



Dexterity Rhythmic Gymnastics Club

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

(in line with the recommended sample policy for sporting organisations from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. POLICY STATEMENT**
- 3. POLICY AIMS**
- 4. GOOD PRACTICE**
- 5. RECORDING / REPORTING INCIDENTS**
- 6. RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF COACHES AND VOLUNTEERS**
- 7. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS**
- 8. PHOTOGRAPHY for COMPETITION / TRAINING**
- 9. PRINCIPLES, PRACTICE & ADVICE FOR COACHES and VOLUNTEERS**

1. INTRODUCTION

As a sporting organisation which makes provision for children and young people, the Dexterity Rhythmic Gymnastics Club (here-on referred to as 'The Club') abides by the Child Protection Policy of British Gymnastics, and ensures that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount
- all children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and / or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- all staff (paid / unpaid) working in the sport have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate person. Coaches / volunteers are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

The Club has a duty of care to safeguard and protect all children involved in the Club and it's activities from harm.

All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account.

The Club will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in Rhythmic Gymnastics and all other Club activities, through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines adopted by the Club.

As defined in the The Children Act (1989) a child is a person under the age of 18.

3. POLICY AIMS

Aims of the Club's Child Protection Policy are to promote good practice throughout by:

- providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of the Club
- allowing all coaches / volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

4. GOOD PRACTICE

All personnel within the Club are encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare, create a positive culture and climate, and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made.

To this end, coaches and volunteers are encouraged to :

- Work always in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets.
- Treat all young people / adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Put the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Recognise the developmental needs, abilities, and capabilities of young people and adults, avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing individuals against their will.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback, both within and outside of coaching, avoiding negative criticism.
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Be an excellent role model - including not smoking, drinking alcohol, using inappropriate language etc. in the company of young people.
- Keep up to date with personal technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport.
- Make activities fun and enjoyable, and promote fair play at all times.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with gymnasts
- Ensure that if any form of manual / physical support is required, it is provided openly and according to guidelines provided by the Coach Education Programme of British Gymnastics. Take care, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child is constantly moving. Consult with the young people and their parents and seek agreement where appropriate.
- Involve parents / carers wherever possible, and encourage them to take responsibility for their children when and where appropriate (e.g. working in pairs, supervision in changing rooms, dismissal etc.).

- Request written parental consent if any Club official is required to transport young people in their cars.
- Ensure that at competitions or residential events, adults do not enter children's rooms alone or invite children alone into their rooms.
- Secure parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, should the need arise to administer emergency first aid and / or other medical treatment.
- Keep a written record of any injury or incident that occurs, along with the details of the incident and any treatment given. Inform parent / guardian of any such incident.

5. RECORDING / REPORTING INCIDENTS

If any of the following occur, coaches / volunteers in the Club will report immediately to the appropriate person, and record the incident. The child's parents will also be informed:

- if a coach / volunteer accidentally hurts a gymnast
- if the gymnast seems distressed in any manner
- if a gymnast misunderstands or misinterprets something the coach / volunteer has done
- if a gymnast appears to be sexually aroused by the coach's / volunteer's actions

6. RECRUITING / TRAINING COACHES / VOLUNTEERS

The Club recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way. All reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working in the Club.

Pre-selection checks will include the following:

- All coaches / volunteers will complete an application form with personal details, and qualifications, which will be substantiated
- Coaches / volunteers must hold a CRB / DBS disclosure through British Gymnastics.

Two references are requested, including one regarding previous work with children.

All coaches and volunteers will:

- Be given the job requirements and responsibilities.
- Have Child Protection procedures explained and training needs identified.
- Be asked to sign up to the Club's Code of Ethics & Conduct and Child Protection policies.

Ongoing Training / Mentoring

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes mentoring after recruitment to help coaches and volunteers to:

- Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is not likely to result in allegations being made.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person, or parent.
- Work safely and effectively with children.

The Club requires:

- Coaches to attend a recognised good practice and child protection awareness training workshop, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of a positive culture towards good practice and child protection.
- Non-coaching staff and volunteers to complete a recognised awareness training on child protection.
- Relevant personnel to receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person.
- Relevant personnel to gain a national first aid training, where necessary and attend update training when necessary.

7. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS / SUSPICIONS

The Club understands it has a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate person, or the appropriate authorities.

The Club will assure all coaches / volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a coach / volunteer, it is understood there may be three types of investigation :

- a criminal investigation
- a child protection investigation
- a disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The Club will take the following course of action if there are concerns:

1. About poor practice

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the designated Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by the Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it will be reported to British Gymnastics who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

2. About suspected abuse

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a coach or a volunteer will be reported to the Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- The Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer will also notify British Gymnastics who will deal with any media enquiries.
- If the Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report will be made to the Club Principal / Head Coach or in her absence the British Gymnastics Child Protection Officer who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

Confidentiality

Every effort is made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information will be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

This includes the following people:

- * the Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer
- * the parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- * the person making the allegation
- * social services / police
- * British Gymnastics Child Protection Officer

The Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.

The Club will seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the Club Committee will assess an individual case to decide whether a coach or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. The Club Committee will reach a decision based upon available information. This could suggest that on

a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Information will be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Follow-up Support

Consideration will be given to the kind of support that children, parents and members of the Club may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture to help the healing process.

Consideration will be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

If bullying is suspected, the same procedures will be followed as set out above.

8. PHOTOGRAPHY for COMPETITION / TRAINING

Videoining / filming may be used as a legitimate coaching aid. However, performers and their parents / carers must be made aware that this is part of the coaching programme and their consent obtained.

Films / photographs taken should be stored safely.

In competitions, the Club will adhere to the rules and policies concerning photography as stipulated by the Competition Organisers and by British Gymnastics.

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled sportspeople in vulnerable positions.

The Club will be vigilant on this matter, and any concerns reported to the Club Welfare Officer.

9. PRINCIPLES, PRACTICE & ADVICE FOR COACHES and VOLUNTEERS

Promoting good practice

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child enters the club activity having been subjected to child abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. In such instances the club activity organiser must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

Practices to be avoided

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the child's parents.(e.g. a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive for a child at the end of a session).

Avoid :

- spending time alone with children, away from others
- taking or dropping off a lone child to an event or activity

Do not :

- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games. incl. horseplay
- share a room with a child
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child
- do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves
- invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

N.B. It may at times be necessary for coaches or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the children involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him / her about what you are doing and give choices. This is particularly so if you are involved in dressing or undressing of

outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out specific activities. Avoid taking on responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Bullying

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim you can be trusted and will help, do not promise not to tell anyone
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer

Action towards the bully(ies):

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully's parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Provide support for the victim's coach.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform appropriate Club members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.
- Most 'low level' incidents will be dealt with at the time by coaches and volunteers. However, if the bullying is severe (e.g. a serious assault), or if it persists despite efforts to deal with it, incidents should be referred to the Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer.

Outside the immediate Club environment (e.g. a parent or carer)

- Report your concerns to the Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.
- If the Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact social services or the police immediately.
- Social Services and the Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.

- The Club Child Protection / Welfare Officer should also report the incident to British Gymnastics. BG should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the Club and act accordingly.
- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.

Information needed for social services / police about suspected abuse

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether the person making the report is expressing their own or another's concerns
- The nature of the allegation, with dates, times, any special or relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. 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 or other injuries occurred.
- Whether the parents have been contacted, and if so what has been said?
- Whether anyone else has been consulted, and if so, record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to, and if so what was said
- Whether anyone has been alleged to be the abuser. Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

Useful contacts :

Help for children & young people

ChildLine
0800 1111

Help for adults

Help and Advice
0808 800 5000

The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from
The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ,
Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189,
E-mail: bac@bacp.co.uk, Internet: www.bacp.co.uk .

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