

COVENTRY GODIVA HARRIERS

**SUMMARY OF REPORT FOLLOWING AN INVESTIGATION
INTO SAFEGUARDING**

Angels Solicitors have undertaken an independent investigation that focussed upon Coventry Godiva Harriers approach to safeguarding and other matters of child welfare and adult emotional abuse. The period covered by the investigation was not time limited. Understandably, the investigation concentrated on events in more recent years. The investigation included obtaining relevant documents, undertaking voluntary interviews with a number of individuals and obtaining statements or written information from other individuals.

The material gathered by the investigation has been assessed by an independent, senior barrister, Andrew Smith QC. He produced a detailed report that has been considered by the Committee.

The report concentrated on 6 main questions and, in summary, reached the following conclusions:

1. Were the established child welfare policies and safeguarding procedures followed by the Club at all times?

The report concluded that the Club had appropriate child welfare policies and safeguarding procedures in place. The effectiveness of those policies and procedures depended upon the willingness of volunteers to fulfil demanding roles. The evidence showed that the Club sought to follow its policies and procedures at all times. The investigation showed that there were times when the Club did not review its implementation of policy and procedure with sufficient regularity or rigour.

2. Were appropriate disclosure checks for coaches and others sought and considered?

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The report concluded that the Club did generally seek appropriate disclosure checks for coaches and other relevant persons. The investigation revealed one example of an individual who should have been subject to a DBS check but was not. The investigation concluded that the failure to seek the DBS check arose out of a lack of rigorous analysis of a what a particular role within the Club involved.

3. Were any allegations made in respect of child welfare properly investigated?

The investigation did not reveal any contemporary, direct allegation of abuse and/ or other child welfare issue being raised by an athlete member of the club. The report found that there was no basis to conclude that any direct allegation involving a child was ignored or overlooked. In the context of the individual who should have been subject to a DBS check but was not, the report concluded that the Club should have considered, at the time, how that position had arisen and did not do so.

4. Where any individual was investigated and a disciplinary hearing followed, was an appropriate sanction imposed?

The investigation identified one disciplinary hearing of potential relevance, a hearing that concerned a complaint by an adult. The report concluded that an appropriate sanction was imposed.

5. Was all appropriate information shared with UK Athletics and/ or any other relevant body?

The investigation identified one instance in which Committee members did not all possess the same information and that potentially relevant information was not apparently shared with external parties. The report did not conclude that the information had been deliberately withheld.

6. Has any child (or vulnerable adult) been exposed to risk as a result of any identified failings?

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There was no evidence that any child or vulnerable adult was exposed to tangible risk as a result of failures of safeguarding. The investigation identified that the absence of a regular review of the implementation of policies and procedures created the potential for difficulties. However, there is no evidence that any child or vulnerable adult was harmed in any way as a result of any identified failings.

The report made the following recommendations to improve the Club's ability to implement and adhere to all relevant safeguarding and welfare policies and procedures:

1. There should be a clear identification of the roles of any officer or Committee member with particular responsibility for safeguarding and welfare. There should be at least two Welfare Officers in post at any one time. There is a need to establish sound record keeping in respect of the need for, and obtaining of, Coaching Licences and DBS checks;
2. There should be a clear identification throughout the Club as to the safeguarding and welfare policies that are being used. Those policies should be the subject of regular review and the adherence to those policies should also be subject to regular scrutiny. Perhaps by way of a formal annual review. There is a necessity to ensure that the Club's approach to issues of welfare and safeguarding is transparent and capable of being readily understood by both members and external persons/ bodies. This is demonstrated by the individual obligation each Club member has to welfare and safeguarding given that the success of relevant policies is not simply determined by the carrying out of relevant checks;
3. The Club should ensure that every officer and Committee member understands and accepts both individual and collective responsibility for the implementation and effectiveness of the safeguarding and welfare policies;
4. The Club should engage in a broader review of its structures, policies and procedures to ensure that safeguarding and welfare matters are robustly addressed on a continuing basis. The Club already recognises that the existing rules require revision;
5. There should be a clear identification of the division of responsibilities in the context of safeguarding and welfare between the Club, UK Athletics and England Athletics. That division of responsibilities should be rigorously maintained;

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6. An environment should be created in which there is greater, overt prominence given to matters of safeguarding and welfare. There is a necessity to ensure that matters of safeguarding and welfare are integral to, and conducted as part of, the Club's primary purpose of encouraging and achieving participation in athletics.