



Cossum Swim Schools
Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy and
Procedures

Background

Everyone has a fundamental right to be safe. Whatever the cause, and wherever it occurs, harm caused to children and adults by abuse, exploitation or neglect is not acceptable. This policy emphasises that **safeguarding is everyone's business** and that as a provider of a public service particularly working with children we should strive to prevent harm to children and adults from abuse, exploitation or neglect.

This policy requires us to put all individuals who may be at risk at the centre of what we do, to listen to them and to work in partnership with them and to create an organisation which has a zero-tolerance of harm to the most vulnerable people living in Northern Ireland.

We recognise that the Safeguarding Policy must be owned at all levels within the organisation and applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and those using the facilities irrespective of their function, remit or role.

Cossum Swim Schools are familiar with the Department of Health Guidance Document 'Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland' which provides the overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people in the statutory, private, independent, community, voluntary and faith sectors <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland>

In practice Cossum Swim Schools, will follow the reporting protocols of the Swimming Teachers Association (STA) which are detailed later in this document and can be found here <https://www.sta.co.uk/policies/safeguarding-policy/>

There is an expectation that all employees will work in partnership as they apply this policy to their work with children and adults who may be at risk of harm or in need of protection.

What is Safeguarding?

Within this policy the term 'safeguarding' is used in its widest sense, that is, to encompass both activity which **prevents** harm from occurring in the first place and activity which **protects** children and adults at risk where harm has occurred or is likely to occur.

Preventative Safeguarding includes a range of actions and measures. Teachers may come into contact with children and adults who may be at risk of harm and so must recognise the potential for, and to prevent, harm. In practice we will support teaching staff by providing safeguarding procedures e.g.:

- Recruitment and vetting
- Training of staff
- Supervision levels at activities
- Managing Challenging Behaviour/Anti-Bullying

Protective Safeguarding is targeted at children and adults who are in need of protection, that is, when harm from abuse, exploitation or neglect is suspected, has occurred, or is likely to occur. The protection service in Northern Ireland is led by Health and Social Care Trusts and PSNI.

Definitions (for the purposes of this policy)

- **Child** - Those aged under 18 years.
- **Child in Need** - A child shall be considered to be 'in need' if:
 - a) They are unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services;
 - b) Their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or
 - c) They are disabled.

'Family', in relation to such a child in need, includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child and any other person with whom he has been living.

In determining whether a child or young person is in need, consideration must be given to:

- a) what will happen to a child or young person's development and health without services being provided; and

b) the likely effect the services will have on the child or young person's standard of health and development.

- **Adult at risk of harm** - It is not possible to definitively state when an adult is at risk of harm as this will change on a case by case basis. The following definition is intended to provide guidance, as to when an adult may be at risk of harm in order that further professional assessment may be sought:

An '**Adult at risk of harm**' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) personal characteristics (*may include, but are not limited to age, disability, illness, physical or mental infirmity and impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain*); and/or
- b) life circumstances (*may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio economic factors and environmental living conditions*);

An '**Adult in need of protection**' is an adult at risk of harm (above)

- c) who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests; and
- d) where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.

The Aim of This Policy

This policy aims to:

- promote zero-tolerance of harm to all children and adults from abuse, exploitation or neglect;
- improve safeguarding arrangements for children and adults who are at risk of harm from abuse, exploitation or neglect;
- influence the way we as a business think about harm to children and adults resulting from abuse, exploitation or neglect by embedding a culture which recognises every person's right to respect and dignity, honesty, humanity and compassion in every aspect of their life;
- establish clear procedures for reporting and responding to concerns that a child or adult is, or may be, at risk of being harmed or in need of protection;
- prevent and reduce the risk of harm to adults, while supporting their right to maintain control over their lives and make informed choices free from coercion;
- promote a continuous learning approach to safeguarding;

This policy has been developed in line with the following legislation and guidance and good practice guidelines, current at the time of publication as well as the STA Safeguarding policy and procedures.

Forms of Abuse

The NSPCC regularly updates information on the forms of abuse and how to recognise it. Further details are available here <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

Children

- **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

- **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Smothering a child's development through over-protection can also be a form of abuse. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse.

- **Sexual Abuse**

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. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate foods, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Adults

The types of abuse are not exhaustive, nor listed in any order of priority.

- **Physical abuse**
Physical abuse is the use of physical force or mistreatment of one person by another which may or may not result in actual physical injury. This may include hitting, pushing, rough handling, exposure to heat or cold, force feeding, improper administration of medication, denial of treatment, misuse or illegal use of restraint and deprivation of liberty.
- **Sexual violence and abuse**
Sexual abuse is any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted or takes place without consent or understanding. Sexual violence and abuse can take many forms and may include non-contact sexual activities, such as indecent exposure, stalking, being made to look at or be involved in the production of sexually abusive material, or being made to watch sexual activities. It may involve physical contact, including non-consensual penetrative sexual activities or non-penetrative sexual activities, such as intentional touching (also known as groping). Sexual violence can be found across all sections of society, irrelevant of gender, age, ability, religion, race, ethnicity, personal circumstances, financial background or sexual orientation.
- **Psychological / emotional abuse**
Psychological / emotional abuse is behaviour that is psychologically harmful or inflicts mental distress by threat, humiliation or other verbal/non-verbal conduct. This may include threats, humiliation or ridicule, withholding security, love or support, provoking fear of violence, shouting, yelling and swearing, blaming, controlling, intimidation and coercion.
- **Financial abuse**
Financial abuse is actual or attempted theft, fraud or burglary. It is the misappropriation or misuse of money, property, benefits, material goods or other asset transactions which the person did not or could not consent to, or which were invalidated by intimidation, coercion or deception. This may include exploitation, embezzlement, withholding pension or benefits or pressure exerted around wills, property or inheritance.
- **Institutional abuse**
Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult, by a regime or individuals, in settings within which adults who may be at risk reside or use. Institutional abuse may occur when the routines, systems and regimes result in poor standards of care, poor practice and behaviours, inflexible regimes and rigid routines which violate their dignity and human rights and place adults at risk of harm. Institutional abuse may occur within a culture that denies, restricts or curtails the privacy, dignity, choice and independence. It involves the collective failure of a service provider or an organisation to provide safe and appropriate services, and

includes a failure to ensure that the necessary preventative and/or protective measures are in place.

- **Neglect**

Neglect is the deliberate withholding, or failure through a lack of knowledge, understanding or awareness, to provide appropriate and adequate care and support, which is necessary for the adult to carry out daily living activities. It may include physical neglect to the extent that health or well-being is impaired, administering too much or too little medication, failure to provide access to appropriate health or social care, withholding the necessities of life, such as adequate nutrition, heating or clothing, failure to intervene in situations that are dangerous to the person concerned or to others particularly when the person lacks the capacity to assess risk. Note that self-neglect and self-harm do not fall within the scope of this definition.

- **Exploitation**

Exploitation is the intentional maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of another person or situation usually but not always for personal gain from using them as a commodity. It may manifest itself in many forms including slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and abuse, or human trafficking.

- **Domestic violence and abuse**

Domestic violence and abuse is “threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on one person by another where they are or have been intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation. Domestic violence and abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another. It is usually frequent and persistent. It can include violence by a son, daughter, mother, father, husband, wife, life partner or any other person who has a close relationship with the victim. It occurs right across society, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography.

- **Human trafficking**

Human trafficking involves the acquisition and movement of people by improper means, such as force, threat or deception, for the purposes of exploiting them. It can take many forms, such as domestic servitude, forced criminality, forced labour, sexual exploitation and organ harvesting. Victims of human trafficking can come from all walks of life; they can be male or female; children or adults; and they may come from migrant or indigenous communities.

- **Hate crime**

Hate crime is any incident which constitutes a criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice, discrimination or hate towards a person’s actual or perceived race, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion or gender identity.

Referral of Child Protection Concerns

As members of the STA, Cossum Swim Schools will follow the reporting protocols of the Swimming Teachers Association (STA) which can be found here <https://www.sta.co.uk/policies/safeguarding-policy/>

Contact details for the STA Lead Child Protection Officer are

Tel: 07817 640189

Email: childprotection@sta.co.uk

Further contact details are also available on the STA website at <https://www.sta.co.uk/policies/safeguarding-policy/#contact-details>

If you think a child is in immediate danger

Don't delay – call the police on 999 or call the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000

When concerns about a child are reported they will be passed to the Health and Social Care Trust's child protection team where appropriate.

A copy of the STA's Incident report form is attached to this policy however is also available by clicking on the link below:

<https://www.sta.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/STA-Safeguarding-Incident-Report-Form-v18.1.pdf>

All swimming teachers should have received a degree of training through their qualifications and compulsory safeguarding course, and is also available on the STA website however this is summarised below.

Listening to the Child or Vulnerable Adult

If a child says or indicates that he or she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a child is being abused, the person receiving this information should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child
- Tell the child they are not to blame and that it was right to tell someone
- Take what the child says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child who is very young, has a speech disability and/or differences in language
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum necessary to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said
- Reassure the child, but do not make promises of confidentiality which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments

- Make a full record of what had been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible.
- Responding to Suspicions or Allegations of Child Abuse

It is not the responsibility of a member of the STA to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. There is however, a responsibility to report concerns so that appropriate agencies can then make inquiries and take any necessary action to protect the child.

Whilst STA acknowledges the importance of the role of statutory agencies involved in children's welfare (social services, police, NSPCC), it appreciates that there may be some reluctance to report direct to these agencies, especially if the person reporting is unclear as to whether abuse has occurred. As a result of this, and in line with STA's Duty of Care, STA have a Lead Child Protection Officer (LCPO), who should be contacted at the earliest possible time after the event or allegation. The LCPO can then liaise directly with statutory agencies and assist the organisation that made the report.

The social services department has a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 to ensure the welfare of a child. When a child protection referral is made its staff have a legal responsibility to investigate. This may involve talking to the child and family and gathering information from other people who know the child. Inquiries may be carried out jointly with the police.

What to Do If There Are Concerns

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, they may have experienced bereavement in the family.

However, there are circumstances in which a child might be placed at even greater risk where such concerns to be shared, e.g. where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately.

In these situations, or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation, or incident of abuse must be reported to the person in charge as soon as possible, and recorded.

It is the responsibility of the person in charge to inform the social services department without delay. If a person in charge is not available, the person discovering or being informed of the abuse should immediately contact the social services department or the police. If you're not sure about what to do, you can contact STA's Lead Child Protection Officer and/or the NSPCC's child protection helpline.

Recording and Information

Information passed to the social services department or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record. The information should contain the following:

- The nature of the allegation
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries
- The child's account, if he or she can give them, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred
- Any times, dates, or other relevant information
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion, or hearsay

Reporting the matter to the police or social services department should not however be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. Once an allegation or concern has been raised with the police, social services or the NSPCC then the concern must be passed on to STA via the LCPO. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the social services department should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record should also be made of the name and designation of the social services member of staff or police officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed.

STA has an incident report form which can be downloaded [here](#). This form will help you ask the correct questions and record appropriate information, before sending it to the [LCPO](#).

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