



Safeguarding Policy

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Version History

Independent Gymnastics Affiliation (IGA) retains the authority to modify this policy at our own discretion.

Version	Summary of amendments/Changes	Published Date
Version 1.1		April 2021
Version 1.2	Policy has been re-written and expanded	July 2023

Definitions & Abbreviations

Child(ren) / Young people	Individuals who have not yet reached their 18 th birthday
Safeguarding	Safeguarding involves the measures we implement to advance the well-being of children & shield them from harm.
Extremism	Extremism refers to the expression or active resistance against core British values, which encompass democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, & mutual respect, as well as the tolerance of diverse faiths & beliefs.
Position of Trust	<p>A position of trust involves an individual holding authority over another person. It is necessary to safeguard young individuals aged 16 & 17 who, despite reaching the legal age of consent for sexual activity, remain vulnerable to sexual abuse & exploitation under specific circumstances. These circumstances include engaging in sexual activity & relationships with adults who hold positions of trust, responsibility, or authority, exerting significant power & influence in the lives of the young individuals. In our policies & procedures, we consider coaches, safeguarding leads, judges, & other officials to be in positions of trust, even if the legal definition does not explicitly include those roles.</p> <p>These definitions & indicators serve as guidelines & are not intended to be definitive. It is important to note that many children may exhibit some of these indicators at certain times, & the presence of one or more indicators should not be automatically interpreted as proof of ongoing abuse. Other factors such as a recent death, the arrival of a new baby in the family, or parental/carer relationship issues can also contribute to changes in behaviour. When assessing whether indicators are linked to abuse or not, authorities will always consider them within the context of the child's development & circumstances.</p>
IGA	means independent Gymnastics Affiliation
Types of Abuse	Any intentional act or omission that leads to harm, excluding accidents.
Bullying or cyber-bullying	Bullying is the act of engaging in behaviour that inflicts harm upon another individual. This behaviour encompasses actions such as name-calling, physical aggression, pushing, spreading rumours, making threats, & undermining someone. Typically, bullying occurs repeatedly over an extended duration & can cause both physical & emotional distress to the child targeted. On the other hand, cyberbullying refers to bullying that occurs in the online realm. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can persistently affect the child regardless of their location, taking place through social networks, online gaming, & mobile phones.
Emotional Abuse	<p>Emotional abuse refers to the ongoing mistreatment of a child that results in severe & enduring negative impacts on their emotional development. This form of abuse involves conveying messages to children & young people that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate, or only valued based on meeting the needs of others. It can also involve placing inappropriate expectations on children, exceeding their developmental abilities. Additionally, emotional abuse may include overprotection, limiting exploration & learning opportunities, or preventing normal social interactions.</p> <p>One aspect of emotional abuse is constant criticism, name-calling, sarcasm, bullying, or placing unrealistic pressure on children to consistently meet high expectations, such as in a sporting context.</p>
Hazing	Hazing behaviours are observed in various social groups, including sports teams, as a means of initiating new members or seeking social acceptance among peers.
Neglect	Neglect involves the ongoing failure to fulfil a child's essential and/or physical requirements, which can significantly impede their health or overall development. In a sports setting, neglect could manifest as a coach's inability to ensure the safety & well-being of children, neglecting to provide them with appropriate comfort, or subjecting them to extreme cold or avoidable injury risks.
non-accidental violence	The umbrella term encompassing both abuse & harassment.
Physical Abuse	Physical abuse refers to the deliberate infliction of physical harm upon a child or young person. It encompasses various actions, including but not limited to hitting, throwing, shaking, poisoning, burning, or scalding. In the context of sports, instances of physical abuse can arise when the training & competition demands surpass the physical capabilities of the child or young person's developing body, or when performance-enhancing drugs are employed to enhance performance or delay puberty.

Sexual Abuse	<p>Sexual abuse entails compelling or enticing a child or young person to engage in sexual activities, irrespective of whether there is a high level of violence involved, & regardless of the child's awareness of the situation. These activities may involve physical contact, such as assault by penetration (e.g., rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts like masturbation, kissing, rubbing, & touching over clothing. Additionally, they can encompass non-contact actions, such as exposing children to sexual images, involving them in the production or viewing of sexual content, encouraging sexually inappropriate behaviours, grooming a child for abuse (including online grooming), or engaging in activities to prepare for abuse. It's important to note that sexual abuse is not exclusive to adult males, as women, other children, & young people can also perpetrate such acts.</p> <p>In the context of sports, coaching techniques involving physical contact with children can create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. The power dynamic between the coach & the child/young person, if abused, can contribute to the development of abusive situations. One challenge in assessing whether sexual assault has occurred is the issue of exploitation. Other symptoms may include pain, itching, bruising, bleeding in the genital or anal areas, genital discharge, urinary tract infections, stomach pains, discomfort while walking or sitting, or sexually transmitted infections.</p>
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Contact Information

IGA Contacts		
Safeguarding Team		safeguarding@igauk.com
National Safeguarding Lead	Malcolm Bridges	malcolm.bridges@igauk.com
Deputy National Safeguarding Lead	Sarah Wright	sarah.wright@igauk.com
Other organisations		
NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000	www.nspcc.org.uk www.thecpsu.org.uk
KIDSCAPE (parent helpline)	0845 1205 204	https://www.kidscape.org.uk/
Family Lives (formerly Parent Plus)	0808 8002 222	https://www.familylives.org.uk/

Background

At IGA, we firmly believe that safeguarding & protecting the welfare of children & young people is the responsibility of every individual, & their safety is of utmost importance to us. We are fully committed to preventing abuse & ensuring the wellbeing of all our members. The safety & welfare of children & young people are central to all our endeavours, & we recognise the significance of collaborative efforts among organisations to safeguard those in need of assistance & support.

IGA also acknowledges its responsibility towards vulnerable adults who may be at risk within the community, as outlined in the IGA Adult Safeguarding policy. Our procedures are based on the principle that the welfare of individuals is paramount, & we are dedicated to ensuring the protection of everyone, regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual identity. IGA stands ready to support anyone who reports concerns in good faith, where someone may be at risk or experiencing abuse. Abuse can manifest in various forms, including emotional, neglect, physical, & sexual abuse, stemming from both actions & inactions.

We recognise our duty of care to safeguarding & promoting the welfare of children & young people, & we are committed to aligning our safeguarding practices with government guidance, statutory obligations, & best practices. Recent & historical incidents of abuse within various sports have shed light on the vulnerability of athletes at all levels.

Individuals may become targets of harassment & abuse due to factors such as age, appearance, athletic ability, disability, gender identity, race, religion, belief, sex, sexual orientation, or any other distinguishing characteristic. Disabled individuals or those who identify as LGBT face an increased risk of abuse.

Abuse can occur both in-person & in digital environments, within the home or extended family, other organisations or community settings, chatrooms, or involving digital/mobile devices. Typically, the perpetrator of abuse is someone known to the individual. While abuse & harassment often involve individuals in positions of trust or power, children & young people can also be victims of abuse by their peers, which may include bullying, hazing, or exploitation.

Abuse can have long-lasting psychological effects, particularly if the victim has been unable to disclose the abuse or receive adequate support. Individuals who have experienced abuse during their childhood or adolescence may encounter challenges in maintaining stable, trusting relationships, & they may be at higher risk of substance abuse, mental health issues, or self-harm.

Although sport can provide opportunities for individuals with harmful intentions, sports clubs can also serve as safe spaces for those who have experienced abuse in other settings. It is crucial to recognise that individuals who have regular contact with children, young people, & at-risk individuals are well-positioned to identify signs of abuse. This becomes particularly important when someone is unable or finds it difficult to recognise & share their concerns, highlighting the reliance on others to remain vigilant & attentive to possible indicators of abuse.

Effective information sharing is a crucial aspect of safeguarding. While data protection laws should not be viewed as barriers to sharing necessary information for the protection of children & young people, caution must be exercised to ensure that any personal information shared adheres to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) & the Data Protection Act (2018).

Sports bodies & organisations play a significant role in fostering a zero-tolerance approach towards all forms of abuse & taking proactive steps to prevent harm, which includes addressing poor or unsafe practices, combating discrimination, harassment, & victimisation, tackling bullying, or hazing, as well as addressing the issue of extremism.

Relevant National, International Legislation & Statements

Working Together to Safeguard Children (A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard & promote the welfare of children HM Government) sets the frame for the safeguarding of children & young people in England, this guidance applies explicitly to sports organisations & to anyone working within these organisations, whether paid or a volunteer.

“There are many sports clubs & organisations including voluntary & private sector providers who deliver a wide range of sporting activities to children. Some of these will be community amateur sports clubs, some will be charities. All should have the arrangements described in this chapter in place & should collaborate to work effectively with the safeguarding partners as required by any local safeguarding arrangements. Paid & volunteer staff need to be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding & promoting the welfare of children, how they should respond to child protection concerns & how to make a referral to local authority children’s care or the police if necessary.” (Chapter 2 – Page 72 – Paragraph 63)

Working together to safeguard children (2018) describes safeguarding children as the actions we take to promote the welfare of children & protect them from harm, which involves:

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

Children Act (1989) enshrines in law that the welfare of children is paramount,

UN convention on the rights of children (article 19) provides the right that all children be safe from violence.

Care Act (2014) provides a statutory framework to safeguarding adults with care & support needs that may be at risk of abuse or neglect. Adults who lack mental capacity will automatically be deemed vulnerable but some adults with capacity may nonetheless be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation.

IOC Consensus Statement: Harassment & Abuse in Sport (2016) highlights that it is incumbent upon all stakeholders in sport both to adopt general principles for safe sport as well as to implement & monitor both policies & procedures for safe sport that state that all athletes have a right to be treated with respect, protected from non-accidental violence & the welfare of athletes is paramount.

The purpose & scope of this policy statement

IGA & its affiliated clubs engage with children & families through various activities, which include birthday parties, competitions, displays, free play sessions, gymnastics classes, & holiday clubs.

The purpose of this policy statement is to ensure that everyone involved can have a positive & enjoyable experience in gymnastics, within safe & child-centred environments. To achieve this, it is essential that everyone understands their responsibilities in preventing & responding to disclosures or concerns, even in situations where the abuse may occur outside the gymnastics environment.

Our primary objectives are as follows:

- Protect children & young people who receive services from IGA & its affiliated clubs, including the children of adults who utilise our services.
- Provide staff, volunteers, children, young people, & their families with overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.
- Foster an understanding that any form of non-accidental violence is unacceptable & will not be tolerated.
- Ensure that individuals know what steps to take if they have concerns about someone’s welfare & promote a culture where no one fears retaliation for raising a concern.
- Establish a clear understanding of responsibilities in reporting concerns about the welfare of individuals at risk, even if the concern pertains to an individual or environment outside the realm of sports.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of IGA & its affiliated clubs.

Legal framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with the legislation, policies, & guidance aimed at safeguarding children in England, Scotland, Wales, & Northern Ireland. A summary of the crucial legislation & guidance can be found at nspcc.org.uk/childprotection.

Supporting documents

This policy statement should be read alongside our organisational policies, procedures, guidance, & other related documents.

- Role of the designated safeguarding officer.
- Worried about a child
- Dealing with allegations made against a gymnastics coach or volunteer.
- Code of conduct for staff & volunteers
- Code of conduct for children & young people
- Code of conduct for Parents/Carers
- Photography & Filming
- Safer recruitment
- Online safety
- Anti-bullying
- Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing
- Health & safety
- Participant to Coach Ratio

Our Commitments

We firmly believe that safeguarding is a collective responsibility, & as such, everyone involved in working with children, regardless of whether they are paid or volunteers, has a duty to ensure their safety.

At IGA, we hold the following beliefs:

- Children & young people should never experience any form of abuse.
- We are responsible for promoting the welfare of all children & young people, ensuring their safety, & conducting ourselves in a manner that protects them.
- Everyone has the right to participate in gymnastics within a safe environment, free from abuse, regardless of age, disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or socio-economic background.

We acknowledge the following:

- The well-being of the child is of utmost importance.
- All children, irrespective of their characteristics, have the right to equal protection from harm or abuse.
- Some children may be more vulnerable due to their past experiences, level of dependency, communication needs, or other factors.
- Collaborating with children, young people, their parents, carers, & other agencies is crucial in promoting their welfare.

To ensure the safety of children & young people, IGA & its affiliated clubs will:

- Value, listen to, & respect them.
- Appoint designated child protection/safeguarding leads & deputy leads.
- Develop policies & procedures for child protection & safeguarding that adhere to best practices.
- Utilise our safeguarding procedures to share concerns & relevant information with relevant agencies, involving children, young people, parents, families, & carers appropriately.
- Foster an anti-bullying environment & implement a policy & procedure to effectively address any bullying incidents.
- Establish & implement an online safety policy & related procedure.
- Disseminate information about child protection & safeguarding best practices to children, families, staff, & volunteers through leaflets, posters, group activities, & individual discussions.
- Safely recruit staff & volunteers, ensuring necessary checks are carried out.
- Provide adequate management for staff & volunteers through supervision, support, training, & quality assurance measures.
- Enforce a code of conduct for staff & volunteers.
- Follow appropriate procedures when managing allegations against staff & volunteers.
- Implement effective complaint & whistleblowing mechanisms.
- Maintain a safe physical environment for children, young people, staff, & volunteers by adhering to health & safety regulations & guidelines.
- Professionally & securely record & store information in accordance with data protection legislation & guidance.

This policy & guidelines are mandatory for all individuals participating in IGA activities & should be adopted at the same or higher level by affiliated clubs.

Monitoring & evaluation

This Safeguarding policy will undergo regular monitoring, & a comprehensive policy review will take place every three years. Additionally, IGA may conduct a policy review in the event of any of the following circumstances:

- Changes to legislation and/or guidance related to safeguarding.
- Changes in the sport of gymnastics that may impact safeguarding practices.
- Changes in the nature or operations of IGA that necessitate a policy review.
- A procedural review prompted by a significant case or incident.

By regularly monitoring & reviewing the policy, we ensure that it remains up to date & aligned with the latest legal requirements, industry standards, & the specific needs of IGA & its participants.