

LFR Child Policy Review

Date: 18 October 2023

Introduction

This document sets out to explain why the Committee decided on 16th October to amend the current child policy, as announced in the newsletter and what actions we are taking.

Background

- The club constitution states members may be accepted from the age of 16.
- Children have been permitted to attend club nights accompanied by their parents and this is set out in the “Operational Guidance” document.
- Children also typically attend a number of ad hoc activities organised by the club such as helping at cake night, races, family fun days or the summer barbecue.
- Anyone under the age of 18 is defined as a child by law and any organisation supplying services to children must have appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place by law.
- This also applies to vulnerable adults.
- England Athletics also require affiliated clubs to have appropriate procedures in place for juniors. These mostly reflect the statutory obligations.

Situation to date

- The Committee recognised the anomaly within the club constitution allowing under 18’s when we did not have all the child protection requirements in place in 2020, and at the 2021 AGM proposed a rule change to make 18 the minimum age of club membership.
- The proposal was rejected by members at the AGM and the Committee was asked to find a way to facilitate members joining from 16.
- The Committee introduced a rule which stated that whilst members may join from age 16, the same conditions would apply as to other children attending club nights. That is they would need to be accompanied by their parent.
- We have continued to review and update all our policies but in particular our Welfare Officers raised concerns that they felt our current child safeguarding arrangements were inadequate and so we asked them to investigate further and present their findings to the Committee, which they did at the 16th October committee meeting.

Summary of Requirements

In England, child safeguarding legislation is covered by three main acts. These are:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

Together, these provide the framework for child protection and safeguarding and impose a duty.

Based upon a publicly available document that simplifies the 116 pages of government interpretation of the laws the requirements are set out below:

'The law says that organisations and individuals working with children must always do what is best for their welfare, and ensure they are protected from harm (section 11 of the Children Act 2004). This applies whether they are providing services to them directly themselves, or others are providing these. Working Together guidance says that all services and organisations working with children and young people must:

- be clear about who does what to make sure that services for children are keeping them safe;*
- name someone at senior level to take a lead on what the organisation does to keep children safe*
- name a professional to support others in their duties for keeping children safe*
- have a culture of listening to children, including taking account of their views to improve services*
- have arrangements for sharing information*
- have safe practices for appointing staff*
- have arrangements to manage allegations and*
- have appropriate training and supervision for all staff that need it*

As a club we do not meet these requirements. In addition, we also need to consider how to implement the framework of 10 standards set out in a document produced by NSPCC and Sport England called "Standards for safeguarding and protecting children in sport".

It is our understanding that by allowing members under the age of 18 we would be providing services to children and therefore subject to this legislation. However, where children are attending on an occasional ad hoc basis with their parents this would not be seen as providing a service but that the parent is wholly responsible.

Actions

1. Fortunately, we do not currently have any members under the age of 18 but with immediate effect we cannot allow any members to join the club under 18. This alongside a clarification of children attending club nights to be communicated to all members via the newsletter. The legal requirements must take precedence over the club constitution.
2. A full review of the requirements and what will be required for the club to be compliant will need to be undertaken. This could mean a material change to the way the club currently



operates. Stephen Moore has kindly offered to undertake this, which is a significant piece of work.

3. When we have a fuller understanding of what exactly will be required, we will probably need to decide as a club how we want to proceed. It is anticipated that whatever the outcome this will need to be discussed and agreed at a club AGM. We hope to be in a position to discuss at the 2024 AGM, however, it is conceivable that it may take longer.

Feedback

If you have any further questions or comments, or if you would like to be involved in creating the policy or would wish to take an active role in the implementation of the policy please contact Andy Heale or one of the club Welfare Officers (Stephen Moore or Karen Boulton).