

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. The Children's Officer (as the DLP) may consider taking an informal consultation with the local Duty Social Worker to consider the extent of the behaviour and the risk of harm to young people.

Poor practice amounts to behaviour that breaches the codes of conduct and may reach the threshold of abuse. 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 may reach the threshold of abuse in some settings.
- An athlete who is not treated equally, or whose particular skills/needs are not recognised by a leader, or they are regularly left out of club activities or do not get a chance to take part with his/her team-mates. The behaviours may become persistent and reach a concern of abuse and may also be shown by one or more persons.
- Regular or prolonged delays in collecting children from the pool where there is no supervision provided, and a young person is 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 where a leader does not turn up to deliver a session. It is also the responsibility of parents to ensure any session or an activity involving their child is taking place by ensuring the leader is present when leaving their children.
- When a parent drops their child off for a pool session, they should always check that the coach/teacher/ leader is present. The responsibility here may lie with either the leader or the parent, or both.

Other examples of poor practice 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. These are all breaches of the codes of conduct and would be considered poor practice. The behaviours have the potential to put children at risk. The behaviour may be a once off occurrence or a persistent disregard of the code of conduct, both which must be addressed by raising a concern with a nominated person, such as the Club Children's Officer or the person in charge of the activity.

What is good practice?

Young people should be motivated and encouraged; their participation in sport is based on their needs, ability and they must be treated equally and fairly. Athlete goals should be agreed between the athlete and the coach/leader, and where relevant with the parent; these should not be imposed, and parents should be supportive of their child's sport, not seeking to achieve vicariously through their children.

Good practices create an environment for athletes to participate in sport in a safe and open setting, where the people involved meet the requirements of their role, work within the codes of conduct and encourage and motivate athletes.

Whistleblowing

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing, as used in this document, refers to the disclosure of information relating to suspected concerns about an individual or individuals where the safety and welfare of athletes is at risk. 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 whistleblower 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 whistleblower to be identified.

Where a whistleblower can be identified the NCO will report directly back to the individual on the conclusion of an investigation. If the whistleblower 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 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 whistleblowing is a respected process in Swim Ireland.