

Storm Elite



Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

2025-2026

All staff will have access to a copy of this policy. The policy will also be available to parents and carers upon request.

Our commitment to safeguarding

Storm Elite takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people in its care and provide a safe environment in which children and young people are kept safe and feel safe where they can participate in cheerleading.

All staff recognise the importance of protecting and safeguarding the welfare of the children and young people entrusted to its care. We understand that all adults, including temporary staff and volunteers, have a full and active part to play in protecting our children from harm. Storm Elite has a responsibility to act if any safeguarding concerns come to light to protect the children in our programme from harm.

In this document the term 'children and young people' is referring to those under the age of 18. Though we understand and recognise that adults are also vulnerable to abuse.

Storm Elite's appointed safeguarding officer is Owner and Head Coach, Chantelle Cooke. She has special responsibility for child protection issues for the year 2025/2026.

Staff:

- All staff will hold an enhanced DBS check
- All staff will hold public liability insurance
- All staff will undergo safeguarding training. (Including online courses)

Storm Elite recognises the following as forms of abuse:

- **Physical abuse:** adults may physically hurt or injure a young person e.g. shaking, throwing, poisoning, biting, burning, scalding, hitting, suffocation, or drowning. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would constitute as child abuse.
- **Emotional abuse:** The emotional mistreatment of a young person, likely causing severe and lasting effects on the child's emotional development. This includes telling a young person they are unloved, worthless or useless in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. This may cause a young person to become frightened or in danger by constantly being shouted at, taunted or threatened. This may cause the young person to become withdrawn. Emotional feedback may occur in sport if the young person is constantly given negative feedback or expected to perform at levels unrealistic for their age or skill level. Other forms of emotional abuse could include but are not limited to, name calling and bullying.
- **Bullying:** Bullying can come from another young person or an adult. Bullying is 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:** Neglect occurs when an adult fails to meet the requirements of the young person's needs, whether physical or psychological – to an extent that is likely to result in serious

impairment of the child's health or development. E.g. failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing. Failing to protect them from physical harm or danger. Failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care and treatment. Refusal to give love, affection and attention is a form of neglect. 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.

- **Sexual abuse:** 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 over eating or loss of appetite.
- Losing weight for no apparent reason.
- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt.
- Cutting or self-harm.

Signs of Bullying

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, 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, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes.
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

It must be recognised that the above lists are 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 Storm Elite to decide that child abuse is occurring. It is their responsibility to act on any concerns.

Safeguarding Officer

- The designated senior member of staff with lead responsibility for child protection issues is: Owner and Head Coach Chantelle Cooke. E: cheerleadingstormelite@gmail.com
- 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.
- She will ensure the safeguarding policy is easily accessible to staff, volunteers, parents and athletes.
- 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.

All staff

Every adult in the company has a key role to play in identifying concerns early, providing help for children, and preventing concerns from escalating.

All staff:

- Must always act in the best interests of the child.
- Have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn.
- Must be familiar with the policies and procedures within our school which support safeguarding.
- Should be aware of the indicators of abuse and neglect so that they are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection. This information is provided through regular training and updates.
- Must know what to do if a child tells them that they are being abused or neglected.
- Must follow the procedures set out in section 3 when they have a concern about a child.
- Should understand information sharing and confidentiality, only involving those who need to be involved.

Parents and Carers

We are committed to working with parents positively, openly and honestly. We ensure that all parents are treated with respect, dignity and courtesy. We respect parents' rights to privacy and confidentiality and will not share sensitive information unless we have permission, or it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard a child.

Staff training

All staff receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training which will be updated annually. In addition, we ensure that their knowledge is kept regularly updated, and checks of knowledge undertaken throughout the year. This provides them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.

Procedure

Concerns about a child

- You must report all concerns in person to the DSL.
- You may be concerned about a child due to something that you have seen or heard, or you may have noticed a change in their behaviour or presentation. Through training and regular reminders and updates, all staff are trained to notice potential signs and indicators of abuse and neglect.
- It is important that all concerns, no matter how small they may seem, are reported and recorded appropriately. Your piece of information, added to other information held by the DSL or noted at a later date, may be an important part of the picture.
- If you have any concerns about a child's welfare it is important that you act on them immediately.
- If you are concerned that a child is in immediate danger or risk of significant harm you must act immediately and speak to the DSL before recording your concern in writing.
- You should never assume that another colleague or professional has reported the concern. The DSL would rather receive the same report in duplication than not receive it at all.

Recording a concern

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

- Listen carefully and stay calm.
- Do not interview the child, but question normally and without pressure, in order to be sure that you understand what the child is telling you.
- Do not put words into the child's mouth.
- Reassure the child that by telling you, they have done the right thing.
- 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.
- Note the main points carefully.
- Make a detailed note of the date, time, place, what the child said, did and your questions etc.
- Staff should not investigate concerns or allegations themselves but should report them immediately to the Designated Person.

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. When recording information, 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.

Responding to a concern from a child

It can be very difficult for children to speak out about abuse. They may fear the consequences, worry that they won't be believed or not understand that what they are experiencing is abuse. Children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. Children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.

If a child speaks to you about information suggesting that they are at risk of, or being abused, this is known as a disclosure. Disclosure is a process by which children start to share their experiences of abuse with others, and can take place over a long period of time. They may tell you a lot of information, tell you something small to see how you react, or mention something in passing. Some children make disclosures non-verbally through writing, drawing or other forms of communication such as through their play. All disclosures should be taken seriously.

If a child chooses to talk to you about a concern, it is important to recognise that they have placed you in a position of trust, and as such you should be supportive and respectful of the child. You must never promise a child that you will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may not be in the best interests of the child.

Additional consideration needs to be given to pupils with communication difficulties and for those whose preferred language is not English. It is important to communicate with them in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and preference.

- **Listen** carefully to what the child is saying. Don't display shock or indicate that you don't believe them. Let them talk freely without interrupting.
- **Reassure** them that they have done the right thing by telling you. Let them know that you are taking what they have told you seriously, and that they can trust you to do the right thing.
- **Explain** what you are going to do next – that you will be speaking to someone who will be able to help.
- **Report** what you have been told as soon as possible. Try to use the child's own words.

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. Storm Elite 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 Storm Elite 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, Storm Elite staff are not child protection experts, 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 Storm Elite, 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:

- Storm Elite 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.
- Owner, Head Coach and Welfare Officer Chantelle Cooke should be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings.
- If the Head Coach is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to the appropriate manager/Assistant Coach 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.

Reporting and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Members of Staff

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

- Storm Elite 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.

Child on child abuse

Reporting, recording and responding

- We encourage pupils to confidentially report abuse. Children and young people are regularly reminded that they can speak to any member of staff if they have a worry or concern.
- Staff must report any concerns regarding Child on child on abuse. All allegations and concerns will be recorded and investigated and dealt with in line with this policy.
- In all cases, if staff are unsure, they should always speak to the DSL.
- We recognise that children are capable of abusing other children and take all concerns and reports seriously. We will support the victim and understand that the child who is perpetrating the abuse may also be at risk or experiencing harm and will consider them as a potential victim and support them appropriately.

What is Child on child abuse?

Child on child abuse can take forms such as, but is not limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based bullying and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers
- Physical abuse (including online elements which facilitate, threaten and/or encourage physical abuse)
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (including online elements which facilitate, threaten and/or encourage sexual violence)
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and or videos
- Upskirting
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

How we minimise the risk of Child on child abuse

Child on child abuse will not be tolerated or passed off as “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys will be boys” as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

We recognise the gendered nature of Child on child abuse and that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators, but that all Child on child abuse is abuse and will be taken seriously.

We understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive in nature. Addressing all inappropriate behaviour, even if seemingly innocuous, can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive, and/or violent behaviour in the future.

Staff have an important role to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it by:

- Challenging any form of derogatory or sexualised language or behaviour, including requesting or sending sexual images.
- Being vigilant to issues that particularly affect different genders – for example, sexualised or aggressive touching or grabbing towards female pupils, and initiation or hazing type violence with respect to boys.

Regulated Activity and obtaining Enhanced DBS checks

- 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.
- However, an individual working in a directly and permanently supervised position is not considered to be engaged in regulated activity but should still have an enhanced DBS disclosure check. However, because they are working in a supervised role the enhanced check will not include a check of the children's barred list.
- 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:

- Storm Elite Management 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.

Duty to refer to the DBS

- 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.
- Storm Elite has 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.
- Referral forms can be downloaded from the DBS's website www.homeoffice.gov.uk/dbs.

The DBS's barring process

- 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.

- 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.
- 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.

Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment

Storm Elite does not allow photography and video with hand held mobile devices such as mobile phones or iPads by friends and family of athletes unless permission is given by the head coach. The use of long lens cameras is strictly prohibited. Sale of photos taken at Storm Elite events is strictly prohibited unless you are the hired photo vendor for the given event. If Storm Elite works with a photographer, a current DBS check is in place. All clubs, athletes, and spectators of cheerleading should be vigilant for any suspicious behaviour involving cameras/filming and any concerns should be reported immediately to security, Storm Elite staff, or the welfare officer directly.

Use of children's images for Storm Elite publicity and advertising

Storm Elite may use images of children 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 give consent for photographs to be taken, and/or footage filmed during practices and performances for promotional materials relating to Storm Elite (including the CC All Stars/Storm Elite Website, YouTube page, Facebook page, Instagram account and Twitter account).

Safer Recruitment and Selection Procedure

Storm Elite recruitment and selection procedures should 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.
- Professional or character references should be obtained
- Disclosure and Barring Service disclosure/List 99 checks (maintain sensitive and confidential use of the applicant's disclosure).
- Use a variety of selection techniques (e.g., qualifications, previous experience etc).