer has a responsibility to work together to stop bullying – by doing nothing you are condoning bullying
- all forms of bullying will be addressed

Commitment

- This policy is to be published on the SHA Website.
- Each SHA club will formally adopt a version of this policy or otherwise incorporate their own anti-bullying policy and procedures into the club's constitution
- All Academy players, club members and parents will sign to accept the constitution upon joining
- The Academy CPWO and Club Chairs or other Club Officials will raise awareness about bullying and why it matters, in particular ensuring that members wishing to talk about bullying or any other issue that affects them are informed and understand whom they should turn to. It is important to identify and address potential barriers to talking (including those associated with a child's disability or impairment) to enable children to approach adults for help
- If issues of bullying arise, Officials will consider meeting with members to discuss the issue openly and constructively

Responding to a bullying concern

Officials designated to investigate bullying incidents shall consider the following guidelines when proceeding:

- children being bullied shall be supported and provided assistance to uphold their right to play and live in a safe environment which allows their healthy development



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- those who bully shall be supported and encouraged to stop bullying
- sanctions for those bullying others that involve long periods of isolation, or which diminish and make individuals look or feel foolish in front of others, shall be avoided.

Officials/Coaches/staff members/volunteers should adopt a positive mind set when responding to bullying concerns. They should be prepared with options for how to respond to incidents of bullying in a planned, deliberate and positive way. Confronting members who have bullied requires a high amount of self-control as well as preparation to know what to say and do. The following are important factors when managing a bullying situation:

- **Be calm.** It is important to be clear thinking and emotionally in control.
- **Be positive.** Have in mind the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with the member. A member is much more likely to modify his/her behaviour if he/she perceives that a coach/official cares.
- **Be assertive.** Coach/official should directly and clearly express their thoughts, feelings and expectations concerning the need for the member to not only stop bullying, but also make restitution with the child who has been bullied.
- **Be confident.** It is important to trust that you will be successful in implementing practices that can have an impact on the member's future behaviour. It is always helpful to focus on the behaviour, not the individual.
- **Be transparent.** Explain to the person enacting bullying behaviour how and why their conduct fails to conform to the sport's shared expectations as identified in this current Anti-Bullying Policy. Assess the situation and its severity level. Determine the appropriate level of response required to manage the situation effectively.

Procedures in case of bullying

1. Report bullying incidents to the Academy Child Welfare and Protection Officer (or for clubs, the Chair or designated Club Official)
2. In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be referred to the SHA Child Welfare and Protection Officer for advice
3. Parents may be informed, depending on the wishes of the person being bullied, and may be asked to come to a meeting to discuss the problem
4. If necessary and appropriate, the police will be consulted
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly
6. An attempt will be made to help the person(s) enacting bullying behaviours to change their behaviour
7. If mediation fails and the bullying is seen to continue, disciplinary action will be initiated under the SHA/club constitution.

Recommended action

If the SHA or a Club decides it is appropriate for them to deal with the situation they should follow the procedure outlined below:

1. Reconciliation by getting the parties together. It may be that a genuine apology solves the problem.
2. If this fails/not appropriate a small panel (made up from Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Coach, committee members) should convene and agree which of them would be best placed to meet with the child (and their parent or guardian, depending on the child's wishes) to understand details of the allegation. Minutes should be taken for clarity, which should be agreed by all as an accurate account.
3. The same person/s should meet with the alleged person enacting bullying behaviour and parent/s and put the incident raised to them to answer and give their view of the allegation. Minutes should again be taken and agreed.
4. If bullying has in their view taken place the individual enacting bullying behaviour should be warned and put on notice of further action i.e. temporary or permanent suspension if the bullying continues. Consideration should be given as to whether a reconciliation meeting between parties is appropriate at this time.
5. In some cases the parent of the person enacting bullying behaviour or the person being bullied can be asked to attend training sessions, if they are able to do so, and if appropriate. The club committee should monitor the situation for a given period to ensure the bullying is not being repeated.
6. All coaches involved with both individuals should be made aware of the concerns and outcome of the process i.e. the warning.

Useful contacts

Respectme: Scotland's anti bullying service :respectme.org.uk

NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000

ChildLine 0800 1111 / www.childline.org.uk

Kidscape www.kidscape.org.uk

Anti-Bullying Alliance www.antibullyingalliance.org



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