

# Poor practice and whistleblowing

## Poor Practice

Poor practices occur where there is a lack of understanding, awareness and/or education about what is considered a child-centred environment. Poor practice is not necessarily abuse; however, it is a breach of the codes of conduct or creates an unsafe environment that should be stopped. If necessary poor practice can be dealt with through the complaints and disciplinary process. Any individual who demonstrates poor practice can be referred to the committee for training and up-skilling and/or can be referred directly to a complaints and disciplinary committee.

Where poor practice becomes a concern, advice should be taken from the Children's Officer (CO) or from the NCO. In extreme cases the Children's Officer (as the DLP) may consider taking an informal consultation with the local Duty Social Worker to consider the extent and risk of harm to young people of the poor practice.

Persistent poor practice is concerning behaviour and may be considered abusive in nature. Concerns of abuse should be reported using the reporting procedures (see Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Policy). Persistent poor practice must be reported to the Mandated Person.

## Examples of poor practice

Bullying behaviour is poor practice however it can become a concern of abuse in some settings. For example: a young person who is not treated equally, their particular skills/needs are not recognised by a leader, they are regularly left out of club activities or do not get a chance to take part with his/her team-mates. This example is a breach of behaviour and may be one or several leaders.

Regular or prolonged delays in collecting children from the pool where there is no supervision provided. For example: a young person regularly having to wait after the end of a session to be collected; if the venue or facility closes or is in an isolated environment this increases any risk. This is the responsibility of a parent.

Lack of supervision due to leader not turning up. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure a session or an activity is taking place by ensuring the leader is present when leaving their children. For example: parents dropping children off for a pool session without checking that the coach/teacher/leader is present. The responsibility here may lie with either the leader or the parent, or both.

Regularly shouting at a young person. Raising your voice to be heard is often necessary in a noisy pool environment but no child should be regularly shouted at. For example: a leader consistently shouting at swimmers throughout the sessions. This is a breach of the leader's code of conduct.

Other examples of poor practice would include lack of encouragement for children; not listening to children's views and opinions; failure to address issues such as bullying; consistently not providing adequate supervision. Any breach of this document or the rules of Swim Ireland has the potential to put children at risk and would be considered poor practice. This may be a once off occurrence or a persistent disregard which must be addressed.

## What is good practice?

Young people should be motivated and encouraged where their participation in sport is based on their needs, ability and they are treated equally and fairly. Goals should be agreed, not imposed, between an athlete and coach where parents are supportive of their child's sport, not seeking to achieve vicariously through their children. Young people should be encouraged to achieve their chosen goals, this may be hard work and require a dedication which needs the support of their parents and leaders. Good practice is where the environment for young people to participate in sport is safe and open, where the people involved meet the requirements of their role, work within the codes of conduct encouraging and motivating athletes.

## **Whistle-blowing**

What is whistle-blowing?

Whistle-blowing, as used in this document, refers to the disclosure of information relating to suspected concerns about the safety and welfare of young people in Swim Ireland. Swim Ireland encourage people to raise concerns or report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. Any concern is taken seriously and investigated appropriately.

### **Raising a concern**

Concerns should be reported to the National Children's Officer (NCO) who will investigate the report. An investigation may be carried out by alternative individuals appointed by the NCO or the CEO. Where possible the identification of the whistle-blower will remain confidential; however, if a report is required for the statutory authorities or the matter is required to be dealt with through our complaints and disciplinary process it may be necessary for the whistle-blower to be identified.

Where a whistle-blower can be identified the NCO will report directly back to the individual on the conclusion of an investigation. If the whistle-blower does not feel the concern has been dealt with the matter should be reported to the CEO. Anonymous reports are dealt with through the same process; however, it is not possible to report back to the whistle-blower in this case.

### **How are concerns dealt with?**

Practices found to be in contradiction of this document or Swim Ireland rules following an investigation will be dealt with by submission of findings to the CDO through the complaints and disciplinary procedures unless the matter is a concern of abuse which will be reported to the statutory authorities as detailed in the Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Policy. If a reported matter is found to be a malicious false allegation this may be subject to a disciplinary process.

The whistle-blower may report their concerns directly to the statutory authorities or submit a complaint to the appropriate body in Swim Ireland if they do not feel the matter has been adequately dealt with. The act of whistle-blowing is a respected process in Swim Ireland.