

## BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

### Mission Statement

We are fully committed to ensuring that our members can swim and train in a safe, secure, caring and friendly environment. Equally, we are also fully committed to protecting ALL club members, coaches, volunteers, club officers and, of course, parents from any form of bullying, harassment or other hurtful behaviour.

Gateshead & Whickham ASC sees any form of bullying and harassment as offensive, harmful and dangerous and consider it to be born out of a need to establish an unfair & demeaning balance of power. Consequently, we hold a “Zero Tolerance” stand towards this type of behaviour.

### What Is Bullying?

Bullying can be defined as unwarranted, aggressive behaviour that can leave the person on the receiving end feeling scared, afraid, fearful, frightened, tearful, intimidated, unsettled, belittled, embarrassed, humiliated, demeaned or devalued.

- BULLYING produces an imbalance of power (‘perceived’ or ‘real’) that aims to control or harm the other person, AND can be repeated again and again over time.
- BULLYING tends to be carried out on a one-to-one basis (with few or no witnesses); with the result that proof of the bullying incident or experience can be difficult to prove.
- BULLYING generally occurs between two people, but it can involve small groups; and these small groups can be either victims of the bullying or joint perpetrators.
- BULLYING, until recently, has been mainly in face-to-face interactions. However, sadly, adult and children’s bullying have been developing rapidly through the wide variety of Digital Mediums that are readily accessible today.
- BULLYING through Digital Mediums has been renamed as “Cyber Bullying” and mediums such as Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram figure prominently.
- Cyber BULLYING can also be carried out through text messages, emails and apps.

### What is the difference Between Bullying and Harassment?

We tend to use these two terms interchangeably and often in the same sentence; and, indeed, the impact of both behaviours produces the same devastating feelings and emotions.

However, they are different in both definition and in the intentions that lie behind each behaviour.

Bullying is motivated by fear, envy and jealousy. The “victim” of bullying has a quality or a number of qualities, skills or knowledge that the “perpetrator” has not. The “victim” is then seen as a threat to the “perpetrator” – a threat to be controlled.

How does the “perpetrator” control the “victim”? Well, he or she will allege “incompetence” where there is “competence”! In other words, the perpetrator will be continually, yet unfairly, critical of the “victim” until the “victim” starts to believe it.

Harassment is discriminatory behaviour that targets “victims” on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, religion, faith, sexuality, colour, race, culture, disability or other difference.

### Types of Bullying & Harassment

**VERBAL** - Teasing, Taunting, Name-Calling, Threats, Inappropriate Suggestions, Inappropriate Sexual Comments

**RELATIONAL** - Deliberately Excluding Someone, Harming Someone’s Reputation, Unfair Treatment, Telling Others Not to Be Friends with Someone

**UNDERMINING** - Spreading Malicious Rumours, Embarrassing Someone Publicly, Critical Gossip

**PHYSICAL** - Hitting, Kicking, Spitting, Tripping, Pushing, Taking Others’ Possessions, Misusing Others’ Possessions, Rude Gestures

**CYBER BULLYING** - Negative, Critical, Threatening or Demeaning Comments that can harm the online reputation of another

### Clues & Signs Indicating Bullying Behaviour

Children, young people and adults may not feel able to come forward and tell someone he or she is on the wrong end of bullying behaviour. Fear of not being believed, fear of making the situation worse or feeling that nothing will be done usually lies behind the reluctance to say anything. However, if we are watchful, there are both physical and behavioural clues that can underpin the existence of bullying and harassment. Things to look out for in victims:-

- Becoming withdrawn, anxious and developing low moods
- Becoming socially withdrawn and not joining in conversations
- Unwilling to attend training sessions and galas
- Nervous about attending training sessions and galas

- Reluctance to go on a club bus
- Becoming tearful without warning
- Sleep problems
- Eating problems
- Feeling ill just before training sessions
- Noticeable drop in swimming performances
- Swimming kit or clothes damaged, soaked or torn
- Asking for extra money when attending sessions (for paying off the bully)
- Unexplained bruises and cuts
- Aggressive and disruptive behaviour (from frustration at their situation)
- Trying to bully siblings (as an outlet for their frustrations)
- Reluctance to say what is wrong when asked
- Afraid of using their mobile phone
- Not wanting to access the internet

## REPORTING PROCEDURES

Incidents of bullying and harassment behaviour can be reported to the following club officers:-

Welfare Officer

Anti-Bullying Officer

Coach

Squad Rep

Club Chair

Committee Members

All complainant reports will be received and treated very seriously by the Club. The aim will always be to eradicate any bullying and harassment behaviour as soon as it appears. Therefore, each complaint will be addressed as speedily as possible.

Once reported, the individual making the report can choose either the Formal or Informal Route in order for the Club to address the situation. In both cases, the Club's approach or investigation will be led jointly by the Welfare Officer and the Anti-Bullying Officer.

### Informal Route

- If the Informal Route is chosen, then the approach will encompass an informal discussion with all the parties involved – as appropriate.
- Possible outcomes may include mediation between the parties, an apology, awareness-raising guidelines, an informal caution, or a verbal warning.
- The situation will continue to be monitored to ensure that the Informal Route resolved the issue, and that any bullying behaviour does not continue.

### Formal Route

- If the Formal Route is chosen, then the Welfare Officer and Anti-Bullying Officer will conduct a formal investigation into what happened.
- All of the parties involved – including any third party witnesses – will be interviewed, and a decision made once all the evidence has been collated.
- The decision and any recommendations will be presented to the Club's Executive Committee for their approval.
- Decisions and recommendations under this route will be conveyed in writing.
- Possible outcomes could include mediation, verbal warning, written warning, temporary suspension or permanent exclusion.
- The situation will continue to be monitored to ensure that the Informal Route resolved the issue, and that any bullying behaviour does not continue.

### Additional Factors

- If swimmers are involved in the bullying allegation, their parents will be informed, kept fully informed throughout the process, and invited to attend any informal discussion or formal investigatory meeting.
- Every reported complaint of bullying will be treated with sensitivity and confidentiality.
- With regard to Formal Route investigations, every interview will be undertaken with the utmost fairness and impartiality.
- With regard to allegations of bullying involving swimmers, coaches will not be asked to conduct any investigations or interviews. They will remain the responsibility of the Welfare Officer and Anti-Bullying Officer.

- If the allegations involve just adults – e.g. coaches & parents, coaches and club officers, club officers and coaches – then any investigation will be conducted by the Welfare Officer & Anti-Bullying Officer, in conjunction with the Club Chair.
- The possible outcomes for both the Informal Route and the Formal Route (as detailed above) will apply to both children & young people (swimmers) AND adults (parents, coaches, volunteers and club officers).
- If any reported bullying or harassment complaint involves safety and safeguarding concerns, then the police will be consulted.