

Milton Keynes Gymnastics Safeguarding Policy

Milton Keynes Gymnastics is committed to ensuring that all participants, particularly children and young people, can enjoy gymnastics in a safe and supportive environment. The welfare of children is paramount, and safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Milton Keynes Gymnastics follows the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures of our National Governing Body British Gymnastics.

You can contact a club welfare officer by email : welfare@mkgym.co.uk

The current club welfare officers are:

Davinia Inkson – Lead Welfare Officer – Parent of a Gymnast
Nicola Bekley – Lead Welfare Officer – Club Receptionist
Jade Davies – Assistant Welfare Officer – Club HR
Bev Denieffe – Assistant Welfare Officer – Parent of a Gymnast
Jennie Ingles – Assistant Welfare Officer – Club Administrator

Purpose

The policy aims to make gymnastics safe for everyone, free from harassment and abuse. To achieve this, all participants must understand their role in preventing and responding to concerns, including those outside the gymnastics setting. It ensures compliance with legal safeguarding requirements for children and adults at risk.

Key Objectives:

1. Make clear that any form of non-accidental violence is unacceptable.
2. Ensure everyone knows how to report concerns and feels safe to do so.
3. Provide a coordinated response to incidents of abuse in line with statutory guidance.
4. Clarify responsibilities for reporting concerns about welfare inside and outside gymnastics.
5. Put safeguarding measures in place for athletes representing the organisation.
6. Implement practices that reduce the risk of harassment and abuse.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff, coaches, volunteers, and members.
- All activities delivered by Milton Keynes Gymnastics, including training, events, and trips.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is essential that everyone involved in gymnastics is fully aware of the early signs of abuse and understands the appropriate steps to report these concerns.

All members must comply with British Gymnastics policy and applicable standards of conduct and specifically not engage in, allow, condone, or ignore incidents of harassment and abuse and be supportive of other participants who report concerns.

Anyone who has reason to believe that a child or adult at risk has or is experiencing abuse has a duty to report it to the relevant statutory authority and to British Gymnastics where the abuse is connected to their role in the sport.

Failure to comply with the policy and associated procedures will be investigated and may ultimately result in disciplinary action against the individuals concerned.

Club Welfare Officers (CWO): First point of contact for safeguarding concerns.

Responsible for implementing this policy, maintaining records, and liaising with British Gymnastics and statutory agencies.

Coaches, Employees and Volunteers: Must follow safeguarding procedures, attend training, and report concerns immediately.

Parents/Carers: Encouraged to be involved and informed about safeguarding practices.

Responding to Concerns

- If a child is at immediate risk, call **999** and inform the Welfare Officer.
- Our role is not to investigate, but to refer concerns to the right authorities
- Record concerns accurately using the Safeguarding Incident Form.
- Share referral details with British Gymnastics Safeguarding Team and statutory agencies as required.
- If advice is needed either contact Milton Keynes MASH 01908 253169 or the NPSCC helpline: 0808 800 5000
- Allegations about any British Gymnastics member, coach or official must be reported to British Gymnastics or the Home Country Welfare Officer.
- Any information relating to safeguarding concerns must be stored securely. In the case of children, records should normally be retained until the child reaches the age of 25.

Appendices – all appendices available on request

1. Definitions
2. Categories of Abuse Defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children
3. Categories of abuse and neglect as defined by the Care and Support Statutory Guidance
4. Poor Practice
5. Roles and Responsibilities of the Club Welfare Officer
6. Key indicators of Abuse
7. Recording Concerns
8. Responding to a Disclosure from a Child

Appendix 1

DEFINITIONS

Child/children - Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people'.

Adult at risk - An adult at risk is defined in the Care Act 2014 as someone who is aged 18 or over and:

- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs).
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect.
- As a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Safeguarding adults at risk involves: Protecting their rights to live in safety and to be free from abuse and neglect; People and organisations working together to prevent the risk of abuse or neglect, and to stop these from happening.

Abuse - Any non-accidental act or failure to act that causes harm. The categories of abuse that apply to children are set out in Working Together as follows:

- Physical abuse.
- Emotional abuse.
- Sexual abuse including sexual exploitation.
- Neglect.
- Extremism.

The IOC Consensus Statement (2016) identifies five forms of harassment and abuse that apply to athletes which may occur in combination or in isolation:

- Psychological.
- Physical
- Sexual harassment.
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

Bullying - Intentional behaviour usually repeated over time that hurts another individual or group.

Hazing - Hazing behaviours are known to occur in many different types of social groups, including sports teams as a way of initiating a new person when they join the group or want to be socially accepted by their peers.

Poor Practice - Poor practice is behaviour of an individual in a position of responsibility which falls below the required standard as set out in the Standards of Conduct. Poor practice may not be immediately dangerous or intentionally harmful to a child but is likely to set a poor example.

Position of trust - A position of trust exists where an adult, by virtue of their role, is in a position of power or influence over another person. Although an adult engaging in any sexual activity with a young person under the age of sixteen would be committing a criminal offence, in some circumstances, engaging in sexual activity within a relationship of trust with a young person between the age of 16-18 years is also a criminal offence. As of 28th June 2022, the law states that those in a position of trust in sports organisations, such as a coach, cannot legally have a sexual relationship with young people under the age of 18 who they have power or influence over e.g. Gymnast/Helper/Volunteer.

Extremism - Extremism goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable, including the young, by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society. Extremism is defined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 as the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.

Appendix 2

Categories of Abuse Defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Child Sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse that occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased

Registered Charity 1080223

www.miltonkeynesgymnastics.co.uk

reception@mkgym.co.uk

status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment).
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers) or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Appendix 3

Categories of abuse and neglect as defined by the Care and Support Statutory Guidance

Physical abuse

Assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanction.

Domestic violence

Psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour' based violence.

Sexual abuse

Rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological/emotional abuse

Emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Financial or material abuse

Theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult at risk's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Modern slavery

Slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Discriminatory abuse including hate crime

Forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

Organisational abuse

Neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one-off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and acts of omission Ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating

Appendix 4

Poor Practice

Poor Practice is behaviour or actions that may fall short of abuse and neglect but is still unacceptable.

Poor practice can be split into different types. These include: - Practices that may be on the fringe of abuse and/or if repeated, could amount to abuse. Most of the examples are linked to emotional abuse.

Examples include:

- Name-calling including sarcasm and racism.
- Excessive monitoring of weight.
- Constant criticism.
- Exerting excessive pressure.
- Forcing a child to do something against their will.
- Use of inappropriate language.
- Harassment.
- Being ostracised or ignored.

Emotional abuse

Within Gymnastics examples of emotional abuse may include:

- Continually belittling a participant's efforts.
- Placing extreme pressure on a participant to perform.

Breaches of British Gymnastics Safeguarding policy and procedures by British Gymnastics clubs and members.

Examples include:

- No Welfare Officer within a club.
- Inadequate safeguarding arrangements.
- Providing inadequate supervision and/or care.
- Failure to respond appropriately to concerns.
- Expelling anyone from the club who raises a concern.
- Excluding parents from observing or asking questions about training.
- Inappropriate use of photographic equipment or materials, including live streaming with external access viewing.

Neglect

Neglect in a sports situation might occur if a teacher or coach fails to ensure participants are safe or exposes them to unduly cold temperatures at their training venue or not taking action to stop young people from doing things that put them at risk of injury. Breaches of recognised best practice in coaching include:

- Providing coaching, or running a session, without another responsible adult present.
- Exceeding level of competence and/or qualification.
- Employing practices that are inappropriate for the stage of psychological and physical development of the individual.
- Excessive training or competition.
- Inappropriate/excessive supporting or stretching.

In Gymnastics an example of physical abuse could include:

- Provision of performance enhancing drugs.
- Setting a training regime that exceeds the capacity of a child's immature and growing body.
- Inflicting pain on a participant that is beyond an acceptable level of discomfort involved in physical preparation and training.
- Forcing a participant into a highly restricted and unhealthy diet that may lead to extreme weight loss.

Practices that are known to be significant risk factors in cases of abuse include:

- Taking a child or adult at risk home or other secluded place unaccompanied by others.
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games.
- Sharing a room with a child or adult at risk.
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Making sexually suggestive remarks.
- Reducing a participant to tears as a form of control.
- Allowing participants to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Allowing allegations made by a participant to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Carrying out personal care for a child or adult at risk that they can do unaided.
- Departing from the premises without first supervising the safe dispersal of children or adults at risk.
- Abusing a privileged position of power or trust.
- Resorting to bullying tactics, or verbal abuse.

- Causing a participant to lose self-esteem by embarrassing, humiliating or undermining the individual.
- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children or adults at risk away from other adults.
- Having children or adults at risk as 'friends' or 'followers' on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- Engaging with children or adults at risk on 'one to one' personal electronic communications.
- Sending inappropriate text messages or social media messages to children or adults at risk.

The above is not exhaustive. Any practices which raise a concern should be considered and advice sought from British Gymnastics.

Appendix 5

Roles and Responsibilities of the Club Welfare Officer

- Assist the club to put in place policies and implementation plans for safeguarding and promoting welfare.
- Be the first point of contact for club staff and volunteers, children and parents for any issue concerning safeguarding, poor practice or potential/alleged abuse.
- Ensure that all incidents are correctly reported and referred in accordance with British Gymnastics guidelines.
- Ensure that all relevant club members access appropriate safeguarding training.
- Ensure that British Gymnastics procedures for recruitment of staff and volunteers are followed and all appropriate existing staff or volunteers have up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosures.
- Maintain local contact details for Children's Social Care Services, the Police and Local Authority Safeguarding panels.
- Ensure that codes of conduct are in place for club staff and volunteers/officials, children and parents.
- Advise club management on safeguarding issues.
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained and information is only shared on a genuine 'need to know' basis.
- Attend Club Management meetings to provide an update on safeguarding within the club environment.

Appendix 6

Key indicators of Abuse

The following guidance has been provided by the NSPCC, which describes various indicators of abuse and neglect in different age groups:

All ages

- Talks of being left home alone or with strangers.
- Poor bond or relationship with a parent, also known as attachment.
- Acts out excessive violence with other children.
- Lacks social skills and has few if any friends.

Under 5s

- Doesn't cry or respond to parent's presence or absence from an early age
- Reaches developmental milestones late, such as learning to speak, with no medical reason
- Significantly underweight but eats well when given food.

5-11-year-olds

- Becomes secretive and reluctant to share information.
- Reluctant to go home after school.
- Unable to bring friends home or reluctant for professionals to visit the family home.
- Poor school attendance and punctuality, or late being picked up.
- Parents show little interest in child's performance and behaviour at school.
- Parents are dismissive and non-responsive to professional concerns.
- Is reluctant to get changed for sports etc.
- Wets or soils the bed.

11-16-year-olds

- Drinks alcohol regularly from an early age.
- Is concerned for younger siblings without explaining why.
- Becomes secretive and reluctant to share information.
- Talks of running away.
- Shows challenging/disruptive behaviour at school.
- Is reluctant to get changed for sports etc.

Appendix 7

Recording Concerns

Any information passed to the Children's Social Care Services, the Police and/or British Gymnastics must be as accurate and helpful as possible and, ideally, should be accompanied by a detailed record providing:

- Details of the person receiving the disclosure/recording the information including their role.
- Details of parent/carer and an indication of what, if any, information has been shared with them.
- Full details of the person about whom the concern/allegation is made including full name, date of birth, address, relationship to the child concerned and/or position held in the club, if any.
- Details of the place, date and times of the incident(s) or other relevant information.
- The nature of the allegation(s).
- Description of any visible injuries or bruising.
- Detailed description of the child's account of how the injuries or bruising occurred.
- Details of any online or social media involvement including the types of any devices,
- applications, formats used and whether any photographs and or text used.
- A clear distinction between what is fact, hearsay or opinion.

Reporting the matter to Police or Children's Social Care Services should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. Wherever possible, referrals made by telephone should be followed up with a copy of the incident report form within 48 hours.

The Welfare Officer should record on the incident form the name and designation of the Children's Social Care Services member of staff or Police Officer, including their rank and department to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time, date and reference of the call.

A copy of any case information should also be sent to British Gymnastics Safeguarding Team or the appropriate Home Country governing body Safeguarding Lead Officer.

Appendix 8

Responding to a Disclosure from a Child

If a child indicates that he/she is being abused, or information is received which gives rise to concern that a child may be being abused, the person receiving the information should:

- Stay calm and ensure that the child is safe and feels safe.
- Listen carefully to what is said and actively listening.
- Explain that it is likely the information will have to be shared with others
 - do not promise to keep secrets.
- Allow the child to continue at his/her own pace.
- Keep questions to a minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. - Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in disclosing the information.
- Show and tell the child that what he/she says is being taken seriously and recognise any difficulties inherent in interpreting what the child says.
- Tell the child what will be done next and with whom the information will be shared.
- Record in writing what was said using the child's own words as soon as possible.

The following information should be recorded:

- Place, date time of disclosure.
- Place, dates and times of incidents.
- Any names mentioned.
- To whom the information was given.
- Information that is fact, (hearsay or opinion should be noted as such, but nevertheless passed to the relevant statutory agency).

Ensure the record is signed and dated and provided to the relevant statutory agency and British Gymnastics.

If the child indicates that he/she does not wish others to be informed about the allegation, carefully and tactfully explain the reasons why it may be in the interests of everybody if the matter is referred to the appropriate person or department, (i.e. Children's Social Care).

Similar discussions should also be held regarding informing the child's parent(s) or guardian, as long as they are not the subject of the disclosure.

The person to whom the disclosure is made is presented with a great responsibility and it is advisable, if there is any uncertainty, to seek advice on how to deal with the issue, from Children's Social Care, NSPCC or from the British Gymnastics Lead Officer.

Actions to Avoid:

- Dismissing the concern.
- Ridiculing or being judgemental of the information being disclosed.
- Panicking.
- Allowing shock or distaste to show.
- Probing for more information than is offered (this could be construed as leading a child).
- Making promises that cannot be kept, such as agreeing not to tell someone else
- Speculating or make assumptions.
- Approaching the person who is the subject of an allegation or suspicion, (this may put a child or young person at further risk and/or jeopardise a criminal investigation).
- Conducting a personal investigation of the case.
- Making negative comments about the accused person.

Irrespective of whether the person receiving the information personally believes what has been said, they must always report the disclosure.