



**SAFEGUARDING POLICY
FOR
ROYALS ALLSTARS (R AllStars)**

SEPT 2018 – AUGUST 2019

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1 Child Protection Policy

1.1 Introduction

Everyone who participates in training with Royals AllStars is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. Royals AllStars have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, all Coaches and Volunteers provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

Royals AllStars is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone in sport accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means to follow procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities - in this case the Safeguarding Officer, whose details are held within this policy.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of Royals AllStars, and to allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

A child/young person is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children's Act 1989)

1.1 Policy Statement

Royals AllStars is committed to the following:

- All children, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in cheerleading, stunting, tumbling and dance in a fun and safe environment
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights and feelings whilst maintaining the status of a competitive sports club
- Safety is of a top priority, therefore all children will be placed on level-appropriate teams according to their demonstration of ability at club try-outs, taking into consideration their mental ability to train within a certain level.
- Try-outs are competitive and athletes must be made aware of this, however coaches and volunteers will remain sensitive towards mental and physical well-being of athletes when assessing, choosing and communicating with teams. The physical safety of athletes is very important and it is the coaches job to choose the correct team for the correct individual regardless of individual and parent desires.
- There will always be at least one training option for every individual wishing to follow the training framework of Royals AllStars, providing they meet the requirements stated in our joining pack e.g. our Code of Conduct, Liability and Medical form, GDPR Photography and Social Media Form, and Competition Form. Failure to adhere to these policies results in failure to adhere to the rules of the club, and therefore disallowing a child to train under Royals AllStars for not abiding by these rules stands as the only suitable reason for not offering at least one form of practice to any said individual.
- All suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All contractors, volunteers and members are aware of the procedure when logging concerns through information given in the joining pack and information found on our

website. All contractors, volunteers and members are aware of the identity of the Safeguarding Officer who is suitably qualified within her role.

- All Royals AllStars (R AllStars) contractors and employees who work with children will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, by ensuring they prove they are suitably DBS checked, qualified and first-aid trained – or are always working alongside someone who is. All volunteers will be aided with guidance on the matter of child-protection and will be suitably DBS checked.
- Working in partnership with parents, children and contractors is essential for the protection of children.

1.2 Monitor and review the policy and procedures

The implementation of procedures should be regularly monitored and reviewed. The Safeguarding Officer should regularly report progress, challenges, difficulties, achievements gaps and areas where changes are required to the Management Committee of Volunteers and the Programme Director.

The policy should be reviewed every 3 years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

2 Promoting Good Practice

2.1 Introduction

To provide children with the best possible experience and opportunities in cheerleading and dance everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework, following the Royals AllStar 'Non-Negotiables', Royals AllStar 'liability and medical form', Royals AllStars 'Code of Conduct' and Royals AllStar 'Reasonable Care' document.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of employees or participants in cheerleading and dance to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child, as explained in section 4.

This section will help you identify what is meant by good practice and poor practice.

2.2 Good Practice

All personnel should adhere to the following principles and action:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private situations where there may only be one adult with one or more underage children present, encouraging open communication) This does not mean parents have to spectate sessions
- Make the discipline of cheerleading and dance suitable for every class, e.g. a recreational class will differ from an advanced session, and the coach or contractor present will be aware of this and demonstrate this in their practice
- Promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying and anti-social behaviour. We are a team
- Treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with athletes (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with

them without other adults present unless they fear for the safety of the child at that given moment)

- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the young person's consent has been given
- Involve parents/carers wherever possible, e.g. where young people need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms always ensure parents, coaches etc. work in pairs. No parent should be alone in the changing rooms with a child that is not their own
- Gain written parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people in their cars
- Gain written parental consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g. overnight stays. Parents must agree to the overnight stay terms and conditions
- Ensure that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- Ensure that at away events adults should not enter a young person's room or invite young people to their rooms, unless safety and welfare of the child are at risk
- Be an excellent role model
- Always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of the young person and do not risk sacrificing welfare of the child for the club's, or personal, achievements
- Follow the accident and injury procedure if the need arises
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given.

2.3 Poor Practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by all Coaches, Volunteers and Contractors:

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- Taking young people alone in a car on journeys, however short, unless parental request and authorisation have been given
- Taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- Sharing a room with a young person
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allow young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun

- Reduce a young person to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature that the young person can do for themselves

When a case arises where it is impractical/impossible to avoid certain situations e.g. transporting a young person on your car, the tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/carer and the young person involved.

If during your care you accidentally hurt a young person, the young person seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions and/or if the young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

3 Defining Child Abuse

3.1 Introduction

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. It commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a young person regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

There are four main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect**. The abuser may be a family member, someone the young person encounters in residential care or in the community, including sports and leisure activities. Any individual may abuse or neglect a young person directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming the young person.

Abuse in all of its forms can affect a young person at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated may follow the individual into adulthood.

Young people with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse had occurred.

3.2 Types of Abuse

- **Physical Abuse:** where adults physically hurt or injure a young person e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute child abuse.

This category of abuse can also include when a parent/carer reports non-existent symptoms or illness deliberately causing ill health in a young person they are looking after. This is called Münchausen's syndrome by proxy.

In a sports situation, physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training disregard the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.

- **Emotional Abuse:** the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve telling a young person they are useless, worthless, unloved, and inadequate.

It may feature expectations of young people that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause a young person to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the young person frightened or withdrawn.

Ill treatment of children, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse in sport may occur when the young person is constantly criticised, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling and bullying.

- **Bullying** may come from another young person or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are three main types of bullying.

It may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

In sport bullying may arise when a parent or coach pushes the young person too hard to succeed, or a rival athlete or official uses bullying behaviour to belittle the athlete or encourage them to act out of character.

- **Neglect** occurs when an adult fails to meet the young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Refusal to give love, affection and attention can also be a form of neglect.

Neglect in sport could occur when a coach does not keep the young person safe, or exposing them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury. **Risk assessments are paramount to avoid unintentionally neglecting a child's wellbeing**, through creating an environment that is not suitable for them to train in.

- **Sexual Abuse** occurs when adults (male and female) use children to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing young people pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.

In sport, activities which might involve physical contact with young people could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over young athletes, if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing.

If there is ever an incident that as a coach you feel slightly uncomfortable about (i.e. you are aware that during physically supporting a child you may have accidentally grabbed an area that is inappropriate), report it to a colleague and the Safeguarding Officer immediately so that the incident can be recorded and explained properly.

3.3 Indicators of Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- An injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent
- The young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- Another young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person
- Unexplained changes in a young person's behaviour e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- Distrust of adult's, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- Difficulty in making friends
- Being prevented from socialising with others
- Displaying variations in eating patterns including over eating or loss of appetite
- Losing weight for no apparent reason
- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

Signs of bullying include:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go training or competitions
- An unexplained drop in performance or an obsession with achieving
- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes
- A shortage of money or frequents loss of possessions

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is taking place. It is **NOT** the responsibility of those working for Royal Cheerleading to decide that child abuse is occurring. It **IS** their responsibility to act on any concerns.

3.4 Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment at Sporting Events

As a club we have a GDPR Photo/Social Media agreement with parents and athletes in order to make photographing and videoing children possible through a regulated and controlled environment. All parents and athletes must sign the agreement as evidence that they are aware of our media channels and the policies we hold surrounding photography, whether it be capturing images or displaying them.

As a club we are proud of the friendships and achievements formed by members of our club and as a result we strive to show parents, carers and friends the successes and

stories of our athletes during training – using social media, photography and filming in order to make these milestones accessible.

Qualified coaches are allowed to take photographs whilst at training and at events as agreed in the GDPR Photo/Social Media policy. Photos and videos will never be taken by coaches or responsible parties whilst alone with any child or children.

There is a strong communication between employees, contractors, volunteers, athletes and their carers during the taking and posting of videos. We allow video requests to be sent through from athletes and carers to the club for posting. Nothing inappropriate can be posted on any of our sites from outside parties as all uploads must be channelled through the network of responsible coaches before being uploaded. Any inappropriate images, or any inappropriate language that could be interpreted as cyber bullying, must be reported IMMEDIATELY to the safeguarding officer for further action, and an incident report form must be completed in case of concerns.

We encourage parents to help their children manage their social media accounts and actively direct them with choosing appropriate training and social posts. In having a communication with the parent and coach, the athlete can learn responsible posting. As a club we must strive to encourage children to talk to their parents about their training and to simultaneously learn about what is appropriate and inappropriate when it comes to online forums and social media.

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people. All clubs should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the Club Welfare Officer immediately.

All parents and performers are made aware that coaches use video equipment as a coaching aid, and for promotional purposes.

4 Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

4.1 Introduction

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for Royals AllStars in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the young person. This applies **BOTH** to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within Royals AllStars and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere. This includes self-abuse and includes, but is not limited to, self-harm and eating disorders.

This section explains how to respond to allegations/suspicions.

4.2 Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed in section 3 of this document. It may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a young person says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

- **Stay calm** so as not to frighten the young person
- **Reassure** the child that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- **Listen** to the child, showing that you are taking them seriously
- **Keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been

dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify

- **Inform** the child that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the child this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- **Safety of the child** is paramount. If the child needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection issue
- **Record** all information
- **Report** the incident to the club/welfare officer

If a child asks you 'not to tell anyone' or asks 'if you can keep a secret' you must let them know gently that secrecy isn't always possible, and that you can't promise you won't tell anyone else. Failure to ensure them of this can result in lack of trust of grown-ups, and a sense of betrayal in the young person.

4.3 Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. Incident forms are available to download on the Royals AllStars website. In recording you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions.

4.4 Reporting the Concern

All suspicions and allegations **MUST** be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement when taking action.

Royals AllStars expects its' members and staff – volunteers, contractors, parents, athletes and coaches - to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child **immediately** with the **Child Safeguarding Officer** and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

If the nominated club Safeguarding Officer is not available you should take responsibility and seek advice from the NSPCC helpline, the duty officer at your local social services department or the police. Telephone numbers can be found in your local directory.

Where there is a complaint against an employee or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation.

- **Criminal** in which case the police are immediately involved
- **Child protection** in which case the social services (and possibly) the police will be involved
- **Disciplinary or misconduct** in which case Royals AllStars will be involved

As mentioned previously in this document Royals AllStars are not child protection experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations must be shared with professional agencies that are responsible for child protection.

Social services have a legal responsibility under The Children Act 1989 to investigate all child protection referrals by talking to the child and family (where appropriate), gathering information from other people who know the child and making inquiries jointly with the police.

NB: If there is any doubt, you must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidences which together cause concern.

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by an employee or a volunteer should be reported to Royals AllStars (R AllStars), who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other children who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- Will refer the matter to social services department
- The parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department
- The Programme Director of the organisation should be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- The Child Welfare Officer should also notify the relevant sport governing body
- If the Child Welfare Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to the Programme Director who will refer the matter to social services

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures and have the matter reported to social services. Other children in the sport, or outside it, may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children.

4.5 Concerns outside the immediate Sporting Environment (e.g. a parent or carer)

- Report your concerns to the Child Welfare Officer
- If the Child Welfare Officer is not available, the person being told or discovering the abuse should contact their local social services department or the police immediately
- Social Services and the Child Welfare Officer will decide how to inform the parents/carers
- The Child Welfare Officer should report the incident to the Royals AllStar Cheerleading Volunteer Committee. The Volunteer Committee should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the organisation and act accordingly
- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis

4.6 Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The Club Welfare Officer
- The parents of the child
- The person making the allegation
- Social Services/police
- The Royals AllStar Programme Director
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

4.7 Internal Inquiries and Suspension

- Royals AllStar Safeguarding Welfare Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries Royals AllStar committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; especially where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases the Royals AllStar Cheerleading Volunteer Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on the balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

5 Recruiting and Selecting Personnel with Children

5.1 Introduction

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. This applies equally to Contract Coaches and Volunteers, both full and part time. To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children the following steps should be taken when recruiting.

5.2 Controlling Access to Children

- All staff and volunteers should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about the applicants past and a self disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from the applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children should be obtained. These references MUST be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo)

5.3 Interview and Induction

All employees and volunteers will be required to undertake an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers should receive formal or informal induction during which:

- A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full, including sections on criminal records and self disclosures
- Their qualifications should be substantiated
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified
- They should sign up to the organization's Code of Conduct
- Child Protection Procedures are explained and training needs identified e.g. basic child protection awareness

5.4 Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help coaches and volunteers to:

- Analyse their own practice against what is deemed good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice and/or abuse
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child
- Work safely and effectively with children

Royals AllStars requires:

- All staff and volunteers who have access to children must undergo a DBS check OR must not be left alone with children at any given time
- All employees, volunteers, coaches, welfare officers and team managers must undertake relevant child protection training or undertake a form of home study, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of positive culture towards good practice and child protection
- All staff and volunteers to receive advisory information outlining good/bad practice and informing them what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person
- All coaches (self-employed, leaders or trainees) should have an up to date first aid qualification, or be teaching alongside someone who has until qualification is received.

Declaration

On behalf of **Royals AllStars (R AllStars)** we, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.