



## Scottish Hockey

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### Safe Sport Anti-Bullying Policy and Guidance

Policy Group	Safe Sport
Policy Owner	Safeguarding Lead
Last Reviewed	April 2026
Due for Renewal	April 2029

Scottish Hockey is committed to ensuring that every child, young person, and adult at risk has the opportunity to participate in hockey within a safe, enjoyable environment that is free from bullying.

## Policy Statement

Scottish Hockey is dedicated to safeguarding the wellbeing of all children, young people, and adults at risk in our care. We recognise that bullying can have a serious impact on their wellbeing, and we believe that any form of bullying is unacceptable and should not be tolerated.

Raising awareness about the wellbeing of children, young people, and adults at risk, understanding what needs to be done, and acting when they need our help and support is crucial. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that children and young people know:

- Yes, they are right to speak up
- Yes, they will be listened to and taken seriously
- **No, it will not affect their place in a team or their selection for an event or competition, whether representing their club or their country**

If bullying does occur, all club members should feel empowered to challenge this behaviour, report concerns, and trust that incidents will be addressed promptly and effectively.

You should inform the club's safeguarding officer, coach, or an adult you trust, or you can seek advice from the Scottish Hockey ethics team at [safeguarding@scottish-hockey.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@scottish-hockey.org.uk)

## Scottish Hockey Will

Respecting the rights of children is paramount. We aim to:

- Foster positive relationships among children and adults that are mutually respectful, responsible, and trusting, promoting emotional health and wellbeing.
- Prevent, reduce, and respond effectively to bullying behaviour through the implementation of this policy and guidelines.
- Ensure that clubs, staff members, officials, volunteers, and Board members adopt and abide by this policy.
- Provide training and support for member clubs, coaches, officials, volunteers, and Board members to adopt best practices in preventing, reducing, and responding to bullying.
- Address the needs of both children who are bullied and those who bully, within a framework of respect, responsibility, resolution, and support.
- Respond to any concerns raised, including those from children who have experienced poor practice, misconduct, or abuse due to an adult's bullying behaviour.
- Highlight bullying based on prejudice and perceived differences to ensure our practices effectively address these issues.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of this policy and guidelines, incorporating children's views in the process.

## Policy

For the purposes of this policy, a child or young person is defined as anyone under the age of 18. This policy applies to all children and young people, regardless of protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (including, but not limited to, age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership), and other factors such as socio-economic status, gender identity, or family circumstances.

Adults at risk (sometimes referred to as ‘adults at risk of harm’) are those aged 16 years and over who:

- Are unable to safeguard their own wellbeing, property, rights or other interests;
- Are at risk of harm; and
- Because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected. Differing legal definitions can be confusing. However, the priority is always to ensure that a vulnerable person who is or may be at risk of harm is offered support and protection.

Members of our Community, like players, may fall into the above categories but it also includes people who encounter children and/or adults at risk outside of Scottish Hockey in their connection with hockey clubs, hockey competitions, and any/all hockey-related activity in Scotland.

Gender reassignment is one of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. It applies to individuals who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to live as their true gender identity.

Scottish Hockey acknowledges the guidance from Scotland’s Anti-Bullying Service, respectme - Bullying is never acceptable. It doesn’t make a child better or stronger to get through it. It should never be seen as a normal part of growing up.

In Scotland, bullying is defined as both behaviour and impact. The impact is on a person’s sense of physical and emotional safety, their capacity to feel in control of their life (agency), and their ability to respond effectively. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it happens face to face and online. Bullying behaviour can be persistent, or it can be a one-off incident. (Respect for All, updated 2024)

Bullying is particularly harmful behaviour, especially when those being bullied find it difficult to defend themselves. It can be a one-time incident or occur repeatedly over time, and it can take many forms, including bullying by adults, peers, or even family members.

Identifying bullying can be challenging because it often happens out of sight, and those who are bullied may not tell anyone. They might feel it’s their fault or that something is wrong with them, leading to feelings of depression, worthlessness, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, or even taking their own life.

When discussing bullying, it’s important not to label children as ‘bullies’ or ‘victims.’ Such labels can stick for life and isolate a child, rather than helping them recover or change their behaviour. It’s better to describe someone as displaying bullying behaviour, as behaviour can be changed with the right help and support.

## BULLYING CAN BE

- Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. 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
- Transphobic - because of, or focussing on the issue of a trans person's identity
- Verbal name - calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber - all areas of social media misuse including abuse by text messaging and calls, misuse of camera and video technologies

## Prevention

- Foster an anti-bullying culture by ensuring adults serve as positive role models for children.
- Create an open and welcoming environment.
- Encourage all children to speak up and share their concerns. Support those being bullied to speak out and confide in a coach, the safeguarding officer, or a trusted adult.
- The club should have written policies and codes of conduct that outline acceptable behavior for all members, including an anti-bullying policy.
- All club members and parents should sign to acknowledge and accept the club's policies and procedures upon joining.
- The club safeguarding officer should ideally raise awareness about bullying, its importance, and the consequences.

## Procedures for Dealing with Concerns

Bullying behaviour can become evident in several ways:

- Through direct observation.
- A child may confide in you.
- A third party might report an incident or express strong suspicions.
- You may develop a suspicion yourself.

It's crucial to remember that it is not your responsibility to determine whether a child is being bullied. However, it is your responsibility to take action if you have any concerns.

## What to do

- Take all signs, allegations, and reports of bullying seriously, whether they occur online or offline, and take action to ensure the child's safety.
- Reassure the child being bullied that it is not their fault and that it is okay to speak up.
- Let them know that you can be trusted and will help them, but explain that you cannot promise to keep everything confidential. You will only share information with those who need to know to provide help.
- Listen carefully to what the child says and take their words seriously. Ensure you fully understand their account, especially if they have learning or physical difficulties that may

affect communication, or if English is not their first language, so you can relay the information accurately to the appropriate individuals.

- Explain what will happen next and how they will be kept informed.
- If the bullying allegation involves a coach, contact the Scottish Hockey Safe Sport Team for guidance.
- Use sensitivity and good judgment when informing parents or carers of those whose negative behaviour is impacting others. Consider whether informing them will create more problems for the child.
- Speak separately with those being bullied and those displaying bullying behaviour.
- In cases of online or electronic bullying, advise children to retain the communication (e.g., screenshot or print it out).
- Talk with the child or children displaying bullying behaviour. Explain the situation and help them understand the consequences of their actions.
- Keep records of what is said, including details of what happened, by whom, and when.
- In some cases, consider seeking an apology from those involved in bullying behaviour, especially if those affected desire reconciliation. Ensure that apologies are genuine.
- Once your report is complete, pass it on to the club safeguarding officer or the designated person for action.

Please note that strategies and solutions are not one-size-fits-all. Each case is unique and requires an individual response. What works in one situation might not work in another, so you may need to try different strategies to find an effective solution.

### **Moving Forward**

- Aim to restore positive relationships and only impose consequences when necessary, such as exclusion from the team or specific activities until behaviour improves.
- Encourage and support those displaying bullying behaviour to change. Ask them to consider the impact of their actions. If there is no improvement, the club must initiate disciplinary proceedings, seeking advice from Scottish Hockey's Ethics team at the start of the process.
- In cases of serious bullying, refer the incidents to Scottish Hockey's Safe Sport Team: [safeguarding@scottish-hockey.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@scottish-hockey.org.uk)
- Keep a written record of all actions taken.

This policy takes into consideration Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service (respectme), managed in partnership with SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health) and LGBT Youth Scotland, and the national approach to anti-bullying: *Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People* (updated November 2024).

For more information, please read:

*Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People* (updated November 2024)