WOLVERINES CHEERLEADING ACADEMY

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

Expanded update to the August 2023 policy • Draft 2.0 • October 2026

Document control

Organisation: Wolverines Cheerleading Academy

Version: Draft 2.0 — expanded update to the Academy's August 2023 policy

Prepared: October 2026 | Policy owner: Academy management / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Approval date: [Complete on approval] | Next review: Within 12 months of approval, or sooner if needed

Applies to: All coaches, staff, volunteers, contractors, management, athletes, parents/carers and relevant visitors

1. Introduction and commitment

Wolverines Cheerleading Academy recognises its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of every child and young person entrusted to its care. WCA is committed to a safe, positive and inclusive environment where children can participate in cheerleading and develop confidence, skills and independence.

The child's welfare is paramount. Every child has the right to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation, bullying, discrimination and avoidable harm. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All adults involved with WCA must be alert to concerns and take appropriate action.

WCA will listen to children, take concerns seriously, respond promptly, keep accurate records, share information lawfully where needed to protect a child, and work with parents/carers and statutory agencies where appropriate. No person will be penalised for raising a concern in good faith.

This policy applies to training, trials, performances, competitions, camps, trips, changing areas, online communication and any contact arising from WCA participation.

2. Aims

- Protect children and promote their welfare, safety, dignity and wellbeing.
- Provide an environment where children feel valued, respected and able to speak up.
- Ensure staff and volunteers know how to recognise, respond to and report concerns.
- Set clear procedures for disclosures, allegations, referrals, recording and escalation.
- Ensure safer recruitment, suitable supervision, appropriate training and professional boundaries.
- Prevent bullying, peer-on-peer abuse, harassment, discrimination and unsafe online behaviour.

3. Legal and guidance framework

WCA will have regard to applicable legislation and current guidance, including the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, Equality Act 2010, Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR, Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, and safeguarding guidance relevant to England.

WCA will review its procedures against the Department for Education's Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 statutory guidance, current information-sharing guidance, local safeguarding partnership procedures and the rules and safeguarding standards of its governing body or association.

This is an organisational policy, not legal advice. Confirm and apply the requirements relevant to the Academy's actual activities and location.

4. Definitions and recognising harm

A child is any person under 18. Abuse and harm may occur in a family, community, sports setting, peer group or online. A child may experience more than one form of harm.

- Physical abuse: deliberately causing injury or harm, including inappropriate physical punishment.
- Emotional abuse: persistent emotional mistreatment that harms a child's emotional development or sense of worth.
- Sexual abuse: involving a child in sexual activity, online or offline, whether or not the child understands what is happening.
- Neglect: persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or emotional needs.
- Other risks include grooming, exploitation, domestic abuse, coercive control, trafficking, harmful practices, bullying, peer-on-peer abuse, online abuse and discrimination.

Possible indicators include unexplained injuries, sudden behaviour changes, fear of a particular person, distress, disclosures, signs of neglect, sexualised behaviour inappropriate to age, bullying, self-harm or online threats. Indicators are not proof. Staff must report concerns rather than investigate or diagnose.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Academy management must approve this policy, provide resources, ensure safer recruitment and training, review arrangements, and respond to concerns about the DSL or senior management.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): [Emma Redmond, Wcasafeguarding25@gmail.com].

WCA is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice: [Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, SportCheer England]

The DSL coordinates safeguarding responses, maintains secure records, supports referrals, liaises with statutory agencies, advises staff and monitors follow-up. The DSL must not delay urgent referrals while seeking internal approval.

All staff and volunteers must follow this policy, complete required checks and training, maintain boundaries, report concerns promptly and cooperate with safeguarding processes. Never promise a child secrecy.

6. Safer recruitment, checks and training

Use safer recruitment practices appropriate to each role, including role descriptions, identity checks, references, interviews or selection checks, verification of relevant qualifications and documented decisions.

DBS checks must only be requested where the role is eligible and the check is legally appropriate. Confirm the correct level and whether a children's barred-list check is permitted or required. A DBS certificate alone does not establish suitability.

No person may undertake regulated activity with children unless applicable legal checks and conditions are met. Supervised trial or induction activity must be risk-assessed, closely supervised and must not provide unauthorised access to children.

All staff and volunteers must receive safeguarding induction before working with children. The DSL and deputy must receive role-appropriate training and keep it current. Maintain confidential recruitment and training records.

7. Responding to a disclosure or concern

1. Stay calm, listen carefully and take the child seriously.
2. Reassure them they did the right thing by telling you. Do not promise confidentiality; explain you may need to tell people who can help.
3. Use open prompts such as “Tell me what happened.” Do not lead the child, interrogate them or ask them to repeat the account unnecessarily.
4. If there is immediate danger or urgent medical need, call 999 and take reasonable steps to keep the child safe.
5. Report to the DSL as soon as possible and on the same day. If the DSL is implicated, unavailable or fails to act, contact the deputy or independent route and/or statutory services directly.
6. Write a factual record promptly, using the child’s own words where possible. Include date, time, location, people present, observations, actions and who was informed. Sign and date it.

Do not confront the alleged person responsible, investigate, circulate sensitive details or delay reporting while trying to establish whether the concern is true.

8. Reporting and referral

Internal reporting does not replace a referral to statutory services where a child may be at risk. Anyone may contact children’s social care or police directly.

Immediate danger: call 999. For non-emergency police concerns, use 101 where appropriate. Concerns that a child may be suffering or at risk of significant harm should be referred promptly to children’s social care for the local authority where the child lives.

Concerns or allegations about an adult who works with children must be escalated promptly to the DSL/management and the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or local equivalent, following local procedures. Contact police without delay if a crime may have occurred or a child is in immediate danger.

If no action is taken or concerns remain, escalate to the deputy DSL, independent contact, management, governing body safeguarding lead, children’s social care, LADO or police as appropriate.

Local contacts: Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership : [Homepage - Hampshire SCP]; governing body safeguarding contact: [Safeguarding | SportCheer England]; NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000; Childline: 0800 1111; emergency services: 999.

9. Allegations, low-level concerns and whistleblowing

Any allegation that an adult may have harmed a child, committed an offence involving a child, behaved in a way indicating a risk of harm, or may be unsuitable to work with children must be reported immediately. Follow advice from the LADO, police and children’s social care; do not conduct an internal investigation that could compromise theirs.

Report low-level concerns about behaviour inconsistent with the code of conduct to the DSL. If the concern relates to the DSL, use the independent route. Record concerns and review patterns.

Anyone may raise concerns about unsafe practice, policy failures or mishandled concerns with [independent contact], the governing body or statutory services. Retaliation against a person raising a concern in good faith is prohibited.

10. Code of conduct and professional boundaries

Treat every child with dignity and respect. Never humiliate, threaten, intimidate or discriminate.

Avoid unnecessary one-to-one situations. Necessary individual support should be observable and interruptible, take place in an appropriate setting and be transparent.

Do not form secret or exclusive relationships, arrange unauthorised private meetings, contact children through personal social media, exchange inappropriate gifts or invite children to your home.

Physical contact must be necessary, proportionate, appropriate to the activity and consistent with safe coaching. Stunt spotting must follow technical guidance and respect the child's comfort and consent.

Do not use physical punishment, body-shaming, threats, food restriction or sporting selection as coercion.
Do not work while impaired by alcohol or drugs, or consume alcohol/illegal drugs while responsible for children.

Breaches must be reported and addressed; serious or repeated breaches may result in removal from duties or disciplinary action.

11. Cheerleading safety, injuries and emergencies

Risk-assess training, stunts, tumbling, equipment, floor conditions, venues, competitions, trips and events. Coaches must work within their competence, follow governing-body rules and ensure suitable first-aid and emergency arrangements.

Maintain registers, emergency contacts, relevant medical information and clear collection arrangements. Share medical information only with people who need it to keep the child safe.

Maintain a process for accidents, injuries, near misses and safety incidents. Do not pressure a child to continue when injured, unwell or distressed. Return after significant injury should follow appropriate medical advice and safe coaching practice.

12. Bullying, peer-on-peer abuse and discrimination

Bullying, cyberbullying, hazing, initiation rituals, coercion, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual violence and discriminatory abuse are prohibited. Do not dismiss behaviour as banter, a joke or part of sport.

Intervene safely, report concerns to the DSL, record facts and assess immediate safety. A child who causes harm may also have safeguarding needs; protect all children and avoid labelling.

Provide accessible ways for children to speak up, including a trusted adult and a way to contact the DSL privately. Retaliation is prohibited.

13. Online safety and social media

WCA-related digital communication must be transparent, professional and for legitimate purposes. Use approved channels and include parents/carers or another authorised adult where appropriate. Do not use disappearing messages or personal accounts for routine contact with children.

Do not request, create, store or share sexualised images of children. If sexual imagery or harmful content is reported, do not forward it or ask a child to send it. Seek advice from the DSL or police and preserve relevant information safely.

Report online grooming, threats, bullying, impersonation, sharing of private images and other harmful contact promptly.

14. Photography and filming

Obtain and record appropriate parent/carer consent and, where appropriate, the child's assent before using identifiable images for publicity. Consent must be informed, specific and withdrawable; participation must not depend on agreeing to publicity photography.

Only authorised people may photograph or film children. Use images for the stated purpose, store them securely and share them through approved channels. Avoid publishing full names with images or disclosing location/routine details that could create risk.

Photography and recording are prohibited in changing rooms and toilet areas. Report concerns about images promptly.

15. Changing, toileting and personal care

Changing and toileting arrangements must be age-appropriate, protect privacy and provide suitable supervision. Adults should not enter changing areas unnecessarily and must follow venue procedures where entry is required for safety.

Children should change separately from adults wherever possible. If assistance is needed due to age, disability, injury or additional needs, agree a plan with the child and parent/carer where appropriate, respect dignity and preferences, and make the support transparent.

Body-shaming, inappropriate comments about appearance or weight, pressure to change in front of others, and photography in changing/toilet areas are prohibited.

16. Inclusion and wellbeing

WCA welcomes children of different backgrounds, identities, abilities and experience. Consider reasonable adjustments so children can participate safely. Racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, religious intolerance and other discrimination must be challenged and recorded.

Handle concerns about self-harm, mental distress, eating difficulties or wellbeing sensitively and involve the DSL where safeguarding is relevant. Seek appropriate support with parents/carers and professionals when safe and appropriate.

WCA does not replace clinical, educational or social care support. Seek advice and signpost or refer where a child's needs exceed the Academy's role.

17. Trips, competitions, transport and overnight stays

Before trips and competitions, document risk assessments, named leads, registers, emergency contacts, supervision, accommodation, medical needs, transport, collection arrangements and reporting procedures.

Give parents/carers relevant information and obtain consent where required. Children should know who is responsible for them and how to seek help. Rooming arrangements must protect privacy. Adults should not share sleeping accommodation with a child except in an exceptional, justified, risk-assessed arrangement with appropriate consent and documented safeguards.

Do not transport a child alone unless necessary and authorised under a documented procedure. If unavoidable, obtain parent/carer consent, inform another responsible adult, use a direct route, keep communication transparent and record the journey.

If a child goes missing, alert the trip lead and venue staff immediately, coordinate a search without leaving other children unsupervised, contact parents/carers and police when appropriate, and record the incident.

18. Missing child and collection

Maintain registers and know which adult is responsible for each group. Only authorised adults may collect a child unless an alternative arrangement has been verified.

If a child is missing, tell the session lead and DSL immediately, check the venue safely, keep other children supervised, contact the parent/carer and venue management, and call police if the child cannot be found promptly or risk is suspected. Do not delay contacting police where risk is high.

For late collection, supervise the child in a safe visible place, contact the parent/carer and emergency contacts, and record the incident. Staff must not take a child home or to a private location unless an emergency plan and appropriate authorisation make this necessary.

19. Confidentiality, records and information sharing

Safeguarding records must be factual, dated, signed and stored securely with access limited to those who need the information. Keep safeguarding records separate from routine coaching notes where practicable. Do not store sensitive records on personal devices or informal messaging apps.

Information may be shared without consent where necessary and lawful to protect a child. Do not promise secrecy or delay a referral while seeking consent. Share relevant, accurate information with appropriate recipients and record what was shared, with whom, when and why.

Follow applicable data protection law, current safeguarding information-sharing guidance and a documented retention/deletion schedule. Data protection must not be used as a reason to withhold necessary safeguarding information.

20. Parents, carers and complaints

Explain safeguarding arrangements to families and provide accessible ways to raise concerns. Parents/carers will usually be informed where safe and appropriate, but may not be informed first if doing so could increase risk or compromise an investigation.

Routine complaints about coaching, selection or administration should use WCA complaints procedure. Safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately under this policy and must not wait for a complaint outcome.

Children must receive age-appropriate information about who they can speak to if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable, excluded or worried.

21. Monitoring, review and related policies

The DSL will maintain a safeguarding action log, check follow-up actions, review patterns and report anonymised trends to management. Lessons from concerns and incidents should inform improvements.

Review this policy at least annually and sooner following changes in law or guidance, a significant incident, a change in Academy activities/governance, or learning from a case. Make the current version accessible to staff, families and children.

Read alongside the Academy's safer recruitment procedure, code of conduct, online safety/social media policy, photography policy, anti-bullying and inclusion policy, complaints and whistleblowing procedures, health and safety/risk assessments, missing-child procedure, trips/transport procedure and data retention policy.

Appendix A — Quick safeguarding response

7. If a child is in immediate danger or needs urgent medical attention, call 999.
8. Listen, reassure, do not investigate and do not promise secrecy.
9. Report to the DSL/deputy immediately and on the same day. If implicated or not acting, use the independent route and contact statutory services directly.
10. Record the child's words and factual observations promptly, sign/date the record and store it securely.
11. Refer to children's social care, police or LADO as appropriate. Internal reporting does not replace external referral.
12. Record advice, decisions, referrals, actions and follow-up.

Appendix B — Details to complete before approval

- Designated Safeguarding Lead: Emma Redmond; wcasafeguarding25@gmail.com .
- Independent escalation / Governing body: SportCheer England: sportcheerengland@gmail.com
- Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership: HSCP@hants.gov.uk
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): LADO@hants.gov.uk
- Wolverines Cheerleading Academy; Unit E, Neville Court, Armstrong Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire. RG24 8NU.

Appendix C — Staff and volunteer acknowledgement

I confirm that I have read and understood the Wolverines Cheerleading Academy Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy. I agree to follow it, maintain professional boundaries and report concerns promptly. I understand that failure to follow the policy may result in disciplinary action or removal from duties.

Name: _____ Role: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Key references

Department for Education, Working together to safeguard children 2026 (England): https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

Department for Education, current safeguarding and information-sharing guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/schools-statutory-guidance

NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit: https://thecpsu.org.uk/