

## **Summary of the BLDSA's Safeguarding policy**

The BLDSA has a Safeguarding policy, which outlines the measures which it is taking in order to protect vulnerable persons who may engage in our sport, as participants, organisers, helpers or spectators. Copies of this policy are available from the Safeguarding Officer on request. The policy includes children, as well as "vulnerable adults". Within law, a vulnerable adult is defined as one who cannot adequately protect themselves from harm. Within the arena of open-water swimming, this may involve the following groups of people (although the list is not exhaustive):

- Children who have not yet attained their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday,
- Adults with certain learning or physical disabilities or mental health difficulties,
- Swimmers, particularly those who may become confused or disorientated as a result of the cold,
- All of those who are in need of, or who are receiving, emergency first aid or medical treatment, or rescue from the water.

It is the intention of the BLDSA to help such vulnerable persons to protect themselves whilst undertaking activities under the oversight of the organisation. This includes swims, briefings, presentations, meetings, and occasionally travel to and from or accommodation at such events. In addition, when a child or vulnerable adult enters our organisation's events, having been subjected to abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the child/vulnerable adult's self-esteem. In such cases the association shall work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the person receives the required support. The BLDSA is committed to helping all persons to enjoy the sport of open water swimming. With regard to vulnerable persons, we are fully committed to ensuring that:

- All swimmers or Kayakers under the age of 18 need to have a named responsible adult on shore during the duration of the swim. Any under 18's on shore will also need a named responsible adult,
- The welfare of the vulnerable person is paramount at all times,
- All persons, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse,
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

All members of the association have a duty to be aware of potential issues regarding the protection of vulnerable persons. This includes ensuring their activities do not cause or facilitate harm to vulnerable persons and reporting any concerns or complaints to the Safeguarding Officer. Volunteers working with the BLDSA are not expected to be trained to deal with situations or abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred, but merely to report any concerns they have. Further guidance on detecting abusive situations, as well as what to do if you have any concerns, is available from the Safeguarding Officer or on the BLDSA website at [www.blds.org.uk](http://www.blds.org.uk).

Certain members of the organisation do have a particular responsibility for child and vulnerable adult protection. These include:

- The Safeguarding Officer, who is responsible on an association wide level for putting policies in place and ensuring they are regularly reviewed in light of new developments, ensuring that the policies are adequately disseminated, followed and enforced, providing help and advice, as well as seeking professional advice should this be required,
- The Safeguarding Committee who assist the Safeguarding Officer and deputise for him or her when required,
- The Executive Committee, led by the BLDSA President, who sanction the actions of the Safeguarding Officer/Committee,
- Swim secretaries and other officials with core roles, who must be aware of particular protection issues in relation to their event. Each swim should have a designated official who deals with child protection issues at their event, and their details should be publicised (e.g. in programmes, entry forms, or at briefings).

The duties of these people, in addition to the membership as a whole, are explained in further detail in the Safeguarding Policy. In particular, where swimmers (or their parents) make a private arrangement with a friend or family member to provide a canoe escort (or other 1:1 contact),

vetting shall not be automatically necessary, although it may be required, at the discretion of the swimmer/parents or the swim secretary to sign a code of good practice to ensure that they are suitable to work with such people. In addition, those taking/collecting, processing or publishing photographs or data on behalf of the BLDSA (other than for internal administrative purposes) must seek permission of the vulnerable person and/or their parents/guardians before doing so. Those members who are unsure as to their role should, in the first instance, contact a member of the Safeguarding Committee. Training in Safeguarding is available for all members upon request.

The following people may be contacted with any queries regarding the protection of children and vulnerable adults:

- Safeguarding Officer,
- Safeguarding Committee Members,
- BLDSA President.