

Anti-Bullying Policy

Guidelines and strategies to support an anti-bullying policy

The chances of bullying happening in a club can be greatly reduced if there is a general atmosphere where members are valued and cared for. The following strategies which are embodied in the ASA code of Ethics will support the club's attempt to prevent bullying:

- Encourage an ethos of mutual respect of difference throughout the club
- Give positive encouragement and promote the value of self and others
- Raise awareness of all to the possible cause and effect of bullying
- Make it clear that bullying will not be tolerated and is unacceptable, but that both victims and bullies will be given the necessary support
- Enable swimmers, coaches and teachers to understand that no form of bullying be it physical, verbal or emotional will be tolerated by the club or the Association
- Enable members to feel confident that their concerns will be listened to and taken seriously
- Publicise SwimLine and the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline

Any club where bullying is evident but not addressed will be considered to be breaching the ASA Code of Ethics. Clubs should ensure that any bullying which involves children should be seen in the same light as other child protection concerns and the ASA Child Protection Procedures should be implemented if a serious concern is raised.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional – being unfriendly, excluding (emotionally and physically), sending hurtful text messages, tormenting, (e.g. hiding goggles/floats, 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
- Verbal – name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing

Procedures

Report bullying incidents to the club welfare officer or any another member of the committee, should the club welfare officer be unavailable.

In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be referred to the ASA for advice.

Parents will be informed and may be asked to come to a meeting to discuss the problem.

If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted.

The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying will be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly.

An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour

If mediation fails and the bullying is seen to continue the club will initiate disciplinary action under the club constitution.

Recommended Club Action

Where appropriate the club should follow the procedures outlined below if they are dealing with a situation themselves.

1. Reconciliation by getting the parties together. It may be that a genuine apology solves the problem.
2. If this fails/is not appropriate a small panel (Made up from Chairman, Welfare Officer, Secretary, committee members) should meet with the parent and child alleging bullying to get details of the allegation. Minutes should be taken for clarity, and these should be agreed by all as a true account.
3. The same persons should meet with the alleged bully and parents/s and put the incident raised to them to answer and give their view of the allegation. Minutes should again be taken and agreed.

4. If bullying has, in the view of the panel taken place the swimmer should be warned and put on notice of further action i.e. temporary or permanent suspension if the bullying continues. Consideration should be given as to whether a reconciliation meeting between parties is appropriate at this time.
5. In some cases the parent of the bully or bullied swimmer can be asked to attend training sessions, if they are able to do so, and if appropriate. The club committee should monitor the situation for a given period to ensure the bullying is not being repeated.
6. All coaches involved with both swimmers should be made aware of the concerns and outcome of the process i.e. the warning

In the case of adults reported to be bullying swimmers under 18

1. The ASA should always be informed and will advise on action to be taken.
2. It is anticipated that in most cases where the allegation is made regarding a teacher or coach, child protection awareness training may be recommended.
3. More serious cases may be referred to the police, social services or judicial complaints procedures.

Prevention:

- The club is required to adhere to ASA law, which includes what is acceptable and proper behaviour for all members of which the anti bullying policy is one part.
- All swimmers and parents will sign to accept the constitution upon joining the club.
- The club welfare officer will raise awareness about bullying and why it matters, and if issues of bullying arise in the club, will consider meeting with swimmers to discuss the issue openly and constructively.

What is Child Abuse?

It generally acknowledged that there are four main types of abuse – **Physical, Sexual, Emotional and Neglect.**

Physical Abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocation, or deliberate ill health to a child. It might also occur if a child is forced to train beyond his/her capabilities.

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. It may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts, involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child that adversely affects their development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, and inadequate, or where inappropriate expectations are put upon them. In a sporting context this may include severe parental or coaching pressure to succeed. Racially and sexually abusive remarks constitute emotional abuse and it can be a feature of bullying.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development, such as failing to provide shelter, food, clothing, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs. In a sporting context it could also mean failing to ensure that a child is safe or exposing them to harm.

IN ADDITION BULLYING currently accounts for a high proportion of referrals to the ASA.

Child Abuse in Swimming

Swimming plays a major part in the lives of many children and families and for most the experience is a positive one that provides them with many opportunities to have fun, keep fit and even participate at national and international competitions. However, sadly we know from experience that a small minority of individuals who wish to harm children will access them through our sport.

Many types of abuse and poor practice have been observed and reported in the swimming environment. Abuse is often committed by a person well known and trusted to the child in the swimming club. It can also be committed by another young person. Sibling and peer abuse has been recognised as an ongoing aspect of child protection in swimming and should be recognised and addressed. Other concerns have involved the use of racist language and racist taunts which should not be tolerated in clubs, nor should bullying by children or adults.

All adults involved in swimming have a responsibility to report concerns of a child abuse nature or poor practice appropriately and to act in a manner at all times that keeps children safe from harm.

Procedures

Please remember it is not your responsibility to decide whether a child is being abused, but we are asking you to act on your concerns. It is your responsibility to ensure the concerns raised are passed on appropriately.

Every ASA registered swimming club should have a club welfare officer. This person will have the knowledge of ASA policy and procedure to advise anyone with a child welfare concern. They should always be involved in any concern raised within the club unless they are in some way implicated in the concern.

As a member, official or parent involved in an ASA affiliated club you should follow the guidelines as outlined below:

- If the child or young person is in immediate danger or has been physically injured, ensure they are safe and contact the police or social services.
- If the child is not in immediate danger but you have concerns, either discuss the concerns with your club welfare officer or a club official who will advise you on the correct procedure for referring your concern appropriately. Or ring the swimline number 0800 100 4001 displayed on our notice board. The club welfare officer will be able to inform you about how to refer your concerns in order to gain appropriate advice and action.
- Make a written record of what you have seen or heard but don't delay passing on the information. As soon as possible complete the ASA referral form which you can get from the club welfare officer. In every case you should
- send a completed referral form to the ASA Legal Department to advise them of your concern and to whom you have reported it. Address the letter to:

ASA Legal Affairs Dept;
Harold Fern House,
Derby Square,
Loughborough LE11 5AL

Please remember – it is not your responsibility to decide whether a child is being abused but we are asking you to act on your concerns.

- When a concern is referred to the ASA and further action is required you will receive a copy of the ASA protocol document. This outlines what possible actions will be taken and what further contact will be made with the referrer.

Poor practice

Reporting procedures regarding:

Complaints about poor practice;

Poor practice which raise suspicions about abuse;

Allegation/concerns about child abuse within the sport's organisation.

Issues of Poor Practice should be reported to the ASA Judicial Administrator. If a formal complaint is made the Judicial Laws and Rules are followed and the Judicial Administrator deals directly with the parties concerned.

- The two departments, the ICPO and the legal department on the one hand and the office of the judicial administrator on the other, are separate and apart. However a complaint will always be referred from one to the other as appropriate.
- The judicial Administrator may appoint an "ASA Friend" to assist both parties throughout the process.
- If the complaint has elements which may relate to child welfare concerns the Judicial Administrator will refer the matter to the ICPO for consideration.
- All issues of concern regarding child welfare and child abuse will be considered by the ICPO and discussed with the Head of Legal Affairs before a decision on where the concern should be dealt with.
- If the decision is made that a complaint does not involve CP issues, the complaint is referred back to the judicial process. The two departments, the ICPO and the legal department on the one hand and the office of the judicial administrator on the other, are separate and apart. However a complaint will always be referred from one to the other as appropriate

Guidance

Action to take if a child tells you that he or she is being abused:

- **Stay calm**
- **Don't promise to keep it to yourself**
- **Listen to what the child says and, please, take it seriously**

- **Only ask questions if you need to identify what the child is telling you - don't ask the child about explicit details.**
- **Make a full written record and complete the ASA incident form of what the child is telling you but as advised in the previous section, please don't delay passing on the information.**