



# **Birtley Community Pool Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures**

**Version: 1.0**

**Revision Date: March 2025**

**Next Review Date: March 2026**

## **1. Introduction**

The Birtley Community Aquatic Centre (BCAC) is dedicated to fostering a safe and welcoming environment for all its users, especially children and young people. As a hub for physical activity and community engagement, BCAC recognises its responsibility to protect the welfare of every child who accesses its facilities and services. The safety and well-being of children are paramount, and this safeguarding policy reflects BCAC's unwavering commitment to ensuring that all children are protected from harm while participating in activities at the centre.

## **2. Purpose**

The purpose of this Safeguarding Children Policy is to outline the procedures and responsibilities of BCAC in safeguarding children and young people under the age of 18. This policy is designed to provide clear guidelines for preventing and responding to any concerns about abuse, neglect, or harm. By implementing this policy, BCAC aims to:

- Ensure that all children and young people who visit or participate in activities at BCAC are safe and protected from harm.
- Provide staff, volunteers, and trustees with the necessary knowledge and tools to recognise and respond to signs of abuse or neglect.
- Establish a framework for the appropriate management of any safeguarding concerns, ensuring that incidents are handled swiftly, effectively, and in accordance with legal requirements.

## **3. Scope**

This policy applies to all individuals associated with BCAC, including trustees, staff, volunteers, subcontractors, and anyone else working on behalf of the centre. It covers all activities and services provided by BCAC, whether within the aquatic centre or in the community, that involve children and young people. The policy is applicable to any person under the age of 18 who uses the facilities or services offered by BCAC.

The policy ensures that all personnel are aware of their responsibilities in safeguarding children and understand the procedures to follow should concerns arise. It is essential that this policy is read in conjunction with other relevant BCAC policies, including those on bullying, harassment, and health and safety, to ensure a comprehensive approach to safeguarding.

#### **4. Policy Statement**

The Birtley Community Aquatic Centre (BCAC) provides leisure facilities and activities to promote active, healthy lifestyles for the community and schools in the Birtley area and beyond. This includes operating a swimming pool and offering swimming lessons, water-based fitness classes, fun activities for children and access for swimming clubs.

BCAC is committed to safeguarding children from abuse and harm while promoting their wellbeing and development. Appropriate measures are in place to protect all children visiting and using the pool, ensuring concerns are addressed swiftly and appropriately.

This policy demonstrates BCAC's commitment to safeguarding children and young people. BCAC recognises its duty to respond appropriately to any allegations, reports, or suspicions of abuse.

It is essential to have clear policies and procedures so that all managers, staff, volunteers, service users, and trustees can work to prevent abuse and know what to do if a concern arises.

The Policy Statement and Procedures aim to:

- Promote good practice to prevent harm, abuse, and coercion.
- Ensure that any allegations or suspicions of abuse are addressed appropriately and that the person experiencing abuse is supported.
- Stop abuse from occurring.

The policy relates to safeguarding children and young people, defined in law as anyone under the age of 18. It applies to all staff, trustees, subcontractors, work placements, volunteers, and anyone working on behalf of BCAC.

## **5. Safeguarding Children Procedures – Introduction**

BCAC provides health and leisure facilities, including lessons and other activities accessed by children under 18. All BCAC staff and volunteers will treat children with respect and care, listening to and taking their concerns seriously. These procedures are designed to ensure the welfare and protection of any child accessing services provided by BCAC, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, or religion. BCAC believes that child protection is everyone's responsibility, and these procedures ensure that all trustees, managers, staff, volunteers, service users, and those working on our behalf act appropriately in response to any child protection concerns.

## **6. Preventing Abuse**

BCAC is committed to implementing safeguards and measures to reduce the likelihood of abuse within its services. This policy should be read alongside the following policies:

- Bullying and Harassment
- Code of Conduct
- Data Protection
- Disciplinary Rules and Procedures
- Equal Opportunities
- Grievance Procedure
- Health and Safety Policy and Procedures
- Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults
- Volunteer
- Whistleblowing

## **7. Safer Recruitment**

BCAC is dedicated to safer recruitment practices for paid staff and volunteers. All staff, volunteers, and board members must undergo enhanced DBS checks before starting their roles, renewed every three years. Any concerns arising from the DBS check will be risk-assessed and referred to the Board for a decision on the appropriateness of employment.

## **8. Recognising the Signs and Symptoms of Abuse**

Abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Physical or sexual violence
- Sexual, racial, or any other harassment
- Bullying
- Threatening, intimidating, or aggressive behaviour or language
- Emotional and psychological abuse (including humiliation and degradation)
- Verbal insults, smacking, and other forms of corporal punishment
- Damage or theft of property, or any behaviour that could cause fear or distress
- Neglect
- Cyberbullying
- Sexual exploitation
- Domestic abuse

Abuse may be deliberate or unintentional, and it can be a single act or repeated acts.

Abusers can come from all backgrounds and walks of life, including professionals, volunteers, friends, family, or neighbours. BCAC will not limit its view of what constitutes abuse or neglect, as these can take many forms.



## **9. Safeguarding Lead**

BCAC has a designated individual responsible for handling safeguarding concerns. In their absence, a deputy staff member will be available for consultation. The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for BCAC is [Name]. In an emergency, contact [Emergency Contact Number].

The roles and responsibilities of the DSO include:

- Ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and trustees know what to do if they have concerns about a child experiencing or having experienced abuse.
- Ensuring concerns are acted upon, recorded, and referred to the appropriate authority.
- Following up on safeguarding referrals to ensure issues are addressed.
- Managing complex cases involving allegations against an employee, volunteer, or customer.
- Reinforcing confidentiality and ensuring good practice regarding security.
- Supporting staff and volunteers working directly with children who have experienced or are experiencing abuse.
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers are supported and protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

## **10. Responding to Children Who Have Experienced or Are Experiencing Abuse**

BCAC acknowledges its duty to act on reports or suspicions of abuse or neglect.

Taking action in such cases can be challenging, but it is crucial.

If a child or young person discloses abuse to you, or you observe any evidence of harm, follow these steps:

- Stay calm and do not show shock or disbelief.
- Listen carefully to what is said.
- Explain that the information will need to be shared with others; do not promise confidentiality.
- Allow the child to continue talking at their own pace.
- Ask questions for clarification only, avoiding leading questions.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Record the conversation in writing as soon as possible, using the child's own words.

If you witness abuse or abuse has just occurred, your priorities should be:

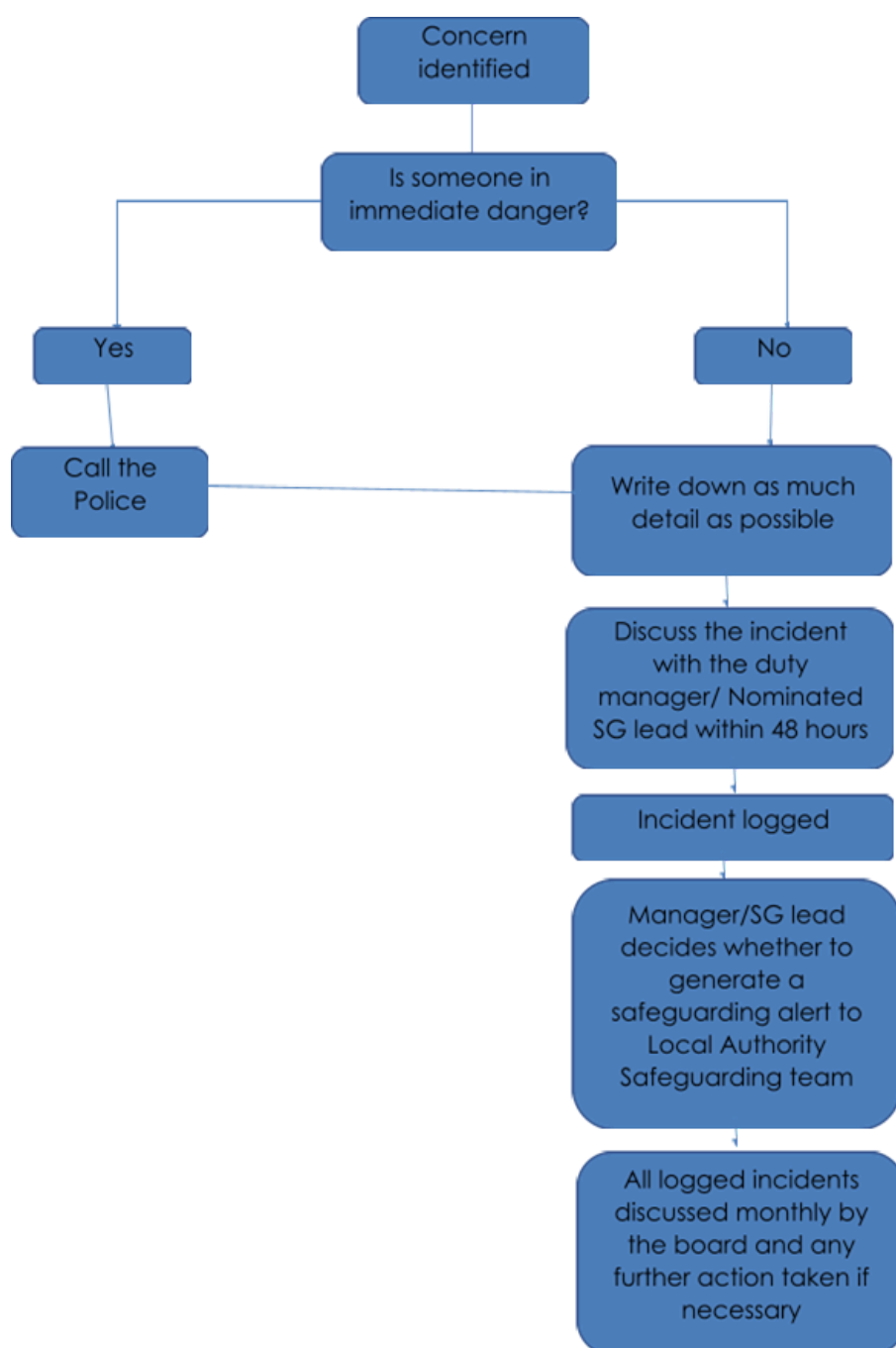
1. Call an ambulance if required.
2. Call the police if a crime has been committed.
3. Preserve evidence.
4. Keep yourself and others safe.
5. Inform the DSO.
6. Record the incident in the Safeguarding Children File in the Centre Office.

All abuse or alleged abuse cases must be discussed with the DSO. If the information meets safeguarding thresholds, the DSO will make a referral to Children's Services. The child and their parent/carer should be informed unless it is not safe to do so.

If you feel unable to raise your concern with the DSO, contact the board member responsible for child protection or Gateshead Council's Children's Services.

## 11. Making a Safeguarding Referral

To make a safeguarding referral, the DSO will contact the Initial Response Team at Gateshead Council by calling 0191 433 2653 or completing the online referral form available at [Insert URL]. If immediate action is required outside office hours, contact the Police or the Emergency Duty Team on 0191 433 0844.



## **12. Investigating Allegations**

BCAC ensures that any allegations against staff members or volunteers are addressed swiftly. The board member responsible for safeguarding must be informed immediately. They will work with the Chair of Trustees and the Senior Operations Manager to decide on immediate actions and the investigation approach, following the Incident Management Procedure.

If a staff member or volunteer is suspected of committing a criminal offence, the police will be informed. If a crime has been witnessed, contact the police immediately.

A risk assessment will be conducted to assess the risk to all service users posed by the alleged perpetrator. This assessment will determine whether it is safe for the individual to continue in their role or any other role within the service during the investigation. If it is not safe for them to continue in their role, they will be suspended until the investigation is complete.

The DSO or board member for safeguarding children will liaise with Children's Services to discuss the best course of action. Records of allegations and investigation outcomes will be securely stored by BCAC for the recommended duration. Requests for the removal of these records will be considered only after obtaining legal advice. BCAC will also fulfil its Legal Duty to Refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service if conditions are met.

BCAC has a whistleblowing policy to ensure that staff and volunteers can raise concerns about colleagues' conduct without fear of repercussions. Staff will be supported to use this policy. Support will be provided following an allegation, even if, after a thorough investigation, the allegation is found to be unfounded. The Senior Operations Manager will maintain records regarding any allegations against staff members.

### **13. Recording and Storing Information**

BCAC is committed to maintaining confidentiality and sharing information about child protection concerns only with those who need to know. All allegations or concerns should be recorded in the Safeguarding Children file. The information should be factual, based on what was seen and heard, and recorded promptly, specifying times and locations.

All records of allegations or concerns must be documented on a form within the Safeguarding Children file. The recorded information should be factual, not opinion-based. It should include what the person has reported to you, what you have observed, and, where applicable, the names of witnesses. Specific times, locations, and, as far as possible, the exact words used by the person reporting the allegation should be recorded. This recorded information will be kept secure and in compliance with data protection procedures. Paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet within the organisation, with access restricted to the Senior Operations Manager and/or deputy and the chair of the trustees.

BCAC will only use photos of children with written parental or guardian consent. Photos will be stored securely and used only for the purposes for which permission was granted.

#### **14. Training, Induction, and Supervision of Staff and Volunteers**

All staff, volunteers, and board members must complete, at a minimum, Level 1 Safeguarding of Children training through Gateshead Council's LSCB / Clennell. Evidence of training completion must be provided to BCAC. This ensures that all staff and volunteers understand the types of abuse and neglect that might affect children and the warning signs to look for.

New staff must sign a statement during their induction to confirm they have read and understood this policy and procedure. Electronic and hard copies of the policy are available for reference. Safeguarding issues will be discussed in supervision when appropriate.

## **15. Disseminating/Reviewing Policy and Procedures**

The Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedure will be communicated to all trustees, staff, volunteers, and service users. The Senior Operations Manager and Trustee Board are responsible for ensuring this is done.

The policy and procedures will be reviewed annually, or as needed, to ensure they remain relevant and effective. Any significant changes must be approved by the BCAC Board of Trustees. The Senior Operations Manager may recommend changes and ensure they are communicated to staff, trustees, and volunteers. Trustees, staff, volunteers, and service users may be involved in the review process.



## **16. Sources of Support**

To make or discuss a referral, contact:

- **Gateshead Council's Initial Response Team**
  - Phone: 0191 433 2653 (Monday-Friday, 8:30 am - 5:00 pm)
  - Out of Hours: 0191 477 0844 (Emergency Duty Team)

For advice and support, contact:

- **NSPCC Helpline:** 0808 800 5000
- **Police Emergency:** 999
- **Gateshead Children's Services:** 0191 433 3257

Trustee with Lead Responsibility for Child Protection: Yvonne Probert

BCAC Designated Safeguarding Officer: Lewis Herbertson

## **17. Safeguarding Code of Conduct**

Birtley Community Aquatic Centre (BCAC) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. All staff, volunteers, and representatives of BCAC must ensure that children are protected from abuse, neglect, and exploitation while in our care. Everyone working with children must act with integrity and uphold the highest safeguarding standards.

### **Staff must:**

- Treat all children with respect and dignity.
- Provide a positive role model by maintaining appropriate personal and professional boundaries.
- Respect children's right to personal privacy and create an environment where they feel safe to raise concerns about behaviours they do not like.
- Challenge and report any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abuse, following BCAC's safeguarding procedures.
- Listen to children and take their concerns seriously.
- Ensure activities are appropriate to the age, maturity, and ability of the children involved.
- Follow BCAC's safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.

### **Staff must not:**

- Engage in any inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children.
- Develop relationships with children that could be considered exploitative or abusive.
- Allow themselves to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour.
- Make suggestive or derogatory remarks, jokes, or gestures in front of children.
- Jump to conclusions about others without verifying facts.

- Either exaggerate or trivialise child protection concerns.
- Show favouritism to any individual child.
- Ignore or fail to report any safeguarding concerns.
- Assume that "it could never happen here."
- Take unnecessary risks that may compromise a child's safety.

## **18. Information About How This Document Should Be Sent Safely and Securely**

This document contains sensitive information relating to the safeguarding of children and must be handled securely. Any concerns about a child's welfare should be reported immediately to the appropriate authorities.

**Sending the Information to Children's Social Care** The completed safeguarding report should be sent to the appropriate Children's Social Care team or the allocated Social Worker, if known. If the Social Worker is unknown, send the form to the designated safeguarding contact at Children's Social Care. The sender is responsible for ensuring the form is received.

### **Options for Sending the Safeguarding Referral Form:**

- **Email:** The form should only be sent via secure email systems (.gov.uk, .cjsm.net, .nhs.net) or encrypted email. The subject field should be marked as CONFIDENTIAL. If secure email is unavailable, do not send electronically.
  - Children's Social Care email: [Insert relevant email address]
- **Fax:** If sending by fax, follow these procedures:
  - Verify the fax number.
  - Ensure the recipient is waiting at the fax machine.
  - Use a fax cover sheet marked CONFIDENTIAL.
  - Confirm receipt with the recipient.
  - Children's Social Care Fax: [Insert fax number]
- **Post:** If posting, use recorded delivery and double-envelope the document. The outer envelope should state, "To be opened by the addressee only" and include a return address. The inner envelope should be marked CONFIDENTIAL.
  - Children's Social Care Address: [Insert relevant postal address]

- **Delivery in Person:** The document can be hand-delivered. A signature from the intended recipient should be obtained to confirm delivery.

For further safeguarding advice, contact the Children's Safeguarding Unit at [Insert contact number].

## **19. Making a 'Good' Safeguarding Referral**

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Clear, factual, and well-documented referrals help agencies collaborate to protect children from harm.

### **19.1 Key Information to Include in a Referral:**

- **What have you observed?** (when, where, and what happened?)
- **What have you heard?** (who said what, and when?)
- **Basic details about the child(ren) at risk.**
  - What are their vulnerabilities or care needs?
  - Do they have disabilities, health conditions, or communication needs?
  - Are there any known safeguarding concerns?
- **Details of the person alleged to be causing harm.**
  - Are they in a position of trust?
  - Do they have a history of concerning behaviour?
- **Why are you concerned?**
  - What type of abuse or neglect is suspected? (physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, exploitation, etc.)
  - Has a crime been committed?
  - What is the immediate and potential future impact on the child?
- **What actions have already been taken?**

- Have other services been contacted?
- What support is in place for the child?
- **Have you sought consent from the child/parents?**
  - If not, why? (e.g., risk of further harm)
- **What does the child want to happen?**
  - Child-centred safeguarding ensures their voice is heard and considered in the decision-making process.

Use the Children's Safeguarding Referral Form to report concerns. Submission details are provided on the form.

### **19.2 Pitfalls to Avoid:**

- Leaving answers blank or stating 'unknown.' If information is unavailable, explain why.
- Altering or sanitising a child's words. Use direct quotes, even if they include slang or distressing language.
- Insufficient detail. Clearly describe incidents and concerns with supporting facts.
- Judgmental or victim-blaming language. Describe concerns professionally and respectfully.
- Delays in reporting. Safeguarding referrals should be prioritised to protect children from further harm.

A key safeguarding principle is keeping the child at the centre of the referral. Ask yourself:

- What is life like for this child?
- Why am I worried?
- What needs to happen to ensure their safety and wellbeing?

**Always report safeguarding concerns promptly to ensure the best possible protection for children.**

## **17. Review and Monitoring**

- This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to any changes in relevant laws or regulations. Any updates will be communicated to all employees.

## **18. Contact Information**

For more information or to discuss additional employment issues, please contact:

Tracy Green

HR Trustee, Birtley Community Aquatic Centre Board of Trustees

Tracy.Green@birtleycommunitypool.org.uk

## **19. Approval**

This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees of Birtley Community Pool on 06/03/2025.

Signatories:

Yvonne Probert

Chairperson, Birtley Community Aquatic Centre Board of Trustees

Tracy Green

HR Trustee, Birtley Community Aquatic Centre Board of Trustees