



Wear Valley Amateur Swimming Club Anti-Bullying Policy

Wear Valley Amateur Swimming Club is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our members so they can learn to swim or train in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable within our club. If bullying does occur, all our members or parents/guardians should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a TELLING club. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the Club Welfare Officer, coach, or committee member.

Objectives of this policy

- All club members, coaches, committee members and parents/guardians should have an understanding of what bullying and cyberbullying are.
- All club members, teachers, committee members and parents/guardians should know what the club policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- As a club we take bullying seriously. Members and parents/guardians should be assured that they would be supported when bullying is reported.
- **Bullying will not be tolerated.**

What is bullying behaviour?

The Anti-Bullying Alliance defines bullying as “the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or through cyberspace”.

Bullying can include:

- Verbal: name calling, persistent teasing, mocking, taunting and threats.
- Physical: any degree of physical violence including hitting, kicking and pushing. Intimidating behaviour, theft or the intentional damage of possessions.
- Emotional: excluding, tormenting, ridiculing, humiliation, setting people up and spreading rumours.
- Cyber: the misuse of digital technologies or communications to bully a person or a group, typically through messages or actions that are threatening and/or intended to cause offence, anxiety or humiliation.
- Peer on peer abuse: this means inappropriate behaviour between peers and includes all of the above together with non-consensual sexual behaviour, sharing of nude or semi-nude images or videos, upskirting, initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

(please refer to p.13, Keeping children safe in education, 2021, Department for Education).

Why are children bullied?

Children are most commonly bullied because of a real or perceived “**difference**”. This difference can be anything but could be attributed to:

- Racist: bullying based on ethnicity, skin colour, and language, religious or cultural practices.
- Homophobic and transphobic: bullying based on sexuality or gender identity.
- Disablist: bullying children who have special educational needs and disabilities.
- Sexual: unwelcome sexual advances, comments that are intended to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation.
- Discriminative: Bullying based on any perceived weakness or difference. This could be because of their gender, age, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability or ability. It could also be factors surrounding the way someone looks or the clothes they wear, their family and social situation, hobbies and interests.

Signs and symptoms

A child may not always ask for help or tell you their concerns. There may be signs or behaviours that indicate they may be being bullied. Adults should be aware of these signs and be prepared to investigate if a child is:

- Unwilling to go to club sessions.
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence.
- Feels ill before or during training sessions or feigns sickness.
- Starts to drop in their level of training or competition.
- Doesn't want to travel with the club or attend club events.
- Comes home with clothing torn or training equipment damaged.
- Has possessions that go “missing”.
- Has unexplained cuts and bruises.
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay the bully).
- Is frightened to say what is wrong.
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable.
- Starts stammering.
- Cries themselves to sleep or has nightmares.
- Is bullying other children or siblings.
- Stops eating or has a poor appetite.
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away.
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above.

This list is not exhaustive and could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Why is it important to respond to bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Individuals who are bullying others need to learn different ways of behaving. Most bullying incidents are not crimes. But some types of bullying are illegal and should be reported to the police. This includes bullying that involves violence, assault and theft; harassment or intimidation over a period of time including calling someone names or threatening them, making abusive phone calls and sending abusive emails or text messages (one incident is not normally enough to get a conviction); and anything involving hate crimes. Wear Valley Amateur Swimming Club as it is a Swim England affiliated organisation has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Procedures

- Report bullying incidents to the Club Welfare Officer, coach, or member of the committee.
- The Club Welfare Officer should be informed if a report of bullying is received by another officer so that appropriate action is taken.
- The Club Welfare Officer will discuss the concerns with the Club Chair to decide whether the matter should be dealt with as an alleged breach of the Club Codes of Conduct or whether the matter proceeds under the Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Advice can be sought at any time from the County or Regional Welfare Officer, Swim England Child Safeguarding Team or Swimline.
- If necessary and appropriate the police should be consulted.
- Parents/guardians should be informed and may be asked to come to a meeting to discuss the problem.
- Bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly.
- If bullying is found appropriate action will be taken.
- Attempts will be made to help the bully to change their behaviour.
- If bullying is seen to continue despite best efforts to stop the behaviour the club may initiate disciplinary action under the Wear Valley Amateur Swimming Club constitution.

Recommended club action

The Welfare Officer is to be fully informed of any allegations involving bullying of a child or children at the club. The Welfare Officer should discuss the concerns with the Club Chair so a decision can be made as to whether it is appropriate for the club to deal with the situation as an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct or for the Welfare Officer to proceed with support from the club under the Anti-Bullying Policy. Agree who will lead the investigation, this will usually be the Welfare Officer but sometimes the children's coach may wish to take the lead with assistance from the Welfare Officer. This is sometimes a preferred option if the children are

more familiar with their coach. Advice can be sought from the County or Regional Welfare Officer or the Swim England Child Safeguarding Team at any time

- Initially try to reconcile the parties by bringing them together. A genuine recognition of the effects of their behaviour and an apology may solve the situation.
- Ensure that parents/guardians are made aware of the concerns and the proposed club action of reconciliation as described above.
- Record the outcome of the reconciliation attempt and advise the parents/guardians of that outcome. If reconciliation fails, is deemed inappropriate in the situation or parents/guardians don't agree to a reconciliation attempt then:
 1. Set up a panel of three, this would normally be led by the Welfare Officer alongside either the Club Secretary, Chairman, committee member or coach.
 2. The panel to meet with the child and their parent/guardian alleging the bullying. Allow the child to explain in their own words what has been happening so that full details of the allegation are known. The panel will need to know when and where this has been happening, by whom and whether they think anyone witnessed the behaviour.
 3. Some children may not feel comfortable talking to the panel even with the support of their parent/guardian so the child should be allowed to give a written account in their own words. The child's parent/guardian should then provide this account to the panel.
 4. If there were any witnesses the same panel would speak to them to determine what they saw and any other information they have. If the witness is a child the panel makes that contact via the parent/guardian. The advice at point 3 should also be followed if required.
 5. The panel meet with the alleged bully and their parent/guardian to put the allegation to them and allow them the opportunity to respond to the allegation in their own words. Again the advice at point 3 should be followed if required.
 6. If the bullying is admitted then the panel can make decisions immediately on appropriate actions.
 7. If the bullying is denied the panel will need to consider and form a view on what is alleged on the balance of probabilities. This view will be formed on all the available information gained by the panel from all sides, previous concerns and knowledge of the parties involved.
 8. At all stages minutes should be taken for clarity and agreed by all as a true account.

Potential club actions if bullying is found

- An apology from the bully and an agreement on future behaviour.
- A formal behaviour contract and ongoing monitoring to prevent repeated bullying.
- Disciplinary action such as a written warning, temporary suspension or permanent exclusion.

All actions must be recorded and all parties should be kept informed on what is happening and the outcomes.

Prevention

Everybody within the club has a responsibility to work together to stop bullying. Wear Valley Amateur Swimming Club has a written constitution and adheres to the Swim England Code of Ethics and accompanying Codes of Conduct.

Cyberbullying

Behaviour that is classed as cyberbullying can include:

- Abusive comments, rumours, gossip and threats over the internet or using other digital communications. This includes “trolling”.
- Sharing pictures, videos or personal information without consent and with the intent to cause harm and/or humiliation.
- Hacking into someone’s email, phone, or online profiles to extract and share personal information, or to send abusive or inappropriate content while posing as that person.
- Creating specific websites that negatively target an individual or a group.
- Blackmail or pressuring someone to do something online they do not want to do.

Some cyberbullying activities could be criminal offences under a range of different laws, including the Malicious Communications Act 1988 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. Whilst our club can commit to ensuring that the Wear Valley Amateur Swimming Club website and Wear Valley Amateur Swimming Club social networking site is being used appropriately and deal with any bullying behaviour on these platforms it becomes more challenging when and if behaviour being reported is happening outside the environment of the club.

Please note that:-

State Schools have powers under the Education Act 2002 to intervene in bullying incidents outside of the school grounds including on home to school transport, in the community and online. The same power does not extend to Swim England or to Wear Valley Amateur Swimming Club to be able to investigate children allegedly using their personal social media sites to cyberbully or use their personal social media inappropriately towards others. If children involved in alleged cyberbullying are members of the same club, parents/guardians can be assured that the club will ensure that behaviour within the club environment remains in accordance with the Code of Conduct and should any bullying behaviour be reported during club time then any necessary action will be taken.

Practical steps parents and guardians can take:-

Many incidents of cyberbullying allow those experiencing it to keep evidence, for example, a screen shot, to show their parent/ guardian or in serious cases the police.

- Make sure your child knows how to block anyone who posts hateful or abusive things. This can usually be found on the help or online safety area of the app or online service.

- Report anyone who is bullying your child to the platform that carried the offending comments, audio, image or video. Many online services and apps have a report now button that can be used.
- Advice can always be sought from the police.
- Parents/guardians please refer to the links provided here where you can receive expert advice and guidance: **Kidscape** kidscape.org.uk, **Anti-Bullying Alliance** anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk, **NSPCC** Child Protection in Sport Unit the cpsu.org.uk
Childline childline.org.uk Bullying UK bullying.co.uk.

(Reviewed March 2022 and adapted from Wavepower p.72-76)