



Section 6

Information and guidance for parents

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The ASA recognise that parents play an important part in keeping their children and other swimmers safe. The ASA also recognise, in line with the guidance in "Every Child Matters", that the role of all adults in ASA clubs, including parents, is of paramount importance to keeping swimmers safe from harm.

Over the last 10 years the ASA have developed a Child Protection Policy and Procedure (downloadable from the ASA website www.britishswimming.org) that gives parents and others clear guidance on what action to take if they are concerned about poor practice or a child welfare matter. While this is in essence a document to help prevent poor practice and encourage and identify good practice, we are aware that sometimes problems can develop in clubs that require action to be taken.

The ASA is confident that the majority of its clubs, and specifically those with a swim21 status, have very good and proactive child welfare policies in place. However, parents need to reassure themselves that the club they choose is a safe environment in which to leave their child or young person. The ASA have therefore developed specific guidance to assist parents in reassuring themselves that their child is joining a safe and responsible club with advice on how to recognise and raise issues that may be poor practice or child welfare. (See Wavepower 2009/11 section 2.)

Additionally, the ASA recommend that parents download a copy of the DCMS "Helping keep your child safe in sport"

document from the ASA website or www.culture.gov.uk or ask the club Welfare Officer to share their copy. When considering a swimming club for your child or young person, it is suggested that as a parent visiting a club, you enquire as to who is the child Welfare Officer. You may wish to discuss with them the list of questions below, although other committee members may be able to assist you as well. Remember, the people in committee posts are volunteers and may not be able to attend every session so be patient if you are asked to wait a few days for a meeting with the Welfare Officer to be arranged.

Watch a training session. The club will have no problem with you and your child or young person doing so but you should identify yourself to a member of the club committee (they are usually in the reception area) if you call in without phoning first. If you do phone the club secretary in advance, you are likely to be met by a committee member who can discuss membership in more detail on the night.

If you do not have access to a computer and printer, all documents referred to can be obtained from the club Welfare Officer.

Some questions you may wish to ask the club Welfare Officer or other committee member are:

- Is the club a swim21 Club (See details on website)?
- If you can see a copy of the club child welfare policy and procedures.
- If the club has an anti bullying policy.
- If the club has good practice guidance and code of conduct for coaches, teachers, helpers, officials, volunteers, parents and swimmers.
- Who is the designated Child Welfare Officer in place if you have not met them.
- Are there procedures in place for dealing with concerns, complaints and disciplinary issues?
- Does the club have procedures in place for safe recruitment?
- Are coaches and teachers suitably qualified and/or experienced?
- Does the club follow the ASA guidance on events and training camps?
- Does the club arrange for all appropriate coaches, teachers and volunteers involved with the supervision of junior swimmers to attend child protection awareness training?
- Are parents encouraged to watch or become involved in the club and their swimmers training in an appropriate manner?

You may wish to discuss with the teacher/coach that will take your child or young person for training if they become members. This can be arranged but it will have to be at a convenient time for both parties. It is not possible or acceptable for teaching or staff to leave poolside to speak to new parents. However, many clubs will have teacher/coach time set aside when they can speak to existing and potential new parents and swimmers.

Some of the questions you may wish to ask the teacher/coach are.

- What times would my child be expected to train?
- What is the opportunity for them competing for the club and how are teams selected?
- Will I have the opportunity to discuss my child's progress with you on a regular basis/if I need to?
- What is the opportunity for my child to go up in terms of lane as they develop their swimming skills and how are the decisions made?

Parents' Commitment to their Child and the Club

We do ask that parents have a commitment to the club in line with the commitment your club will have to your child.

There are various ways that the parent can assist the club, some of which are outlined below.

- Take an interest in your child's activity and progress and be supportive.
- Find out what the club has to offer in terms of coaching sessions and competitions.
- Be punctual when dropping off and picking up your children for/ from coaching and competitions.
- Take an interest in your son/ daughter's swimming and have clear lines of communication to keep up with your child's progress.
- If you are unable to stay at training/ competitions, ensure your son/ daughter have all the appropriate required equipment and ensure that the club has an emergency contact number for you, a mobile would be preferable, and that you leave your mobile switched on so that you can be contacted in an emergency.

- Advise the Club Welfare Officer/ Junior Organiser if your child has any particular needs (e.g. allergies, learning disabilities) to ensure they are provided for in the best way possible, and ensure any relevant new concerns/illnesses or ongoing treatments are reported appropriately to the club Welfare Officer or coach.

Many clubs have now adopted the ASA "Parents Code of Conduct". If your club has not we suggest you consider asking the committee to consider such a code being adopted.

Feel free to offer your services to the club. The club will always be looking for volunteers to help run the club, assist at galas, join the committee, fund raise etc. At some stage in the future you may yourself wish to train as a swimming teacher, coach, ASA timekeeper or judge. Many clubs will assist in this both by finding suitable courses and in sometimes assisting with the cost involved.

The club can only run with the help of the parents who become willing volunteers. Please do not hold back from offering to help. Speak to any of the committee members about what help is required and see if you can assist to help in the smooth running of the club for your child as well as all club members.

What should you do if you have a concern for yours or another child in the club?

While everything will be done by your club committee, coaches and teachers to ensure good practice at all times, you may at some time have concern you need to raise.

Remember: if you take on a role with significant access to and responsibility for children under 18 years you will be asked to complete a CRB check. This is not because

the club does not trust you, but is a safeguarding measure in place to protect all swimmers.

If the concern is about your child or young person's training your club should have guidance available by which you can discuss with the coach the training your child is receiving. If this is not the case, we advise you approach the club welfare officer to find out how you can arrange a time suitable for yourself and the coach/teacher to discuss your child's training and development.

- If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of any discussion with the club coach/teacher you should approach the club Welfare Officer for advice on what to do next. But remember, the training offered may be in the interests of the majority of the swimmers but not meet the needs of your individual swimmer. If this is the case you need to discuss whether a change of squads, lanes or even club is appropriate to ensure your child's needs are met.

If you have an issue regarding poor practice by the club in relation to your child's training

- The ASA Signposting Helpdesk is a helpline available to all ASA members who need guidance on who to approach for help and advice if they have a concern. The helpdesk can be contacted on 01509 632275 or via email on signposting@swimming.org.
- If you have exhausted all avenues to discuss your concern within the club and still feel the club are failing to meet the needs of your child, you can consider the option of a complaint against the club through the ASA.
- Issues of poor practice should be reported to the ASA Office of Judicial Administration. If a formal complaint is made the Judicial Laws

and Rules are followed and the Office of Judicial Administration deals directly with the parties concerned.

If you have a concern of a child welfare nature about your child or another child

- Please refer to the guidance in Section 2 of the Wavepower 2009/11 policy.
- If your concern is about a child you consider may be in immediate risk of injury or harm, or has been injured or harmed, do not hesitate and immediately contact the local Children's Social Care Team, the police, or the ASA ICPO. They will ensure action is taken without delay to ensure the wellbeing of the child/ young person. The club Welfare Officer and ICPO must be informed as soon as possible of a referral to the statutory agencies.
- If you have a concern that is regarding the welfare of your/ another child, it is important you raise your concern immediately with the club Welfare Officer. They will advise you as to action you can take action themselves, refer the matter to the statutory agencies or the ASA ICPO.
- If you do not wish to approach the club directly you can call the Swimline number 0808 100 4001. You will need to leave a number for a Swimliner or the ICPO to call you back or if you wish to speak to someone immediately, hold on and you will be put through to the NSPCC helpline.
- If the matter is involving your child you will be advised of what you should do and kept fully involved of all action taken.
- If the matter is about a child unrelated to yourself information will only be made available to you in line with appropriate confidentiality.

The ASA have produced many policies to assist in good practice within clubs which can be seen on the ASA website and downloaded if required. Additionally, the Child protection page of the website has a "FAQ" page.

If you cannot find you answer to a query within these pages, speak to the club Welfare Officer or contact Swimline if it is a matter of a child welfare nature.

We hope you and your child enjoys his/ her membership of the ASA and he/ she will continue to enjoy training and competing for their club, county or country for many years.





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NSPCC Registered Charity Number 216401

Wavepower 2009 - 2011 (May 09)