

ATHLETE SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1.0 Introduction

SportCheer Scotland is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all athletes in its care. It recognizes its responsibility to promote safe practice and to protect athletes from harm, abuse and exploitation.

This document outlines SportCheer Scotland's commitment to protect all athletes. These guidelines are based on the following principles:

- The welfare of athletes is of primary concern
- All athletes regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, language, ethnic origin, socio-economic status, religious beliefs and / or sexual identity have the right to protection from all forms of harm and abuse.
- Protection is the responsibility of all SportCheer Scotland staff, coaches, volunteers and parents.
- Athletes have a right to express their views on all matters which affect them and should be encouraged to do so in appropriate ways.
- SportCheer Scotland shall work in partnership together with athletes, coaches and parents to promote the welfare, health and development of athletes.

2.0 Definitions

Club - refers to the cheerleading club that the athlete is a member of / attends training sessions at.

Protection Officer – refers to SportCheer Scotland's Safeguarding Officer (safesport@sportcheerscotland.org.uk)

Registered Coach – coaches that are appropriately qualified by a registered body and are registered on the PVG Scheme.

Properly Supervised – by an appropriately trained and qualified coach.

3.0 Responsibilities

The Role of the Athlete's Parent / Guardian

- All parents / guardians must take all measures necessary to protect their children from harm or the risk of harm.
- All parents / guardians must take all measures necessary to ensure that they are satisfied with the club and the club's officials.
- All parents / guardians, where relevant, must sign their child's consent and / or participation wavier forms.
- All parents / guardians must make arrangements for the transportation of children to and from the activity. It will be the responsibility of the parents to satisfy themselves regarding the appropriateness of the arrangements.
- All parents / guardians must take all necessary arrangements to ensure that appropriately trained personnel can be in attendance in good time should their child require specialist medical or other assistance arising in relation to an existing medical condition or disability.
- Where appropriate all parents / guardians must provide sufficient information in good time to the club to enable the club to make any reasonable adjustments required by law and so that the club can ensure the safety of their child during an activity.
- All parents / guardians must know who the protection officer is and their contact details:

SportCheer Scotland Safeguarding Officer
Safesport@sportcheerscotland.org.uk

SportCheer Scotland
Athlete Safeguarding Policy – Version 2
Approved by the Board of Directors: December 2023
Review Date: December 2024

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- Only parents / guardians who are registered officials or volunteers of the club will qualify for a PVG Scheme check.

Note: All persons involved in cheerleading have responsibilities to report and suspected or alleged breaches of the Athlete Safeguarding Policy to the relevant member of SportCheer Scotland staff. It is not the coach / official's responsibility to decide whether an athlete has been abused.

The Role of the Coach

- Take all reasonable steps, where possible, to protect all athletes from harm or the risk of harm during all activities.
- All registered coaches should be PVG checked.
- Any new person who wishes to help with coaching etc. must be supervised by a current registered coach until they have completed PVG checks.
- All coaches must protect all athletes from all forms of abuse.
- All coaches have a duty to report any allegations or concerns about other adults / coaches to SportCheer Scotland staff at safesport@sportcheerscotland.org.uk.
- All coaches must display high standards in respect of behavior and appearance. They should project an image of health, cleanliness and efficiency in respect of the function for which they have responsibility.
- All coaches must observe the SportCheer Scotland Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- All coaches must have coaching qualifications appropriate to the athlete and / or team level or discipline of the session.

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The Role of SportCheer Scotland

- Take all reasonable steps, where possible, to protect all athletes and coaches from harm or the risk of harm during all activities.
- To ensure all coaches and volunteers are PVG checked in a timely manner and that all relevant checks on coaches are performed before they are offered membership e.g. identification – they are who they say they are.
- To accept that all coaches must report concerns in respect of any suspected abuse.
- To be committed to eradicating bad practice.
- In cases of reported abuse, to maintain total confidentiality. Information must only be shared on a need-to-know basis i.e. with people who need to know to ensure the child's health, welfare and development.

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4.0 Code of Conduct

4.1 Normal Activities

Good Practice:

- Make cheerleading fun and enjoyable.
- Always treat athletes and coaches with respect and dignity irrespective of their age, race, religious beliefs, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or social background.
- Involve parents wherever possible. Always be open and honest with athletes and parents.
- Make sure all activities are properly supervised by qualified and registered coaches.
- Make sure that all athletes and parents have completed a consent form and / or participation waiver.
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust that empower and include athletes in the decision – making process.
- Always work in an open environment. Avoid private or unobserved situations.
- Always strive to have a minimum of two coaches in attendance during all activities.
- Always act in the best interests of all athletes and coaches, putting their welfare first before winning or achieving performance goals.
- Be an excellent role model including not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of athletes and avoid excessive training and competition, pushing them against their will and putting undue pressure on them.
- Take all reasonable steps, where possible, to protect all athletes and coaches from harm or the risk of harm during all activities.
- In emergency situations, take note of all risks before making decisions.
- Always make sure that any allegations or concerns are recorded and acted upon.
- Always report all incidents of abuse or concerns to the relevant member of SportCheer Scotland staff and submit a written record of said incident or concerns.
- At least one coach per session must have first aid training and have access to first aid supplies.
- Always be punctual for all activities promoting good coaching practice and the ongoing development of a safe environment where the needs and welfare of athletes is of paramount importance.
- Always encourage full participation in all activities whilst at the same time acknowledging the limitations that may prevent this because of an athlete's special needs.

Practices to be avoided:

- Avoid spending too much unnecessary time alone with an athlete away from other athletes.
- Avoid meeting with athletes away from organized activities without a parent or other coach being involved.
- Avoid making arrangements to meet an athlete in their home without the athlete's parent or guardian being present.
- Avoid favouritism – this could lead to resentment and jealousy from other athletes and could be misinterpreted by others.
- Avoid doing things of a personal nature of an athlete that an athlete can do for themselves such as going to the toilet or changing clothes. If assisting an athlete in the toilet, the coach must never enter the toilet cubicle. Seek the consent of the parents and athletes where physical assistance is absolutely necessary.

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- Avoid being present whilst athletes are showering and changing unless it is necessary in the interests of health and safety or the athletes are particularly young or vulnerable. In these circumstances it would be best practice to have at least two coaches present and, if appropriate, to leave the door open.
- Avoid an athlete travelling along with a coach irrespective of the length or duration of the journey. If possible make sure your pick-up or drop-off points are with at least two coaches. If a single athlete has to be transported the coach should seek the consent of the athlete's parent or guardian or the athlete, if they are over the age of 18.
- If under exceptional circumstances a single athlete has to be transported, make sure the coach involved advises another coach or reports the incident to SportCheer Scotland staff.
- Allowing athletes or coaches to swear unchallenged.
- Avoid athletes being unsupervised during activities.
- Avoid coaches taking activities on their own.
- Avoid coaches placing themselves in vulnerable situations.

Practices never to be sanctioned:

- Any club / team having unregistered coaches acting for or on behalf of them.
- Harming an athlete or putting an athlete at risk of harm.
- Sexually abusing an athlete.
- Forming intimate emotional, physical or sexual relationships with children.
- Allowing coaches or athletes to use sexualized language unchallenged.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Allowing or engaging in touching a child in a sexually suggestive manner. Any such incidents must be reported to another coach and the athlete involved informed that this behaviour is unacceptable.
- Engaging in sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allowing coaches to shower or change with athletes. Always wait until all athletes have left the changing room.
- Physically assaulting an athlete or coach.
- Engaging in rough or physical contact.
- Inviting or allowing children to stay with you at your home.
- Supplying alcohol or prohibited substances to athletes.
- Supplying prohibited substances to coaches.
- Allowing athletes or coaches to be under the influence of alcohol or any prohibited substances during activities.
- Extortion.
- Bullying e.g. reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Harassment and intimidation e.g. racial harassment. Allowing athletes and coaches to refer to another member's religion, gender, disability, gender identity or sexuality in a derogatory manner.
- Allowing allegations made by an athlete to go unchallenged, unreported or not acted upon.

4.2 Outings and Overnight Stays

Good Practice:

- Making sure all outings are planned with health and safety of uppermost importance.
- Inform all parents timeously in writing of the times of departure, pick-up points, time of return, drop-off points and emergency telephone contact numbers.

- Make sure all outings are properly supervised e.g. a ratio of one coach to six athletes with a minimum of three coaches in attendance.
- Make sure all outings are properly supervised e.g. if the group consists of male and female athletes they must be accompanied by both male and female coaches, where possible.
- Make all athletes aware of the availability of telephones to contact home.

Practices to be avoided:

- Athletes visiting an adult's room.
- Allowing coaches to enter an athlete's room.

Practices never to be sanctioned:

- A coach sharing a room with a child unless they are the parent or guardian of the child.
- Allowing coaches to supervise or have any responsibility for athletes while under the influence of alcohol or any prohibited substances.
- Allowing coaches to check athletes' rooms unaccompanied. A minimum of 2 coaches is required.

5.0 Safe In-Care Guidelines

5.1 Adult – to – Athlete Ratios

As a guide, the following ratios are recommended to all activities:

- Age 3 up to age 8 – 1:6
- Age 8 and over – 1:8
- All activities should be planned to involve a minimum of at least two registered coaches.
- All trips and overnight stays should be planned to involve a minimum of at least 3 registered coaches.
- If the team is mixed gender, it is preferred that there is one male and one female coach, where possible.

As a general guide, the following factors will also be taken into consideration in deciding how many coaches are required to safely supervise athletes:

- The number of athletes involved in the activity.
- The age, maturity and experience of the athletes.
- Whether any of the coaches or athletes has a learning or physical disability or special requirements.
- Whether any of the athletes have challenging behaviour.
- The particular hazards associated with the activity.
- The particular hazards associated with the environment.
- The level of qualification and experience of the coaches.
- The programme of activities.

5.2 First Aid and the Treatment of Injuries.

All coaches must ensure:

- Where practicable all parents of athletes under 18 have completed a consent form before their child participates in cheerleading.
- There is an accessible and well-resourced first aid kit at the venue.

- They are aware of any pre-existing medical conditions, medicines being taken by participants or existing injuries and treatment required.
- Only those with a current, recognized first aid qualification treat injuries. In more serious cases assistance should be obtained from a medically qualified professional as soon as possible.
- An incident record from is completed is an athlete sustains a significant injury along with the details of any treatment given. Common sense should be applied when determining which injuries are significant.
- Where possible, access to medical advice and / or assistance is available. Do not take on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained e.g. giving an athlete an injection.
- An athlete's parents are informed of any injury and action taken as soon as possible.
- The circumstances in which any accidents occur are reviewed to avoid future repetitions.

5.3 Physical Contact

All forms of physical contact should respect and be sensitive to the needs and wishes of athletes and should take place in a culture of dignity and respect for all athletes. Athletes should be encouraged to express their views on physical contact.

In the first instance, coaching techniques should be delivered by demonstration (either by the coach or an athlete who can display the technique being taught). Educational instruction should be clearly explained with a description of how it is proposed to handle or have contact with the athlete before doing so. This should be accompanied by checking if the athlete is comfortable.

Manual support should be provided openly and must always be proportionate to the circumstances.

If it is necessary to help an athlete with the personal tasks e.g. toileting or changing, the athlete and parents should be encouraged to speak out about methods of support with which they are uncomfortable. Coaches should work with parents and athletes to develop practiced routines for personal care so that parents and athletes know what to expect.

Do not take responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained e.g. manual assistance for an athlete with a physical disability.

6.0 Procedures to be Followed where Abuse is Disclosed or Suspected

If you have a concern about an athlete's welfare, you should contact your club / programme's Safeguarding / Wellbeing Officer. They will then take the correct steps to report it.

We recommend completing our Incident / Concern form to assist with capturing all relevant information. A copy of this should also be sent to SportCheer Scotland at safesport@sportcheerscotland.org.uk.

If a child confides in you about an issue, here are some points to follow:

- Stay calm and do not rush into actions which may be inappropriate.
- Tell them you know how difficult it must have been to confide in you.
- Reassure the child.
- Listen to and believe what the child says, show you are taking the matter seriously.

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- Be honest and do not make promises you cannot keep. Explain that you may have to tell other people in order to stop what is happening.
- Be clear about what the child says so that it can be passed onto the relevant professionals.

Record

- What the child has said to you, in a legible and accurate format.
- The facts and objective observations, not your own opinion.
- The child's name, address and date of birth.
- The date and time of the incident.
- Exactly what the child said, and what you said.

Ensure

- You date and sign the record.
- The record is countersigned by an appropriate individual e.g. SportCheer Scotland's Safeguarding Officer.
- You do not take sole responsibility. Consult with SportCheer Scotland's Safeguarding Officer or any other coach as soon as possible, so that you can protect the child and gain support for yourself in a difficult situation.

Actions

- SportCheer Scotland's Safeguarding Officer shall consult the appropriate agencies.
- The Safeguarding Officer will obtain names and phone numbers of those consulted.
- The Safeguarding Officer will follow the advice given by the appropriate agencies.
- The Safeguarding Officer shall inform SportCheer Scotland's President that an incident has occurred and of the action taken.
- Coaches must be aware that they are not child-care professionals and that the procedures set down are to be followed immediately where they suspect abuse to have taken place. It is the role of the professional child-care protection agencies to investigate.

7.0 Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and relevance.