

ALLSTAR PASSION CHEERLEADING

Anti-Bullying Policy

At a Glance

This page tells you what you need to know. The full policy follows and applies in full.

Bullying of any kind is not tolerated at this club — by athletes, parents, coaches or spectators.

Report it to any coach you trust, to the Safeguarding Lead safeguarding@allstarpassion.co.uk or Programme Owner pk@allstarpassion.co.uk

Athletes: Childline 0800 1111 — free, 24 hours, confidential.

What counts as bullying

Behaviour that intentionally or recklessly causes harm, intimidation, humiliation or distress, usually repeated and usually involving an imbalance of power. Two things worth knowing:

- **One incident can be enough** if it is serious, or has a lasting effect
- **“It was only a joke” is not a defence.** If a reasonable person would expect the behaviour to cause harm, we treat it as bullying.

It covers physical, verbal, social (exclusion, rumours), online, prejudice-related and coercive behaviour.

What we will do

Same day	We acknowledge your report and make sure the person affected is safe.
3 working days	We assess it, including whether it needs to go to the Safeguarding Lead.
15 working days	We speak separately to everyone involved and record what they say.
25 working days	You get a written outcome. You can appeal within 10 working days.
2 and 6 weeks	We check back to confirm the behaviour has stopped.

Things you should know

- Serious bullying is a safeguarding matter and goes to the Safeguarding Lead — it is never kept in-house to protect the club.
- This policy applies to adults too. Parents and spectators can be excluded from events for bullying behaviour, including online.
- Nobody who reports in good faith will be penalised. Retaliation is treated as a further, more serious breach.
- We will not ask the person being bullied to move teams as the fix, or suggest they brought it on themselves.
- Please raise concerns with us, not on social media or in the parent group chat — it makes a fair investigation much harder.

Document Control

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Approved by	Leisha Bailey

1. Purpose and Scope

Allstar Passion Cheerleading (the “club”) is committed to a safe, positive and supportive environment. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. This policy explains what bullying is, how to report it, how the club responds, what timescales apply, what sanctions may follow, and how to appeal. It applies to children and adults alike.

Bullying can be a safeguarding matter. Section 4 sets out when a report must be escalated under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; where the two overlap, the safeguarding policy takes precedence.

It applies to athletes, coaches, staff, volunteers, directors, parents, carers and spectators, and covers behaviour at the venue and in training; at competitions, showcases, camps, socials and fundraisers; during club-arranged travel and overnight stays; online in any club-related context, including team and parent group chats, club social media and direct messages between members; and outside club activity where behaviour between members has a material effect on someone's safety or participation at the club.

On that last point: conduct outside our sessions, particularly online, frequently affects athletes inside them. The club will act where the effect on participation is material, while recognising its authority extends only to its own membership and it may need to signpost to a school or the police.

2. What Bullying Is

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group that intentionally or recklessly causes physical or emotional harm, intimidation, humiliation or distress, usually though not always repeated, and usually involving an imbalance of power. Two clarifications, both deliberate changes from the club's previous wording:

- **A single incident can constitute bullying** where it is sufficiently serious, or intended to have or has a continuing effect. The club will not require someone to be harmed repeatedly before acting.
- **Intent need not be proved.** Behaviour a reasonable person would expect to cause harm is treated as bullying whether or not the person says they meant it. “It was only a joke” and “they took it the wrong way” are not defences, though they may bear on the sanction.

An imbalance of power may come from age, size or strength, seniority in the club, position in a stunt group, popularity, numbers, access to information, or any coaching or supervisory relationship.

Form	Examples
Physical	Hitting, pushing, tripping, pinching, restraining, throwing belongings, unwanted contact, deliberately unsafe stunting.
Verbal	Name-calling, insults, threats, mocking, persistent teasing, offensive remarks, sarcasm about ability or appearance.
Social	Deliberate exclusion, spreading rumours, encouraging others to reject someone, humiliating someone in front of the team, damaging reputation.
Cyberbullying	Abusive messages, posts or images; group chat pile-ons; fake accounts; sharing screenshots to embarrass; excluding someone from a team chat; sharing images without consent.
Prejudice-related	Bullying targeting a protected characteristic — see Section 3.
Coercive	Pressuring someone into something they do not want to do, including initiation or hazing rituals, threats about team or stunt placement, or using friendship as leverage.
Damage or theft	Taking, hiding or damaging kit, uniform, bows, shoes or belongings.

What is not bullying. A one-off falling out between friends, a disagreement between equals, or robust but fair coaching feedback may not be not bullying, and treating it as such could be unfair to the person accused. But the club decides this on the facts, not on the assertion of the person accused; behaviour that is not bullying may still breach the Programme Rules.

3. Prejudice-Related Bullying

The club will not tolerate bullying relating to any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. This includes, racist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, disablist, sexist and religiously motivated bullying, and bullying about appearance, body, socio-economic background, family circumstances or caring responsibilities.

- It is recorded as such, with the characteristic involved noted.
- It is an aggravating factor when deciding sanction.
- It may be a hate incident or hate crime. The club will report it to the police where appropriate and support anyone who wishes to report it themselves.
- Sexual harassment — sexualised comments, jokes, gestures, unwanted touching — is dealt with under the Safeguarding Policy as child-on-child abuse where those involved are under 18, not solely as bullying.

4. When Bullying Becomes a Safeguarding Matter

A report must go to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately, and be handled under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, where any of the following apply.

Escalate to the DSL immediately if:

- a child has been, or may have been, significantly harmed physically or emotionally;
- the behaviour is or may be a criminal offence — assault, threats, harassment, malicious communications, hate crime, or sharing indecent images;
- the behaviour is sexual in nature, including sexual harassment or sexualised comments;
- it involves nude or semi-nude images of a person under 18;
- it involves initiation, hazing or any coerced ritual;
- the person accused is an adult and the person affected is a child — consider the LADO criteria in Section 10 of the Safeguarding Policy;
- the person affected has self-harmed, expressed suicidal thoughts, or shows signs of significant distress or disordered eating;
- the person affected is an adult at risk;
- the behaviour is persistent and has continued despite earlier intervention;
- there is any doubt about whether the threshold is met.

The person receiving the report makes this decision — it is not deferred. What happens next is for the DSL, and beyond them for Children's Services, the LADO or the police.

5. Reporting

Everyone is encouraged to report bullying they experience or witness. Bystanders who report are supporting a teammate, not telling tales, and the club will say so publicly and repeatedly.

In person	Any coach or member of staff you trust.
Safeguarding Leads:	safeguarding@allstarpassion.co.uk
Leisha Bailey	
Mel Banks	
Sue Taitt	
Programme Owner	pk@allstarpassion.co.uk
Outside the club	Childline 0800 1111 (free, 24 hours, confidential). If a crime may have been committed, police 101, or 999 in an emergency.

Concerns must be raised through the routes above. Airing allegations about other members on social media, in parent group chats, or with other parents is itself a breach of this policy — it prejudices any investigation, causes further harm, and may be defamatory.

6. How the Club Responds

Immediately: make sure the person affected is safe; record the report the day it is received, in the words used; apply the Section 4 escalation test and, if any threshold is met, refer to the DSL and stop — the safeguarding procedure takes over; and confirm receipt to the person who reported, explaining what happens next.

Stage	Action	Timescale
Acknowledgement	Report acknowledged; safety of the person affected addressed.	Same day or within 1 working day
Initial assessment	Whether the Section 4 threshold is met, and whether this is bullying, a Programme Rules breach, or interpersonal conflict.	Within 3 working days
Fact-finding	Speak separately to the person affected, the person accused and any witnesses; record both accounts. Parents of any child involved informed unless that would increase risk.	Within 15 working days
Outcome	Written outcome to both parties stating the finding and, in general terms, the action being taken.	Within 25 working days of the report
Action	Sanctions and support put in place; parents informed where a child is involved.	Immediately on outcome
Follow-up	Check in with the person affected to confirm the behaviour has stopped.	At 2 weeks and 6 weeks

Where the club cannot meet a timescale — for example over a holiday period, or where an external agency is involved — it will say so and give a revised date.

Fact-finding principles. Both parties are heard separately and both accounts recorded. The person accused is told in fair terms what is alleged and given a real opportunity to respond, unless the DSL directs otherwise because a safeguarding investigation is running. Neither party is left in the same group or activity in a way that exposes the person affected to further harm meanwhile. The person handling the matter must not be a party to it. Findings are made on the balance of probabilities and the reasoning recorded.

Where an adult's behaviour towards a child may meet the LADO criteria, that referral is made and this procedure does not run in its place.

6.1 Mediation and restorative approaches

Bringing parties together can work for peer conflict where both genuinely want to resolve it. It is not appropriate in every case.

Mediation must not be used where:

- there is a significant imbalance of power between the parties;
- the behaviour was sexual in nature, or involved sexual harassment;
- the behaviour amounts to abuse or a criminal offence;
- one party is an adult and the other a child;
- the person affected does not freely wish to take part — they must never be pressured, or made to feel that declining ends the club's involvement;
- a safeguarding referral is open, unless the statutory agency agrees.

7. Sanctions

Sanctions are proportionate to seriousness, frequency and impact, and to the age and understanding of the person responsible. Where a child is responsible, the first purpose is to change the behaviour, not to punish.

- **Aggravating:** targeting a protected characteristic; repetition after a warning; involving others; targeting a younger or more vulnerable athlete; using seniority or authority; recording or circulating the incident; retaliating against someone who reported.
- **Mitigating:** genuine acknowledgement and apology; the person responsible is themselves experiencing harm or has relevant additional needs; no previous concerns; prompt cessation.

Athletes	Informal → conversation with a coach, parents informed. Formal warning → written, with expectations and a review date. Restriction → temporary removal from a stunt group, routine position, competition or event; supervised participation. Suspension → defined period, with conditions for return. Withdrawal of membership → in the most serious cases or where behaviour continues. The programme rules states the position on refunds.
Adults — parents, carers, spectators, volunteers, staff	Informal → conversation with the Programme Owner, expectations confirmed in writing. Formal warning → written, referencing the code of conduct. Restriction → exclusion from spectating, competitions or events, or removal from club group chats and social channels. Removal from role → for volunteers and staff, with LADO and DBS referral considered where the Safeguarding Policy criteria are met. Withdrawal of membership → where an adult's conduct makes continued participation untenable. The programme rules states the position on refunds.

8. Appeals

Anyone subject to a sanction, and anyone who raised a concern and is dissatisfied with the outcome, may appeal in writing within 10 working days of the written outcome, stating the grounds: that the finding was not supported by the evidence; that the procedure was not followed and this affected the outcome; that the sanction was disproportionate; or that new information is available.

- The appeal is considered by someone not involved in the original decision, and the outcome given in writing within 15 working days. It is final within the club's own process.

Nothing here prevents anyone contacting the police, Children's Services or the LADO at any point, and the club will not ask anyone to exhaust the internal process first.

9. Support and Confidentiality

For the person affected: a conversation with the DSL or a trusted coach at a time and place where they feel comfortable; practical measures to keep them safe, such as changes to grouping, supervision or arrival and departure timing; reassurance that they will not lose their place, position or opportunities for reporting; signposting to external support including Childline (0800 1111) and the Anti-Bullying Alliance; and regular check-ins for as long as needed.

The club will not ask the person affected to change teams, sessions or groups as the primary remedy; suggest they contributed to the behaviour; or treat their reaction to being bullied as the problem to be managed.

For the person accused or responsible: they are told what is alleged and given a fair chance to respond; treated as a child in need of support rather than only a wrongdoer, since a child who bullies may themselves be experiencing bullying, abuse or difficulty at home, and the club will consider whether they need a safeguarding referral; supported to understand the effect of their behaviour and change it; and, where the allegation is not upheld, told so in writing, with reasonable steps taken to ensure they are not treated adversely as a result.

For anyone who reports: nobody reporting in good faith will be penalised, upheld or not. Retaliation — exclusion, hostility from parents, comments online — is a further and aggravated breach of this policy.

Confidentiality. Reports are handled discreetly and information shared only with those who need it to act. But confidentiality is not absolute and will not be promised: where a child may be at risk, information goes to the DSL and, where necessary, to statutory agencies, with or without consent. The person accused will normally need to know what is alleged in order to respond fairly. The person who raised the concern is told the outcome as it affects them, but not the details of a sanction imposed on someone else, which is that person's own confidential information. All parties are expected not to discuss the matter on social media or with other members while it is being handled.

10. Concerns Involving Coaches, Staff or Directors

- A concern about a coach, member of staff or director is not handled by that person, nor by anyone they manage.
- Where the person affected is a child, the LADO criteria in the Safeguarding Policy are considered before any internal process begins.
- Where the concern is about the DSL, the Deputy DSL or the Programme Owner, it may go directly to the Gloucestershire Allegations Management Service, 01452 426994 / amadmin@gloucestershire.gov.uk.

11. Records, Prevention and Review

- Every report is recorded, including those found not to be bullying and those resolved informally: date received, who reported, who was involved, what was alleged, the Section 4 assessment, the accounts given, the finding and reasoning, the sanction, the support provided, and the follow-up.
- **Records are held in the club's access-controlled safeguarding storage, not in personal email accounts or on personal devices**, with access limited to the DSL, Deputy and Programme Owner. Records about a child are kept until their 25th birthday as a minimum, in line with the Safeguarding Policy.
- This policy and the Programme Rules are issued at registration and published on the club website.
- The club recognises teammates who include and support others, not only those who perform well.
- Coaches and directors model the standard expected of everyone else — how adults speak to and about athletes, parents and each other sets the tone athletes copy.
- Reviewed annually by the DSL and approved by the directors, and sooner after any significant incident or change in guidance. The review considers anonymised case data, feedback, and whether published timescales were met.

12. Contacts

Contact	For	Details
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Leisha Bailey	safeguarding@allstarpassion.co.uk
Deputy DSL	Mel Banks	safeguarding@allstarpassion.co.uk
Programme Owner	Pokuwa Strong	pk@allstarpassion.co.uk
Independent safeguarding contact	Sport Cheer England	sportcheerengland@gmail.com
Childline	Athletes — free, confidential, 24 hours	0800 1111 / childline.org.uk
NSPCC Helpline	Advice for adults	0808 800 5000
Gloucestershire Children's Services	Concern about a child's welfare	01452 426565
Allegations Management Service (LADO)	Concern about an adult working with children	01452 426994 / amadmin@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Police	If a crime may have been committed	101, or 999 in an emergency
Anti-Bullying Alliance	Information and support	anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk