

GOOD PRACTICE

Child abuse and poor practice can generate strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

Good Practice Guidelines

Everyone in the BSW Network should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect children and themselves from allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and environment within Water skiing.

Good Practice Means:

- Adoption of BSW Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and following BSW guidance documents
- Promotion of the policy to all Club members and parents to illustrate the Clubs' commitment to a safe environment
- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment – i.e. no secrets)
- Treating all young people equally, and with respect and dignity
- Always putting the welfare of young people first, before winning or achieving goals
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance from participants (e.g. it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a young person or to share a room with them)
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers young people to share in the decision-making process
- Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according to guidelines provided by the BSW Coach Education Programme.
- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport
- Ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- Ensuring that at competitions or residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms. If an adult is working in a supervisory capacity, they should only enter the children's rooms when accompanied by another adult
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people and promoting a healthy diet
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will
- Securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given. Where staff witness an injury this must be reported to the parents at the first opportunity

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Coaching Ratios

When working with groups of children under 8 years of age, Government guidance states clearly that there should be one supervising adult for every six children (Care Standards Act 2000). Participants under the age of 17 must be supervised at all times and cannot be included in staffing ratios. For young people over the age of 8, experience has shown that a ratio of one adult to ten participants is a minimum requirement in keeping with models of best practice.

The national guidance states that the level of supervision should take account of:

- The age and ability of the young people
- The activity being undertaken
- Children's growing independence
- Children's need for privacy
- The geography of the facility being used
- The risk assessment

If there is an accident or an incident involving a young person or member of staff, you should ensure that there are enough people remaining to supervise the group safely. Coaches working with young people should not work in isolation. Good practice suggests that at least one other adult in addition to the coach should be present at every session. The additional adult does not have to be a qualified coach.

Changing Rooms

Where practical, children and young people should have sole use of the changing facilities participants as this negates any risks and potential vulnerability associated with mixing adults or other young people when changing or showering. If mixed use of changing rooms is unavoidable, the group should be supervised by two members of staff of the same gender as the children.

Supervision may also be necessary in the following situations;

- Children are too young to change alone – it is recommended that children under 8 years should be supervised
- Groups including disabled children who require additional support or assistance
- There are concerns about bullying, fighting or other inappropriate behaviour

The following recommendations should also be followed;

- Adults should not change or shower at the same time using the same facility as young participants
- If there is a mixed gender group, separate changing facilities should be made available
- If a young person is uncomfortable changing or showering in public no pressure should be placed on them to do so – encourage them to shower and change at home
- Involve disabled participants, and their carers, in deciding how they should be assisted and ensure they are able to consent to the assistance that is offered
- Any staff, medical or otherwise, for example a male coach working with female participants, must not be present in the changing rooms whilst participants are getting showered or changed
- No photographic equipment should be allowed in the changing room environment including cameras, video cameras, camera mobile phones etc.

Treatment of Young People

- It is recommended that no young person should be treated in any way in a situation where the young person is on his/her own in a treatment room with the door closed
- It is strongly recommended that all treatment procedures should be 'open' i.e. the door remains open, parents are invited to observe treatment procedures. Where strict medical confidentiality is to be observed then parents of the young person should be invited to attend
- It is recommended that if treating an area of the body which is potentially embarrassing to a young person (i.e. the groin) a suitable consenting adult acting as a chaperone should be present
- It is important to maintain medical confidentiality and patient dignity at all times
- Prior to medical treatment being carried out on a young person, parental consent in the written form must be sought where appropriate
- It is recommended that all treatment procedures are fully explained to the young person and verbal consent is given before they are carried out

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Practices to be Avoided

The following should be avoided except in cases of emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable (i.e. a medical emergency or a parent has failed to turn up), they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge at the Club or the young person's parents;

- Never spend excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- Never take young people to your home where they will be alone with you

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horse play
- Share a room with a young person
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Allow young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun
- Reduce a young person to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature for young people or disabled adults that they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow young people to stay with you at home unsupervised

N.B. It may be sometimes necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for young people, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the participants involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in the dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a young person to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

If any of the following incidents should occur, you should report them immediately to another colleague and make a written note of the event. Parents should be informed of the incident:

- If you accidentally hurt a participant
- If he/she is distressed in any manner
- If a participant appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a participant misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done

Relationship of Trust

"The inequality at the heart of a relationship of trust should be ended before any sexual relationship begins." Caring for Young People and the Vulnerable Guidance for Preventing Abuse of Trust (Home Office, 1999).

This statement recognises that genuine relationships do occur between the different levels of volunteers and participants in a group but that no intimate relationship should begin whilst the member of staff or volunteer is in a 'position of trust' over them. The power and influence that the older member has over someone attending a group or activity cannot be underestimated. If there is an additional competitive aspect to the activity and the older person is responsible for the young person's success or failure to some extent, then the dependency of the younger member upon the older will be increased. It is therefore vital for volunteers to recognise the responsibility that they must exercise in ensuring that they do not abuse their positions of trust. Young people aged 16-18 can legally consent to some types of sexual activity; however, in some provisions of legislation they are classified as children.

If you engage in an intimate or inappropriate relationship with a young person it is a breach of the BWSW Code of Ethics and Behaviour and as such will result in disciplinary action. In certain circumstances, the 'abuse of trust' is considered a criminal offence.

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Photography and Video

BWSW is keen to promote positive images of young people participating in Water skiing and is not banning the use of photographic or videoing equipment. However, there is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people. It is advisable that all Clubs adhere to the appropriate guidelines detailed in the BWSW Guidelines for Photographs and Filming.

Use of Images of Young People

The use of images of young people, for example on the web, in the media or in publications:

- Ask for written parental permission to use the young person's image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport;
- Ask for the young person's written permission to use his/her image. This ensures that he/she is aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport;
- If the young person is named, avoid using his/her photograph;
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the young person;
- Only use images of young people in appropriate dress, to reduce the risk of inappropriate use, and to provide positive images of the young people;
- Encourage the reporting of inappropriate use of images of young people. If you are concerned, report your concerns to a Club Official or the Club Welfare Officer.

Use of Video as a Coaching Aid

There is no intention to prevent Coaches using video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid. However, participants and their parents should be aware that this is part of the coaching programme and care should be taken in storing such films. The parents and young people must provide written consent for the use of photography and video analysis.

