

Child Protection Policy

It is essential that children and young people participating in swimming and water polo are able to do so in a safe and secure environment. Swindon Dolphin ASC recognises and accepts its responsibility to safeguard the health and welfare of children under its care by protecting them from physical, sexual or emotional harm; and from neglect or bullying.

The term 'child / children' is used within this document and refers to a young person / people under the age of 18 years.

Swindon Dolphin ASC is committed to raising awareness of child protection in swimming; and takes every possible measure to ensure that swimming is a safe and secure experience for children.

To this end, the club has adopted the Child Protection Guidelines (see *Appendix 1 at the end of this document*) issued by the ASA in conjunction with the NSPCC. All club coaches, teachers, assistants, officials, poolside helpers, volunteers and team managers are therefore required to undertake Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) (see *Appendix 1*) checks every three years through its Disclosure service. This service enables organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to make safer recruitment decisions by identifying candidates who may be unsuitable for certain work, especially that involving children or vulnerable adults. All club coaches, teachers, assistants, officials, poolside helpers, volunteers and team managers are also governed by the ASA/ISTC "Code of Ethics" (see *Appendix 1*). The club recognises that all those directly involved in the club and its activities have a responsibility to:

- Provide a safe environment for children and young people to enjoy swimming and water polo whilst in the care of the club
- Take the interests of its members into account in all its activities
- Promote the health and welfare of its members through a relationship of mutual trust
- Take all practical steps to protect its members from physical, sexual or emotional harm by:
 - recognising abuse
 - treating all suspicions and allegations of abuse seriously
 - responding in an appropriate way to children who disclose they are being abused
 - providing a structure to deal sympathetically with abuse

The club therefore requires and encourages all coaches and helpers to attend suitable training so that they are able to:

- Understand what child abuse means
- Recognise the signs and symptoms of each category of child abuse
- Identify the foundations of good practice in child protection

- Review their own practices to ensure that it complies with recognised codes of conduct
- Ensure that their own behaviour and conduct is always beyond reproach to prevent exposure to false allegation
- Take appropriate action if concerns are raised which suggest a child is abused.
- Deal sensitively and effectively with the issue should it arise
- Identify appropriate action if abuse is suspected
- Take any swimmers' or parents' concerns seriously and deal with them confidentially
- Recognise the roles and responsibilities of other agencies/organisations

They will be required to attend the “ASA/SCUK Safeguarding and Protecting Children workshop” every three years.

Child Abuse

The following procedures and guidelines were produced in conjunction with the ASA and have been adopted by the club on the subject of child abuse. They are intended as a guide for people involved in club activities and are provided for the reference of coaches, officials, volunteers, parents and members alike. The following procedures are based on the principles that:

- the child's welfare is the paramount consideration;
- the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to protecting children from abuse
- all children, regardless of any disability they may have; regardless of their age, gender, racial origin, religious belief or sexual identity; have a right to be protected from abuse.

The aim of the policy is to introduce the subject of child abuse in all its forms and to provide ways of recognising the warning signs, and dealing with it quickly and effectively. Child abuse is an emotive term used to describe all the ways in which children can be harmed, usually by adults and often by those they know and trust. Child abuse can occur anywhere there are children, at home, at school, or even within a sports environment such as the swimming club. Sadly there are some people who will seek to be where children are simply in order to abuse them. The Children Act (1989) and Working Together to Protect Children (1999) states there are four main types of abuse, physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. Abuse may be the action (or inaction), by for example a coach, volunteer, family member or even another young swimmer.

Physical Abuse In general terms, physical abuse takes place when adults or even children, deliberately inflict hurts or injures on a child by hitting, striking, throwing, shaking, biting burning, scolding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm. It can also occur by knowingly not preventing such injuries.

In a swimming context, it might also occur if a child is pushed to train beyond his or her capabilities; where an adult gives children alcohol or where inappropriate drugs are used to enhance performance.

Sexual Abuse occurs when adults or other children (both male and female) use children to meet their own sexual needs. This includes forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening, or showing children pornographic material. In a sporting context, it could also involve inappropriate photography or videoing, for the sexual gratification of the viewer. The club therefore ensures that all children are protected by accordance with the Guides for use of photographic/filming equipment at Competitions (see *Appendix 1*), issued by the ASA.

Emotional Abuse is the emotional ill treatment of a child resulting in severe and persistent adverse affects. Emotional abuse can occur when a child is not given love, help and encouragement or is constantly shouted at, threatened, derided or subject to sarcasm. Conversely, it can also occur if a child is over-protected. It is the persistent emotional ill treatment such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development.

In a swimming context, this may occur if children are subject to constant criticism, name-calling or sarcasm. It is also present in unrealistic expectations of coaches and parents over what a child can achieve. Racially and Sexually abusive remarks constitute emotional abuse and it can be a feature of bullying. The club has therefore adopted the following Anti-Bullying Policy, again following ASA guidelines.

Neglect usually occurs when adults fail to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs, resulting in the serious impairment of the child's health and development. It may involve for example persistent lack of care or leaving a child alone or unattended, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failure to provide food, warmth, adequate clothing, medical attention etc. In a swimming context, it could occur for example be a coach 'turning a blind eye' to bullying or abuse from another or exposing them to unnecessary risk of injury.

Indicators of Abuse

Recognising child abuse is not always easy, even for experts. The list below is not exhaustive and it should be realised that these are indicators only. They are not in any way confirmation that abuse has occurred.

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, bites or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- The child says that he or she is being abused, or another person says they believe (or know) that abuse has occurred
- The child has an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent or which has not been adequately treated.
- The child's behaviour changes, either over time or suddenly, and he or she becomes quiet and withdrawn, or alternatively becomes aggressive.
- Refusal to remove clothing for normal activities or keeping covered up in warm weather
- The child appears not to trust adults e.g. a parent, or coach with whom he or she would be expected to have, or once had, a close relationship, and does not seem able to make friends

- He or she becomes increasingly neglected looking in appearance, or loses or puts on weight for no apparent reason
- Pain or itching, bruising or bleeding in or near the genital area
- The child shows inappropriate sexual awareness for his/her age, and sometimes behaves in a sexually explicit way

It should be borne in mind that disabled children and young people are particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them. Dependency on others for primary needs such as feeding, clothing and intimate care may make a young person feel powerless to report abusive treatment. A fear of retribution for 'telling' can be a powerful silencer. Difficulty in identifying abusive situations or behaviour may allow it to continue.

Reporting Abuse

If you have concerns about the welfare of a child; please remember, it's not your responsibility to decide whether or not a child is being abused but we are asking you to act on your concerns.

Please make a detailed note of what you've seen or heard and don't delay passing on the information to an appropriate person.

If you are a member of Swindon Dolphin ASC, or the parent/carer or friend of a member, you should tell a club officer such as the welfare officer, club secretary, chairperson, coach or any Committee member or team manager, unless of course you suspect them of being involved.

Your information should include:

- the nature of the suspicion or allegation
- a description of any injury
- the athlete's account of what has happened
- dates and times and any other information, distinguishing between fact, opinion or hearsay

If you are a club officer or team manager you can:

- Seek the advice of the club Welfare Officer in the first instance.
- Talk to the child's parents/carers about the concerns if you think there may be an obvious explanation such as bereavement or pressures from studies/exams
- Alternatively, you can speak directly (and in complete confidence) to:
 - the **ASA's Swimline Service** (calls are free) on 0808 100 4001
 - the **NSPCC Child Protection Helpline** on 0808 800 5000 (open 24 hours a day and calls are free)
 - Childline (0800 1111)
 - Contact your local Social Services Department or, in an emergency, the police.
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If you are working with athletes away from home, at a training camp or a national or regional competition, tell the Team manager or the Chief Coach. Again, please remember to make a detailed note of what you've seen or heard and don't delay passing on the information.

Appendix 1

Child Protection Guidelines please visit :

<http://www.sportcentric.com/vmgmt/vfilemgmt/page/filedownload/1,8202,4716-44656-14202-0-file,00.doc>

Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), please visit:

<http://www.disclosure.gov.uk/Default.aspx?page=308>

ASA/ISTC "Code of Ethics", please visit :

<http://www.swindondolphin.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/asa-code-of-ethics.pdf>

Guides for use of photographic/filming equipment at Competitions, please visit :

<http://www.sportcentric.com/vmgmt/vfilemgmt/page/filedownload/1,8202,4716-44656-13436-0-file,00.doc>

