

# Whistleblowing Policy

Whistleblowing allows individuals to raise genuine concerns about any potential incident of poor practice, wrongdoing, illegal or unethical conduct by individuals without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

As a Swim England Member, AVSC adheres to the Swim England Whistleblowing Policy, as part of Wavepower.

Wavepower can be accessed on the Swim England Website (link below) or in the AVSC Documents and Policies page on the AVSC website.

[Wavepower 2020-23 | Child safeguarding for Swim England clubs \(swimming.org\)](#)

Whistleblowing allows individuals to raise genuine concerns about any potential incident of poor practice, wrongdoing, illegal or unethical conduct by individuals without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

This policy applies to all Swim England members.

Children are vulnerable to abuse and all adults who work in sports organisations, whether paid or unpaid, member or non-member, must look to safeguard their welfare. Swim England believes it is necessary to develop a culture in all organisations and counties, regionally and nationally, where concerned individuals can raise concerns in a safe and supportive environment.

## **Swim England is committed to:**

1. Developing a culture that is safe.
2. Encouraging a culture of openness.
3. Protecting all members.
4. Upholding the reputation of the organisation.
5. Maintaining our sports' and the public's confidence.

## **“Whistleblower”**

The term “whistleblower” is commonly used to describe a person who discloses concerns about wrongdoing, illegal or unethical conduct. Within Swim England such disclosures could include but not be limited to:

- Criminal acts e.g. indecent images of children.
- Incidents of child abuse within our sports.
- Bullying.
- Breaches of the Code of Conduct or discrimination.
- Concerns regarding health and safety e.g. encouraging a child to train against medical advice.
- Disclosure of confidential information about a child or other member.

- Breaches of the Equality and Diversity Policy e.g. a child not being given the same opportunity as another child due to their gender.
- Witnessing or being told about poor practice or a failure to safeguard children.

### **Reasons for whistleblowing**

Every member, member's parent(s)/guardian(s), employee and volunteer in Swim England has a responsibility to raise concerns about potential poor practice and abuse/ unacceptable behaviour in order to:

- Prevent the problem increasing.
- Protect or reduce the risk to others.
- Avoid becoming a party to the concern by lack of appropriate action.

### **Making a Disclosure**

You may be worried about raising such issues or may want to keep the concerns to yourself, perhaps feeling that it is none of your business or that it is only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, your employer or to Swim England. You may decide to say something but find that you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

Swim England takes any form of misconduct seriously and this policy enables any individual with genuine concerns to raise them as soon as possible in the right way. We encourage all individuals, where appropriate, to raise the matter as a concern, if genuine, rather than wait for proof.

All children have a right to be protected. It is often the most vulnerable children who are targeted and who are least able to act or defend themselves, or disclose what is happening. They need you and others like you to protect their wellbeing and safeguard them from harm or potential harm. Everyone involved in our sports has a responsibility to raise concerns appropriately to individuals who can act upon them whether that is the Welfare Officer, the Swim England Child Safeguarding Team or the statutory agencies. Swim England acknowledge that "blowing the whistle" on a colleague or friend will be difficult but it is important you do so rather than allow a child to become or remain at risk. Once the concern has been raised, the Welfare Officer, the Swim England Child Safeguarding Team and/or the statutory agencies will take action in the appropriate manner.

### **Why is it difficult to whistleblow?**

You may feel worried that:

- You will be starting a chain of events you have no control over.
- To do so will be disruptive to the organisation, the young person(s) and/or yourself.
- You may have got it wrong and the concern will prove to be unfounded.
- You will not be listened to or believed.

At each stage, concerns are managed by professionals, with a view to independently assess the information, and act in the best interests of any children that may be involved. Concerns are taken seriously, and if proved unfounded, any action taken is designed not to disrupt children and families unnecessarily. Reporting concerns will not start a process that cannot be halted, if unfounded.

Swim England assures everyone involved in our sports that they will be treated fairly and all concerns will be properly considered. If you act in good faith in reporting a concern and even if the suspicion is unfounded you will be supported and no action will be taken against you. However, if it is proven the concern has been raised maliciously to cause harm to others, you may be liable to action under the Swim England complaints and disciplinary processes.

### **Referring the concern**

If you are a member of a Swim England club or organisation, or the parent/guardian of a member you must refer your concern to the Welfare Officer, the County or Regional Welfare Officer, the Child Safeguarding Team or the statutory agencies. If you receive a concern from a third party regarding a member of a Swim England organisation, you should try to obtain the following information:

- Their name, address and contact details.
- The names of all the individuals involved.
- If they have evidence of the alleged concern or if not what it is that leads them to believe that abuse or poor practice is happening.
- How they became aware of the concern.

The information should then be referred to the Welfare Officer, or the County or Regional Welfare Officer if appropriate, Swim England Child Safeguarding Team or the statutory agencies who will consider what action to take.

If you are a Swim England employee rather than a member of a Swim England club or organisation, you should report the concern to your line manager, the Chief Executive Officer or you can contact Public Concern at Work at [pcaw.org.uk](http://pcaw.org.uk).

When referring the concern, do not:

- Try to deal with the concern yourself.
- Inform the person about whom the concern has been raised.
- Inform any other members or employees of the concern other than those outlined above.
- Commence your own investigation.
- Annotate or remove evidence received.
- Delay in reporting the concern.

Also, do not assume that:

- “All is well or it would have been noted earlier.”
- “It does not matter” or “no harm will arise.”
- “I should ignore it as it’s not my responsibility.”

### **What happens when you have raised a concern in good faith?**

- The concern you raise will be treated in confidence and will be shared only on a need-to-know basis.
- You will be given updates on how the enquiry is progressing if it is possible to do so.
- Swim England has a responsibility to protect you from harassment of any kind that results from your disclosure.

- If the matter is proven/found on the balance of probabilities to be so then appropriate action will be taken against the individual(s) concerned.
- If the matter is unproven/unfounded on the balance of probabilities, providing you raised the concern in good faith, no action will be taken against you.
- Malicious allegations will be considered as a disciplinary offence.

## **Feedback**

Every effort will be made to provide feedback to you on the outcome and action taken on the matter you referred, but how much detail can be reported back to you will vary according to the nature and result of the investigation. Wherever possible, Swim England will ensure you have notice while the matter is ongoing and when it has been concluded.

The key contacts are as follows:

### **AVSC Welfare Officer**

[welfare@avsc.co.uk](mailto:welfare@avsc.co.uk)

### **County (ONB) Welfare Officer**

<https://uk.teamunify.com/team/onbc/page/welfare/welfare-contact>  
[ONBwelfare@gmail.com](mailto:ONBwelfare@gmail.com) (Lucie Clark)

### **Regional (Swim South East) Welfare Officer**

<https://www.southeastswimming.org/other-roles-and-responsibilities/>  
Welfare Officer (Shelley Robinson)  
[Welfare@southeastswimming.org](mailto:Welfare@southeastswimming.org)

### **Swim England Child Safeguarding Team**

01509 640270

### **Swimline**

0808 100 4001

### **NSPCC Child Protection Helpline**

0808 800 5000