Anti-Bullying & Mental Health

Recognise it. Report it. Respond safely. Review until it stops.

WHAT IS IT?

Bullying-type behaviour is usually targeted, repeated and intended to cause harm. It involves an imbalance of power.

It may be verbal, physical, social, written or online—and can include deliberate exclusion.

Not every disagreement or one-off unkind act is bullying, but harm still needs action. 'Banter' stops being banter when someone is hurt, targeted or unable to opt out.



Emotions & confidence

They may feel anxious, ashamed, angry, lonely, unsafe or less confident in themselves.

Belonging & trust

Exclusion, rumours or humiliation can damage friendships, trust and a sense of belonging.

Body & wellbeing

Stress may show as headaches, stomach aches, poor sleep, tiredness or changes in appetite.

Participation & performance

They may avoid training, lose enjoyment, struggle to focus or consider leaving the club.

Safety & mental health

Severe or ongoing harm can contribute to low mood, self-harm or thoughts of suicide.

A coach notices and supports—a coach does not diagnose.

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Notice.Respond.Connect.
SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN SPORT

What a volunteer coach may notice and what to do next.

- Missing training, arriving late or wanting to leave early.
- Withdrawing, losing confidence or becoming unusually quiet or anxious.
- Unexplained injuries, damaged kit, missing belongings or money.
- Repeated jokes, threats, exclusion or targeted criticism—on or offline.
- Laughing, filming, sharing or staying silent while harm continues.
- Self-harm, hopelessness or talk of suicide.



Look for change, patterns and context. These signs can have many explanations.

01 NOTICE

Spot Changes in behaviour, mood , attendance or performance.

No obvious sign?
Check in anyway.

02 TALK

Say what you have noticed, or simply remind them you care. "Ive noticed.." "I'm checking in.."

Follow safeguarding procedures.

03 LISTEN

Give them time. Ask open questions. Do not interrupt, judge or rush to try and fix everything.

Take notice and care to listen.

04 CARE

Stay calm, kind and non-judgmental. Repeat back what they tell you. Respect privacy within the safeguarding limits e.g. Coach, Parent and Safeguarding Officer.

Ask what would help.

05 CONNECT

If anything worries you follow the safeguarding procedures and connect them with the right lead, trusted person, GP or support service.

Immediate danger call 999.

URGENT / MEDICAL

If anyone is in immediate danger, seriously injured or at immediate risk of suicide, call 999. Stay with them. Report concerns to the club Safeguarding Officer and follow club procedures. Do not promise secrecy or investigate. If a child may be at risk of significant harm, contact the relevant HSC Gateway Service or police.

WHERE TO GET HELP IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Safeguarding Officer / governing body

HSC Gateway Service or PSNI

TEXT "TEAMMATE" TO 85258

LIFELINE 0808 808 8000

Immediate Danger 999





5 WAYS TO SUPPORT SOMEONE

01 Listen, believe and reassure

Give them time to explain without interrupting or questioning their version.

Say clearly: "This is not your fault. You did the right thing by telling me."

02 Make them safe immediately

Stop the behaviour calmly, separate those involved and check for physical or emotional harm.

Provide a trusted adult, safe place or supportive teammate—but do not punish the person being bullied by removing them from their team.

03 Record and report every incident

Write down dates, locations, behaviour, witnesses and actions taken. Keep screenshots of online bullying before blocking and reporting it.

Follow the club's safeguarding procedures and involve the safeguarding lead, school or parent/carer as appropriate

04 Agree a plan with the person

Ask: "What would help you feel safe?" Agree who they can approach, where they can go and what adults will do if it happens again.

Do not force an immediate apology, confrontation or mediation—the person may feel intimidated or blamed.

05 Keep checking in and rebuild belonging

Bullying rarely ends through one conversation. Arrange regular check-ins, connect them with supportive teammates and make sure they remain included in activities.

Feeling cared for and connected to trusted adults and peers protects mental health and increases help-seeking.



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