



# Stevenage Sports Acrobatics Club

## Child Protection Policy

### Policy - Principles

The policy is based upon the following fundamental principles:

- A child or young person is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years old.
- All Club Gymnasts regardless of age, gender, disability, racial origin, religious belief and sexual orientation have a right to be protected from abuse.
- It is the responsibility of child protection experts to determine if abuse has taken place, but it is everyone's responsibility to report it.
- The welfare of the Club Gymnasts is paramount and all concerns and allegations of potential poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- That best practice guidelines and procedures apply equally in the protection of vulnerable adults as well as Club Gymnasts.
- Confidentiality should be upheld in line with the Data Protection Act (1998).
- The term parent/s is a generic term and represents all parents, carers and guardians.
- The term Coach is a generic term and represents the Head Coach, Club Coach, Assistant Coach or approved Helper called upon by the Head Coach to aid in gymnastic sessions, events or competitions
- The British Gymnastics Child Protection Policy forms the basis of the Club Child Protection Policy and that the British Gymnastics policy should be upheld at all times.

### Policy - Responsibilities

SSAC strives to ensure the protection of its gymnasts and endeavours to promote the highest standards of care by:

- Providing and implementing procedures to safeguard the well-being of all participants and protect them from abuse.
- Respecting the rights, wishes and feelings of all participants.
- Adopting good practice in the recruitment, training and supervision of volunteers and provide guidance to parents.
- Requiring all coaches and volunteers to adopt SSAC and British Gymnastics' Code of Ethics and Conduct, Health, Safety and Welfare Policy and the Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Responding to all allegations and concerns, and implement the appropriate disciplinary and appeals procedure.

### Policy – Actions

Adopted:

SSAC has adopted and implemented the British Gymnastics policy.

SSAC maintains confidential records of all complaints, concerns and sanctions against coaches, volunteers and participants.

SSAC has a complaint and disciplinary procedure in place.

SSAC has reviewed their Child Protection Policy and are committed to have the policy in place and implemented by May 2004.

SSAC will abide by the Safe Recruitment Policy set up in April 2004.

Future action:

SSAC will appoint a designated Welfare Officer who will have responsibility for Child Protection matters.

SSAC will encourage all coaches to attend the 3 hour Child Protection Awareness course.

All competitions and events will follow Child Protection policies and procedures.

SSAC will ensure that coaches and volunteers are given adequate training opportunities.



## Policy – Review

SSAC will review this policy if any of the following take place:

- Changes in legislation
- Changes to the British Gymnastics policy including the British Gymnastics review of November 2006
- Procedural review following a significant complaint

## Recognition of Poor Practice, Abuse or Bullying

SSAC will provide a confidential communication line through which gymnast or parental concerns can be expressed. A Welfare Officer will be designated to whom concerns can be expressed in confidence.

### Poor Practice

This can be defined as any action or behaviour, which contravenes: the Club or British Gymnastics Child Protection Policies, the accepted role and responsibilities of a Coach, Health, Safety and Welfare policies.

### Forms of Abuse

#### Racial Discrimination

Black and minority ethnic groups may experience harassment, discrimination and institutional racism.

#### People with a Disability

May be vulnerable to abuse or poor practice since they may be unable to express their concerns, protect themselves or understand what is happening.

#### Abuse

This may be peer abuse, someone inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm.

This may be physical abuse by intentionally physically harming a child, giving inappropriate substances, or inflicting a type and intensity of training which exceeds the capacity of the child's maturation.

This may be sexual abuse, which also includes taking, possessing or showing inappropriate photographic or other type of images. In sport situations where manual support may be required, Coaches must be particularly aware of the possibilities of misuse of power.

This may be emotional abuse, which can be described as the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child, which can cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Typical examples are: constantly, shouting at, taunting, humiliating or ignoring a child; subjecting the child to constant criticism, name calling, sarcastic comments or bullying; placing unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations.

#### Neglect

May describe the failure to provide basic necessities for a child or to protect a child from danger or physical harm. Includes failure to access appropriate medical care or allowing children to be exposed to unnecessary risk of harm or injury.

## Recognition of Abuse

These are some of the signs, which may give indication of abuse:

- Unexplained bruising or injuries, particularly in unusual places, or an injury where the explanation seems to be inconsistent.
- Sudden changes in behaviour (withdrawal, sudden temper or emotional outbursts, very quiet).
- Inappropriate sexual awareness, language or explicit behaviour.
- Is prevented from socialising or has difficulty making friends.
- Distrustful of adults particularly those where a close relationship might normally be expected.
- Displays variations in eating patterns – the child may be making themselves physically unattractive.



- The child becomes increasingly unkempt or dirty.
- Something another child has said which suggests a child is being abused.
- The child describes an act, which appears to be abusive.

**It is not the responsibility of the Coach or official to decide that the child is being abused but it is their responsibility to act upon their concerns.**

### **Bullying**

Bullying is often abuse by another young person. It is defined as deliberate, hurtful behaviour in the form of physical, emotional or aggressive verbal conduct against another person.

Symptoms that bullying is taking place may be:

*Behavioural* changes including reluctance to attend activities previously enjoyed, tearful, depression, loss of concentration, erratic emotions

*Physical* symptoms such as stomach aches, headaches, sleeplessness, bed-wetting, scratching, bingeing

*Performance* may drop

### **Position of Trust**

Coaches must not use their position of power to manipulate a gymnast in their charge into a sexual relationship.

### **Club Response**

Everyone associated with the Club has a duty to respond to concerns relating to the welfare of children and young adults, whether they relate to their home, family, community or within the Club.

### **Outside the Club**

**The Club's primary responsibility is to ensure that concerns and relevant information is passed to the police or social services without delay. These organisations have a statutory responsibility to make enquiries to establish if a child is at risk of harm.**

Concerns should be passed to the Club Welfare Officer or the Head Coach or if neither is available, the information should be passed directly to the police or social services. The British Gymnastics Child Protection Incident form should be completed and together with written information sent to the statutory organisation and British Gymnastics within 24 hours. *The person receiving the information should:*

- Stay calm and make the child safe and feel secure
- Tell the child they are not to blame and they were right to tell you
- Show/tell the child that you are taking what they say seriously – recognise the inherent difficulties of interpreting what they say.
- Keep questions clear, and to a minimum, to establish an accurate understanding of what has been said – keep a record of what has been said, heard and seen. Detailed questioning should be left to qualified personnel.
- Be honest and tell the child that you may have to tell someone else to help you protect them. You may need to carefully and tactfully explain why the matter needs to be referred to another person or department.

*The person receiving the information should not:*

- Dismiss the concern
- Panic
- Allow any shock or distaste to show
- Probe for more information than is offered
- Make promises that cannot be kept such as not telling anyone else
- Speculate or make assumptions
- Approach the alleged abuser
- Make negative comments about the accused person.



## **Welfare Officer**

The Welfare Officer should handle Child Protection issues – they should make the decision to contact the Social Services. If the Welfare Officer has not been appointed, the person in charge should handle the issue. Advice on action to be taken can be sought from British Gymnastics, the NSPCC or Social Services who also provide an out of hours service.

The designated Welfare Officer will:

- Sign a self-declaration form
- Be policed checked via the Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure Service
- Be given adequate training to undertake the role.
- Pass on accurate Information and be as helpful as possible – detailed records should contain where relevant:
  - ❖ Nature, date and times of the allegation
  - ❖ Description of any physical injuries
  - ❖ Detailed description of the child's account of how the injuries were sustained
  - ❖ Clear distinction between fact, opinion and hearsay.
- Forward a copy of the incident form within 24 hours, include who the concerns were passed to, date and time of the call.
- Send a copy of the Incident form to Child Protection Officer, British Gymnastics, marked 'Private and Confidential'.

## **Within the Club**

Any allegations made against a Coach, Helper or official should be taken seriously.

The Welfare Officer must be notified immediately of any circumstances that cause concern or raise suspicions. If unclear what action to take, advice should be sought from British Gymnastics (Ethics and Welfare Manager), NSPCC or from Social Services.

It is not the responsibility of the person raising the concern to decide if abuse is being perpetrated nor to investigate it, but it is **a responsibility to act on those concerns and do something about it.**

## **What Action?**

A complaint of abuse may instigate a number of investigations:

- Criminal
- Child Protection
- Disciplinary or misconduct.

In addition the person making the complaint, or their family can also initiate civil proceedings.

Social Services or the Police will investigate - if the matter is clearly disciplinary, poor conduct this will be passed to British Gymnastics to take the matter further. Disciplinary proceedings can be found in the BG member's handbook.

For poor practise the club and the Welfare Officer can deal with it as a misconduct issue. If the allegation is about the Welfare Officer or the issue remains a concern, inform British gymnastics via an incident form immediately.

ANY concern regarding potential abuse (either current or belatedly) should be recorded and reported to BG without delay. Any suspicion or report of abuse should be referred to the Welfare Officer without delay, who should then report the incident to the Social Services or the police. If the allegation concerns the Welfare Officer, report suspicions directly to the Police or the Social services. Contact BG for advice or help.

**BG must be kept informed at all times.**



### **Confidentiality**

Only tell others if it will help the child. **Confidentiality must be maintained at all times.** Remember the accused may be innocent of the allegation or the child may have misunderstood the situation.

### **Responding to Bullying**

- Take all signs of possible bullying seriously
- Encourage an open environment with sufficient supervision at all times.
- Encourage children to speak to the Welfare Officer or Club official about any concerns.
- Reassure the victim and explain you may have to inform someone in authority.
- Inform the bully's parents or guardians.
- Ensure property or items are returned to the rightful owner.
- Record and report all actions taken.
- Impose sanctions or disciplinary action where necessary.
- Encourage the bully to change their behaviour/s.

### **Responding to Media Inquiries**

In the event of a media enquiry follow the guidelines below:

- Refer the Press to British Gymnastics.
- Do NOT attempt to answer ANY questions
- Immediately contact the Welfare Officer AND British Gymnastics and confirm that the Press have made enquiries.
- If in doubt – 'no comment' or 'The matter is being dealt with by BG/Social Services/Police' should be enough – do NOT get drawn into answering any questions – no matter how innocuous the question.

### **Changing facilities**

- Separate changing facilities will be available for males and females
- No mobile phone use is allowed in the changing rooms
- Any concerns re conduct in the changing rooms should be reported immediately.