**Abuse & Poor Practice**

**Recognising abuse, bullying and poor practice.
It is important to recognise signs and indicators of abuse and to be aware of how it should be dealt with.**

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| **A child may be being abused or bullied if they:** • Change their usual routine; • Begin to be disruptive; • Become withdrawn anxious or lacking in confidence; • Become aggressive or unreasonable; • Start stammering or stop communicating; • Have unexplained cuts or bruises; • Start bullying other children; • Are frequently dirty, hungry or inadequately dressed; • Display sexual behaviour inappropriate for their age; • Seem afraid of parents or carers; • Do not want to attend events or club activities; • Stop eating and/or are frightened to say what’s wrong. **One of these signs on its own is very unlikely to be an indicator of abuse. However, cumulatively they should be taken seriously. Participants need to be aware of these possible signs and always report any concerns to the CSO or the Compliance Officer at Motorsport UK.** | **Types of abuse** There are four main types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. Bullying is an additional type of abuse often encompassing aspects of the other four categories. An individual may abuse or neglect a child directly or may be responsible for abuse by failing to prevent another person harming that child. **Physical abuse**Physical abuse may involve kicking, pushing, hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Examples of physical abuse in sport include physical punishments; forcing a child into training and competition that exceeds the capacity of his or her maturity and growing body or limitations of a disability; assaulting a person; or where the child is given drugs to enhance performance or in the case of a child, delay puberty. **Sexual abuse** Sexual activity with children is a form of Sexual Abuse. It may involve inappropriate touching, penetrative or non-penetrative sexual acts. It may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at or in the production of photographic or moving images of a sexual nature or of online images watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. | **Emotional abuse** Emotional abuse is the persistent maltreatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on their development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed. These may include interactions that are beyond the child developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing them from participating in normal social interaction. Emotional abuse may involve a child seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another as well as serious bullying, causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may also occur alone. Examples of emotional abuse in sport include subjecting children to constant criticism, name-calling, and sarcasm or bullying. It could also include their regular exclusion from an activity, non-selection for a team, failing to rotate squad positions or more subtle actions such as staring at or ignoring a child. Putting children under consistent pressure to perform to unrealistically high standards is also a form of emotional abuse. |

**Neglect**
Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development. Neglect may involve a parent failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment), failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, or to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers) or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child’s basic emotional needs.

Examples of neglect in sport could include: not ensuring children are safe; exposing them to undue cold or heat or unsuitable weather conditions, or exposing them to unnecessary risk of injury.

**Bullying**
Bullying is often considered to be a fifth type of abuse but when it does occur it usually has elements of one or more of the four categories identified. The bully can be a parent who pushes too hard, a coach or team manager with a ‘win at all costs’ attitude or another intimidating child. It should also be recognised that bullying can take place in the virtual world of social networking sites, emails or text messages.

If bullying does occur it should not be ignored and the victim should be supported through what can be a traumatic experience. Bullying will not just go away.

Bullying takes many forms but ultimately it is the perception of the victim that determines whether or not they are being bullied and not the intention of the bully.

There are opportunities to bully at any motor sport event or activity. It is the way that incidences are dealt with which makes the difference between life being tolerable or becoming a misery for the victim. Bullies can be very cunning and develop strategies to avoid it being seen by anyone but the victim.

**Poor practice**

Incidents of poor practice arise when the needs of children are not afforded the necessary priority, compromising their wellbeing. Poor practice can easily turn into abuse if it is not dealt with as soon as concerns are raised or reported. Clubs which allow poor practice to go unchallenged may find that their culture is one which allows abuse to exist and be accepted as the norm.

Examples of poor practice may include shouting, excessive training or testing, ridicule of children or children’s errors, ignoring safety guidelines and failing to adhere to the club’s Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct.

For further information please contact Motorsport UK.

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The Department for Education advice “What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused” provides advice in identifying child abuse.

 The NSPCC website is also a good source of information and advice. [www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/)