DUNSTABLE UNDERWATER HOCKEY SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. Purpose

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework for acceptable conduct at Dunstable Underwater Hockey Club (DUWH), whether participation is social or competitive. It also sets out measures to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

No member is exempt from this policy, regardless of their position, age, level of experience, or social standing.

2. Reporting Concerns

Any member who believes this policy has been breached must report it to a committee member. Allegations will be recorded in writing and kept securely by the Chair (or another uninvolved committee member).

The club promotes and celebrates diversity. Any behaviour — verbal, physical, or online — that targets a person based on gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, religion, belief, or age may result in disciplinary action. What is “unacceptable” is determined by the individual’s experience; any member may raise a concern if they feel targeted or harmed.

3. DBS Checks

All committee members and those in positions of authority must undergo an annual enhanced DBS check. The Chair will organise checks after appointment. Records will be stored securely by the Chair. Costs will be covered by DUWH or a parent agency such as BSAC.

4. Safety and Risk Management

Although underwater hockey is a non-contact sport, minor injuries may occur, and more serious injuries (e.g. fractures, dislocations) are possible. Serious incidents must trigger a review of club risk assessments. Risk assessments will be reviewed annually or following a significant incident.

5. Prohibited Conduct

No conduct that is illegal or against statute will be tolerated during club activities.

No abuse or degrading treatment — verbal, physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, or neglectful — will be accepted. This applies to all forms of communication (verbal, written, online, social media, messaging apps, etc.).

Members must not share inappropriate content, images, or communications about or with other members, especially juniors. Photos or videos of juniors may only be shared with written parental/guardian consent.

Where immediate action is needed (e.g. physical assault), committee members present must intervene to ensure safety. This may involve removing an individual from a session or cancelling the session. Suspension or exclusion may follow, alongside referral to external agencies such as the police or social services where appropriate.

6. Disciplinary Process

Breaches of this policy will be assessed objectively. A staged approach (e.g. a three-strike system) may be used, with the severity of consequences based on the nature of the offence. Possible sanctions include:

Suspension from club activities (training, tournaments, social events) for a specified period.

Permanent exclusion from the club and cancellation of membership.

Return of any club-owned or DUWH-branded kit, with reimbursement of the item’s value.

Actions deemed severe or destructive may lead to immediate maximum penalties, even on a first offence.

7. Appeals

Members may appeal disciplinary action if they feel they have been unfairly treated. Appeals will be heard by the committee (excluding anyone implicated). Appeals must be submitted in writing within 14 days of notification of the decision. The committee's decision will be final, though external authorities may be consulted if legal proceedings are involved.

8. Whistleblowing and Confidentiality

The club supports whistleblowing. Members raising concerns in good faith will be supported and not penalised.

All disclosures will be handled with sensitivity and confidentiality. Written records will be securely stored in line with data protection requirements (GDPR).

Members must be aware that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in cases where illegal activity or safeguarding concerns are disclosed. In such cases, information may be shared with parents/guardians or external agencies (e.g. police, social services). No internal investigation will proceed until external authorities have concluded their involvement.

9. Definitions of Abuse

While not exhaustive, the following definitions provide guidance:

Physical abuse – e.g. striking, shaking, burning, suffocating, or any deliberate act causing harm.

Sexual abuse – forcing or enticing a person into sexual activity (contact or non-contact), grooming, sexualised language, or sharing of sexual images.

Emotional abuse – persistent criticism, silencing views, unrealistic demands, belittling, or undermining confidence and self-worth.

Psychological abuse – coercive or controlling behaviour such as sustained bullying or manipulation, leading to withdrawal, low self-esteem, or depression.

Neglect – failure to meet an individual's needs for food, clothing, shelter, safety, medical care, or emotional support.

Reviewed

17/09/2025 - David Surrige