



# **Child Protection Policy**

All British Federation for Historical Swordplay (BFHS) member groups, clubs or schools that make provision for children and young people must ensure that:

- **The welfare of the child is paramount.**
- **All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.**
- **All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.**
- **All BFHS members have a responsibility to report their concerns through the appropriate channels.**

## **The BFHS Child Protection Policy Statement**

The British Federation for Historical Swordplay has a duty of care to safeguard from harm all children involved in activities relating to, or associated with, the BFHS. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be considered.

The British Federation for Historical Swordplay will endeavour to ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in any BFHS member group activitiesError! Reference source not found. through their adherence to the BFHS Child Protection guidelines set out in this document.

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

### **1) Policy aims**

**The aim of the BFHS Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:**

- 1.1** Children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of BFHS member groups.
- 1.2** Allow all BFHS members to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

### **2) Promoting good practice**

- 2.1** Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.



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- 2.2** Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer could have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.
- 2.3** When a child enters a group, club or school, having been the subject of abuse outside the group environment, their activities within the group can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. In such instances the group, club or school must inform the BFHS, who can assist them in working with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the necessary support.

### 3) Good practice guidelines

**All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.**

#### **Good practice means:**

- 3.1** Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- 3.2** Treating all young people / disabled adults equally with respect and dignity, as outlined in the BFHS Equal Opportunities Policy.
- 3.3** Always putting the welfare of each young person first.
- 3.4** Maintaining 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 or to share a room with them).
- 3.5** Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children to share in decision making.
- 3.6** Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- 3.7** Ensuring that if any form of manual / physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according to guidelines provided by the BFHS Instructor programme. If it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child is constantly moving, young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- 3.8** Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance, as set out in the BFHS membership requirements and covered in the BFHS Level 1 'Group Basic' training criteria.
- 3.9** Involving parents / carers in activities wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in the changing rooms. If children to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure that parents, BFHS Instructors or trusted group representatives work in pairs.
- 3.10** Ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away for the day or night, they should always be accompanied by a male and female BFHS member group representative, ideally qualified to BFHS Level 1 'Group Basic'. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.



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- 3.11 Ensuring that at tournaments or residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- 3.12 Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or Securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and / or other medical treatment.
- 3.13 Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- 3.14 Requesting written parental consent if group representatives are required to transport young people in their cars.

## 4) Practices to be avoided

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (eg the child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge within the respective group or the child's parents.

### 4.1) Otherwise, **avoid**:

- 4.1.1 Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- 4.1.2 Taking or dropping off a child to a class or group event.

### 4.2) Practices never to be sanctioned, you should **never**:

- 4.2.1 Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- 4.2.2 Share a room with a child.
- 4.2.3 Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- 4.2.4 Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- 4.2.5 Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- 4.2.6 Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- 4.2.7 Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- 4.2.8 Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
- 4.2.9 Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

### 4.3) **Be aware**:

It may sometimes be necessary for BFHS members or group representatives to offer assistance of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and other group members involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, e.g. lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.



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### 5) Incidents that must be reported/recorded

5.1) If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child and the BFHS are informed:

- 5.1.1 If you accidentally hurt a child during the course of group activities.
- 5.1.2 If a child seems distressed in any manner.
- 5.1.3 If a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- 5.1.4 If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

### 6) Use of photographic or video filming equipment.

- 6.1 There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or video footage of young and disabled people in vulnerable positions. All clubs should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the appropriate BFHS officer or an event official.
- 6.2 Should photographic or video images of group activities be necessary for the purpose of group advertisement with respect to a poster, brochure or website, for example, then the consent of the involved parties, and their parents where appropriate, must be obtained in advance.
- 6.3 There is no intention to prevent group, club or school instructors using video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid. However, the individuals involved, and their parents / carers where appropriate, should be made aware that this is part of the coaching programme and such films should be used responsibly.

### 7) Recruitment and training of group members, Instructors & volunteers

The British Federation for Historical SwordplayError! Reference source not found. recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

7.1 Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- 7.1.1 All BFHS member groups must insist that their group members complete an application form that can be referred to by the group, and the BFHS, should the need arise. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and self-disclosure when concerning any criminal record that applicant may have. Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau should it the need arise.



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- 7.1.2 When a group member assists in the instruction of a group where children are involved, two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children, must be obtained. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact. If long term assistance is likely then the group member must personally achieve and maintain the BFHS Level 1 'Group Basic' standard.

## 8) Interview and induction

**All group members must be informed of the protocol and recommendations set out by the BFHS.**

**All new group members should receive formal or informal induction, during which:**

- 8.1 A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full (including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures).
- 8.2 Any appropriate qualifications should be substantiated.
- 8.3 Their requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- 8.4 The prospective member understands the mandates and policies of their respective groups and the BFHS
- 8.5 Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified within the BFHS and group requirements.

## 9) Training

**In addition to a groups application for BFHS membership (and therefore their group representatives and Instructors aiming to achieve and maintain the BFHS Level 1 'Group Basic' standard), the safeguarding process must include:**

- 9.1 Analyse their own practice against the BFHS Level 1 guidelines, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.
- 9.2 Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse to the appropriate person, be it within their respective group or a BFHS officer.
- 9.3 Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person.
- 9.4 Work safely and effectively with children.
- 9.5 Respective groups, where children are likely to be at risk, holding BFHS, or equivalent, awareness training on child protection.
- 9.6 Relevant group members to receive advisory information within their group outlining good BFHS practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person.
- 9.7 Relevant group members to undergo appropriate BFHS first aid training (where necessary).
- 9.8 Attendance of update training when necessary. Information about meeting training needs can be obtained from the BFHS



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## 10) Responding to allegations or suspicions

- 10.1** It is not the responsibility of anyone involved within the membership or administration of the British Federation for Historical Swordplay to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.
- 10.2** The British Federation for Historical Swordplay assures all BFHS members that it will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concern that another BFHS member is, or may be, abusing a child.
- 10.3 Where there is a complaint against a BFHS member, there may be three types of investigation:**
- 10.3.1 A criminal investigation.
  - 10.3.2 A child protection investigation.
  - 10.3.3 A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.
- 10.4** The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

## 11) Action

### 11.1 Concerns about poor practice:

- 11.1.1 If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the respective groups Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- 11.1.2 If the allegation is about poor practice by the respective groups Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the relevant BFHS officer who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

### 11.2 Concerns about suspected abuse:

- 11.2.1 Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a BFHS member or a volunteer, the incident should be reported to the respective groups Child Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- 11.2.2 If the respective groups Child Protection Officer considers the allegations to be sufficiently serious, they will refer the allegation to the social services department which may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours and urgency dictates.
- 11.2.3 The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- 11.2.4 The relevant groups Child Protection Officer should also notify the appropriate BFHS officer who in turn will deal with any media enquiries.



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11.2.5 If the respective groups Child Protection Officer is the subject of suspicion or allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate group representative or, in his or her absence, directly to the appropriate BFHS officer who will refer the allegation to the respective group representative and, if appropriate, social services.

### **11.3 Confidentiality should be maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.**

**This includes the following people:**

- 11.3.1 The respective groups Child Protection Officer.
- 11.3.2 The parents of the child who is alleged to have been abused.
- 11.3.3 The person making the allegation.
- 11.3.4 Social services and police.
- 11.3.5 The identity of the group and the BFHS officers involved.
- 11.3.6 The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a juvenile).

**11.4** Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

**11.5** Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

### **11.6 Internal enquiries and suspension**

- 11.6.1 The respective groups Child Protection Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.
- 11.6.2 Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries, the BFHS Disciplinary Committee, in conjunction with the respective groups Child Protection Officer (or a group representative, if that groups Child Protection Officer is under suspicion) will assess all individual cases to decide whether a BFHS member or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the BFHS Disciplinary Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information, which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

### **11.7 Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse**

- 11.7.1 Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents and members of the BFHS may need. Use of help lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189.



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11.7.2 Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

### 11.8 Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children). Where such an allegation is made, the group, club or school should follow the procedures as detailed above in section 10 and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because there is still the possibility that children, either within or outside the group environment, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

11.8 **Action if bullying is suspected.** (If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in section 10 above.)

#### **Action to help the victim and prevent bullying:**

- 11.9.1 Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- 11.9.2 Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell a person in charge or someone in authority.
- 11.9.3 Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- 11.9.4 Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- 11.9.5 Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- 11.9.6 Report any concerns to the respective groups Child Protection Officer, or the victims school if that is where the bullying is taking place.

#### **Action towards the bully(ies):**

- 11.9.7 Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- 11.9.8 Inform the bully(ies)'s parents.
- 11.9.9 Insist on the return of any 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- 11.9.10 Support the victim's Instructor, and any other involved individuals, in dealing with the bully and their activities.
- 11.9.11 Impose sanctions as necessary.
- 11.9.12 Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- 11.9.13 Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- 11.9.14 Inform all associated within the group of action taken.
- 11.9.15 Keep a written record of action taken.





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## **11.10 Concerns outside the immediate group environment (e.g. a parent or carer):**

- 11.10.1 Report your concerns to the respective groups Child Protection Officer, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.
- 11.10.2 See 11.11 below for the information that the social services or the police will need.
- 11.10.3 If the respective groups Child Protection Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse, if they consider the accusation serious enough, should contact social services or the police immediately.
- 11.10.4 Social services and the respective groups Child Protection Officer will decide how to involve the parents / carers.
- 11.10.5 The respective groups Child Protection Officer should also report the incident to the appropriate BFHS officer. This officer will then ascertain whether or not the person(s) involved in the incident play an important role in the BFHS and will act accordingly.
- 11.10.6 Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.
- 11.10.7 See 11.11 below regarding information needed for social services.

## **11.11 Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse:**

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure / concern, which should include the following:

- 11.11.1 The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- 11.11.2 The child's home address and telephone number.
- 11.11.3 Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- 11.11.4 The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- 11.11.5 Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- 11.11.6 A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- 11.11.7 Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- 11.11.8 The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- 11.11.9 Have the parents been contacted?
- 11.11.10 If so, what has been said?
- 11.11.11 Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- 11.11.12 If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- 11.11.13 Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- 11.11.14 Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact social services or the police direct, or the **NSPCC Child Protection Helpline** on **0800 800 5000**, or **Childline** on **0800 1111**.



## British Federation for Historical Swordplay

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### Declaration

On behalf of the group / club / school named below, we, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of the British Federation for Historical Swordplay Child Protection Policy, and take all necessary steps to ensure it is implemented and adhered to.

Group / Club / School Name:	
Group Representative Name:	
Signed:	
Date signed:	Position Held:

Group Child Protection Officer Name:	BFHS Representative Name:
Contact details:	Signed
Date position accepted	Date countersigned:

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