

## **Raising a Welfare Concern**

Swim England and we are committed to ensuring that any child who attends a Swim England organisation, event or activity will be safeguarded from harm. Protection and safeguarding of children is paramount and should be based on prevention and best practice

The adoption of Wavepower by Swim England organisations has minimised and will continue to minimise the opportunity for acts of child abuse or harm to children to take place.

We recognise that all risk cannot be removed, and child safeguarding concerns will continue to be raised both as part of, and outside of, any Swim England organisation. Swim England has therefore created the following three stages of action to be taken for any person involved in our sports who may have a concern, observe a concern or have concerns raised to them about a child's wellbeing.

**Stage 1** – React to the concern, disclosure, suspicion or allegation in a timely and appropriate manner.

**Stage 2** – Record the relevant information.

**Stage 3** – Report the information to the appropriate person(s) and/or organisation(s).

### **Remember**

You do not have to decide that a concern or incident is or is not child abuse or a failure to safeguard a child. You do have to refer that concern to seek advice from the appropriate agency so they can make that decision.

Anyone involved in our sports can contact the Swim England Child Safeguarding Team, Swim England Legal Department, Swimline, County or Regional Welfare Officer for advice and guidance.

### **In an emergency**

When you believe a child has been harmed or may be at immediate risk of harm and you are unable to contact the Club Welfare Officer or Swim England Child Safeguarding Team then immediate contact should be made with police, Children's Social Care, Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), NSPCC Child Protection Helpline or other agencies as appropriate. Take the name and contact details of the person you have spoken to and the incident/referral reference number (if applicable) so you have a record and report this to the Club Welfare Officer and Swim England Child Safeguarding Team as soon as possible e.g. next working day.

Parents and guardians of the child should be advised of the actions taken only if they are not implicated/involved in the concern.

### **When should you act?**

There are a number of reasons why you might take action, which may include but are not limited to:

- Something a child has said or disclosed.
- Signs or suspicions of abuse.
- Significant and/or unexplained changes in a child's demeanour or behaviour, including self-harm.
- Allegations made against staff or a volunteer.
- Allegations made about a parent/guardian, carer or someone not involved in our sports. Concerns about inappropriate behaviour.
- Alleged breaches of the Swim England Code of Ethics and accompanying Codes of Conduct.
- Allegations or observations of bullying.

### **Stage 1 – React**

If a child or adult shares a concern or allegation with you:

- Stay calm.
- Reassure the person reporting their concerns that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Listen carefully to what is being said.
- Ensure you don't show upset, disgust or disbelief at what is being said.
- Be honest and explain that you cannot keep what they are saying a secret and never promise to do so.
- Keep an open mind and don't make assumptions or judgements.
- Ask open questions only if you need to clarify what is being said.
- Reassure the person you take their concerns seriously and tell them the actions that you will or will not be taking.
- Write down what has been said as soon as possible after or during the conversation as appropriate. The Swim England referral form can be used to record the information.
- Sign and date the referral form and any other paperwork referring to the concern as this could be used at a later date in criminal or care proceedings.
- Report the concern to the Swim England Child Safeguarding Team.

### **Never**

- Confront the alleged abuser.
- Make promises you cannot keep.
- Ask leading questions or make comments or suggestions. \*
- Take sole responsibility for dealing with the concern.
- Delay in reporting the concerns to the Swim England Child Safeguarding Team.

\* A leading question is one which may prompt the respondent to answer in a particular way. They can lead to false or distorted information. They also create an opportunity for bias as the question will be suggestive of what answer should be given. Examples of leading questions could be:

- This has happened before, hasn't it?
- Who else is involved?
- Did this take place at the club?

Try and ask questions objectively to encourage a more accurate response:

- Has this happened before?
- Is anyone else involved?
- Where did this take place?

## Stage 2 – Record

Swim England provide clubs with a template referral form to use to record information. This can be found at [swimming.org/wavepower](http://swimming.org/wavepower).

We recommend you keep copies of the form in an easily accessible place. Your report should ideally include:

- Name, address and date of birth of the child.
- Name, address and contact details of the parent/guardian.
- Is the parent/guardian aware of the referral?
- Full details of the referral.  
Ensure the referral details are recorded verbatim i.e. always use the referrer's own words.
- Details of who the allegation is about. If possible, their full name, date of birth, address, relationship with the child concerned and their relationship or position with the organisation (if any).
- Details of any injuries, marks or bruising on the child that are visible to you. A body map template is provided for you to use and can be found at [swimming.org/wavepower](http://swimming.org/wavepower).
- Details of any witnesses.
- Any other relevant information.
- Provide your contact details and sign and date your report.

Some of the above information may not be known or available to you or the organisation. Please remember that you can only refer the information you have. Referrals should not be delayed to allow for searches for missing information that you may or may not be able to find.

It is vitally important that all information is captured and recorded accurately as it was said to you as soon as possible.

## Stage 3 – Report

**It is the duty of everyone involved in our sports to report potential child safeguarding concerns in order to protect children, but it is only for the professionals to decide whether or not abuse has taken place.**

It is important that Swim England organisations do not attempt to investigate allegations of potential criminal offences. Advice and guidance should always be taken from the Swim England Child Safeguarding Team, Swimline or by contacting the police directly. In all cases where it is alleged that indecent images have been taken of a child, the guidance on pages 82-85 of Wavepower must be followed.

Parents and guardians of the child should be advised of the actions taken only if they are not implicated/involved in the concern. Please note a parent/guardian cannot make the decision as to whether a safeguarding concern is disclosed to a statutory agency.

If you are not satisfied with the response of a statutory agency when making a referral please contact the Swim England Child Safeguarding Team. The team will support you to follow up or escalate your concerns with the agency concerned.

If the child is not considered to be at immediate risk of harm contact should be made with the Welfare Officer or Swim England Child Safeguarding Team with full details of the concern as soon as possible e.g. the next working day.

**The Swim England Child Safeguarding Team hold a record of every concern raised to them and must always be informed of an incident or concern, regardless of the situation.**

### **How will Swim England respond?**

In cases which allege harm to a child, potential criminal acts, child abuse or allegations against an individual in a position of trust, Swim England will refer directly or support the organisation to refer directly to statutory agencies such as the police, MASH, Children's Social Care and the LADO. Statutory agencies will follow procedures under the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 and the Government Guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) to determine next steps.

In cases where there is an allegation or concerns that any person who works or volunteers with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children

Swim England will refer or support the organisation to refer to the LADO. Discussion with the LADO or DO must take place within one working day of the allegation/concern being raised.

The LADO or DO will advise next steps to be taken following referral in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018).

In some cases it may be necessary for Swim England to impose a temporary or specified term suspension of an individual. Suspensions are governed under the Swim England Child Protection Regulations 241. The Swim England Child Safeguarding Team will notify the Swim England Chief Executive Officer to request suspension under the Regulations. This usually follows a recommendation from a statutory agency to Swim England to take this action. In cases which can be managed directly by the Welfare Officer and organisation concerned advice will be provided by the Swim England Child Safeguarding Team so the matter can be resolved internally.

In cases where the Welfare Officer and organisation can resolve the matter directly but may require further support the Swim England Child Safeguarding Team may refer to the County or Regional Welfare Officer to provide ongoing advice, support and guidance.

### **Safeguarding concerns for a child or children outside my organisation**

Many Swim England organisations hire their pool time from facilities who will have members of the public or other organisations using their facility at the same time. In such circumstances you may witness or have reported to you a safeguarding concern about a child or children who are not known to you and is/are not a member of your organisation.

In such cases you are unlikely to know anything about the child/children or their family. That concern may involve potential criminal acts, child abuse, inappropriate or concerning behaviour or parenting/guardian concerns.

In such cases there is a responsibility to safeguard that child/children from harm, wherever possible.

In an emergency where you believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of imminent harm you should refer the concern immediately to the Welfare Officer or Swim England Child Safeguarding Team who will refer directly or support the organisation to refer directly to statutory agencies such as the police, MASH, Children's Social Care and the LADO.

If the Welfare Officer or Swim England is not available referral should be made directly to such an agency for immediate advice.

Inform the facility/pool management of the concerns at the earliest opportunity so they can assist in safeguarding the child/children. The facility/pool management may be able to assist in identifying the child and their parents/guardians and making the referral to a statutory agency.

**If the child requires emergency medical assistance call 999 for an ambulance.**

Ensure you make a formal record of all of the actions taken. Take the name and contact details of anyone you have spoken to and report this to your Welfare Officer (if not already involved) and the Swim England Child Safeguarding Team.

If concerns do not relate to an emergency child protection matter but you witness or have disclosed to you matters such as another organisations, alleged poor practice, safety, supervision or behaviour and discipline issues this should be reported to the facility/pool management. Make a formal record of this action and who the concern was reported to.

In some cases, you may get to know the organisations that share your pool time and if this is the case you could report directly to their Welfare Officer or DO any concerns about their staff or members. Make a formal record of that action and who you reported it to.

**In all cases advice can be sought from the Swim England Child Safeguarding Team if you are unsure how to proceed.**

A flow chart of this process is provided below

#### **How to contact your Welfare Officer:**

1. If non-urgent, the Team Bath AS Welfare Officer can be contacted via email at [natasha@otooles.co.uk](mailto:natasha@otooles.co.uk). If a genuine, valid welfare concern is raised, a meeting will be scheduled to discuss face to face with the Welfare Officer. A confidential record of the meeting will be filed and will be held as an ongoing document until resolution, solution or if required by additional agreed person(s) or agencies,
2. If urgent, please contact our support office on 01344 898330 who will contact the Welfare Officer, or if unavailable, refer directly to the police, MASH team, Children's Social Care, LADO or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline for action/advice and inform the Welfare Officer as soon as possible.