

## **Safeguarding Policy**

### **V1.4 [Updated 12/5/2020]**

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### **A General Policy Statement**

1. Ultimate Cheer has a moral duty to ensure that it functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Throughout these policies and procedures, reference is made to "children and young people". This term is used to mean "those under the age of 18".

Ultimate Cheer recognise that some adults are also vulnerable to abuse, accordingly, the procedures may be applied (with appropriate adaptations) to allegations of abuse and the protection of vulnerable adults, such as, but not limited to, persons with learning disabilities, regardless of age.

Ultimate Cheer is committed to ensuring that the organisation

- Provides a safe environment for children and young people.
- Identifies children and young people who are suffering.
- Takes appropriate action to see that such children and young people are kept safe from harm.

In pursuit of these aims, Ultimate Cheer will approve and review policies and procedures every 2 years, or sooner if there's new legislation. It will be reviewed by the Ultimate Cheer safeguarding lead, with the aim of:

- Raising awareness of issues relating to the welfare of children and young people and the promotion of a safe environment for the children and young people.
  - Providing procedures for reporting concerns.
  - Establishing procedures for reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff.
  - The safe recruitment of staff.
2. Ultimate Cheer has nominated [Head Coach Tasmin Steer] as lead person with special responsibility for child protection issues for the year [2020-21]. He/she will undertake appropriate training.
  3. Staff and volunteers working with children will receive training adequate to familiarise them with child protection issues and responsibilities and the organisation's procedures and policies, with refresher training at least every 3 years. If appropriate there will be also be a member of the management team or volunteer who may through their employment background have particular expertise in child protection issues. All staff and volunteers will undergo DBS.
  4. Ultimate Cheer recognises the following as definitions of abuse (from Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2019):

**Abuse:** a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

**Physical abuse:** a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

**Emotional abuse:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

**Sexual abuse:** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education.

**Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

**Peer on peer abuse:** All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as peer on peer abuse). This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying)
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm
- sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

In sport, activities which might involve physical contact with young people could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over young athletes, if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing.

## 5. Indicators of Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with child 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 a child is 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 young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them.
- Another young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person.
- Unexplained changes in a young person'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.
- Cutting or self-harm.

Signs of bullying include:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go to 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, bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes.
- A shortage of money or frequent 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 working with or for Ultimate Cheer to decide that child abuse is occurring. It is their responsibility to act on any concerns.

6. Safe Touch – when physical contact is necessary for instruction

The concept of 'safe touch' recognises that in some sports such as Cheerleading it may be quite common for people teaching/working with children to have physical contact with them in order to instruct them.

For a touch to be 'safe' it needs to be:

**Necessary** – are you sure that demonstration or verbal instruction is not adequate

**Permitted** – permission for contact sought and given, except if permission is refused

**Clear and contextual** – tell the child where and how you will touch them and explain why it is necessary and cannot be done by other means.

Overriding all of the guidance and procedures relating to physical contact with children is our responsibility to keep children safe at all times when in our care.

Therefore, should a situation arise in which a child appears to be in or heading towards imminent danger, for example a child is falling from a stunt, and the quickest most effective way of keeping them safe is to touch them, then a member of staff should never allow concerns over Safeguarding to delay them in responding and keeping a child from harm.

7. Training via live video feed:

Ultimate Cheer may utilise live video sessions as a means of virtual/online training. The following practical applications are required from athletes in order to participate:

- Permission to be online from a parent/guardian
- Suitable clothing worn
- Webcams location must be in a communal space or space used must have a door open. Younger children must have an adult present.
- The same safeguarding and behaviour policies apply as would in regular training sessions, including but not limited to appropriate language and behaviour.

Incident reporting

The same protocol applies to reporting an incident as it would do in the gym; anything witnessed must be noted down in the record made by the coach and immediately reported to the Designated Person. Any reports should be made using encrypted message/password protected documents.

## **B Designated Staff with Responsibility for Child Protection i.e Senior Staff Member with Lead Responsibility**

1. The designated senior member of staff with lead responsibility for child protection issues is: Head Coach Tasmin Steer. E: [hello@ultimate-cheer.co.uk](mailto:hello@ultimate-cheer.co.uk) T: 07584199017
2. She has a key duty to take lead responsibility for raising awareness within the organisation of issues relating to the welfare of children and young people, and the promotion of a safe environment for the children and young people.
3. She has received appropriate training and should keep up to date with developments in child protection issues. She will also have responsibility for making new staff and volunteers aware of the existing child protection policy.
4. She will be the main contact point for Child Protection issues; contact details for relevant organisations are:
  - a. Wandsworth Children's Social Care: 020 8871 6622 (Out of hours: 020 8871 6000)
  - b. NSPCC Helpline 0800 800 5000

## **C Dealing with Disclosure of Abuse and Procedure for Reporting Concerns**

1. If a child or young person tells a member of staff about possible abuse:
  - Listen carefully and stay calm.
  - Do not interview the child, but question normally and without pressure, in order to be sure that you understand what the child is telling you.
  - Do not put words into the child's mouth.
  - Reassure the child that by telling you, they have done the right thing.
  - Inform the child that you must pass the information on, but that only those that need to know about it will be told. Inform them of to whom you will report the matter.
  - Note the main points carefully.
  - Make a detailed note of the date, time, place, what the child said, did and your questions etc. Sign and date the report
  - Staff should not investigate concerns or allegations themselves but should report them immediately to the safeguarding lead.

### 2. Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed written 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's name, age and date of birth.
- The child'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's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred.
- Have the parents 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.

Information recorded should be passed securely (preferably in person or via encrypted message & document) to the safeguarding lead. This will be kept securely indefinitely. Injuries and reports will be kept until the child is 21 years old.

### 3. 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.

Ultimate Cheer expects its members and staff to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the person in charge and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

While Ultimate Cheer has its own policy, the organisation will also adhere to the policies of the organisations and venues that it works with, for example, at Bolingbroke Academy which is operated by School Lettings Solutions (SLS) any reports made will additionally be passed on to SLS.

Allegations will be referred to the local authority social services (and possibly) the police will be involved.

If the nominated safeguarding lead is not available for immediate help/action, you should take responsibility and seek advice from the NSPCC helpline, the duty officer at your local social services department or the police:

- a. Wandsworth Children's Social Care: 020 8871 6622 (Out of hours: 020 8871 6000)
- b. NSPCC Helpline 0800 800 5000

Where there is a complaint against an employee or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation:

- Criminal in which case the police are immediately involved
- Child protection in which case the local authority social services (and possibly) the police will be involved
- Disciplinary or misconduct in which case Ultimate Cheer will be involved

As mentioned previously in this document, Ultimate Cheer personnel and volunteers are not child protection 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 child protection.

Social services have a legal responsibility under The Children Act 1989 to investigate all child protection referrals by talking to the child 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.

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by an employee or a volunteer should be reported to Ultimate Cheer, who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- Ultimate Cheer will refer the matter to social services department.
- The parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- the chair person of your organisation should be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- A referral to LADO Wandsworth (local authority designated officer - the local authority responsible for dealing with allegations against staff/volunteers) will be made

If the safeguarding lead is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to LADO Wandsworth

#### 4. Allegations made after the event

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such an allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures and have the matter reported to social services. This is because other children in the sport or outside it may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offenses related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children.

## **D Regulated Activity and obtaining Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks**

1. Under the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, an individual working unsupervised with children is considered to be engaged in regulated Activity and must have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check which will involve a check of the children's barred list, in order to perform their duties.
2. However, an individual working in a directly and permanently supervised position is not considered to be engaged in regulated activity but should still have an enhanced DBS disclosure check. However because they are working in a supervised role the enhanced check will not include a check of the children's barred list.
3. Note that applications for a DBS enhanced check can only be submitted where the applicant is aged 16 or over at the time of making the application.
4. 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:

- Ultimate Cheer Management and safeguarding lead
- The parents of the child.
- The person making the allegation.
- Social Services/police.
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Seek social services 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.

## **E Duty to refer to the DBS (Now Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS))**

1. The Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 both make it mandatory to refer anyone known to pose a threat of harm to a child or vulnerable people to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This means that the designated member of staff responsible for safeguarding must not knowingly employ anyone who poses

a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults, this includes anyone who is believed to have committed a relevant conduct while on the job or who has a record of such conduct.

2. Ultimate Cheer has a legal duty to refer an employee or volunteer who poses a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults to the DBS, failure to do so can result in a fine and/or up to 5 years imprisonment. There must be sufficient and solid evidence that the employee or volunteer poses a risk of harm before they can be referred to the DBS. The DBS will not consider evidence based on rumour or unsubstantiated reports. The employer should also inform the police and other relevant authorities if they believe a relevant conduct has occurred.
3. Referral forms can be downloaded from the DBS's website [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/dbs](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/dbs).

### **F Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment at Ultimate Cheer events and training sessions**

Parents/guardians are asked to sign written consent forms. Where a form is signed, the parents/guardians gives consent for Ultimate Cheer to take photographs, and/or film footage during practices, performances and Ultimate Cheer associated activities.

Please also be aware that during practices, performances and Ultimate Cheer associated activities athlete's parents/guardians/spectators may take photographs or film footage of Ultimate Cheer members. Sale of photos taken at Ultimate Cheer events is strictly prohibited unless you are the hired photo vendor for the given event.

Ultimate Cheer may utilise live/recorded video for training sessions or events.

Where Ultimate Cheer work regularly with a photographer, a current DBS check is in place.

All clubs, athletes, and spectators of cheerleading and dance should be vigilant for any suspicious behaviour involving cameras/filming and any concerns should be reported immediately to security, Ultimate Cheer staff or the safeguarding lead directly.

All parents and athletes should be made aware Ultimate Cheer use video equipment as a coaching aid.

## **G Use of children's images for Ultimate Cheer publicity, website, social media and press**

From time to time Ultimate Cheer may use images of children to promote its activities through their website, social media, promotional materials such as posters/flyers and press releases.

Parents/guardians are asked to sign written consent forms. Where a form is signed, the parents/guardians gives consent for Ultimate Cheer to take photographs, and/or film footage during practices, performances and Ultimate Cheer associated activities. These may be used for promotional materials relating to Ultimate Cheer (including, but not limited to, the Ultimate Cheer Website, Youtube page, Facebook page and Instagram account).

Photographs taken, and/or footage filmed during practices, performances and Ultimate Cheer associated activities may be shared with other members/parents/guardians/coaches, including in social media groups/pages, with coaches external to Ultimate Cheer, for example for choreography sessions, with Cheerleading event providers, for example to be used on social media, and with Cheerleading governing bodies, e.g. SportCheer England or IASF for legality checks.

## **H Social Media**

It is Ultimate Cheer's policy that coaches do not accept requests from athletes under 18 to Friend or Follow them on any social media network. Requests will be rejected or athletes blocked from following coaches' personal accounts such as Instagram, Facebook or Twitter etc

## **I Missing Child Procedure**

At Ultimate Cheer we are always alert to the possibility that children can go missing during sessions. To minimise the risk of this happening staff will carry out periodic head counts, particularly when transporting children between locations.

If an athlete cannot be located, the following steps will be taken:

- All staff will be informed that the child is missing.
- Staff will conduct a thorough search of the premises and surrounding area.
- After 10 minutes the police will be informed. The lead coach will inform the Head Coach who will then contact the child's parents or carers.
- One staff member will take a register of all remaining children, to ensure all others are present. As normal a routine as possible will continue for the rest of the children at the club.

- Remaining staff and SLS staff will continue to search for child whilst waiting for the police and parents to arrive.
- The Head Coach will liaise with the police and the child's parent/guardian.

A report of the incident will be made. A review will be conducted regarding this and any other related incidents along with relevant policies and procedures. We will identify and implement any changes as necessary.

### **J The DBS's barring process**

1. Whenever new relevant information (such as a conviction or caution) becomes known, the information will be sent to the DBS. The DBS will consider this information, together with other information known on the individual, and decide whether it indicates that the individual poses a risk of harm to vulnerable groups. If so, the DBS will commence its barring process and the DBS will issue a disclosure certificate to the applicant with the barring information.
2. The applicant should be advised by the designated member of staff to make a representation to the DBS regarding the barring information. The DBS will assess the barring information and representation and decide whether to bar the applicant. If there is sufficient barring evidence, the applicant will be placed on either the Children's Barred List or the Vulnerable Adults Barred List or both depending on the offence. The applicant must then be removed from regulated activity.
3. The applicant has the right of appeal to a tribunal and must be advised of this right. Serious offences committed against vulnerable people will lead to automatic barring and the applicant will have no right to make representations or to appeal against a barring decision.

### **K Reporting and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Members of Staff.**

The procedures apply to all staff, whether trustees, administrative, management or support, as well as to volunteers. The word "staff" is used for ease of description.

1. Ultimate Cheer recognises that an allegation of child abuse made against a member of staff may be made for a variety of reasons and that the facts of the allegation may or may not be true. It is imperative that those dealing with an allegation maintain an open mind and that investigations are thorough and not subject to delay.

2. Ultimate Cheer recognises that the Children Act 1989 states that the welfare of the child is the paramount concern. It is also recognised that hasty or ill informed decisions in connection with a member of staff can irreparably damage an individual's reputation, confidence and career. Therefore, those dealing with such allegations within the organisation will do so with sensitivity and will act in a careful, measured way.

## **L Safer Recruitment and Selection Procedure**

Ultimate Cheer's recruitment and selection procedures should take account of the following:

- The post or role should be clearly defined
- Vacancies should be advertised widely in order to ensure a diversity of applicants.
- Two references required for Ultimate Cheer staff and volunteers; these may be professional or character
- Disclosure and Barring Service checks (maintain sensitive and confidential use of the applicant's disclosure)
- Use a variety of selection techniques (e.g. qualifications, previous experience etc).