Good Practice Adults at Risk

Introduction

Everyone involved in hockey has a role in creating a safe, welcoming and respectful environment for Adults at Risk.

This guidance provides practical advice on supporting Adults at Risk to participate in hockey safely, confidently and with dignity. It focuses on good planning, appropriate support, respectful relationships and clear boundaries.

An Adult at Risk may not describe themselves as being “at risk”. Their circumstances and support needs may also change over time. Use the definition in the EH Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy when considering whether someone is an Adult at Risk.

Read this guidance alongside:

- EH Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy;
- EH Safeguarding Reporting Procedures;

This document explains how to promote good practice when supporting Adults at Risk. The companion poor practice guidance explains how to recognise behaviour or arrangements that may fall below expected standards and how to respond when a concern arises.

Detailed reporting, information-sharing and case-management requirements are set out in the EH Safeguarding Reporting Procedures.

Work with the Adult at Risk. Respect their rights, choices and independence, agree appropriate support and respond promptly to concerns.

Principles for Support Adults at Risk

An Adult at Risk is an adult first. Having care or support needs does not remove their right to make decisions, express preferences, take reasonable risks or participate independently.

Good practice means:

- listening to the Adult at Risk and taking their views seriously;
- involving them in decisions that affect them;
- asking what support they want rather than making assumptions;
- providing information in a form they can understand;
- supporting them to communicate in their preferred way;
- respecting their privacy, dignity and independence;
- maintaining appropriate personal and professional boundaries;

- recognising and addressing imbalances of power or dependency; and
- following EH safeguarding procedures when a concern arises.

Do not assume that an Adult at Risk is unable to make a decision because they:

- are disabled;
- have care or support needs;
- communicate differently;
- have a particular condition or diagnosis;
- receive assistance from another person; or
- make a decision with which other people disagree.

If there is a material concern about an Adult at Risk's capacity to make a particular decision, do not attempt to assess this informally. Seek advice through the **EH Safeguarding Reporting Procedures.**

Understanding Individual Needs and Barriers to Participation

The circumstances, strengths, communication preferences and support needs of Adults at Risk will differ and may change over time.

Barriers may arise from:

- the physical environment;
- inaccessible information or communication;
- club or team arrangements;
- a lack of appropriate support; or
- the behaviour and assumptions of other people.

Good practice

- Ask the Adult at Risk what would help them participate safely and confidently.
- Discuss communication, accessibility and practical support needs directly with them.
- Consider barriers created by the environment, arrangements or behaviour of other people.
- Agree proportionate adjustments with the Adult at Risk.
- Check whether agreed arrangements are working.
- Review arrangements when the activity or the Adult at Risk's circumstances change.
- Avoid assumptions based on age, disability, diagnosis, appearance or receipt of support.
- Use the definition in the EH Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy when considering whether the adult safeguarding policy applies.

Key message: Support should enable participation, choice and independence. It should not create unnecessary restrictions or dependency.

Good Practice Expectations

Do

- Treat Adults at Risk with dignity, fairness and respect.
- Speak directly to the Adult at Risk.
- Involve them in decisions affecting their hockey experience.
- Ask about their wishes, communication preferences and support needs.
- Explain roles, expectations, boundaries and available support.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Recognise imbalances of power or dependency.
- Take concerns seriously.
- Follow the EH Safeguarding Reporting Procedures when a concern arises.
- Encourage feedback and explain how concerns can be raised.

Avoid

- Making decisions for an Adult at Risk without involving them.
- Providing assistance without first establishing whether it is wanted.
- Assuming silence, compliance or a lack of objection means agreement.
- Applying child-specific restrictions automatically to Adults at Risk.
- Assuming that care or support needs prevent an Adult at Risk from making decisions.
- Creating arrangements that unnecessarily restrict independence or participation.
- Communicating only through a supporter, relative or carer when the Adult at Risk can and wishes to communicate directly.

Never

- Use your role to intimidate, exploit, coerce or pressure an Adult at Risk.
- Humiliate an Adult at Risk.
- Punish or disadvantage an Adult at Risk for expressing a preference or raising a concern.
- Promise to keep a safeguarding concern secret.
- Ignore or minimise a concern because the person involved is influential or well regarded.
- Investigate a safeguarding concern yourself.
- Confront the person alleged to have caused harm.
- Attempt to mediate a suspected safeguarding concern.

Bullying and banter

Good practice

- Agree clear expectations for behaviour on and off the pitch.
- Consider the impact of comments, not only the speaker’s intention.
- Challenge intimidating, humiliating, discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour where it is safe to do so.
- Provide a private and accessible way for an Adult at Risk to raise a concern.
- Ask the Adult at Risk what support they want.
- Record repeated or related incidents in a way that allows patterns of concern to be identified.

- Record and report safeguarding concerns through the EH Safeguarding Reporting Procedures.
- Protect an Adult at Risk from retaliation or disadvantage after they raise a concern.

Key message: Intention does not determine impact. Describing behaviour as “banter” is not a reason to dismiss its effect on an Adult at Risk or avoid responding to a concern.

Changing rooms

Good practice

- Explain the facilities that are available.
- Discuss accessibility, assistance and privacy needs directly with the Adult at Risk.
- Give the Adult at Risk an opportunity to discuss sensitive arrangements privately.
- Respect an Adult at Risk’s choice not to change or shower at the venue.
- Agree any assistance directly with the Adult at Risk.
- Do not assume that a supporter, family member or carer should provide assistance.
- Hold team discussions outside changing and showering areas wherever reasonably practicable, so that an Adult at Risk does not need to change in front of others to receive essential team information.
- Do not photograph or film in changing or showering areas.
- Review arrangements if the facilities, activity or needs of the Adult at Risk change.

Key message: Agree suitable arrangements without automatically separating or excluding the adult.

Communication

Do

- Speak directly to the Adult at Risk.
- Use their preferred communication method.
- Provide accessible information.
- Allow sufficient time for the Adult at Risk to understand information, ask questions and respond.
- Check that information has been understood using a respectful approach agreed with the Adult at Risk.
- Agree reasonable communication boundaries, including appropriate methods and times for contact.
- Offer an alternative where an Adult at Risk cannot or does not wish to use a particular application or platform.
- Check with the Adult at Risk before sharing information with a supporter, relative or carer.
- Record agreed communication arrangements where this is necessary to provide safe and consistent support.
- Review communication arrangements if the Adult at Risk’s wishes or circumstances change.

Avoid

- Automatically communicating through a relative, carer or supporter.
- Speaking about the Adult at Risk as though they are not present.
- Allowing another person to answer every question on behalf of the Adult at Risk.
- Adding supporters, relatives or carers to conversations without considering the wishes and privacy of the Adult at Risk.
- Treating a communication difference as evidence that the Adult at Risk cannot understand or make a decision.
- Sending intrusive, excessive, unwanted or pressuring messages.
- Sharing sensitive information in general team or group conversations.

Consent and decision-making

Good practice

- Explain what is proposed and why.
- Provide information in a form the Adult at Risk can understand.
- Explain the available choices, including reasonable alternatives.
- Check that agreement is specific and freely given.
- Give the Adult at Risk an appropriate opportunity to ask questions.
- Recognise that an Adult at Risk may change their mind.
- Support the Adult at Risk to understand information and communicate their decision.
- Do not treat disagreement or an apparently unwise decision as evidence that an Adult at Risk is unable to decide.
- Do not assume that a supporter, relative, carer or emergency contact can provide agreement on behalf of an Adult at Risk.
- Seek safeguarding advice where consent, decision-making or information sharing is uncertain.

The wishes of the Adult at Risk should be sought, recorded and taken seriously when a safeguarding concern arises. However, do not promise that information will never be shared.

There may be circumstances in which safeguarding information needs to be shared without the agreement of the Adult at Risk. Do not make this decision alone. Follow the EH Safeguarding Reporting Procedures and seek advice through the approved reporting route.

Wherever it is safe and practicable, explain to the Adult at Risk:

- what information may need to be shared;
- why it may need to be shared;
- who it may be shared with; and
- what is likely to happen next.

Key message: Agreement is specific. Agreement to participate in hockey is not blanket agreement to physical assistance, photography, filming, transport, information sharing, personal care or any other activity.

Data storage and information sharing

Good practice

- Collect only the information needed for a clear and appropriate purpose.
- Explain to the Adult at Risk why information is needed.
- Explain how the information will be used, stored and shared.
- Check with the Adult at Risk before seeking information from a supporter, relative or carer, unless a safeguarding or legal reason requires a different approach.
- Keep information accurate.
- Review information when circumstances change.
- Store information securely.
- Restrict access to people who need the information for an appropriate purpose.
- Follow approved EH retention and secure-disposal arrangements.
- Record safeguarding concerns through the designated secure process.
- Keep factual records that distinguish what was observed, what was reported and what action was taken.
- Record the wishes, communication needs and support needs of the Adult at Risk.

Do not record safeguarding concerns through informal team chats, personal messaging accounts or general team records.

Do not promise secrecy or absolute confidentiality. If a safeguarding concern arises, record the wishes of the Adult at Risk and follow the EH Safeguarding Reporting Procedures.

Seek advice if information may need to be shared without the agreement of the Adult at Risk.

Key message: Be clear about why information is needed. Collect, use, store and share it proportionately and through the approved process.

Mental wellbeing

Experiencing poor mental wellbeing does not, by itself, establish that someone is an Adult at Risk. Consider the person's circumstances using the definition in the EH Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy.

Good practice

- Create opportunities for an Adult at Risk to raise concerns privately.
- Listen without judgement.
- Ask the Adult at Risk what support would help.
- Provide information in an accessible form.
- Avoid diagnosing or attempting to provide treatment.
- Signpost appropriate support.
- Remain within the responsibilities and competence of your role.
- Follow the EH Safeguarding Reporting Procedures where there is a concern that an Adult at Risk or another person may be experiencing, or may be at risk of, abuse, neglect or other harm.

- If anyone is in immediate danger or requires urgent medical assistance, contact the emergency services.
- Do not delay urgent assistance while following an internal reporting process.
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Personal assistance

Good practice

- Ask the Adult at Risk whether assistance is wanted.
- Explain what you propose to do.
- Check that the Adult at Risk agrees before providing assistance.
- Follow their preferred approach where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- Agree how the Adult at Risk will indicate that assistance should stop or change.
- Recognise that previous agreement does not automatically apply on every occasion.
- Protect the privacy and dignity of the Adult at Risk.
- Work within your competence and agreed responsibilities.
- Clarify arrangements for personal care or medication rather than assuming that club volunteers will provide them.
- Record ongoing assistance arrangements where this is necessary for safety, consistency and accountability.
- Review arrangements with the Adult at Risk if the activity, environment or person providing assistance changes.

Key message: Assistance should be wanted, agreed and proportionate. It should support the dignity and independence of the Adult at Risk rather than replace them unnecessarily.

Support arrangements and staffing

Good practice

- Base arrangements on the activity, environment and agreed individual needs of the Adult at Risk.
- Involve the Adult at Risk in developing and reviewing support arrangements.
- Clarify who is providing support and what their role includes.
- Apply relevant EH recruitment, training and checking requirements according to the role being undertaken.
- Do not assume that every informal supporter, relative or carer holds a club role.
- Ensure that people understand the boundaries and responsibilities of their role.
- Plan for emergencies and unexpected absences.
- Avoid relying exclusively on one person where this would create preventable dependency.
- Ensure the Adult at Risk knows who to contact if agreed support is unavailable or causes concern.
- Review arrangements when the activity, environment or circumstances of the Adult at Risk change.

Key message: Base support arrangements on the needs of the activity and the agreed needs of the Adult at Risk. Do not automatically transfer child supervision arrangements or ratios to adult activity.

Supporter, family and carer involvement

Good practice

- Ask the Adult at Risk who they want involved and in what way.
- Agree with the Adult at Risk what information may be shared.
- Clarify whether the other person is acting in a formal support role, an informal personal role or a club role.
- Clarify responsibilities and emergency arrangements.
- Continue to address the Adult at Risk directly.
- Provide appropriate opportunities for the Adult at Risk to speak privately.
- Do not assume that the preferences of a supporter, family member or carer represent the wishes of the Adult at Risk.
- Do not assume that being a relative, carer or emergency contact gives someone authority to make decisions on behalf of the Adult at Risk.
- Be alert to circumstances in which another person prevents private communication, controls access to hockey or places pressure on the Adult at Risk.
- Follow the EH Safeguarding Reporting Procedures if the relationship or support arrangement gives rise to a concern.

Tours and overnight stays

Good practice

- Involve the Adult at Risk in planning.
- Discuss accessibility, accommodation, transport and support needs directly with them.
- Give the Adult at Risk an opportunity to discuss personal or sensitive arrangements privately.
- Clarify what support the organiser can and cannot provide before the Adult at Risk commits to the tour.
- Agree room-sharing arrangements without pressure.
- Do not assume that sharing with a supporter, relative or carer is wanted or appropriate.
- Identify a welfare contact and safeguarding reporting route.
- Give the Adult at Risk reporting information in an accessible form before departure.
- Plan emergency arrangements and reasonable contingencies.
- Explain costs, expectations and any limits to available support.
- Keep sensitive information appropriately restricted.
- Consider whether travelling away from usual support networks creates any new support needs or dependency.
- Review arrangements if circumstances change during the tour.

Transport

Good practice

- Clarify whether transport is privately arranged or organised by the club.
- Make clear whether the driver is acting privately or on behalf of the club.
- Agree collection points, destinations, timings and accessibility arrangements with the Adult at Risk.
- Ensure club-organised transport follows applicable safety requirements.
- Plan what will happen if transport is delayed, changed or unavailable.
- Avoid last-minute changes that prevent the Adult at Risk from making an informed choice, wherever reasonably practicable.
- Consider one-to-one journeys proportionately rather than automatically prohibiting them.
- Avoid arrangements that create pressure, secrecy or unwanted dependency.
- Ensure the Adult at Risk knows how to raise a concern about transport.
- Do not assume that a supporter, family member or carer must provide transport.

Video conferencing and group messaging

Do

- Explain the purpose of the group or meeting.
- Agree behaviour and moderation arrangements.
- Explain whether telephone numbers, profile details or other personal information will be visible.
- Provide an alternative way for an Adult at Risk to receive essential information.
- Use appropriate access and privacy settings.
- Explain recording arrangements in advance.
- Obtain appropriate agreement before recording.
- Agree expected contact times and the purpose of direct messages.
- Check with the Adult at Risk before adding a supporter, relative or carer.
- Provide an accessible route for reporting unwanted or intrusive contact.
- Address bullying, excessive contact, pressure, secrecy or attempts to move communication away from agreed channels.

Do not

- Share confidential welfare or safeguarding information in team groups.
- Allow bullying, harassment or intrusive contact to go unaddressed.
- Assume that every Adult at Risk can or wants to use the same platform.
- Add another person to a conversation without considering the wishes and privacy of the Adult at Risk.
- use group membership to pressure an Adult at Risk into sharing personal information; or
- assume that silence or continued membership of a group means agreement to all communication.

Welcoming adults and supporting transitions

Good practice

- Explain club routines, key contacts and safeguarding reporting arrangements.
- Provide this information in an accessible form.
- Ask the Adult at Risk about their previous experience and preferred support.
- Agree how and when support arrangements will be reviewed.
- Review arrangements when an Adult at Risk changes team, role, venue or level of participation.
- Explain any changes in expectations or available support.
- Do not assume that support is no longer needed when a young person turns 18.
- Do not continue parental involvement automatically without considering the wishes of the Adult at Risk.
- Where appropriate, plan the transition into adult hockey with the young person before they turn 18.
- Explain how becoming an adult may affect:
- communication;
- decision-making;
- information sharing;
- safeguarding arrangements; and
- the involvement of parents or carers.