

Guidance for coaches, teachers and poolside helpers

Swim England recognises the commitment of all those who work directly with children in our sports, whether paid or unpaid.

Coaches and teachers are often “chosen” by children as a safe and trusted adult to whom they can confide in to disclose concerns about abuse, in the knowledge that the trusted person will help get that concern addressed in a proper and confidential manner. The Swim England Child Safeguarding Team wishes to acknowledge the importance of the role undertaken by our coaches and teachers over and above that expected of them to safeguard children, and the important role that they, and all staff, play in putting Swim England Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures into practice.

The Swim England Code of Ethics applies to all those involved in our sports and can be found in the Swim England Handbook swimming.org/swimengland/swim-england-handbook/.

The Code of Ethics should be read in conjunction with the Swim England Codes of Conduct. The Codes of Conduct for members under the age of 18, parents/guardians, coaches, teachers, poolside helpers, officials and all those who work with children can be found on the website at swimming.org/wavepower.

All those who work directly with children must adhere to Wavepower to ensure they safeguard children at all times.

This section has been written with the help of the British Swimming Coaches Association (BSCA) and a representative group of coaches and teachers, to provide clear and specific guidance to enable best practice to be implemented by all. Information on the BSCA can be found at gbswimcoaches.co.uk.

Safeguarding members

All those who work directly with children must ensure that:

- Children are treated with dignity and respect.
- Good practice is promoted, in order to reduce the possibility of abusive situations occurring.
- They, along with every coach, volunteer, official and member of staff continually reflect upon their own coaching, supervisory style, philosophy and practices to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children at all times.
- They always work appropriately and openly with children in the organisation.
- They are an excellent role model, which includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children.
- They always put the welfare of the child first, before winning or achieving goals.
- They build a balanced relationship based on mutual trust, which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- They refer and deal with concerns regarding child safeguarding appropriately.
- Ensure parents/guardians and members obtain appropriate information regarding training and competitions.
- Work in partnership with officers and event organiser(s).
- Not exceed the level of their competence and qualifications.
- Have open and regular communication with parents/guardians.
- Ensure that activities are appropriate for the child's age, maturity, experience and ability.
- Always put the wellbeing, health and safety of the child before all other considerations including the development of performance.
- Promote honesty, teamwork and a good sporting environment.
- Follow Swim England guidance on coaching children. All coaches should follow the guidance from their awarding body relating to coaching/teaching children.
- Report any concerns they may have in relation to children following reporting procedures laid down in Wavepower.

Coaches and teachers should:

- Keep up to date with their technical skills and qualifications.
- Complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check upon commencing a new post and update that check every three years.
- Complete a Swim England approved Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport course upon commencement as a coach and attend a refresher course every three years.
- Know and understand Swim England Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures contained in Wavepower.
- Recognise the expectations on members to undertake other activities outside of the sport including the demands of school sports and school examinations.

Swim England coaches, teachers, officials and helpers should not:

- Take children to their home or other secluded places where they will be alone.
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games.
- Ever use physical force on a child for example hitting or slapping a child.
- Share a room with a child.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Make sexually suggestive remarks to children.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Use physical exercises as a form of humiliation or punishment to a child for example making a child perform sit ups or press ups poolside in front of their peers.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language or behaviour unchallenged.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Leave the pool venue before all members have been collected or are continuing to be supervised by appropriate officers.
- Abuse their position of power or trust with children or adults.
- Resort to bullying tactics or verbal abuse.
- Cause a child to lose self-esteem by embarrassing, humiliating or undermining the individual.
- Spend excessive amounts of time with one member to the detriment of the squad/team.
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.
- Smoke or consume alcohol while working with children.
- Engage in a sexual relationship with a child aged 17 or under.

Relationships with members aged 17 and under

The relationship between coaches, teachers or members of staff who hold a position of trust and responsibility and members of the organisation under 18 must be professional and appropriate at all times. In some situations, legislation may reflect this requirement.

However, the importance of the relationship between a coach and a member must never be forgotten. Not only does it develop a child's sporting potential and self-esteem, but it also allows them to develop an appropriate and trusting relationship with a responsible adult. Research of child safeguarding cases in our sports has shown that it is this relationship that has enabled many children to disclose their concerns.

The coach/member relationship is a complex one for both parties. It is important that the coach acknowledges that children often develop feelings for people in positions of trust, often identified as "a crush" or "hero worship". In the case of a sports coach, this may result in admiration of the coach's previous achievements, e.g. as a national level athlete, representative of their country. If this should happen to you, always inform the Welfare Officer to note the matter, and ensure that concerns are discussed and managed in an open and transparent manner. The Welfare Officer will be able to advise you on how to manage the issue and any action to take, if required. You and the Welfare Officer will be able to deal with such situations ensuring you and the child are safe from harm or allegation.

Coaches may develop stronger relationships with some children than with others. It would be unrealistic not to acknowledge that it is possible to like one person more than another. However, the professional nature of the coach's position requires them to never favour one member or group of members over another. If one member requires more attention for reasons identified by the coach (e.g. the member is preparing for a national level event) then that is totally acceptable,

but such preferential treatment or extra attention must be justifiable as being necessary for a member's professional development, and should not be to the detriment of other members.

Some coaches have considered it acceptable to give rewards to members who do well, and it is acknowledged that in the vast majority of cases, gifts were given with no ulterior motive other than to reward success or improvement.

However, as outlined in Section 2.1 on grooming (pages 32-33), the giving of gifts or favours can be identified or misconstrued as part of the grooming process. Our clear advice to coaches is to not give members gifts in any form. It is recommended that if a coach feels that a member has attained a level of achievement that should be rewarded, then it is the organisation that should recognise that, on the coach's recommendation, and that any reward, gift or recognition given is then from the organisation and not one individual.

Where a coach does wish to carry out a rewards system, they should inform the relevant personnel within the organisation to make them aware of this, and provide details of the infrastructure around it. This may protect the coach from potential allegations of favouritism or grooming. In all cases, the reasoning behind creating the rewards system, and the justification for awarding a reward to an individual should be done on an open and transparent basis, for the sake of all concerned.

It is important that coaches adhere to the Swim England Code of Ethics and follow good practice as outlined in the accompanying coaches Code of Conduct, to ensure their behaviour towards their members is appropriate. All coaches are in a position of trust over children and must act professionally at all times. If an action you take could be deemed to be unprofessional and inappropriate, then do not take that course of action.

Relationship of trust

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 states: "It is an offence for a person aged 18 years or over to involve a child under that age in sexual activity where he or she is in a specified position of trust in relation to that child. This includes those who care for, advise, supervise or train children and young people."

This does not currently apply in law to swimming, para-swimming, diving, high diving, artistic swimming, water polo and open water swimming teachers or coaches (though this may change following lobbying) but Swim England has adopted this policy into Swim England's Codes of Conduct and the Swim England Code of Ethics, and any relationship of this nature may result in disciplinary action.

Swim England adopt the Home Office guidelines which recommend the principle that people in positions of trust and authority should not have sexual relationships with under 18-year-olds in their care. The power and influence a coach or teacher has in a professional relationship with a child cannot be underestimated. In addition to this, the child's success or failure and team selection may be dependent on the coach. It is vital for all coaches and teachers, as well as other volunteers, to recognise the responsibility they have and ensure that they do not abuse that position of power and trust.

Therefore, the position of Swim England is that no sexual relationship should exist between members under 18 years of age and their coach or teacher, and that the relationship between coach and member must be appropriate at all times.

Please note that children aged 16/17 years can legally consent to some types of sexual activity. However, in almost all provisions of legislation (under the Children Act 1989) they are still classified as children.

Managing challenging behaviour

Individuals who deliver sports activities to children may, on occasions, be required to deal with challenging behaviour.

Advice and guidance can be found on the following links:

- Child Protection in Sport Unit briefing paper on Managing Challenging Behaviour thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/best-practice/managing-challenging-behaviour
- UK Coaching provide an e-learning module to help coaches and teachers develop skills to manage disruptive behaviour at ukcoaching.org/courses/learn-at-home/inspiring-positive-behaviour-in-sport
- Connected Coaches is an initiative by UK Coaching, a charity established in 1984, to drive the development of sports coaching in the UK. They provide resources on how to inspire good behaviour in sessions at connectedcoaches.org
- Mencap provide advice and guidance for parents/guardians and professionals for challenging behaviour at mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/conditions/challenging-behaviour
- The Challenging Behaviour Foundation are a charity providing advice and guidance to professionals for individuals with a severe learning disability at challengingbehaviour.org.uk/supporting-you/for-professionals/for-professionals.html

