

The role of the Club Welfare Officer

Every club should have a Welfare Officer and every SwimMark club must have a Welfare Officer. The Welfare Officer role is essential in providing a first point of contact for children and adults within the club who have a child safeguarding or welfare concern.

In partnership with the club committee, the Welfare Officer must also ensure that the club is adopting and implementing the various safeguarding activities, which are necessary for it to demonstrate its duty of care to children.

Clubs may choose to have one or two Welfare Officers; often one male and one female is helpful.

The importance of selecting the right person cannot be underestimated. The selected individual may be involved in the most private aspects of club members' lives. They may have to take part in meetings and discussions with the police and statutory agencies. They must show that they are able to handle matters of a child safeguarding nature in an appropriate and confidential manner.

Welfare Officer core tasks

- To raise awareness of and assist the club in implementing Wavepower.
- To assist the club committee in putting plans in place for child safeguarding.
- To introduce themselves to members and their parents/guardians and ensure they know who to contact and how to access the safeguarding arrangements at the club.
- To be the first point of contact for club staff, volunteers, children and parents/ guardians for any issues concerning child welfare and potential or alleged abuse.
- To ensure that all incidents are correctly referred and reported in accordance with Wavepower. To act independently and in the best interests of any child at the club, putting their needs above that of others and the club itself.
- To ensure that relevant club members, volunteers and staff have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check if appropriate and the opportunity to access appropriate child safeguarding training. These should both be updated every three years.
- To ensure that Wavepower procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers are followed.
- To be aware of, and have a note of contact details of police, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Team, safeguarding partners and the Swim England Child

Safeguarding Team.

- To be aware and have contact details for the County and Regional Welfare Officer.
- To ensure the club has Codes of Conduct in place for club staff, volunteers, coaches, competitors and parents/guardians.
- To sit on, or be in attendance at as necessary, the club management committee to advise on child safeguarding issues.
- To ensure confidentiality is maintained and information is only shared on a “need-to- know” basis.

How does a club select a Welfare Officer?

- The club should follow the safe recruitment

guidance in Wavepower.

- The position of the Welfare Officer is one that requires an enhanced disclosure with barred list DBS check.
- The Welfare Officer should be an appropriate person willing and able to fulfil the commitments of the role.

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The Welfare Officer should ideally be someone who:

- Is able to act independently and in the best interests of the child, putting their needs above that of others and the club itself.
- Holds no other position on the club committee.
- Is not an active teacher or coach in the club.
- Is not related to anyone in either of the positions above.
- Is able to attend the club frequently.
- Has the time to fulfil the role and is prepared to complete all of the core tasks.
- Can satisfy the requirements, core skills and knowledge areas needed for the role.
- Is prepared to undergo the training required.
These recommendations are made to avoid difficulties that could arise should a club member wish to refer a concern to the Welfare Officer but feels unable to do so, or the Welfare

Officer feels unable to deal with the concern, due to a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest could arise through the Welfare Officer being related to a member of the club committee or coaching team or if they themselves hold another role on the committee or coaching team.

It is important to note that should it not be possible to recruit a truly independent Welfare Officer then the club should appoint a second Welfare Officer. This means that should a conflict of interest arise, the first Welfare Officer can call upon the second as and when required to deal with the concern. The second Welfare Officer could be someone else within the club able to meet the requirements of the role. In some cases and only with prior agreement it could be the County or Regional Welfare Officer acting for the club.

In all cases the names and contact details of the Welfare Officer(s) must be clearly communicated and publicised to all club members. This ensures that should anyone at the club have a concern they are clear on whom they can refer that concern to.