



AMATEUR SWIMMING ASSOCIATION CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Foreword

In the ASA we believe that the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to protecting children from abuse. Everyone in swimming - administrator, club official, coach, parent, friend, children themselves, everyone - can help.

Abuse can occur anywhere there are children - at home, at school, in the park, at the club. Sadly, there are some people who will seek to be where children are, simply in order to abuse them. We believe that everyone in the ASA has a part to play in looking after the children with whom they are working. The Children Act 1989 and Working Together to Safeguard Children (DOH 1999) highlight the shared responsibility of organisations to promote children's wellbeing and safeguard them from harm. They stress the importance of effective information sharing, collaboration, and understanding.

As the National Governing Body of Swimming the ASA has a moral and legal obligation to both identify and appropriately deal with concerns raised regarding the wellbeing of children involved in our sport.

These child protection procedures stem from the following principles

- The child's welfare is the first consideration.
- All children regardless of age, gender, racial origin, religious belief, sexual identity and any disability have a right to enjoy sport free from all forms of abuse or sexual exploitation.
- The ASA and associated clubs have responsibilities for the welfare of children and young people who take part in our sport.
- The ASA has a responsibility to maintain confidentiality in all cases involving child protection and poor practice in line with the current legislation.
- The ASA will not tolerate, within its associated clubs, poor practice in dealing with child welfare.

We know that if the procedures are to help to protect children, everyone involved in swimming needs to see and discuss them. We are, therefore asking club secretaries and welfare officers to make sure that they are widely distributed and discussed at club executive and general meetings.

Finally, please remember the 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.

The ASA policy on child welfare is mandatory and all affiliated clubs must appoint a Club Welfare Officer to oversee that the procedure is followed appropriately at all times.

A child is defined as any young person under the age of 18.

What is Child Abuse?

It's 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, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm 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. A separate anti bullying policy has been written by the ASA with the assistance of KIDSCAPE. The guidance in this document should be followed in any case where bullying has been reported or observed within the club setting.

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.

In 2002, the ASA and NSPCC jointly published the report "In at the Deep End", which analysed child welfare cases that had been referred to the ASA between 1997 and 2001. The study identified that having a policy and procedure was an essential part of child protection in our sport. All clubs were supplied with a copy of the report and any club member can access it from their club welfare officer.

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. The ASA have published an anti bullying policy, which all clubs should adopt if they do not already have an acceptable policy on bullying.

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.

Children with Specific Needs

Some disabled children may require specialised care and clubs who work with children with physical learning disabilities should ensure that:

- The guidelines of Disability Sport England "Protecting Disabled Children and Adults in Sport and Recreation" are followed by clubs, teachers and coaches who work with children (and adults) with disabilities.
- All coaches and teachers are suitably qualified to teach/coach children with specific needs.
- The views of the child and parent/carer are always obtained prior to any activity, specifically those requiring any physical handling or of a physical nature, to gain both consent and agreement of all concerned.
- No child is discriminated against in any manner by the club or any member or from taking part in an activity, which it is safe and proper for them to undertake.

Some children may suffer with an illness but show no outward appearance of being a child with specific needs, such as those diagnosed with epilepsy or diabetes. It is essential that the club co-operate with parents to meet the needs of their child should they become ill at training or competition. Advice can also be sought from the ASA medical advisor if required. Such children should not be excluded or prevented from taking part in any sporting activity in which all other swimmers are entitled to take part, as this would be discriminatory. With the correct knowledge and information, and the required parental support, children with such illnesses can train and compete as any other swimmer.

Currently the ASA is developing a welfare policy specifically for both children and adults with specific needs.



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.

LOCAL AUTHORITY SWIM SCHEMES

If the child is part of a school group or on a local authority play scheme you are involved with follow the guidelines laid down by your employer, or the centre at which the concern arose.

CLUBS AND SWIM SCHEMES AFFILIATED TO THE ASA

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 your 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've seen or heard but don't delay passing on the information. As soon as possible complete the ASA referral form

found on page 10 of this document. NB You or the club welfare officer/ official should, in every case 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's 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. This document is located in the appendix section of this guide.
- Poor practice**
- Reporting procedures regarding:
- Complaints about poor practice;
 - Poor practice which raise suspicions about abuse;
 - Allegations/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 off ice 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.

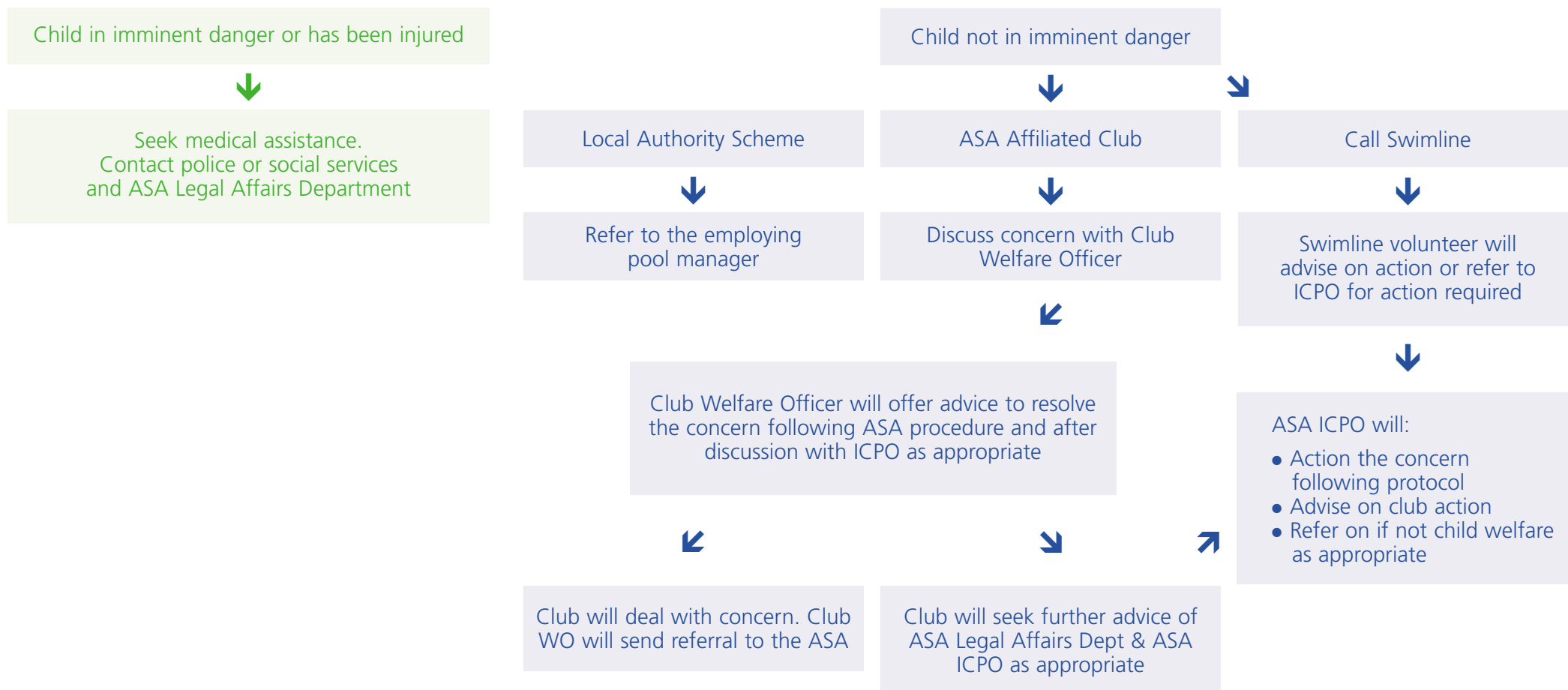
- The judicial Administrator may appoint an "ASA Friend" to assist both parties throughout the process.
- If the complaint has elements which may relate to child welfare concerns the Judicial Administrator will refer the matter to the ICPO for consideration.
- All issues of concern regarding child welfare 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 off ice 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**

Procedure Flow Chart - REFERRAL OF CHILD PROTECTION/WELFARE CONCERNS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF THE SPORT



RECORD OF INCIDENT

1. All clubs should have an Incident Book where incidents, including those of a child welfare nature should be recorded. The book should be held by a nominated member of the club, and be kept in a secure and confidential manner. It should be available at all club sessions.
2. The club welfare officer or another officer of the club should complete the ASA referral form whenever a child welfare issue is raised and send it to the Legal Affairs Department of the ASA.

NB: ICPO = Independent Child Protection Officer