

Heart of Midlothian ASC: Anti Bullying Policy

Heart of Midlothian ASC is committed to providing a friendly and safe environment for all our members. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Hearts and will not be tolerated. If bullying occurs, we would encourage swimmers, their peers or parents to talk to us to enable incidents to be dealt with promptly and effectively. If you become aware of bullying, you can raise this with a coach or the Wellbeing & Protection Officer.

We will strive to create an environment where there is an anti-bullying culture. Adults will be expected to behave as good role models for children and young people.

Heart of Midlothian ASC will:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Create an open environment in which all members are encouraged to speak and share their concerns. Where members are bullied, we will support them to tell a coach or the Wellbeing & Protection Officer.
- Take all allegations seriously and take action to ensure the member is safe.

Policy Objectives

- To ensure Club members, including Committee members, coaches, swimmers and parents have an understanding of what bullying is and the impact it can have on all involved.
- To ensure Club members, including Committee members, coaches, and volunteers know what the Club policy is on bullying, and follow this when bullying is reported.
- To ensure swimmers and parents know what the Club policy is on bullying, and where to report it if bullying arises. A copy of this policy is available on the Club's website.
- To ensure all those involved with incidents of bullying receive appropriate support.
- This policy applies to all children and adults regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, socio-economic status or family circumstance.
- For the purposes of this policy, a child is recognised as someone under the age of 18 years and adult is someone over 18 years.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is a deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time and in situations where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. It can make a person feel frightened, threatened, left out and hurt. Something only has to happen once to make a person feel worried or scared to go to the swimming club or other places they enjoy going.

Bullying is between peers e.g. child to child, and there are times when adults behaviour towards children can be described as "bullying" such as a parent who pushes too hard, or a coach or manager with a 'win at all costs' mentality. Scottish Swimming believes that adults who behave in a manner that causes distress, hurt or upset to a child are behaving on a spectrum that runs from poor practice to abuse, and that behaviour is more appropriately dealt with via the Scottish Swimming Wellbeing & Child Protection policy.

Bullying takes many forms but ultimately it is the perception of the victim that determines whether they are being bullied rather than the intention of the bully. It should be recognised that bullying can take place both in person and in the virtual world of social networking sites, emails or text messages.

Examples of Bullying in Sport:

It can take many forms, including:

- Physical - hitting, kicking, theft, punching, shoving, any use of violence (in some cases, this might constitute an assault)
- Verbal - threats, name-calling, spreading rumours, teasing
- Emotional - isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of the peer group, being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding belongings, threatening gestures)
- Harassment e.g. using abusive or insulting behaviour in a manner intended to cause alarm or distress
- Cyber - vindictive posts on all areas of the internet such as social media sites e.g. Facebook or Instagram, nasty messages, emails, mobile threats by text messaging and calls, misuse of connected technology, i.e. camera and videos
- Prejudiced based - e.g. racist, homophobic or sectarian using abusive or insulting behaviour in a manner intended to cause alarm or distress

Cyber Bullying

Cyber Bullying intends to cause emotional distress through recurring or repeated bullying and harassment via the use of electronic devices such as personal computers and mobile phones - using email, texting and social networking websites.

Cyber Bullying might include:

- A peer who intimidates through the use of a social networking website.
- A swimming coach who sends negative feedback about a participant via personal text message.
- A club member who posts negative comments about a fellow member on a club forum.

Cyber Bullying may also include threats, sexual remarks and hate speech. E-Bullies may publish personal contact information of their victims at websites. They may attempt to act as the victim for the purpose of publishing material in their name that would defame or ridicule them.

Cyber Bullying is particularly serious due to the nature in which the abuse occurs. It can be very personal and take place in a closed private format where the victim may feel isolated and the content will not be viewed by parents, friends or siblings. Alternatively, it could take place in a public format. It may lead to the victim rereading any material in private perhaps leading to feelings of paranoia, depression or loneliness.

Heart of Midlothian ASC will take all cases of Cyber Bullying seriously and deal with them in line with the standard bullying procedures.

Identifying Bullying

Bullying can be difficult to pick up because it often happens away from others and victims do not tend to tell. A child may indicate by their behaviour that he/she is being bullied, it is the responsibility of all adults interacting with children to be vigilant of the following signs:

- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or appears to lack confidence
- Hesitation or reluctance to come to attend training or activity
- Begins to be disruptive during training sessions
- Becomes aggressive towards others, disruptive or unreasonable
- Reluctance to work with a certain individual
- Often last one picked for a team or group activity for no apparent reason, or being picked on when they think your back is turned
- Clothing or personal possessions go missing or get damaged
- Act out and bully others
- Believe that there is something wrong with them
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Suffer from depression / develop feelings of worthlessness
- Exhibit self-harm behaviours such as cutting, an eating disorder, taking of drugs/alcohol
- In extreme cases, lead to suicide.

Bullying should not be ignored and the victim should be supported through what can be a traumatic experience. Bullying will not just go away. Bullies can be very cunning and develop strategies to avoid it being seen by anyone but the victim.

Responding to Bullying:

When talking about bullying, it's never helpful to label children and young people as 'bullies' or 'victims'. Labels can stick for life and can isolate people, rather than helping them to recover or change their behaviour. It is preferable to talk about someone displaying bullying behaviour rather than label them a 'bully' – behaviour can be changed with help and support.

Scottish Swimming encourages all children and adults to report any suspected instances of bullying to one of the club coaches/helpers or to the club Wellbeing & Protection Officer. Children in particular need to be assured not to keep worries to themselves, but to tell their parent and/or coach. Heart of Midlothian ASC will ensure that all instances of bullying are taken very seriously and will be investigated thoroughly.

Procedures

1. Bullying incidents should be reported to a coach or the Wellbeing & Protection Officer.
2. In particularly serious cases (for example where a child is injured, the bullying has a serious impact on their mental health or there is a possibility of child abuse) the incident will be referred to the Scottish Amateur Swimming Association (SASA) for advice. If necessary and appropriate, the police will be consulted.

3. Where a member discloses bullying they will be reassured that the person they have told can be trusted and will help them, although they can't promise to tell no-one else.
4. In cases of cyber-bullying, members who are being bullied by text, email etc. will be advised to retain the communication or to print it out.
5. The person to whom the bullying is reported will keep records of what is said i.e. what happened, by whom and when.
6. The person to whom the bullying is reported will alert the Wellbeing & Protection Officer of what has been reported and obtain advice.
7. Action taken will depend on the nature and duration of the incident and the apparent level of distress. Coaches may choose to address bullying by speaking to their squad about acceptable behaviour or speaking to those being bullied and those displaying bullying behaviour separately. Where appropriate parents/carers should be informed and asked to attend a meeting to discuss the problem with the swimmer present.
8. In some cases, seeking an apology from those involved in bullying behaviour (for example where those on the receiving end wish reconciliation) may be considered. Apologies are only of real value however, when they are genuine. This will give those displaying bullying behaviour an opportunity to understand the consequences of their behaviour and change this without embarking on more formal procedures.
9. Heart of Midlothian ASC will assess each instance of bullying on a case by case basis and will determine whether it is appropriate to inform parents with a view to supporting the Club in addressing the behaviour.
10. Heart of Midlothian ASC may deal with any incidence of bullying in accordance with its Disciplinary Procedure.

In the case of adults reported to be bullying swimmers under the age of 18 the SASA will be informed and advice will be sought on the appropriate course of action.

Review

This Policy and guidelines will be regularly reviewed:

- In accordance with changes in guidance on anti-bullying or following any changes within Scottish Swimming.
- Following any issue or concern raised about bullying within Scottish Swimming.
- In all other circumstances, at least every three years.