

VR019 Welfare (Safeguarding) Policy

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1. Welfare and Safeguarding Overview

Vegan Runners UK is committed to ensuring that all members can participate in club activities in an enjoyable and safe environment. All children and adults are entitled to a duty of care and to be protected from abuse.

In addition, Vegan Runners UK have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, our coaches and other volunteers provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

Vegan Runners UK is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone in sport accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children, young people and adults from harm and abuse. This means following procedures to protect club members and reporting any concerns about their safety or welfare to appropriate authorities.

The aim of this policy is to promote good practice, providing children, young people and adults with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of Vegan Runners UK and to allow the core team and other volunteers make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding issues.

This document details the club's approach, responsibilities and policy and procedures to safeguard children and adults at risk.

Vegan Runners UK is committed to the UK Athletics Safeguarding Policies in their entirety:

- [UKA Safeguarding Children Policy 2020](#)
- [UKA Safeguarding Adults Policy 2020](#)

2. Welfare Secretary contact details

Email: welfare@veganrunners.org.uk

3. Regional Welfare Officers contact details

Please contact the Welfare Secretary for the most up to date regional contacts information.

4. Roles and responsibilities for Welfare Secretary and Regional Welfare Officers

All committee members, parents/guardians, and members of the club have responsibility to uphold the safeguarding and welfare policies and procedures, to adhere to good practice and to respond to any suspected breaches.

Vegan Runners UK requires:

- All volunteers to undergo a DBS check
- All volunteers undertake relevant safeguarding training or undertake a form of home study to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of positive culture towards good practice and safeguarding of children, young persons and vulnerable adults. Training expectations are variable dependent on volunteer role and will be detailed to individual volunteers by the Welfare Secretary
- All volunteers to receive advisory information outlining good or bad practice and informing them what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of club member
- All coaches, trainee coaches and run leaders should have an up to date first aid qualification

Vegan Runners UK will appoint a Welfare Secretary and Regional Welfare Officers.

The Welfare Secretary's role is to oversee all matters related to Club Welfare and Safeguarding including:

- Maintaining a confidential register of current DBS checks
- Maintaining a confidential register of current welfare and safeguarding training for all volunteers
- Advising and supporting the club officers for matters related to club members' welfare or safeguarding
- Implementing and maintain the safeguarding and welfare policies and procedures
- Liaise with Local Authority Designated Officers as required
- Meeting regularly with the Club Chair and Club Secretary to brief them on matters related to club's welfare (maintaining strict confidentiality of individuals related to safeguarding matters where required)
- Work collaboratively with others in the club to ensure a positive environment for all members
- Ensure club fulfils its responsibilities to safeguard club members
- Ensure the club implements its safeguarding plan for the positive welfare of children, young persons and adults.
- Have working knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of statutory agencies (children's social care, the police and the NSPCC) and Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Compile a register of contact details for Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults Boards at County level
- Promote the club's best practice guidance and Code of Conduct within the club

- Adherence to expectation for absolute discretion and maintenance of confidentiality of all those involved in any welfare or safeguarding matters. No details of welfare related matters are shared without explicit permission
- Work in collaboration with the Mental Health Ambassadors, Mental Health Champions and Welfare Officers to promote anti-discriminatory practice

The Regional Welfare Officers' role is to act as the first point of contact for members in their designated area when concerns about club member's welfare, poor practice or abuse are identified, respond to any concerns regarding child protection in their regions and inform the Welfare Secretary as a matter of urgency so that they can liaise with the relevant LADO

- Making the Welfare Secretary (WS) aware within 24 h of any safeguarding or wellbeing issues who will then implement reporting and recording procedures
- Addressing these issues under the guidance and support of the WS.
- Work collaboratively with others in the club to ensure a positive environment for all members
- Assist club to fulfil its responsibilities to safeguard club members
- Assist club to implement its safeguarding plan for the positive welfare of children, young persons and adults.
- Demonstrate awareness of the boundaries of the role of club welfare officer
- Have basic knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of statutory agencies (children's social care, the police and the NSPCC) and Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Maintain contact details for the local children's social care department, the police and Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Promote the club's best-practice guidance and/or code of conduct within the club
- Adherence to expectation for absolute discretion and maintenance of confidentiality of all those involved in any welfare or safeguarding matters and no details of welfare related matters are shared beyond the WS by WO without explicit permission
- Promote anti-discriminatory practice

5. Mental Health

Vegan Runners UK fully supports the England Athletics Mental Health initiatives to:

- Create a welcoming, inclusive and positive environment for everyone to participate in athletics
- Encourage people to talk about mental health and
- Support people to seek help and support when needed.

As part of this programme the club has signed up to the England Athletics Mental Health

Charter. Full details of the [England Athletics Mental Wellbeing and Running programme can be found here.](#)

Mental Health Ambassadors

To align with England Athletics recommendations, Vegan Runners UK will aim to have at least one Mental Health Ambassador.

Our Mental Health Ambassadors contact info:

Our Mental Health Ambassadors share the VRUK regions. Click on the names below to hyperlink to their email addresses

- [Andy McMillan](#)
- [Sarah Whitson - Russell](#)

Roles and responsibilities for Mental Health Ambassadors

The Mental Health Ambassador's role is to:

- Make the Welfare Secretary aware within 24 h of any welfare or safeguarding issues
- Working with other people in the Club (such as committee members and the Mental Health Champions) to proactively support the mental wellbeing of club/group members
- Be a Mental Health Champion (MHC) and support the other MHC to establish the following within VRUK:
 - Behave in a professional, confidential and non-discriminatory manner at all times and promote equal opportunities for all.
 - An open and non-judgmental attitude.
 - Delivering positive and patient approaches towards supporting people with mental health problems.
 - Be a positive role model.
 - Support #RunAndTalk campaigns and register an organised run for each event (usually in September).
 - Provide crisis contacts to their club/group and signpost to local / national services as required but are not encouraged to act as counsellors unless they are professionally qualified to do so.
 - Encourage and promote conversations about mental health and signpost accordingly
 - Make links with mental health organisations in the community
 - Actively promote mental wellbeing and running
 - Make links between VRUK and local mental health groups and organisations and encourage members to start running.
 - Liaise with the Welfare Secretary as required

Mental Health Champions

Vegan Runners UK will appoint Mental Health Champions. The role of a Mental Health Champion is to support people to access the mental wellbeing benefits of running, remove stigma and get people talking about mental health. Champions will NEVER be expected to provide mental health support in the role, but they will be provided with details of where to signpost people for professional support with their mental health.

Roles and responsibilities Mental Health Champions

1. Maintain regular communication with the Mental Health Ambassador and the Welfare Secretary on your activities as MHC
2. Making the Welfare Secretary aware within 24 h of any safeguarding issues you are aware of
3. With support from the Mental Health Ambassador and the Welfare Secretary and in collaboration with other MHC you will be working towards establishing the following within VRUK:
 - Behaving in a professional, confidential and non-discriminatory manner at all times and promoting equal opportunities for all.
 - Projecting an open and non-judgmental attitude.
 - Delivering positive and patient approaches towards supporting people with mental health problems.
 - Being a positive role model.
 - Actively promote mental wellbeing and running including supporting #RunAndTalk campaigns and registering an organised run for each event
 - Provide crisis contacts to your group and signposting to local / national services as required. Please note that you are not encouraged to act as counsellors unless you are professionally qualified to do so.
 - Encourage and promote conversations about mental health and signpost accordingly
 - Make links between VRUK and local mental health groups and organisations and encourage members to start running.

MHC may also wish to do the following activities as part of their role:

- **Tweeting:** Posting using #RunAndTalk particularly during the campaign periods.
- **Sharing:** Sharing social media posts from England Athletics, RunTogether, Mind and other Mental Health Champions using #RunAndTalk.
- **Talking:** – Starting conversations about mental health with other club or group members. – Sharing good news stories in your newsletters or website to get people talking

- **Advocating:** Sharing guidance and information provided by England Athletics with elected club/group officials and others about mental health issues related to running.

The Regional Welfare Officers may also act as the Mental Health Ambassadors, but these can also be separate roles.

Mental Health Champions contact details

Please contact the Welfare Secretary (welfare@veganrunners.org.uk) for the most up to date Mental Health Champion information.

Useful National Mental Health Contacts

Samaritans

Telephone: 116 123 (24 hours a day, free to call)

Email: jo@samaritans.org Website: www.samaritans.org

Provides confidential, non-judgemental emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those that could lead to suicide. You can phone, email, write a letter or in most cases talk to someone face to face.

Mind infoline

Telephone: 0300 123 3393 (9am-6pm Monday to Friday)

Email: info@mind.org.uk Website: www.mind.org.uk

Mind provides confidential mental health information services. With support and understanding, Mind enables people to make informed choices. The infoline gives information on types of mental distress, where to get help, drug treatments, alternative therapies and advocacy. Mind has around 140 local Minds providing local mental health services.

Rethink Mental Illness advice line

Telephone: 0300 5000 927 (9.30am – 4pm Monday to Friday)

Email: info@rethink.org Website: www.rethink.org

Provides expert advice and information to people with mental health problems and those who care for them, as well as giving help to health professionals, employers and staff. Rethink also runs Rethink services and groups across England and Northern Ireland.

Saneline

Telephone: 0300 304 7000 (4:30pm-10:30pm) Website: www.sane.org.uk

Saneline is a national mental health helpline providing information and support to people with mental health problems and those who support them.

The Mix

Telephone: 0808 808 4994 (11am-11pm, free to call) Website: www.themix.org.uk

The Mix provides judgement-free information and support to young people aged 13-25 on a range of issues including mental health problems. Young people can access The Mix's support via phone, email, peer to peer and counselling services.

ChildLine

Telephone: 0800 1111 Website: www.childline.org.uk

ChildLine is a private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of nineteen. You can contact a ChildLine counsellor for free about anything – no problem is too big or too small.

Elefriends

Website: <http://elefriends.org.uk/>

Elefriends is a supportive online community where you can be yourself. Elefriends is run by Mind.

If you're a carer needing support you can contact all of the above as well as [Carers Direct](#) and the [Carers Trust](#), both of whom are able to provide support and advice on any issues affecting you.

What should I do if I'm supporting someone else?

If the person seems unwell, and you are worried about their safety, you should encourage them to seek help. [The Mind website provides guidance on how to support someone in crisis here.](#)

6. Training for volunteers

The Welfare Secretary, Regional Welfare Officers, Mental Health Ambassadors and Mental Health Champions will have Safeguarding, Mental Health and Preventing Bullying training which is available through United Kingdom Athletics and they will undertake refresher training every three years. The other club volunteers will have to undertake various elements of this training along with DBS checks in accordance with the requirements of their roles.

For full details of required training for all roles please contact the Welfare Secretary.

The Club's Welfare Secretary will maintain a register of all volunteer roles' safeguarding and welfare training. This will be stored in the welfare section of the club's shared drive, so that it is available for the Club Secretary and Club Chairperson to access at any time. All roles will be expected to complete DBS approval and relevant training prior to taking up their role and undertake refresher training as stated above.

The training can be accessed at the url below and course fees will be reimbursed once evidence of completion is received:
<https://www.uka.org.uk/governance/welfare-and-safeguarding/educare-online-safeguarding-training/>

Any individual involved at any level of the sport of athletics can raise concerns with UK Athletics for investigation through the [UKA Whistleblowing Policy](#).

Additional Contact Details and Information

- England Athletics
(Advice and support regarding Club and Athlete Compliance and Wellbeing matters):
Jane Fylan / jfylan@englandathletics.org / 0121 713 8450 (option 3)
englandathletics.org
- [NSPCC Safeguarding in Sports Unit](#)
- [Childline](#)

7. Anti-bullying

Vegan Runners UK is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our members, so they can participate in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our club. If bullying does occur, all members or parents should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a telling club. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the Club Welfare Secretary, a Regional Welfare Officer or any committee member.

[The full UKA Anti-bullying policy can be found here.](#)

Additional Organisations

[Kidscape – help with bullying.](#)

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We aim to be a welcoming, diverse and inclusive club, and acknowledge the rights of all of our members and prospective members to be treated fairly, with respect and dignity. No individual will be unjustly discriminated against. This includes, but is not limited to,

discrimination because of age, disability, gender identity, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation.

Additional Documents

[UKA Disability Terminology](#)

[UKA Transgender Policy](#)

[Government Sports Charter Against Homophobia and Transphobia](#)

The Equality Act 2010

Underpinning the Policy is [The Equality Act 2010](#) which came into force on 1 October 2010. The Equality Act established 9 'protected characteristics', on the grounds of which it is unlawful to discriminate against a person.

These are:

- Age (all ages and age groups).
- Disability (physical and mental impairments).
- Gender reassignment (people who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment).
- Marriage and civil partnership.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race (including ethnic or national origin, colour and nationality).
- Religion or belief (including religion or a lack of religion, a religious or philosophical belief or a lack of belief).
- Sex (Gender).
- Sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual orientation)

All club members have a responsibility to challenge discriminatory behaviour and promote equality of opportunity.

Vegan Runners UK will deal with any incidence of discriminatory behaviour seriously, according to the UKA disciplinary procedures here.

9. Harassment

Harassment is a form of discrimination under the [Equality Act 2010](#). Discrimination which is against the Equality Act is unlawful. This means you can take action in the civil courts. If you've been treated badly, but it's not unlawful discrimination there may be other things you can do.

Harassment is unwanted behaviour which you find offensive or which makes you feel intimidated or humiliated. It can happen on its own or alongside other forms of discrimination. Unwanted behaviour could be:

- spoken or written words or abuse
- offensive emails, tweets or comments on social networking sites
- images and graffiti
- physical gestures
- facial expressions
- jokes

You don't need to have previously objected to something for it to be unwanted.

10. Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adult

Introduction

Everyone who participates in Vegan Runners UK is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. Vegan Runners UK have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, coaches and volunteers provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

Vegan Runners UK is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone in sport accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm and abuse. This means following procedures to protect these club members and report any concerns about their wellbeing to appropriate authorities.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children, young people and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of Vegan Runners UK and to allow the core team and other volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding issues.

A child/young person is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children Act 1989)

A vulnerable adult is defined as a club member who is or may be for any reason unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation from other club members or other adults. It is important to note that no mention of mental capacity or competence appears in our definition – this is deliberate omission.

Policy Statement

Vegan Runners UK is committed to the following:

- Ensuring the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount

- all children, young persons and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in sporting events in a fun and safe environment
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children, young persons and vulnerable adults from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- all Vegan Runners UK core team and other volunteers who work with children will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, DBS checked and will be provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and safeguarding procedures
- working in partnership with parents, children, young persons and vulnerable adults is essential for the protection of those people

Monitor and review the policy and procedures

The implementation of procedures will be regularly monitored and reviewed. The Welfare Secretary will regularly report progress, challenges, difficulties, achievements gaps and areas where changes are required to the management committee.

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

11. Promoting Good Practice

Introduction

To provide children, young persons and vulnerable adults with the best possible experience and opportunities in sporting events, everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework such as the club's Code of Conduct.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of the core team or other volunteers or participants in sporting events to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult.

Good Practice

All core team members and other volunteers will adhere to the following principles and action:

- always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- make the experience of sporting events fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying
- treat all young people / vulnerable adults equally and with respect and dignity
- always put the welfare of the young person / vulnerable adult first, before winning

- maintain a safe and appropriate distance with players (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child, young person or vulnerable adult or to share a room with them)
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people / vulnerable adult. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person / vulnerable adult. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the young person's / vulnerable adult's consent has been given
- Involve parents/carers wherever possible, e.g. where young people / vulnerable adults need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child / carer to take responsibility for their vulnerable adult. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms always ensure parents, carers, coaches etc work in pairs
- request written parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people / vulnerable adults in their cars
- gain written consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g. overnight stays
- ensure that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- ensure that at away events adults should not enter a young person's / vulnerable adult's room or invite them to their rooms
- be an excellent role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people / vulnerable adults
- always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- recognising the developmental needs and capacity of the children, young persons and vulnerable adults and do not risk sacrificing welfare in a desire for club or personal achievements. This means avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will
- secure written parental consent for the club to act in loco parentis, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises
- keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given

Poor Practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and will be avoided by all core team members and other volunteers:

- unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with children, young persons and vulnerable adults away from others
- taking children, young persons and vulnerable adults alone in a car on journeys, however short
- taking children, young persons and vulnerable adults to your home where they will be alone with you
- sharing a room with a child, young person or vulnerable adult
- engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allowing children, young persons and vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- making sexually suggestive comments to a children, young persons and vulnerable adults, even in fun
- reducing a children, young persons and vulnerable adults to tears as a form of control

- allow allegations made by a child, young person or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- do things of a personal nature that the child, young person or vulnerable adult can do for themselves

When a case arises where it is impractical/impossible to avoid a certain situation e.g. transporting a young person in your car, the tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/carer and the person involved.

If, during your care, you:

- accidentally hurt a child, young person or vulnerable adult
- note they seem distressed in any manner
- note they appear to be sexually aroused by your actions
- if you are aware they misunderstand or misinterpret something you have done

You must report any such incidents as soon as possible to the Club Welfare Secretary and make a written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

12. Defining Child Abuse

Introduction

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to either physical or emotional injury or harm, it commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to children, young persons and vulnerable adults regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

There are four main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect**. The abuser may be a family member, or someone the child, young person or vulnerable adult encounters in sports and leisure activities. Any individual may abuse or neglect a child, young person or vulnerable adult directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming the child, young person or vulnerable adult.

Abuse in all of its forms can affect children, young persons and vulnerable adults at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated may follow the individual into adulthood and the remainder of their lives.

Young people with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse had occurred.

Types of Abuse

- **Physical Abuse:** where adults physically hurt or injure children, young persons and vulnerable adults e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute child abuse.

This category of abuse can also include when a parent/carer reports non-existent symptoms or illness deliberately causes ill health in a young person they are looking after. This is known as Fabricated or induced illness (FII) – as with all forms of abuse, if you suspect this to be occurring, refer your concerns immediately to the Club Welfare Secretary, and do not confront the parents with your suspicions.

In a sports situation, physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training disregard the capacity of the child's immature and growing body. Our coaches and other volunteers are trained and supported to ensure this does not happen to our club members during training or other events offered by the club.

- **Emotional Abuse:** the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve telling children, young persons and vulnerable adults they are useless, worthless, unloved, inadequate or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. It may feature expectations of children, young persons and vulnerable adults that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause children, young persons and vulnerable adults to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the children, young persons and vulnerable adults frightened or withdrawn. Ill treatment of children, young persons and vulnerable adults, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse in sport may occur when children, young persons and vulnerable adults are constantly criticised, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling and bullying. Our coaches and other volunteers are trained and supported to ensure this does not happen to our club members during training or other events offered by the club.

- **Bullying** may come from another child, young person or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are three main types of bullying. It may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

In sport bullying may arise when a parent or coach pushes the young person too hard to succeed, or a rival athlete or official uses bullying behaviour. Our coaches and other volunteers are trained and supported to ensure this does not happen to our club members during training or other events offered by the club.

- **Neglect** occurs when an adult fails to meet children, young persons and vulnerable adults' basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of their health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. Refusal to give love, affection and appropriate attention can also be a form of neglect.

Neglect in sport could occur when a coach does not keep the children, young persons and vulnerable adults safe, or exposing them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury. Our coaches and other volunteers are trained and supported to ensure this does not happen to our club members during training or other events offered by the club.

- **Sexual Abuse** occurs when adults (male and female) use children, young persons and vulnerable adults to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing them pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.

In sport, activities which might involve physical contact with children, young persons and vulnerable adults could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over vulnerable athletes, if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing. Our coaches and other volunteers are trained and supported to ensure this does not happen to our club members during training or other events offered by the club.

Indicators of Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition, but indications that children, young persons and vulnerable adults are being abused may include one or more of the following:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- an injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent
- the child, young person or vulnerable adult describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- another child, young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person

- unexplained changes in a child, young person or vulnerable adult's behaviour e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- inappropriate sexual awareness
- engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- distrust of adults, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- difficulty in making friends
- being prevented from socialising with others
- displaying variations in eating patterns including over-eating or loss of appetite
- losing weight for no apparent reason
- becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

Signs of bullying include:

- behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go training or competitions
- an unexplained drop off in performance
- physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, reports of bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes
- a shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indications is not proof that abuse is taking place.

It is NOT the responsibility of those volunteering for Vegan Runners UK to decide that child abuse is occurring. It is their responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting them to the Club Welfare Secretary.

13. Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment at Sporting Events

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people. **All club coaches and other volunteers should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the Club Welfare Secretary.**

14. Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

Introduction

It is not the responsibility of anyone volunteering for Vegan Runners UK to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the Club Welfare Secretary who will liaise with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the child, young person or vulnerable adult. This applies **BOTH** to

allegations/suspicious of abuse occurring within Vegan Runners UK and to allegations/suspicious that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

This section explains how to respond to allegations/suspicious.

Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed in the indicators of abuse section of this document, it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a young person says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

- **stay calm** so as not to frighten the child, young person or vulnerable adult
- **reassure** the child, young person or vulnerable adult that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- **listen** to the child, young person or vulnerable adult, showing that you are taking them seriously
- **keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child, young person or vulnerable adult has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify or to demonstrate that you have understood what the child, young person or vulnerable adult is telling you
- **inform** the child, young person or vulnerable adult that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell them this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- **safety of the** child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount. If they need urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a safeguarding issue where child protection has become immediately necessary
- **record** all information
- **report** the incident to the Club Welfare Secretary

In all cases if you are not sure what to do you can gain help from the Club Welfare Secretary: welfare@veganrunners.org.uk and from the UKA Lead Safeguarding Officer dbrown@uka.org.uk or call 0121 713 8450 (option 2)

If you think a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at IMMEDIATE risk, you should treat this as an emergency and call 999 to report your concerns to the Police.

Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions.

Information should include the following:

- the child, young person or vulnerable adult's name, age and date of birth
- the child, young person or vulnerable adult's home address and telephone number
- whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's
- the nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- a description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- details of witnesses to the incidents
- the child, young person or vulnerable adult's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred
- have the parents / carer been contacted? If so, what has been said?
- has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details
- has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record detail

Reporting the Concern

All suspicions and allegations **MUST** be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

Vegan Runners UK expects its coaches and other volunteers to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the person in charge of the event and with the Club Welfare Secretary who will subsequently check that appropriate action has been taken.

If the Club Welfare Secretary is not available you should take responsibility and seek advice from the UKA Lead Safeguarding Officer dbrown@uka.org.uk or call 0121 713 8450 (option 2)

If you think a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at IMMEDIATE risk, you should treat this as an emergency and call 999 to report your concerns to the Police.

Actions taken when a complaint is made about a Club volunteer or Club member

Where there is a complaint against a Club volunteer or member, there may be three types of investigation.

- **Criminal** in which case the police are immediately involved
- **Child protection** in which case the social services (and possibly) the police will be involved
- **Disciplinary or misconduct** in which case Vegan Runners UK will be involved

As mentioned previously in this document Vegan Runners UK are not safeguarding experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations must be shared with professional agencies that are responsible for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Social services have a legal responsibility under The Children Act 1989 to investigate all safeguarding referrals by talking to the child, young person or vulnerable adult and family (where appropriate), gathering information from other people who know the child and making inquiries jointly with the police.

NB: If there is any doubt, you must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidents which together cause concern and the information you hold may be the missing link to these.

Any suspicion that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has been abused by a Club volunteer or member should be reported to Vegan Runners UK Welfare Secretary who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child, young person or vulnerable adult in question and any other child, young person or vulnerable adult who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- The Club Welfare Secretary will refer the matter to the local MASH Team / LADO
- the parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the local MASH Team / LADO
- the Chairperson of Vegan Runners UK should be notified as soon as possible to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- the Club Welfare officer will also notify the UKA Lead Safeguarding Officer dbrown@uka.org.uk or call 0121 713 8450 (option 2)
- **if the Club welfare officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to the appropriate committee member (usually the Chairperson or Club Secretary) who will refer the matter to the UKA Lead Safeguarding Officer dbrown@uka.org.uk or call 0121 713 8450 (option 2)**

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such an allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures. This is because other children, young persons or vulnerable adults in the sport or outside it may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children.

Concerns outside the immediate Sporting Environment (e.g. a parent or carer)

- Report your concerns to the Club Welfare Officer
- If the Club Welfare Officer is not available, the person being told or discovering the abuse should contact their local MASH Team or the police immediately

- The MASH Team and the Club Welfare Officer will decide how to inform the parents/carers
- The Club Welfare Officer should also report the incident to the Triathlon England Governing Body as detailed above. The Governing Body should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the organisation and act accordingly
- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The Club Welfare Secretary or Welfare Officer
- The parents of the child
- The person making the allegation
- The MASH Team
- The UKA Lead Safeguarding Officer
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

Seek MASH Team / LADO advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

Internal Inquiries and Suspension

- Vegan Runners UK Club Welfare Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended from volunteering for the club pending further MASH Team inquiries
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries Vegan Runners UK Disciplinary Committee (section 17 and 18) will assess all individual cases to decide whether a volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; especially where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases the Vegan Runners UK Disciplinary Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on the balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult should remain of paramount importance throughout.

15. Recruiting and Selecting Personnel with Children

Introduction

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children, young persons and vulnerable adults. This applies equally to paid

staff and volunteers, both full and part time. To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children, young persons and vulnerable adults the following steps should be taken when recruiting / accepting offers of volunteer support.

Controlling Access to Children

All volunteers who will have close contact with children, young persons and vulnerable adults in the Club should complete a DBS application form. The application form will elicit information about the applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record. An enhanced DBS check is required if the Club Member is in a regulated activity with children, young persons and vulnerable adults:

- Once a week or more
- Four or more times in a 30 day period or
- Overnight between 2am and 6am

If a Club Member is in regular face to face contact with Club children, young persons and vulnerable adults once a month or more then they will need to complete either a standard or enhanced DBS check depending on their role. The Club Welfare Secretary will be able to advise accordingly.

Interview and Induction

All volunteers should receive formal or informal induction during which:

- A check by the Club Welfare Secretary should be made that the DBS application (if need is indicated as above) has been completed in full, including sections on criminal records and self disclosures
- Their qualifications should be substantiated
- The volunteer role requirements and responsibilities should be clarified by the appropriate person within the Club
- They should sign up to Vegan Runners UK Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding of Children, Young Persons and Vulnerable Adults Procedures are explained and training needs identified

16. Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes any necessary training after recruitment to help volunteers to:

- Analyse their own practice against what is deemed good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice and/or abuse
- Respond to concerns expressed by children, young persons and vulnerable adults
- Work safely and effectively with children, young persons and vulnerable adults

Vegan Runners UK Club requires:

- All volunteers who have access to children (as outline above) to undergo a DBS check
- All volunteers, coaches, Welfare Officers and Committee Members to undertake relevant safeguarding training or undertake a form of home study to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of positive culture towards good practice and safeguarding of children, young persons and vulnerable adults
- All volunteers to receive advisory information outlining good/bad practice and informing them what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person
- All coaches, trainee coaches and leaders should have an up to date first aid qualification

17. Disciplinary and Grievance Matters

The Vegan Runners UK [Code of Conduct](#) sets out the standards of behaviour expected from everyone associated with the Club.

All complaints about anyone falling below these standards should be made to any Committee member, all such complaints will be investigated and if a breach of behaviour is found to have occurred there is a process of verbal and written warnings.

18. Club Disciplinary Procedure

Club Discipline and Appeals Process

Step 1:

All complaints regarding the misconduct of club members should be submitted in writing to the Club Secretary. Where the matter relates to the Club Secretary, submit the complaint to the Club Welfare Secretary. The content of a complaint will include specific details and evidence in relation to the infringement of Club Rules or any other offence or misconduct carried out during or in association with athletics activities which might reasonably be considered as bringing or having the potential to bring the Club into disrepute.

Step 2:

Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the Club Secretary shall, having taken, and subject to, such advice as he or she considers it prudent to take in the circumstances, write to the Member or Members concerned to inform them of the complaint and to invite them to comment in writing within fourteen days upon the relevant allegations.

Step 3:

On completion of step 2, the Club Secretary will determine if the complaint has sufficient grounds and is capable of being pursued based on the evidence/statements provided and will dismiss any frivolous complaints at this stage.

If the matter is sufficiently evidenced a process will be pursued. The Club Secretary will appoint three club members to sit on the Disciplinary Panel, none of whom have had any direct interest or involvement in the matter.

Step 4:

The Club Disciplinary Panel or Hearing will consider the matter on receipt of the initial complaint and formal responses from the member(s) involved.

The Club Disciplinary Panel will have the power to suspend temporarily from membership any Member accused of an offence or misconduct, pending further investigations or enquiries. This suspension shall be to facilitate the investigation and be without prejudice to the outcome of the investigation.

The Disciplinary Panel/Hearing will make such further enquiries as it thinks fit and will offer a reasonable opportunity to any Member concerned, who may be accompanied by a supporter, if so desired, to meet with it and answer the allegations and the Disciplinary Panel/Hearing will hear such witnesses as are reasonably produced. The Disciplinary Panel/Hearing will make such procedural provisions as necessary for the just and efficient disposal of the case.

If the Disciplinary Panel/Hearing is satisfied that an offence of misconduct has been committed by a Member, then it may impose one or more of the following actions:

- i. note the offence or misconduct but take no further action;
- ii. formally warn the Member concerned as to future conduct;
- iii. suspend or disqualify the Member from club athletic competition, club coaching and/or administration and/or use of the Club's premises for some definite or indefinite period;
- iv. recommend to the relevant governing body that the Member be disqualified from any involvement in athletics for some definite or indefinite period and/or;
- v. terminate the membership or such other penalty as the Disciplinary Panel considers appropriate.

All parties concerned will be provided with the Disciplinary Panel's/Hearing formal written outcome notification by hand or by recorded delivery within seven days of the decision.

Step 5 – Appeal Process:

The letter notifying the decision of the Disciplinary Panel shall also set out the right to Appeal.

The accused and/or the Complainant, may appeal against the decision of the Disciplinary Panel/Hearing, by serving a Notice of Appeal on the Club Secretary within seven calendar days of receiving the written decision. The Notice of Appeal must state the grounds on which the verdict of the Disciplinary Panel is challenged.

The Club Secretary shall acknowledge a Notice of Appeal within seven calendar days of its receipt and will cast a decision regarding ‘the grounds on which the verdict is challenged’, if there are sufficient grounds/evidence provided to support the challenge, the Appeal Panel process will commence (Step 5.1.), if there are insufficient grounds, the appeal will be dismissed.

Step 5.1.

The Club Secretary, shall appoint an Appeal Panel of three members who have not been involved directly, either in the events giving rise to the Hearing, or in the initial Disciplinary Hearing itself.

The Club Secretary shall inform all parties concerned of the composition of the Appeal Panel. Either party may object to the composition of the Appeal Panel by notifying the Club Secretary of the Objection and setting out the reasons for such an Objection no later than seven calendar days from the date of being informed of the composition of the Panel.

The Club Secretary, within fourteen calendar days from the date of receipt of an Objection, will notify in writing the parties that either:

- the composition of the Panel has changed, in which case the Club Secretary shall provide details of the new Appeal Panel; or
- the composition of the Panel has not changed, in which case the Club Secretary shall give reasons why it has not accepted the Objection.

Within fourteen calendar days from the date the Club Secretary responds to the Objection above (as appropriate), the Club Secretary shall give such directions to all parties that include;

- the date and place at which the Appeal Panel will meet to determine the Appeal.
- whether the appeal will proceed by way of written submissions or an oral hearing; and

- whether the parties should be required to submit statements of their evidence and/or written submissions prior to the hearing and, if so, a timetable for doing so and the procedure for exchanging such statements and written submissions.

Powers of the Appeal Panel

The Appeal Panel shall meet on the date fixed by the Club Secretary. The Appeal Panel may at its sole discretion disregard any failure by a party to adhere to this appeal procedure and may give such further directions as may be appropriate.

Any such hearings shall be in private unless all parties agree otherwise, or unless the Appeal Panel directs. The Appeal Panel shall have power to make a decision on the facts as it thinks fit and may:

- Quash the original decision;
- Confirm the original finding
- Request that the case be reheard (re-trial)
- Increase the original sanction;
- Abate the original sanction;

The Appeal Panel shall inform all parties of its decision within fourteen calendar days together with written reasons for its decision. The decision of the Appeal Panel shall be final. The Appeal Panel shall decide on any issue by majority.

A supporter can be a legal representative, who must be named, and may accompany the Complainant/Accused throughout the appeal process.

Records of Hearings and Appeals

The decision of a Disciplinary Panel/Hearing, including Appeal Panel/Hearing, shall be recorded and retained in confidential records for a period of six years by the Club. Supporting documentation shall also be retained in the same fashion.

Notification to UK Athletics (UKA) and England Athletics (EA)

Where appropriate the Panel Chair, once the Appeal notice has expired, will inform EA/UKA;

- Disciplinary Hearing - details of a decision, including sanctions imposed, will be communicated to EA and/or UKA if it is considered necessary to ensure compliance with a sanction, or for the safety and well-being of those engaged in athletics activity. EA/UKA may determine to publish details on their websites
- Appeal Panel - details of a decision, including sanctions imposed, will be communicated to EA and/or UKA if it is considered necessary to ensure compliance with a sanction, or for the safety and well-being of those engaged in athletics activity. EA/UKA may decide to publish details on their websites.

Cooperation of All Parties

The procedures described in these Discipline Procedures assume that all parties will cooperate in the interest of resolving the issue in question. In the absence of such cooperation, or if it is withdrawn at any stage, the Club reserves the right to proceed with a Hearing or an Appeal based on such evidence and information as it is able to obtain.

When dealing with a complaint, the Club Secretary or nominated Club representative shall be entitled to take, or omit to take, such action as is recommended pursuant to legal advice received from a legal practitioner whom the Club Secretary reasonably believes is competent to provide such advice and/or EA's legal representative service for affiliated members (contact EA Membership Services for further details on 0121 347 6543)

Date agreed by Committee:

For Review: