

Portsmouth Triathletes' Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Last update 11th December 2024 – removed Covid

Reviewed by Kevin McTaggart December 2024 – next review December 2026

1 Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy

1.1 Introduction

Everyone who participates in Portsmouth Triathletes is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. Portsmouth Triathletes have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, coaches and volunteers provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

Portsmouth Triathletes is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone in sport accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm and abuse. This means to follow procedures to protect these club members and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children, young people and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of Portsmouth Triathletes and to allow the core team and other volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding issues.

A child/young person is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children's Act 1989)

1.1 Policy Statement

Portsmouth Triathletes is committed to the following:

- Ensuring the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount
- all children, young persons and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in triathlons / duathlons / aquathlons / other multisporting events in a fun and safe environment
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children, young persons and vulnerable adults from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- all Portsmouth Triathletes core team and other volunteers who work with children will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, DBS checked and will be provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and safeguarding procedures
- working in partnership with parents, children, young persons and vulnerable adults is essential for the protection of those people

1.2 Monitor and review the policy and procedures

The implementation of procedures will be regularly monitored and reviewed. The welfare officer will regularly report progress, challenges, difficulties, achievements gaps and areas where changes are required to the management committee. The policy will be reviewed every 3 years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

2 Promoting Good Practice

2.1 Introduction

To provide children, young persons and vulnerable adults with the best possible experience and opportunities in triathlons / duathlons / aquathlons / other multisporting events everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework such as The Coaches Code of Conduct.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of the core team or other volunteers or participants in triathlons / duathlons / aquathlons / other multisporting events to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult, as explained in section 4.

2.2 Good Practice

All core team members and other volunteers will adhere to the following principles and action:

- always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- make the experience of triathlons / duathlons / aquathlons / other multisporting events fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying
- treat all young people / vulnerable adults equally and with respect and dignity
- always put the welfare of the young person / vulnerable adult first, before winning
- maintain a safe and appropriate distance with players (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child, young person or vulnerable adult or to share a room with them)
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people / vulnerable adult. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person / vulnerable adult. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the young person's / vulnerable adult's consent has been given
- Involve parents/carers wherever possible, e.g. where young people / vulnerable adults need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child / carer to take responsibility for their vulnerable adult. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms always ensure parents, carers, coaches etc work in pairs
- request written parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people / vulnerable adults in their cars
- gain written consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g. overnight stays
- ensure that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- ensure that at away events adults should not enter a young person's / vulnerable adult's room or invite them to their rooms
- be an excellent role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people / vulnerable adults
- always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- recognising the developmental needs and capacity of the children, young persons and vulnerable adults and do not risk sacrificing welfare in a desire for club or personal achievements. This means avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will

- secure written parental consent for the club to act in loco parentis, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises
- keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given

2.3 Poor Practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and will be avoided by all core team members and other volunteers:

- unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with children, young persons and vulnerable adults away from others
- taking children, young persons and vulnerable adults alone in a car on journeys, however short
- taking children, young persons and vulnerable adults to your home where they will be alone with you
- sharing a room with a child, young person or vulnerable adult
- engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allowing children, young persons and vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- making sexually suggestive comments to a children, young persons and vulnerable adults, even in fun
- reducing a children, young persons and vulnerable adults to tears as a form of control
- allow allegations made by a child, young person or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- do things of a personal nature that the child, young person or vulnerable adult can do for themselves

When a case arises where it is impractical/impossible to avoid certain situation e.g. transporting a young person in your car, the tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/carer and the person involved.

If, during your care, you accidentally hurt a child, young person or vulnerable adult, they seem distressed in any manner, they appear to be sexually aroused by your actions and/or if they misunderstand or misinterpret something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to the Club Welfare Officer and make a written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

3 Defining Child Abuse

3.1 Introduction

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to either physical or emotional injury or harm, it commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to children, young persons and vulnerable adults regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

There are four main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect**. The abuser may be a family member, someone the child, young person or vulnerable adult encounters in sports and leisure activities. Any individual may abuse or neglect a child, young person or vulnerable adult directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming the child, young person or vulnerable adult.

Abuse in all of its forms can affect children, young persons and vulnerable adults at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated may follow the individual into adulthood and the remainder of their lives.

Young people with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse had occurred.

3.2 Types of Abuse

- **Physical Abuse:** where adults physically hurt or injure children, young persons and vulnerable adults e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute child abuse.

This category of abuse can also include when a parent/carer reports non-existent symptoms or illness deliberately causes ill health in a young person they are looking after. This is known as Fabricated or induced illness (FII) – as with all forms of abuse, if you suspect this to be occurring, refer your concerns immediately to the Club Welfare Officer, and do not confront the parents with your suspicions.

In a sports situation, physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training disregard the capacity of the child's immature and growing body. Our coaches and other volunteers are trained and supported to ensure this does not happen to our Club members during training or other events offered by the Club.

- **Emotional Abuse:** the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve telling children, young persons and vulnerable adults they are useless, worthless, unloved, inadequate or valued in terms of

only meeting the needs of another person. It may feature expectations of children, young persons and vulnerable adults that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause children, young persons and vulnerable adults to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the children, young persons and vulnerable adults frightened or withdrawn.

Ill treatment of children, young persons and vulnerable adults, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse in sport may occur when children, young persons and vulnerable adults are constant criticised, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling and bullying. Our coaches and other volunteers are trained and supported to ensure this does not happen to our Club members during training or other events offered by the Club.

- **Bullying** may come from another child, young person or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are three main types of bullying.

It may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

In sport bullying may arise when a parent or coach pushes the young person too hard to succeed, or a rival athlete or official uses bullying behaviour. Our coaches and other volunteers are trained and supported to ensure this does not happen to our Club members during training or other events offered by the Club.

- **Neglect** occurs when an adult fails to meet children, young persons and vulnerable adults' basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of their health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Refusal to give love, affection and appropriate attention can also be a form of neglect.

Neglect in sport could occur when a coach does not keep the children, young persons and vulnerable adults safe, or exposing them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury. Our coaches and other volunteers are trained and supported to ensure this does not happen to our Club members during training or other events offered by the Club.

- **Sexual Abuse** occurs when adults (male and female) use children, young persons and vulnerable adults to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and

fondling. Showing them pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.

In sport, activities which might involve physical contact with children, young persons and vulnerable adults could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over vulnerable athletes, if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing. Our coaches and other volunteers are trained and supported to ensure this does not happen to our Club members during training or other events offered by the Club.

3.3 Indicators of Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition, but indications that children, young persons and vulnerable adults are being abused may include one or more of the following:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- an injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent
- the child, young person or vulnerable adult describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- another child, young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person
- unexplained changes in a child, young person or vulnerable adult's behaviour e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- inappropriate sexual awareness
- engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- distrust of adults, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- difficulty in making friends
- being prevented from socialising with others
- displaying variations in eating patterns including over-eating or loss of appetite
- losing weight for no apparent reason
- becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

Signs of bullying include:

- behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go training or competitions
- an unexplained drop off in performance
- physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, reports of bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes
- a shortage of money or frequents loss of possessions

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indications is not proof that abuse is taking place.

It is NOT the responsibility of those volunteering for Portsmouth Triathletes to decide that child abuse is occurring. It IS their responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting them to the Club Welfare Officer.

3.4 Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment at Sporting Events

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people. **All club coaches and other volunteers should be vigilant, and any concerns should be reported to the Club Welfare Officer.**

All parents and performers will be made aware when coaches use video equipment as a coaching aid.

4 Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

4.1 Introduction

It is not the responsibility of anyone volunteering for Portsmouth Triathletes to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the Club Welfare Officer who will liaise with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the child, young person or vulnerable adult. This applies **BOTH** to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within Portsmouth Triathletes and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

This section explains how to respond to allegations/suspicions.

4.2 Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed in section 3 of this document, it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a young person says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

- **stay calm** so as not to frighten the child, young person or vulnerable adult
- **reassure** the child, young person or vulnerable adult that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- **listen** to the child, young person or vulnerable adult, showing that you are taking them seriously
- **keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child, young person or vulnerable adult has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify or to demonstrate that you have understood what the child, young person or vulnerable adult is telling you
- **inform** the child, young person or vulnerable adult that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell them this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- **safety of the** child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount. If they need urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a safeguarding issue where child protection has become immediately necessary
- **record** all information
- **report** the incident to the Club Welfare Officer

In all cases if you are not sure what to do you can gain help from the Club Welfare Officer: welfare@portsmouthtriathletes.co.uk and from the Portsmouth City Council Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). You can contact the MASH during office hours:

Tel: 02392 688793 Email: pccraduty@portsmouthcc.gcsx.gov.uk

The out of office hours contact (5pm -8am weekdays, weekends and Bank Holidays) is: 03005 551373

If you think a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at IMMEDIATE risk, you should treat this as an emergency and call 999 to report your concerns to the Police.

4.3 Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions.

Information should include the following:

- the child, young person or vulnerable adult's name, age and date of birth
- the child, young person or vulnerable adult's home address and telephone number

- whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's
- the nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- a description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- details of witnesses to the incidents
- the child, young person or vulnerable adult's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred
- have the parents / carer been contacted? If so what has been said?
- has anyone else been consulted? If so record details
- has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record detail

4.4 Reporting the Concern

All suspicions and allegations MUST be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

Portsmouth Triathletes expects its coaches and other volunteers to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the person in charge of the event and with the Club Welfare Officer who will subsequently check that appropriate action has been taken.

If the nominated Club Welfare Officer is not available you should take responsibility and seek advice from the Portsmouth City Council Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). You can contact the MASH during office hours:

Tel: 02392 688793 Email: pccraduty@portsmouthcc.gcsx.gov.uk

The out of office hours contact (5pm -8am weekdays, weekends and Bank Holidays) is: 03005 551373

If you think a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at IMMEDIATE risk, you should treat this as an emergency and call 999 to report your concerns to the Police.

Where there is a complaint against a Club volunteer, there may be three types of investigation.

- **Criminal** in which case the police are immediately involved
- **Child protection** in which case the social services (and possibly) the police will be involved
- **Disciplinary or misconduct** in which case Portsmouth Triathletes will be involved

As mentioned previously in this document Portsmouth Triathletes are not safeguarding experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations must be shared with professional agencies that are responsible for safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Social services have a legal responsibility under The Children Act 1989 to investigate all safeguarding referrals by talking to the child, young person or vulnerable adult and family (where appropriate), gathering information from other people who know the child and making inquiries jointly with the police.

NB: If there is any doubt, you must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidences which together cause concern and the information you hold may be the missing link to these.

Any suspicion that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has been abused by a Club volunteer should be reported to Portsmouth Triathletes Welfare Officer who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child, young person or vulnerable adult in question and any other child, young person or vulnerable adult who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- The Club Welfare Officer will refer the matter to the local MASH Team
- the parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the local MASH Team
- the Chairperson of Portsmouth Triathletes should be notified as soon as possible to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- the Club Welfare officer will also notify Triathlon England:01509 226159 Lindahaywood@britishtriathlon.org or the British Triathlon Lead Safeguarding Officer (LSO) on 01509 226159.
- **if the Club welfare officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to the appropriate committee member (usually the Chairperson) who will refer the matter to MASH during office hours: Tel: 02392 688793 Email:pccraduty@portsmouthcc.gcsx.gov.uk**

The out of office hours contact (5pm -8am weekdays, weekends and Bank Holidays) is: 03005 551373

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures. This is because other children, young persons or vulnerable adults in the sport or outside it may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children.

4.5 Concerns outside the immediate Sporting Environment (e.g. a parent or carer)

- Report your concerns to the Club Welfare Officer
- If the Club Welfare Officer is not available, the person being told or discovering the abuse should contact their local MASH Team or the police immediately
- The MASH Team and the Club Welfare Officer will decide how to inform the parents/carers
- The Club Welfare Officer should also report the incident to the Triathlon England Governing Body as detailed above. The Governing Body should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the organisation and act accordingly
- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis

4.6 Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The Club Welfare Officer
- The parents of the child
- The person making the allegation
- The MASH Team
- The Triathlon England Regional Development Manager and Triathlon England Club Welfare Officer
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

Seek MASH Team advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

4.7 Internal Inquiries and Suspension

- Portsmouth Triathletes Club Welfare Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended from volunteering for the Club pending further MASH Team inquiries
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries Portsmouth Triathlete's Disciplinary Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; especially where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases the Portsmouth Triathlete's Disciplinary Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on the balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult should remain of paramount importance throughout.

5 Recruiting and Selecting Personnel with Children

5.1 Introduction

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children, young persons and vulnerable adults. This applies equally to paid staff and volunteers, both full and part time. To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children, young persons and vulnerable adults the following steps should be taken when recruiting / accepting offers of volunteer support.

5.2 Controlling Access to Children

All volunteers who will have close contact with children, young persons and vulnerable adults in the Club should complete a DBS application form. The application form will elicit information about the applicants past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record. An enhanced DBS check is required if the Club Member is in a regulated activity with children, young persons and vulnerable adults:

- Once a week or more
- Four or more times in a 30 day period or
- Overnight between 2am and 6am

If a Club Member is in regular face to face contact with Club children, young persons and vulnerable adults once a month or more then they will need to complete either a standard or enhanced DBS check dependant on their role. The Club Welfare Officer will be able to advise accordingly.

5.3 Interview and Induction

All volunteers should receive formal or informal induction during which:

- A check by the Club Welfare Officer should be made that the DBS application (if need is indicated as above) has been completed in full, including sections on criminal records and self disclosures
- Their qualifications should be substantiated
- The volunteer role requirements and responsibilities should be clarified by the appropriate person within the Club
- They should sign up to Portsmouth Triathletes Code of Ethics and Conduct
- Safeguarding of Children, Young Persons and Vulnerable Adults Procedures are explained and training needs identified e.g. basic safeguarding awareness

5.4 Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes any necessary training after recruitment to help volunteers to:

- Analyse their own practice against what is deemed good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice and/or abuse
- Respond to concerns expressed by children, young persons and vulnerable adults
- Work safely and effectively with children, young persons and vulnerable adults

Portsmouth Triathletes Club requires:

- All volunteers who have access to children (as outline above) to undergo a DBS check
- All volunteers, coaches, Welfare Officers and Committee Members to undertake relevant safeguarding training or undertake a form of home study to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of

positive culture towards good practice and safeguarding of children, young persons and vulnerable adults

- All volunteers to receive advisory information outlining good/bad practice and informing them what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person
- All coaches, trainee coaches and leaders should have an up to date first aid qualification

Declaration

On behalf of Portsmouth Triathletes we, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of this Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.

Signed:

Name:
Denyse King

Name:

Position within Portsmouth Triathletes:
Club Welfare Officer

Position within Portsmouth Triathletes:
Club Chairperson

Date:
12/01/17

Date:

Name:

Name:

Position within Portsmouth Triathletes:
Lead for Portsmouth Triathletes' junior section

Position within Portsmouth Triathletes:
Lead Coach

Date:

Date:

