

## RECOGNISING ABUSE

The important thing to remember for anyone in table tennis is that if you see, hear or become aware of something that gives you concern or you feel uncomfortable about whether it involves a child or an adult at risk then you have a duty of care to report that concern.

Whilst it is important to understand the different types of abuse that may occur and how to recognise them - if anyone has any concerns they should report them at once.

Reports of abuse will be taken seriously and acted upon, always being aware of the welfare of the possible victim or victims.

- **Neglect** This is where adults are consistently or regularly failing to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs. **In terms of sporting needs it may be when an athlete's personal or intimate requirements are ignored particularly if they are disabled, or where an athlete is not cared for in a way appropriate or according to their needs. It could also mean failing to ensure they are safe or exposing them to harm.**  
*In adults this can also be self-neglect which covers a wide range of behavior e.g. not caring for one's personal hygiene or health and can also include hoarding. Outward signs could be an unkempt appearance, not wearing suitable sports kit and a deterioration in personal hygiene. It can also include the withholding of access to services or support such as medication, nutrition or water.*
- **Physical** It is normal for most children to collect cuts and bruises in their daily life, and certainly through their involvement with sport but if these become noticeably excessive or a child shows fear of a person then it could be a concern. Children and vulnerable adults should be deterred from competing or training if they are suffering from an injury or illness until they are recovered.  
**For sport it might also occur if a person is forced to train beyond their capabilities or the intensity of training disregards an individual's ability/impairment. Physical abuse may also occur through encouraging the inappropriate use of substances to stimulate performance.**  
*In adults can also include hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication and inappropriate sanctions.*
- **Sexual** Concerns about sexual abuse are most likely to be detected through changes in a child's behaviour. Concerns may be reported by a third party – children may not tell you either directly or indirectly that they are being sexually abused. Direct disclosures from children or vulnerable adults are comparatively rare. If this does happen then it will have taken enormous courage on their part because it is likely that they will feel ashamed, afraid, confused and may have been threatened with abuse if they tell. They may be aware and very frightened of the potential consequences of disclosing abuse so they should be listened to very carefully and always taken seriously.  
Some of the behavioural signs that may be noticeable are:
  - ✓ Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour
  - ✓ Apparent fear of someone
  - ✓ Having sexual knowledge beyond the child's age or developmental level
  - ✓ Possible eating problems

- ✓ Self harming
- ✓ Saying they have secrets that they cannot tell anyone
- ✓ Substance abuse or taking drugs
- ✓ Suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- ✓ Not having friends
- ✓ Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults and children

This can also include sexually suggestive comments being made by an adult to actual sexual contact or it could involve inappropriate photography or videoing for the gratification of the viewer.

*In adults this also includes rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, sexual teasing or innuendo, subjection to pornography or witnessing acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.*

- **Emotional** This is probably the most difficult to measure. Often children who appear well cared for may be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled or because they receive little or no love, affection or attention from their parents/carers. It can also be displayed by being too protective particularly in the case of disabled people. *Again in adults this can include threats of harm, blaming, intimidation, withdrawing support networks or services.*  
**In the case of sport emotional abuse can occur when a person is not given help and encouragement and is constantly derided, ridiculed or ignored. Conversely it can also occur if a person is over-protected. This can be present in the unrealistic expectations of parents and coaches over what an athlete can achieve, or the undermining of an athlete through ridicule. Bullying is also likely to come into this category. It can include racist and sexually abusive remarks. Psychological abuse often includes emotional abuse and can include threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidating, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal of services or support networks.**
- **Bullying** The damage caused by bullying is frequently underestimated. It can cause distress to the people being bullied to the extent that it can affect their health and development. Where bullying is concerned the abuser may well be another young person. Bullying can occur where there is inadequate supervision.  
**In a sports context this could be during a residential training event, in changing rooms. Increasingly bullying is occurring through the use of social media.**
- **Radicalisation** The signs are often similar to those displayed by people being bullied and can lead to the young person becoming withdrawn and isolated from their normal friendship groups. It may also lead to a change of appearance e.g. dress and behaviour.
- **Poor practice** This includes any behaviour that contravenes Table Tennis England's Codes of Conduct. Many people will lack the skills or confidence to complain and it is important that the adults and officers of the club or league are alert and support those people being abused. Most poor practice should be dealt with through the club/league/county complaints procedure but in more serious cases they may be decided through the Table Tennis England's Disciplinary process following an investigation.

In addition the following may also be apply particularly where adults are concerned but not exclusively:

- **Modern Slavery** This encompasses slavery, modern trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and Slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.  
**In sports this could be a participant missing from practice sessions and not responding to reminders from team members or coaches.**
- **Domestic abuse** Including psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. It also includes ‘honour’ based violence.  
**In sport this may be a noticeable power imbalance between a participant and a family member.**
- **Discrimination** Discriminatory abuse centres on a difference or a perceived difference particularly in respect of race, gender or disability or any of the protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010.  
**This could be a club or team member harassing another team or club member because they are perceived to be transgender.**
- **Organisational abuse** This includes neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting or could be related to care being provided in a person’s home. This could be one off or ongoing poor treatment.  
**In sport terms it could be over training without the appropriate breaks.**
- **Financial or material abuse** This could include theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to and adult’s financial affairs and arrangements, in connection with wills, property inheritance.
- **Forced marriage** This is different from an arranged marriage where both parties consent to the assistance of a third party in finding a spouse. It is where one or both of the parties are married without their consent or against their will. Whilst it would not happen in a sports setting club or team members may be aware and should report their concerns to the local authorities.  
**In sports terms it could be taking equipment away from a person with dementia or a learning disability**

People should also be aware of discriminatory abuse based on the grounds of racism, sexism and any form of abuse targeting a person’s ability, disability, age, sexual identity or religious belief. This should always be challenged.