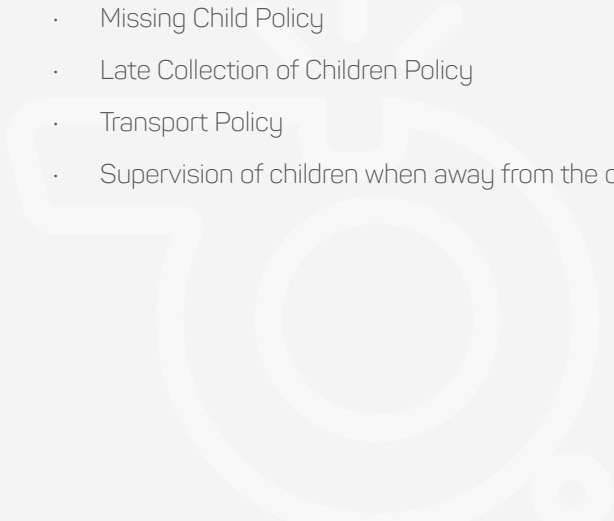




SECTION 2.4

Policies, Procedures and Guidance

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Guidance for children and adults training and competing together in water polo

Swim England recognise that during water polo training sessions and competitions, it is likely that children and adults, male and female players, may take part in activities together. For this reason, specific guidance below has been collaboratively developed by the Independent Child Protection Officer (ICPO), the Swim England Safeguarding and Legal Department and advisors with water polo experience to assist in maintaining proper safeguarding for all Swim England members.

Often, senior water polo players will teach the junior players how to deal with certain situations in the sport. This is a commonly accepted way of passing on knowledge and skills. The junior players benefit from this approach as they learn from the older players, and their skills improve due to the experience of training at a higher level. The training of adults and children in the same session can be seen as contrary to child safeguarding recommendations. It is therefore necessary to have good practice guidelines in place to both prevent and deal with any concerns that arise.

It is also acknowledged that water polo is a contact sport and, as such, not all risks can be removed in terms of physical contact or allegations. However, best practice can minimise the risks and ensure the sport is safe for all.

In training sessions, games and competitions referees or those responsible for the water polo activity must report any violent or sexual behaviour towards a child, deemed to be a potential criminal assault, outside of the rules governing the sport to police. They should advise the Child Safeguarding Team of the incident using the Swim England referral form as soon as possible.

Those responsible for the water polo activity must take appropriate, proportionate and necessary action at the time to prevent a risk of significant harm to any child. For the purposes of this guidance, junior players are aged under 18 and senior players are aged over 18.

Training sessions

- All teachers, coaches, referees and chaperones should be Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked in line with the guidance provided in Wavepower.
- Any senior player who has water-based contact with any junior player should also be DBS checked if they are acting in a coaching capacity. Advice on what constitutes a coaching capacity, based on how often that role is fulfilled, can be obtained from the DBS guidance on pages 47-52.
- In all sessions where junior and senior players are training together, it is best practice to minimise risk to have a chaperone on poolside, whose only duty is to ensure the safety of the junior players by providing extra supervision. This person(s) should not have any other duties. They should not have any direct access to the junior players and should report any concerns to the coach. Smaller clubs must have a lifeguard able to fulfil this function if no other solution is available.
- The coach is responsible for ensuring all sessions are planned and well organised.
- In all sessions where male and female players train together, it is best practice to minimise risk to have a chaperone on poolside as described above.



- Junior players and senior players should not train together when there is a substantial age difference, unless the situation is unavoidable due to time, space, competition rules which cover the situation and/or acceptable training practices. If they do train together, the coach must be aware of the heightened risks and should address those risks accordingly.
- The session should be appropriate for the ages and abilities of all participants.
- All coaches, junior and senior players must be made aware of, and adhere to, the Codes of Conduct in training at all times.
- During sessions, the coach may add to or vary the standard rules of a game for the purposes of training, to benefit all participants or to meet a duty of care.
- The coach should make appropriate considerations when planning drills to ensure minimum contact between junior and senior players. If possible, all contact drills should be undertaken by same gender juniors with seniors completing the drills separately.
- Junior players should not play competitively with senior players when there is a substantial age difference between them, unless the situation is unavoidable due to time, space or competition rules which cover the situation. If they do play together, the coach must be aware of the heightened risks and address those risks accordingly.
- The rules of water polo should be strictly adhered to when seniors and juniors play competitive matches together.
- If a referee has concerns about a junior player's ability to compete, these should be raised with team managers and coaches prior to the start of the game. Referees should be aware of their duty of care to each junior player, e.g. if a player is significantly younger and/or smaller than the remaining squad members, that may leave them open to unacceptable risk.
- Referees should be aware of best practice in that they are in total charge of any game and that they have a duty of care to the players in their charge.
- Referees and coaches should not tolerate any inappropriate activities between players.

Games and competitions

- The coach has a duty of care to take all factors into account when selecting a team, including, but not exclusively, the age, gender, physical capability and skills of all players in the team and of the opposition's team.
- Where junior males and females play together the coach must be aware of the heightened risk that this may present. To minimise any risk it would be best practice to have a chaperone on poolside whose only duty is to ensure the safety of the junior players by providing extra supervision.

