



## **Reporting concerns**

### ***Overview***

This document sets out the steps that should be followed where there is concern that a child, adult at risk or athlete who is taking part in gymnastics activity may be at risk of or is experiencing abuse or neglect.

Concerns may arise following:

- A disclosure from a child or adult.
- Direct or reported observations of possible abuse, neglect, suspicious behaviour, or poor practice, including those of colleagues.
- Significant changes in an individual's behaviour, appearance, attitude, or relationship with others.
- Reports from external agencies or individuals.

Safeguarding allegations fall into two categories:

- Gymnastics related i.e. allegations about a member or someone who is in a position of trust in the sport.
- External to the sport i.e. allegations that involve someone who is not connected to the sport, e.g. a concern that someone is being abused or neglected by a family member who is not involved in gymnastics.

### ***Safeguarding responsibilities***

All staff and volunteers in gymnastics need to be aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and ensure that children and adults in their care are kept safe and must report concerns and understand when it is appropriate to make a referral to the local authority, social services or the police.

It is important to remember that some children and adults are unable to recognise or share concerns and are more reliant on adults with whom they are in contact to be alert to the possibility that they may be experiencing harm in some area of their lives.

Basingstoke Gymnastics Club has a designated Welfare Team that are responsible for responding to safeguarding concerns and are available to provide advice.

### ***Recognition of indicators and signs of abuse***

At Basingstoke Gymnastics Club everyone must be alert to the signs and triggers of abuse and neglect. Sometimes an individual may disclose a specific concern but in many cases the indicators may be less obvious and only become apparent over time. All coaches who hold a minimum level 1 qualification are required by British Gymnastics to hold a safeguarding and child protection certificate and should be able to identify signs in accordance with their learning.

It is essential that everyone accepts the responsibility to report any information that

may indicate that an individual is being abused or neglected or is abusing. Where a safeguarding concern is disclosed to a member of staff or volunteer as part of their role at Basingstoke, the responsibility for that information rests with the organisation and not the individual.

It is vital to maintain confidentiality and ensure information is only disclosed within the organisation to those individuals who have specific safeguarding responsibilities and have a legitimate “need to know”.

### ***Poor practice***

It is essential that everyone challenges poor practice within gymnastics, even where there is a belief that the motives of an individual are well meaning. Failure to challenge poor practice can lead to an environment where abuse is more likely to remain unnoticed and accepted.

Poor practice includes actions that would be considered unacceptable as part of routine/regular practice e.g. being alone with a child or adult at risk but that may be appropriate in unforeseeable or emergency circumstances.

Where an event arises where a coach or other person in a position of responsibility, having assessed the options, the individual involved must provide a written report of the incident to the Lead Welfare Officer without unreasonable delay. Where appropriate, a parent or carer should also be informed. This is particularly important if a situation arises where an individual was hurt or distressed, may have misunderstood or misinterpreted something that was said or done or may appear to have become sexually aroused.

### ***Information sharing***

Information sharing between organisations can be essential to protect individual rights, facilitate access to support and services and may be vital in protecting people from being harmed.

While the focus here is on information sharing about abuse or neglect concerns, information sharing may also be appropriate in other circumstances to promote the welfare or wellbeing of a ‘child in need’ or an adult at risk.

The third-party organisations with whom safeguarding concerns may need to be shared include:

- Statutory Authorities e.g. police and social care.
- Gymnastics organisations i.e. where clubs or affiliated organisations share information with Basingstoke Gymnastics Club and vice-versa.
- Other organisations e.g. other sports organisations or community clubs where risks posed by an individual cannot be managed without the disclosure of information
- British Gymnastics

Where an individual receives information that he or she knows or ought to know is being given in confidence there is a duty to ensure this information is kept confidential. Generally, this means that such information should not be shared without the individual’s permission. However, confidential information can be shared with other organisations where there is an overriding justification to do so

without consent, for example where there is a significant safeguarding concern.

Basingstoke Gymnastics Club report any safeguarding concerns about their members who may present a risk to others to British Gymnastics Integrity Unit. In these cases, the Integrity Unit will assume responsibility for any further information sharing decisions in consultation with the club.

Where a safeguarding concern is external to the sport if a club or affiliated organisation is not clear that information should be shared, advice about whether sharing is appropriate can be advised by the police or local authority without disclosing the identity of the person in the first instance.

It is not our role to investigate where it is suspected that a child or an adult at risk may be experiencing abuse or neglect, but it is our role to refer and share information where appropriate, with the relevant statutory authority.

If an individual is at immediate risk of significant harm a referral should be made without delay to the Local Authority Social Services, or to the Police who are responsible for the investigation of suspected criminal offences.

Reporting the matter should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information or to contact the designated Welfare Officer and/or Basingstoke Gymnastics Club. Wherever possible, referrals made by telephone should be followed up with a copy of the incident report or email the welfare team within 48 hours.

Whoever makes the referral must ensure that the name and contact details of the person to whom the referral was made are provided by Basingstoke Gymnastics, together with the details of the referral without delay.

If there is any uncertainty as to whether a referral is appropriate the NSPCC 24-hour helpline can provide guidance for concerns about children or Adult or Children's Social Care.

### ***Whistleblowing***

Although incidents can be reported directly by the affected individual, the term "whistle blowing" is often used to describe a complaint relating to the conduct of an individual that is made by someone other than the affected person.

Basingstoke Gymnastics Club recognises that some individuals may be fearful of the consequences of making a complaint under these procedures, particularly where the perpetrator is in a position of authority. In these circumstances, where possible, the identity of the whistle blower will remain confidential.

Any person or their child if a participating gymnast reports a concern in good faith must not be subject to reprisal or other adverse consequences. These protections shall not apply to a person who intentionally makes a complaint that is false, vexatious, retaliatory, or frivolous.

### ***Responding to a disclosure***

If an individual discloses a concern, it is important that they are provided with appropriate support and guidance but in a way that does not jeopardise any potential investigations.

Where a member of staff or volunteer receives information about a safeguarding concern, they should explain to the individual to whom it relates that they have a responsibility to share the concern with the appropriate Welfare Officer. It is important to reassure the individual, who may be fearful of any repercussions and provide appropriate support to help them understand why it is necessary to share this information.

If an abusive situation arises in a gymnastics environment, the individuals involved should be approached immediately preferably by two adults, one of whom should ideally be the Welfare Officer (if they are on site).

If the incident is on-going, the person(s) involved must be instructed to stop the behaviour immediately with the priority being to ensure that anyone who is at risk is made safe. The Welfare Officer or another responsible adult must remain with anyone at risk until their needs have been fully addressed.

If an incident cannot be controlled, the police or British Gymnastics should be called. If anyone requires immediate medical treatment this should be sought without delay. It is important that anyone providing medical treatment is aware that this is, or maybe, a safeguarding incident.

If the matter of concern is felt to be serious poor practice rather than abuse and there is no immediate risk, a different approach would be appropriate and the Welfare Officer may not need to be involved in the first instance. Consideration should be given to informing the individual in a manner that will not compromise their right to privacy or undermine their position.

Serious allegations of sexual abuse may be made some time after the event, particularly where the person experiencing the abuse was a child. All sexual cases can be dealt with as if they have a recent complaint.

### ***Investigation***

Where concern or complaint of abuse or poor practice is made there may be a number of types of investigation:

- Criminal - conducted by the Police.
- Child Protection
- Adult protection
- Basingstoke Gymnastics Club internal enquiry – in accordance with Complaints and Disciplinary Policy. The Safeguarding Team will conduct any necessary enquiries deemed necessary. These may be in support of the above investigations and/or be in parallel with them or internally.

### ***Interim measure***

As part of any investigation and in order to afford protection for all parties concerned, Basingstoke Gymnastics Club may impose interim protective measures, including the temporary suspension of membership pending the outcome of investigations. Where

appropriate, these decisions will be taken in consultation with the Welfare Officer and Club Manager.

### ***Criminal convictions***

Where a participant is convicted of a criminal offence, this may be sufficient to conclude that harassment and abuse has occurred without further investigation. In such instances, the matter will be referred to Integrity Unit who will take any further action necessary in accordance with the British Gymnastics Complaints & Disciplinary policy.

### ***Retention of records***

Any information relating to safeguarding concerns will be stored securely. Any safeguarding concerns that have been reported to a club or affiliated organisation should be retained as is deemed necessary to safeguard that individual. In the case of children, records should normally be retained until the child reaches the age of twenty-five.

Basingstoke Gymnastics Club will retain information about significant safeguarding concerns relating to members in a position of trust for a minimum of 10 years and/or any subsequent review.