

# **Vikings Cheerleading**

## **Child Protection Policy**

### **2018**

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# 1. General Policy Statement

Vikings Cheerleading has a moral duty to ensure that it functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Throughout these policies and procedures, references are made to “children and young people”. This term is used to mean “those under the age of 18”.

Vikings Cheerleading recognise that some adults are also vulnerable to abuse, and accordingly the procedures may be applied (with appropriate adaptations) to allegations of abuse and the protection of vulnerable adults, such as, but not limited to, persons with learning disabilities, regardless of age.

Vikings Cheerleading are committed to ensuring that the organisation:

- Provides a safe environment for children and young people
- Identifies children and young people who are suffering
- Takes appropriate action to see that such children and young people are kept safe from harm.

In pursuit of these aims, Vikings Cheerleading will approve and annually review policies and procedures with the aim of:

- Raising awareness of issues relating to the welfare of children and young people and the promotion of a safe environment.
- Providing procedures for reporting concerns
- Establishing procedures for reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff
- The safe recruitment of staff

Vikings Cheerleading have nominated **Kerry Foulger** as the lead person with special responsibility for child protection issues for the season **2018/19**.

Staff and volunteers working with children will receive training adequate to familiarise them with child protection issues and responsibilities and the organisation’s procedures and policies, with refresher training at least every 3 years. All permanent staff and volunteers will undergo DBS.

Vikings Cheerleading recognise the following as definitions 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.
- **Emotional or Psychological 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, inadequate or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. 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 given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are clearly unrealistic for their age/skill level. Other forms of emotional abuse could include, but are not limited to name calling and bullying.  
 Bullying may come from another young person or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate 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 or social media posts), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments). This may also include cyber bullying inclusive of comments and contact through social media.
- **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.

- **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.

## 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 adults, 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 overeating or loss of appetite
- Losing weight for no apparent reason
- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt
- Cutting or self harm
- Signs of bullying include:
  - Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy,

- The child becoming depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go training or competitions
- An unexplained drop off in performance
- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, general pain
- 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 indications is not proof that abuse is taking place. It is not the responsibility of those working with or for Vikings Cheerleading to decide that child abuse is occurring. It is their responsibility to act on any concerns.

## 2. Designated Staff with Responsibility for Child Protection

The designated person with lead responsibility for child protection issues at Vikings Cheerleading is: **Kerry Foulger**, [kerry\\_foulger@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kerry_foulger@hotmail.co.uk) +447975893386

She has a key duty to take lead responsibility for raising awareness within the organisation of issues relating to the welfare of children and young people, and the promotion of a safe environment for the children and young people.

1. She is responsible for ensuring that appropriate questions are asked on relevant volunteer and employment application forms.
2. She has received appropriate training and should keep up to date with developments in child protection issues. She will also have responsibility for making new staff and volunteers aware of the existing child protection policy.
3. She will be the main contact point for Child Protection issues and will have contact details for relevant organisations available for employees and volunteers. This list will usually include contact details of relevant individuals and provisions such as the NSPCC Helpline 0800 800 5000 and the local police child protection unit.

## 2. Dealing with Disclosure of Abuse and Procedure for Reporting Concerns if a child or young person tells a member of staff about possible abuse.

- Inform the child that you must pass the information on, but that only those that need to know about it will be told. Inform them of to whom you will report the matter
- Allow adequate time to listen to the child in a suitable environment
- Do not put words into the child's mouth
- Reassure the child that by telling you, they have done the right thing
- Note exactly what is said
- Make a detailed note of the date, time, place, what the child said/did etc. This document must be kept confidential
- Staff should not investigate concerns or allegations themselves, but should report them immediately to the designated person
- Contact the safeguarding officer

### Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed written record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. 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.

Information should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth
- The child's home address and telephone number
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's
- The nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- A description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- Details of witnesses to the incidents
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred
- Have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details

- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record detail
- Signed and dated by person confided in

## 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 about any action to take.

Vikings Cheerleading expects its members and staff to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the person in charge and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

While Vikings Cheerleading has its own policy, the organisation will also adhere to the policies of the organisations and venues that it works with, social services department or the police.

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

As mentioned previously in this document, Vikings Cheerleading staff and volunteers are not child protection professionals, 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 Vikings Cheerleading, who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.

This will include the following:

- Vikings Cheerleading 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 directors of Vikings Cheerleading will be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- If the welfare officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the assistant welfare officer (Dancia Cane, +447720 609097) 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.

This is because other children in the sport or outside it may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offenses related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children.

### 3. Regulated Activity and obtaining Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks

1. Under the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, an individual working unsupervised with children is considered to be engaged in regulated Activity and must have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check which will involve a check of the children's barred list, in order to perform their duties.
2. However, an individual working in a directly and permanently supervised position should still have an enhanced DBS disclosure check.
3. Note that applications for a DBS enhanced check can only be submitted where the applicant is aged 16 or over at the time of making the application.

## 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:

- Vikings Cheerleading Directors and Welfare Officer
- The parents of the child
- The person making the allegation
- Social Services/police
- 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.

## 5. Duty to refer to the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service)

1. The Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 both make it mandatory to refer anyone known to pose a threat of harm to a child or vulnerable people to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This means that the designated member of staff responsible for safeguarding must not knowingly employ anyone who poses a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults, this includes anyone who is believed to have committed a relevant conduct while on the job or who has a record of such conduct.
2. Vikings Cheerleading have a legal duty to refer an employee or volunteer who poses a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults to the DBS, failure to do so can result in a fine and/or up to 5 years imprisonment. There must be sufficient and solid evidence that the employee or volunteer poses a risk of harm before they can be referred to the DBS. The DBS will not consider evidence based on rumour or unsubstantiated reports. The employer should also inform the police and other relevant authorities if they believe a relevant conduct has occurred.
3. Referral forms can be downloaded from the DBS's website [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/dbs](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/dbs).

## 6. Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment at Vikings Cheerleading events and training sessions

Vikings Cheerleading does not allow photography and video with handheld mobile devices such as mobile phones or iPads by friends and family of athletes unless permission is given by the head coach.

All athletes must have completed the waiver and given their permission to be photographed. If an athlete is not allowed to be photographed, this will be communicated with spectators whilst keeping the athletes identity confidential.

The use of long lens cameras are strictly prohibited.

Sale of photos taken at Vikings Cheerleading events is strictly prohibited unless you are the hired photo vendor for the given event.

Where Vikings Cheerleading work regularly with a photographer, a current DBS check is in place.

All clubs, athletes, and spectators of cheerleading and dance should be vigilant for any suspicious behaviour involving cameras/filming and any concerns should be reported immediately to Vikings Cheerleading staff, or the welfare officer directly.

## 7. Use of children's images for Vikings Cheerleading publicity, website, social media and press

Vikings Cheerleading may use images of children within the club to promote its activities through their website, social media, promotional materials such as posters/flyers and press releases.

Parents/guardians are asked to sign written consent forms. Where a form is signed, the parents/guardians gives consent for photographs to be taken, and/or footage filmed during practices and performances for training purposes, and promotional materials relating to Vikings Cheerleading (including the Vikings Cheerleading Website, Facebook page, Instagram and Twitter account)

Footage will not be broadcast or distributed through any commercial operations and names will not be placed next to photos. Athletes will not be 'tagged' in the photos by Vikings Cheerleading staff.

## 8. The DBS's barring process

1. Whenever new relevant information (such as a conviction or caution) becomes known, the information will be sent to the DBS. The DBS will consider this information, together with other information known on the individual, and decide whether it indicates that the individual poses a risk of harm to vulnerable groups. If so, the DBS will commence its barring process and the DBS will issue a disclosure certificate to the applicant with the barring information.
2. The applicant should be advised by the designated member of staff to make a representation to the DBS regarding the barring information. The DBS will assess the barring information and representation and decide whether to bar the applicant. If there is sufficient barring evidence, the applicant will be placed on either the Children's Barred List or the Vulnerable Adults Barred List or both depending on the offence. The applicant must then be removed from regulated activity.
3. The applicant has the right of appeal to a tribunal and must be advised of this right. Serious offences committed against vulnerable people will lead to automatic barring and the applicant will have no right to make representations or to appeal against a barring decision.

## 7. Reporting and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Members of Staff.

The procedures apply to all staff, whether trustees, administrative, management or support, as well as to volunteers. The word "staff" is used for ease of description.

1. Vikings Cheerleading recognises that an allegation of child abuse made against a member of staff may be made for a variety of reasons and that the facts of the allegation may or may not be true. It is imperative that those dealing with an allegation maintain an open mind and that investigations are thorough and not subject to delay.

2. Vikings Cheerleading recognise that the Children Act 1989 states that the welfare of the child is the paramount concern. It is also recognised that hasty or ill informed decisions in connection with a member of staff can irreparably damage an individual's reputation, confidence and career.

Therefore, those dealing with such allegations within the organisation will do so with sensitivity and will act in a careful, measured way.

## 8. Safer Recruitment and Selection Procedure

Vikings Cheerleading have recruitment and selection procedures.

These ensure that they take account of the following:

- They should apply to staff and volunteers who may work with children.
- The post or role should be clearly defined.
- The key selection criteria for the post or role should be identified.
- Vacancies should be advertised widely in order to ensure a diversity of applicants.
- Obtain professional and character references.
- Verify previous employment history.
- Disclosure and Barring Service disclosure/List 99 checks (maintain sensitive and confidential use of the applicant's disclosure).
- Use a variety of selection techniques (eg qualifications, previous experience, interview, reference checks).

Should you have any questions regarding Vikings Cheerleading's Child Protection Policy, please contact:

**Kerry Foulger**  
**kerry\_foulger@hotmail.co.uk**  
**+447975893386**