

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Hellcats fully recognises its responsibilities for child protection. Our policy applies to all staff that work with the company. There are five main elements to our policy:

- Ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children.
- Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe.
- Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse.
- Supporting children who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan.
- Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.

We recognise that because of the regular contact with children, staff are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse. Hellcats will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to communicate, and are listened to.
- Ensure children know that there are adults whom they can approach if they are worried.

We will follow the procedures set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board and take account of guidance issued by the Department for Education and Skills to:

- Ensure the planning of activities so as to minimise situations where abuse of children may occur.
- Risks assess the activity so that appropriate steps are taken to safeguard the welfare of children or vulnerable adults at the event.
- Ensure that there is no physical contact by any staff or volunteers with children or vulnerable adults, unless the nature of the activity requires it.
- Have a nominated person to act as Children Protection Officer and to be a point of contact for any child or parent of a child to raise any welfare concerns
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and responsibility for referring any concerns.
- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the company and staff for child protection.
- Notify social services if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a pupil who is on the child protection register.
- Develop effective links with relevant agencies and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters including attendance at case conferences.

- Keep written records of concerns about children, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately.
- Ensure all records are kept securely, separate from other files.
- Develop and then follow procedures where an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer.
- Ensure safe recruitment practices are always followed.

We recognise that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The activity or club they are attending may be the only stable, secure or predictable element in the lives of children at risk. When partaking in activities lead by Hellcats Cheerleaders, their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. We will endeavour to support the child through:

- The content of the Class, or Workshop
- The class ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives children a sense of being valued.
- The behaviour policy which is aimed at supporting vulnerable children. Razzle Dazzle Cheer and Dance will ensure that the child knows that some behaviour is unacceptable but they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred.
- Liaison with other agencies that support the child such as social services, Child and Adult Mental Health Service, education welfare service and educational psychology service.

Each of our coaches undergoes yearly safeguarding training with squad safe Sport-specific safeguarding for cheerleading, dance and gymnastics to ensure our athletes are safe. The course covers the following:

- Safeguarding athletes: What is the coach's role and main responsibilities?
- How to embed a safeguarding culture at your gym or studio that's open and honest.
- What is meant by child abuse and keeping children and young people safe?
- What are the different types, signs and indicators of abuse and neglect, including online risks like social media?
- How should coaches and staff respond to concerns about the safety and welfare of children and young people, and who should they report to?
- Identify the barriers that prevent children and young people from reporting abuse.
- Understand the barriers that prevent staff from reporting concerns, and how to overcome them.
- What is the process for reporting safeguarding concerns and recording observations, and how to respond effectively to a child who reports abuse.

- What are the issues related to recording and sharing personal information and data, including confidentiality and data protection.
- Learn how to identify and respond to adult behaviour that is a cause for concern.
- Develop awareness of the emotional impact of safeguarding children and young people and identify ways in which a Safeguarding Lead can support staff.
- How to work with athletes using hands-on coaching "Safe touch" techniques that limits risk to protect both the athlete and coach.
- Be confident in communicating your gym or studio's overarching policy and procedures.
- Identify the next steps your studio or gym needs to take to look after the safety and welfare of the children and young people in your care.

Any suspicion that an individual has been abused by a Hellcats member within the activity of cheerleading, should be reported to the Safeguarding lead, who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the individual in question and any other individual who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- The CPO will refer the allegation to the appropriate Local Authority Designated Officer who may involve the police or go directly to the police if out of hours.
- Undertake own investigation as to circumstances of the allegation, but first and foremost will allow the police and/or LADO to undertake their investigation without disruption. Hellcats will take a collaborative approach with such authorities.
- The parents of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the LADO.
- The CPO will also notify the Chief Executive who will decide who should deal with any media enquires.
- The CPO and/or the Chief Executive can impose an interim suspension of membership and involvement in the activity based on the risk to the child, an assessment of the seriousness of the allegation and the need to ensure a full investigation can be instituted.
- CPO can report to Sports Cheer England and affiliated Event Producers to notify the EP of the suspension of the adult concerned, where the adult may be withdrawn from any event venue if it is considered that their use of that venue would be a form of threat to children.
- CPO may withdraw coaching accreditation/qualifications.
- CPO will work with the police and/or the relevant LADO as to any investigative findings. The UKA CPLO will also make a full report to a UKA Case Management Panel. Irrespective of the findings of the Children's Social Care (social services) or the Police, UKA will assess all individual cases and determine if the person can be reinstated and how this can be handled sensitively. This decision must be made on the available information, which could suggest on the balance of probability; it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child is paramount.

In circumstances where Hellcats does not have jurisdiction to deal with the individual (i.e. the person is not a member of Hellcats but is reportedly partaking in cheerleading as an activity), the Hellcats CPO will act as liaison between the sport and the LADO and/or the police and pass on all the information to the organisation with disciplinary jurisdiction.

Where the police or social care services make a statutory referral and invite a club official to a child protection conference or professional meeting then the CPO must be informed as soon as possible to determine whether to attend and represent Hellcats at the meeting and support the individual and club.

Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences relating to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. These decisions will be dealt with by the Independent Safeguarding Authority for England, Wales and Northern Ireland in Scotland this will be the role of the Central Barring Unit. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act (1999) and set out in Schedule 4 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act. The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act (2003) and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups are applicable in Scotland.

Record Keeping

Hellcats will retain a centralised document retaining information as to any referrals of allegations made. Such document is to assist in easily identifying the following:

Confidentiality

Any records of referrals will be kept securely, and on a “need to know” basis. Only the CPO for Hellcats and the Director will have access to this. Coaches are able to make enquiries as to whether a new member or coach has had any referrals made. Those referrals will be shared with the person with whom the information relates, and to the enquirer on a child protection basis. Full details of substantiated claims will not be disclosed, to ensure the protection of any third party, only information that is necessary to protect athletes in the future.

Poor Practice vs incidents of abuse

If the allegations are against an employee or volunteer Hellcats, and after consideration such allegations relate to poor practice as opposed to child abuse, the allegation will be dealt with by the club’s Child Welfare/Protection Officer in accordance with their disciplinary procedures for misconduct issues.