



Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Our policy statement is:

"The health, safety and welfare of all children & vulnerable adults are of paramount importance. They have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability and have a right to be safe at all of EMCA's training sessions and club events/activities."

A child is defined as under 18 years of age - The Children Act 1989.

What is Abuse?

There are 4 commonly recognised categories of abuse as follows:

- Physical Abuse - hurting or injuring a child, for example, by hitting or shaking them. This category is also likely to include bullying.
- Sexual Abuse - when an adult exploits their power, authority or position and uses a child sexually to gratify their own needs - it could range from sexually suggestive comments to full intercourse.
- Emotional Abuse - when a child is not given love, help and encouragement and is constantly derided, ridiculed or ignored. This also includes racially and sexually abusive remarks.
- Neglect - this usually means failing to meet children's basic needs such as food, warmth, adequate clothing, medical attention etc It could also mean failing to ensure they are safe or exposing them to harm.

Cheerleading activity offers a valuable contribution to the development of athletic skills and the promotion of worthwhile values through positive leadership, teamwork and community involvement. In our club cheerleaders learn to trust and respect the adults of the club. This places your staff and volunteers in a unique position of trust and confidence. This position of trust is one in which a child may feel the need to confide in you, or where you may feel that all is not well in the child's life. Our club has a duty to ensure that our staff and volunteers are equipped with the necessary information and knowledge to provide the support and guidance they need. A safe environment is thus not just working to cheerleading safety guidelines, ensuring safety mats are provided for stunting, and that safety spotting techniques are taught thoroughly. It is a duty of care to ensure that all aspects of the child's safety and well-being are paramount, and cared for.

How does this affect you?

There may be a time when a child approaches a trusted adult to discuss a problem in their life. It is vital that you know how to react to this in a sensitive and appropriate manner. It may be something outside of cheerleading, it may however be something relating to relationships and behaviours that you had not been aware of.

Promoting good practices

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse 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. Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, club official or volunteer may have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where a young person needs protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported. When a child enters into an sporting environment having been subjected to child abuse outside the activity can play a crucial role in improving the child's self esteem. In such instances adults must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.



The following are common sense examples of good practice:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment i.e. no secrets). The club always has two DSB cleared adults at any training session.
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with cheerleaders (e.g. it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child, to share a room with them or offer them a lift).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children 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 enclosed. Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child is constantly moving. Young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- Keeping up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible (e.g. for the responsibility of their children in the changing rooms). If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure parents/teachers/coaches/officials work in pairs.
- Ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. (NB however, same gender abuse can occur)
- Ensuring that at competitions or residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – 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. Requesting written parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people in their cars.

The Internet

The internet is a means of accessing and supplying information, social websites also contain many details of personal data and images. Never enter or retrieve information onto or from the internet without permission from a relevant parent or guardian.

Discipline

Cheerleading involves athletic techniques where for safety reasons control and attention has to be maintained. Non physical discipline may be required on occasions due to inappropriate or unsafe behaviour of children/young people. When discipline is used it should be done so appropriately and with the clear intention of teaching or reinforcing appropriate behaviour. It must not be used impulsively, to gain power, or to embarrass or humiliate a child/young person. Discipline should be used only to:

- Develop a sense of responsibility for behaviour;
- Develop respect for others and their property;
- Reinforce the rules or values of the sport;
- Reinforce positive behaviour or attitudes;
- Reinforce awareness of health and safety aspects of the activity.



Physical Contact

Many sports, by their nature, require a degree of physical contact between adults and children/young people. Physical contact can be used appropriately to instruct, encourage, protect or comfort. The aims of guidelines relating to physical contact are to provide adults and children/young people with appropriate types and contexts for touching. Physical contact between adults and children should only be used when the aim is to:

- Develop sports skills or techniques
- To treat an injury (All injuries must be reported and recorded).
- To prevent an injury.
- To meet the requirements of the particular sport.

Physical contact should always meet the need of the child/young person and not the need of the adult.

Physical contact should be fully explained to the child/young person and prior consent be sought from parents, except in the case of an emergency. EMCA gives all parents the opportunity to attend an annual meeting in which we explain the necessary physical contact between a group of cheerleaders and between the coach and cheerleaders. Training sessions are open session and parents are not restricted from watching their child at training.

If you have concerns about a child, vulnerable adult or the behaviour of an adult

Report your concerns to the clubs' safeguarding officer, Anna Mead (in person, over the phone or by email).

If under 18:

- Contact the parent/guardian if this will not lead to further harm to the child
- Contact School headteacher or school nurse +/- local child protection team
- Contact the Police if a serious act has been allegedly committed or the child is in imminent danger
- Encourage the child/young person to seek help from their GP

If over 18 and consented to break of confidentiality, or in imminent danger:

- Contact the parent/guardian/partner if this will not lead to further harm to the individual
- Contact local vulnerable adults service or domestic violence service
- Contact the Police if a serious act has been allegedly committed or the individual is in imminent danger
- Encourage the individual to seek help from their GP

Written in conjunction with the British Cheerleading Association.

Anna Mead
Programme Director

Helena Zarzycki
Programme Director

Owain Davies
Programme Director

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