

Child abuse in sport

When it comes to safeguarding children, a particular point of concern can be the prominence of child abuse in sport. Child abuse in sports can take on many forms including mental abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. In recent years, several instances of child abuse in the sporting world have emerged both in the UK and across the globe, and each one highlights the need for more stringent safeguarding principles.



Why safeguarding children in sport is important

- The large number of children under the age of 18 are involved in sports teams and embark on sport-based trips.
- ▲ The coach holds a position of trust. This makes it easier for child abusers to push children into doing something they feel uncomfortable doing, and to threaten or coerce them into not telling anyone, ultimately opening the door to abuse.
- Sports teams are, by nature, competitive. Instances such as not performing well during a match or game can lead to punishments by adults which constitute abuse such as extreme vocal abuse, forcing a child to have a cold shower or violent punishments.
- ◆ Being a member of a sports team also includes numerous overnight trips away from home with a coach figure, out of sight of other adults.

How to spot the signs

-  There are numerous signs of child abuse in sport that you should keep an eye out, both with your own children and others.
-  Take note of any physical injuries. While these might be part and parcel of playing a contact sport like rugby, bruises can be a sign of physical abuse, particularly when focussed around the head or neck.
-  Be aware of any injuries which aren't adequately explained by taking part in sports such as serious fractures, burns and scalds.
-  Take note if the child talks about sexual behaviour that is beyond their age range.
-  Be aware if the child displays strong distrust of adults and other children and finds it hard to communicate with others.
-  Listen when the child talks about other children being abused in his sports club.



If you suspect that a child is being abused in their sports club, the first thing you should do is talk to them or ask them to talk to someone they trust. If they would rather speak to someone they don't know, they can call the confidential Childline number 0800 1111 for private support.

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.virtual-college.co.uk/courses/safeguarding-courses>