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**ALLSCOTT HEATH FOOTBALL CLUB**

**ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

Allscott Heath Football Club is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all members so they can participate in football in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our club. If it occurs, members and parents should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a TELLING club. This means if anyone knows bullying is happening, they are expected to tell the CWO and/or any committee member.

Objectives of this policy

All club members, parents and officials should understand what bullying is, what the club policy is following it when bullying is reported.

Players, parents and carers should be confident they will be supported when bullying is reported. They should have the understanding and knowledge of how to spot the signs and indicators of bullying.

**BULLYING WILL NOT BE TOLERATED**

What is bullying?

It is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person and can result in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

Emotional – being unfriendly, excluding (emotionally and physically), sending hurtful text messages, tormenting (e.g. hiding football boots/shin pads/ threatening gestures)

Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence

Racist – Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures

Sexual – unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments

Homophobic – because of or focussing on the issue of sexuality

Verbal – name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing

Why is it important to respond to bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one should be a victim of bullying. Everyone has the right to be treated with respect. Individuals who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

AHFC has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Signs and Indicators

Adults should be aware of these possible signs and should investigate if a child:

* Says he or she is being bullied
* Is unwilling to go to club sessions
* Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
* Feels ill before training sessions
* Comes home with clothes torn or training equipment damaged
* Has possessions go ‘missing’
* Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay the bully)
* Has unexplained cuts or bruises
* Is frightened to say what’s wrong
* Gives improbable excuses for any of the above

In more extreme cases

* Starts stammering
* Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
* Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
* Is bullying other children or siblings
* Stops eating
* Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away

Procedure for reporting bullying

* Report incidents to the CWO
* In cases of serious bullying the incidents will be referred to the CFAWO for advice
* Parents/carers should be informed and asked to come in for a meeting to discuss the problem
* If necessary and appropriate the Police will be consulted.
* Bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped immediately
* Attempts to help those bullying to change their behaviour
* If mediation fails and the bullying is seen to continue the club will initiate disciplinary action

In the case of adults reported to be bullying anyone

* County FA Welfare Officer should always be informed and will advise on action to be taken
* If the allegation is made regarding a team manager, official or coach, the FA’s Child Protection and Best Practice awareness training may be recommended
* More serious cases may be referred to the Police and/or Social Services

Prevention

* AHFC has a Code of Conduct which includes what is acceptable and proper behaviour for all members of which the anti-bullying policy is one part
* All club members and parents will sign to accept the Code of Conduct upon joining the club
* Club Welfare Officer will raise awareness about bullying and why it matters, and if issues of the bullying arise in the club, will consider meeting with members to discuss the issue openly and constructively.

Recommended Club action

If the club decides it is appropriate for them to deal with the situation, they should follow the procedure outlined below

* Reconciliation by getting the parties together. It may be a genuine apology solves the problem
* If this fails, a small panel (made up from Chairman, CWO and Secretary) should meet with parent and child alleging bullying to get details of the allegation
* Minutes should be taken for clarity, which should be agreed by all as a true account
* The same three persons should meet with the alleged bully 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
* If bullying has in their view taken place, the individual 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
* All coaches involved with both individuals should be made aware of the concerns and outcome of the process

Updated by Cathy Jones on 28/07/2023