

CHILD PROTECTION

These guidelines have been extracted from the ASA Child Protection in Swimming Procedures and Guidelines that Taunton Deane Swimming have adopted.

The contents of this document are not meant to alarm you but to raise your awareness and guide you through the correct procedures should the situation arise. The Children Act 1989 indicates that anyone who has the care of a child should “*do what is reasonable in all the circumstances for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the child’s welfare.*”

These Child Protection procedures stem from the following principles:

The child’s welfare is the first consideration,

All children, regardless of age, any disability they may have, gender, racial origin, religious belief and sexual identity have the right to be protected from abuse.

ASA will support anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concerns that a child is at risk of, or may actually be, being abused.

There are four main types of abuse – **Physical, Sexual, Emotional and Neglect**. Abuse may be the action or inaction by, for example by a coach, teacher, helper, family member or another swimmer.

Physical Abuse is what the term implies – hurting or injuring another for example, by hitting, shaking, burning or biting. In swimming terms it might also occur if a child is forced to train beyond his/her capabilities, or the intensity of training disregards disabled persons impairment.

Sexual Abuse occurs when a child knowingly or unknowingly takes part in something which meets the sexual needs of the other person(s) involved – it could range from sexually suggestive comments, masturbation, touching to full intercourse. It could also include inappropriate photography or videoing for the sexual gratification of the viewer.

Emotional Abuse occurs when a child is not given love, help and encouragement and is constantly derided or ridiculed or perhaps even worse ignored. Conversely, it can also occur if a child is over-protected. In swimming terms this is present in the unrealistic expectations of parents and coaches over what a swimmer can achieve, or the undermining a swimmer through ridicule. Bullying is likely to come under this category, as could racial and sexually abusive remarks.

The damage caused by bullying is frequently underestimated and can and does cause considerable distress and harm to children. No swimmer will be able to reach their full potential if they feel they are the victims of bullying either by an adult or their peers.

Neglect usually means failing to meet children’s basic needs such as food, warmth, adequate clothing, medical attention etc. It could also mean failing to ensure they are safe or exposing them to harm. It may be when a swimmer’s personal or intimate requirements are ignored, particularly if they are disabled.

INDICATIONS

Recognising child abuse is not always easy – even for the experts! The examples listed are not a complete list and they are only *indicators - not confirmation*.

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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 actually know) that abuse is occurring.

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 quite suddenly and he or she becomes quite 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 with whom it would be expected to have or once had and does not seem able to make friends.

He or she becomes increasingly neglected looking or whose weight fluctuates 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 group and sometimes behaves in a sexually explicit way.

Disabled and young children are particularly vulnerable and may have the added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them. A fear of retribution for "telling" can be a powerful "silencer". Failure to identify abuse may allow it to continue.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS

It is not your responsibility to decide whether a swimmer is being abused but we are asking you to act on your concerns. Make a detailed note of what you've seen or heard and don't delay in passing on the information.

Your concerns should be passed to the Club Welfare Officer or if you are at an event the referee unless of course you suspect the person of being involved! Alternatively ring Swimline 0808 100 4001 Swimline is the ASA's own helpline where you can talk to someone who understands both swimming and the requirements of Child Protection.

WHAT TO DO WITH DISCLOSURES

If a swimmer tells you they are suffering some form of abuse, you should;

React calmly so as not to frighten or deter them,

Listen to what the swimmer is saying,

Only ask questions of clarification, don't ask the swimmer explicit details or leading questions,

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Make a detailed note of what the swimmer has told you and pass the information on,

Reassure the swimmer they have done the right thing by telling you,

Do not make any promises about passing on the information and explain you need to keep them safe and pass on the information to someone trusted to deal with the information.

GOOD PRACTICE

Avoid situations where you are alone with the swimmer. The Club acknowledges that on given situations there may be no alternative. However, this must never be allowed to occur on a regular basis.

If appropriate ascertain from the swimmer's parents carers views about manual support for the swimmer who needs this kind of help especially when they are in the water.

If it is necessary to do things of a personal nature make sure you have another adult accompanying you. Whenever possible obtain the parent/carer's consent and talk to the swimmer and let them know what you are doing and if appropriate why.

Always work in pairs when supervising changing rooms.

Ensure that mixed teams are always accompanied by male and female teacher/coaches/club officials.

Don't allow any physically rough or sexually provocative games, or inappropriate talking or touching by anyone in any group for which you have responsibility.

At galas/competitions look out for people who don't appear to be relatives or friends of children who are swimming but nevertheless seem to spend a lot of time videoing or photographing them. Report these incidents to the organisers or the pool management immediately.

All coaches, teachers and poolside helpers are required to register with ASA.

If the procedures and guidelines contained here are implemented properly they can offer safeguards to everyone involved in swimming. Most of all they can help to prevent children being abused.

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GUIDELINES FOR USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC/FILMING EQUIPMENT AT TRAINING SESSIONS

There is no intention to prevent club coaches and teachers using videoing as a legitimate coaching aid. However, swimmers and their parents should be aware that this is part of the coaching programme and care should be taken in the storing of such films.

If you are aware of someone not connected to the Club videoing or photographing ask them to leave and contact the pool management.

PHOTOGRAPHIC/VIDEO EQUIPMENT AT COMPETITIONS

Specific details concerning photographic/video and filming registration should be announced over the public address system prior to the commencement of the event and a notice prominently displayed at the spectator entry desk.

If you wish to use any such equipment you will be asked to register your details i.e. name and address usually at the spectator entry desk before using any such equipment.

The Honorary Secretary holds the Photography Register and will ensure it is displayed in a prominent place at all functions organised by Taunton Deane Swimming.