



Code of Practice

FOR COACHES
& OFFICIALS

March 2019

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Policy Statement

Gymnastics is a fantastic sport full of challenge, fun and excitement. Children and young people can develop valuable qualities and skills such as self-esteem, leadership and teamwork. They have the right to do so in a safe environment.

Although this document sets out the standards of behaviour for all those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, Scottish Gymnastics expects coaches, officials, volunteers and clubs across all disciplines, to conform to the highest standards of integrity, behaviour, equality of treatment and etiquette specified in the Association's Articles and various policies and procedures.

Failure to comply to the standards of behaviour may lead to action being taken as described in the conduct in sport code.

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR COACHES & OFFICIALS

This Code details the required standards, behaviour and practice, including verbal and non-verbal actions, by all Scottish Gymnastics' coaches, helpers and staff when involved in activities with children, young people and vulnerable adults. It provides clear information about what you can and cannot do working in such a hands on sport, who to go to for advice and support as well as step by step procedures for reporting any concerns you may have.

Although this code is aimed primarily at coaches, the standards and behaviours apply equally to officials and volunteers working for or on behalf of Scottish Gymnastics and within registered clubs. All concerns about a breach of this code of practice will be taken seriously and responded to in line with Scottish Gymnastics policies and procedures.

Duty of care

It is important to note that clubs and coaches have a legal duty of care, and that duty of care begins from the point of receipt of the child to the point of return to the parent or carer, and the duty of care is non-transferable.

Risk of Harm

By adhering to the standards and practice contained within this document, you will be doing everything reasonably possible to ensure children, young people and vulnerable adults are not placed at risk of harm.

CONDUCT FOR SPORTS COACHES KEY PRINCIPLES

Rights: coaches must respect and champion the rights of every individual to participate in sport.

Relationships: coaches must develop a relationship with gymnasts and others based on integrity, mutual trust and respect.

Responsibilities - personal standards: coaches must demonstrate the highest standards of conduct and integrity at all times.

Responsibilities - professional standards: to maximise benefits and minimise the risks to gymnasts, coaches must attain a high level of competence through qualifications and a commitment to ongoing training which ensures safe and correct practice becomes the norm.

RIGHTS

Coaches must:

- Create an environment where every individual has the opportunity to participate
- Create and maintain an environment free of fear and harassment
- Recognise the rights of all gymnasts to be treated as individuals
- Recognise the rights of gymnasts to confer with other coaches and experts
- Promote the concept of a balanced lifestyle, supporting the well-being of the gymnast both in and out of the sport

RELATIONSHIPS

Coaches must:

- Promote the wellbeing and best interest of gymnasts
- Empower gymnasts to be responsible for their own decisions
- Clarify the nature of the coaching services being offered to gymnasts
- Communicate and cooperate with other individuals and organisations in the best interests of gymnasts
- Not engage in or tolerate behaviour that constitutes any form of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, bullying)

RESPONSIBILITIES – PERSONAL STANDARDS

Coaches must:

- Be fair, honest and considerate to the gymnasts and others in the sport
- Project an image of health, cleanliness and efficiency
- Be positive role models for gymnasts

RESPONSIBILITIES – PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Coaches must:

- Gain coaching qualifications appropriate to the level of skills being performed by their gymnasts
- Not misrepresent their qualifications
- Make a commitment to ongoing CPD which includes safeguarding
- Be professional and accept responsibility for their actions
- Promote safe and correct practice at all times
- Provide a safe environment which maximises benefits and minimises risks to gymnasts
- Co-operate fully with Scottish Gymnastics and other organisations in connection with any investigation

Position of Trust

A **relationship of trust** can be described as one in which one party is in a position of power or influence over another by virtue of their position.

Abuse of position of trust:

We would view young people being indoctrinated with attitudes to training, drugs and cheating, or social, political and religious views as a breach of trust. This is unacceptable to the young person, the community, and rules of the sport.

THIS GUIDANCE IS PRIMARILY INTENDED TO PROTECT YOUNG PEOPLE

There is a need to protect young people aged 16 and 17 who, despite reaching the age of consent for sexual activity, are considered to be vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, in defined circumstances. This includes sexual activity and relationships with adults who hold a position of trust, responsibility or authority in relation to them and, as a result, have a considerable amount of power and influence in their lives.

The principles and guidance apply irrespective of sexual orientation: neither homosexual nor heterosexual relationships are acceptable in a position of trust.

Abuse of position of trust:

Any sexual activity, which is not freely consenting, is criminal. The sexual activity covered by abuse of trust may seem to be consensual, but rendered unacceptable because of the relative positions of the parties concerned.

Conduct on sexual activity between individuals in a relationship of trust aims to:

- Protect young people aged 16 and 17 or vulnerable adults from an unequal and potentially damaging relationships
- Protect the person in a position of trust by preventing him/her from entering into such a relationship deliberately or accidentally, by providing clear and enforceable guidance on what behaviour is acceptable

Guidelines on abuse of trust:

- Any behaviour, which might allow a sexual relationship to develop between the person in a position of trust and a young person in their care, must be avoided
- Coaches should ensure they maintain healthy, positive and professional relationships with all gymnasts
- Coaches should not seek or engage in sexual activity or sexualised communication via social media with 16 or 17 year olds for whom they are responsible
- Coaches and others in positions of authority and trust in relation to gymnasts aged 16 and 17 years must not engage in sexual relationships with them while that unequal power relationship exists
- All those in our organisation have a duty to raise concerns about behaviour by coaches, staff, volunteers, managers and others, which may be harmful to those in their care, without prejudice to their own position

Grooming

These are practices which may appear to be carried out with the best of intentions but are regularly used by people who sexually abuse children and young people to 'groom' their victim.

HOW ABUSERS TARGET AND GROOM

WHAT THEY DO

- Engineer one-to-one situations
- Develop a special friendship
- Make promises of success
- Engage family, other coaches, people of influence
- Use messaging via mobile phone
- Befriend on social media
- Have "special secrets"
- Extend the relationship from the gym to socialising
- Buy gifts to buy affection
- Have unnecessary physical contact with young people e.g. excessive handling/supporting, cuddling, kissing, "friendly" taps
- Alienate gymnasts and coaches from their peers

Substance Abuse

Scottish Gymnastics is committed to promoting the well-being of coaches working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Likewise all those working with children and young people must recognise that they have a duty of care towards themselves, the children and young people in their care and to their colleagues. One key factor that can affect health, safety and child wellbeing is the use of alcohol or drugs.

Scottish Gymnastics would refer to “substance abuse” as:

- **The use of illegal drugs**
- The use of prescribed drugs and over the counter drugs where the side effects can affect and or impair judgement and performance
- **The use of alcohol where its effects carry on into the working day and affect or impair judgement**
- The use of other substances such as solvents that can have a negative effect on the mind or body

Gymnastics is a high risk sport and our overwhelming priority is to ensure children and young people are not placed at risk of harm, potential or otherwise, due to substance abuse.

You should never:

- **Consume alcohol prior to or during coaching, or in such a way, where its effects carry on into the working day and affect or impair judgement, placing others at potential or actual risk of harm**
- Use legal drugs prior to coaching knowing that the side effects will impair your judgement, placing others at potential or actual risk of harm. For example, taking a strong antihistamine which you know causes you drowsiness
- **Use illegal drugs**

Safe Environment

- Create a safe and positive environment so that gymnasts can enjoy their activity
- Always place the safety and welfare of the gymnasts as the highest priority
- Clubs must operate a sign-out policy, which means legal duty of care is passed from the club back to the parent/carer
- Maintain a written record (accident book) of any injury and for those injuries which require a visit to the hospital, complete the Scottish Gymnastics online accident report without delay
- Maintain a written record of any wellbeing incident i.e. bullying, using the incident reporting form
- Adhere to British Gymnastics' recommended coach/gymnast class ratios
- Care should be taken when providing manual support (spotting). Recognised/advised techniques for spotting should be used to avoid inappropriate contact. If inappropriate contact does happen, apologise to the gymnast and inform another coach and the parent/carer
- Consent forms must be obtained from parents/carers before children begin training and must include: child's name and parent/carer contact details as well as emergency contact details, medication, and details of other relevant illness or conditions which the club should be made aware of
- Where residential stays apply, increased supervision, care and attention must be adopted

COACHING PRACTICE WHICH MUST BE ADHERED TO

- Always work in the open when working with gymnasts to avoid situations where a coach and an individual gymnast cannot be observed
- Behave in an exemplary manner and be a role model for excellent behaviour
- Treat all gymnasts equally, with respect and dignity and put their wellbeing first, before winning
- Motivate through positive and constructive feedback
- Coaches should recognise the stage of psychological and physical development of the gymnast and avoid excessive training and competition, pushing them against their will and putting undue pressure on them
- If gymnasts have to be transported, then a male and female coach/chaperone should accompany them
- Do not enter a gymnast's bedroom on trips away from home, unless in an emergency situation or in the interests of health and safety
- Do not issue nicknames to gymnasts
- Where possible, parents should be responsible for young children in the changing rooms or toilets
- If a group of young children must be supervised in the changing rooms try to ensure that adults work in pairs to supervise the children
- Mixed teams of gymnasts should, where possible, be accompanied by a male and a female coach/chaperone

THERE MUST BE

- At least two qualified coaches present at all times during training sessions. One minimum Level 2, plus one appropriately-qualified assistant coach, in the disciplines being offered

YOU SHOULD NEVER

- Cause harm to a gymnast or place a gymnast at risk of harm
- Coach on your own under any circumstances
- Abuse your privileged position of trust with gymnasts
- Coach out with your level of coaching qualifications. The practice of working skills from the syllabus one level above, applies to those who have already attended the next level of coaching award and are being directly supervised by a suitably qualified mentor coach
- Contact individual gymnasts directly, either by messaging or on social media. All communications should be made through parents/carers
- Have gymnasts as friends on social media
- Cause a child or young person to see or hear an indecent communication
- Cause a child or young person to hear an inappropriate conversation
- Cause a child or young person to look at a sexual image
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games
- Take a child or young person to your home where they will be alone with you
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Make sexually suggestive remarks to a child or young person – even in fun
- Allow children to swear or use sexualised language unchallenged
- Allow allegations made by a child or young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature for a child or young person if they can do it for themselves, unless you have been requested to do so by the parents/carers (do so with the utmost discretion)

- Depart from the premises until you have supervised the safe dispersal of all children and young people
- Cause a gymnast to lose self-esteem by embarrassing, humiliating or undermining them
- Reduce a gymnast to tears as a form of control
- Have 'favourites' – this could lead to resentment and jealousy from other gymnasts and could be misinterpreted by others
- Compromise your position by suggesting anything is your and your gymnasts "special secret"
- Share a room alone with a child or young person

SAFE PRACTICE IN UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES

If any of the following incidents occur, you should report them immediately to another colleague or safeguarding officer and make a written note of the event, signed and dated. Parents should also be informed of the incident:

- If you accidentally hurt a gymnast
- If a gymnast misinterprets something you have said or done
- If you have to restrain a gymnast (please note: minimum force only must be used)

IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR A SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL GYMNASTICS FLEXIBILITY PROGRAMME

Coaches often have concerns about what is acceptable practice with regards to stretching exercises and flexibility training for gymnasts.

To protect the gymnasts in our care and to protect ourselves against possible allegations of poor practice, coaches must carefully consider their actions and how they might be perceived by an observer.

- In all situations the gymnast must be in control and able to say STOP
- Always remember there are a variety of ways to stretch, not just 'hands on' passive stretching. Situations where the gymnast is using their own body weight are usually more effective and longer lasting
- Expectations must be consistent with all other factors related to gymnastic development i.e. age, potential, physiology and training situation
- Encourage a good flexibility programme from the beginning as young children are more flexible and once a good range of movement is achieved, it is easier to maintain
- For a flexibility programme to be effective, the gymnast must be motivated and want to improve in this area
- It is not necessary or desirable for the gymnast to experience extreme discomfort in order to improve flexibility. In fact, this is likely to have a negative impact and make the flexibility programme less effective
- Develop an understanding of why flexibility is essential for gymnastics. The gymnast must understand that if they do not improve/maintain their flexibility, it will limit their skill development, the quality of their work, and make them more susceptible to injury
- It is important to maintain a balance between passive and active stretch
- Stretching must only be done in a suitably warm environment and only when the gymnast is thoroughly warmed up
- Regular, gradual and progressive stretching with a focus on achievable and measureable targets is likely to be far more effective
- As more flexibility and range of motion is gained, it is essential for the gymnasts to improve strength and control

● **TO BE AVOIDED**

- **Unrealistic expectations for a 'quick fix'**
- Situations where gymnasts may feel 'exposed' i.e. for stretching box splits, it is better to have a gymnast lying on their stomach as opposed to lying on their back, gymnasts should also be allowed to wear shorts
- **A coach stretching gymnasts to the point of excessive pain or extreme discomfort**
- Exercises that place the coach's and gymnast's bodies in "close proximity" and could be considered inappropriate

THE COACH SHOULD NEVER

- **Touch a gymnast's inner thigh, groin area or buttocks during stretching exercises**
- Cause a gymnast to cry
- **Use their full body weight to push down on a gymnast**
- Work alone and with only one gymnast
- **Work alone in a secluded or separated area in the gym where they cannot be observed by other adults**

It is impossible to establish guidelines for every situation which may occur in our sport and common sense should be used at all times. If you are unsure of the appropriateness of any stretching activity, do not be afraid to discuss it with someone you trust or alternatively contact the Ethics, Welfare & Conduct team at Scottish Gymnastics.

Reporting Concerns

Parents have the right to expect that organisations, to which they entrust their child, provide appropriate care and protection for them. All coaches and others working with children and young people have a duty to act promptly if they have a concern about their wellbeing.

Abuse may become apparent in a number of ways:

- **Through observation**
- A child may tell you
- **A third party may have reported an incident, or may have a strong suspicion**
- You may have a suspicion

It is important to remember that it is not your responsibility to decide whether or not a child, young person or vulnerable adult is being abused but it is **your responsibility to act** if you have concerns.

IF AN ALLEGATION IS BROUGHT TO YOUR ATTENTION:

STEP 1 – Listen and Reassure

WHAT TO DO

- **Stay calm**
- Reassure the child that it's not their fault
- **Emphasise that it's alright to tell**
- Make sure you clearly understand what the child has said, especially if they have learning or physical difficulties which may affect their ability to communicate or, if English is not their first language, so you can pass on the information to the appropriate agencies
- **Listen to what the child says and take what they say seriously**
- Keep questions to a minimum, use open ended questions
- **Explain what happened to them is wrong, they were right to tell and explain what you will do next. Say you can't promise to keep what you have been told to yourself but you will only share it with people who need to know so they can help**
- Consult with the appropriate child protection authority (e.g. police, social work or club safeguarding officer, depending on degree of urgency) ensuring that you communicate all the information accurately. They will advise as to your next step
- **Maintain confidentiality**

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Panic
- Show shock or distaste
- Speculate or make assumptions
- Criticise the alleged perpetrator
- Approach the alleged perpetrator
- Probe for more information
- Ask intrusive questions
- Make promises you can't keep
- Delay

STEP 2 – Record

If the allegation is abuse, the following process should be followed:

- Make a full report of any allegations or suspicions on paper as soon as possible after the disclosure, and sign and date it. Do not use a computer
- Give the report to the club safeguarding officer (unless they are involved in the complaint) who will involve the appropriate authorities as and when necessary
- Confidentiality must be maintained

If the allegation relates to poor practice, please follow the guidance contained on the inside back cover of this booklet.

STEP 3 – Report

Once you have completed your report you must contact the Scottish Gymnastics Ethics, Welfare & Conduct Manager to report the concern, then email the scanned report to welfare@scottishgymnastics.org without delay or post to Ethics, Welfare & Conduct Manager, Scottish Gymnastics, Caledonia House, 1 Redheughs Rigg, Edinburgh EH12 9DQ, marked Private and Confidential.

Do not keep any electronic, printed or written versions of this report, once Scottish Gymnastics has confirmed receipt. It is important to maintain confidentiality, so delete or shred as soon as the information has been passed on.

Where there are concerns that parents/carers may be responsible for, or have knowledge of, the abuse, sharing concerns with the parents/carers may put the child at further risk. In such cases, advice must always firstly be sought from the police/social work services.

EMOTIONS SURROUNDING DISCLOSURE

Scottish Gymnastics acknowledges that taking appropriate action is never easy and discovering that a member of staff or colleague may be abusing a child, young person or vulnerable adult could stir up emotions for everyone involved.

These emotions may evolve around feelings of:

Doubt

- Is it true?

Confusion

- What will happen?
- What actions should be taken?
- What will be the effect?

Guilt

- Should I have known?
- Did I miss something?
- Did I have any suspicions?
- Should I have said something?

Fear

- Will I or others be suspected?

Concerns

- What can I do to support all those people who may need support?
- Are there systems in place to expose future situations?

There is clearly a need to have support mechanisms for all those involved in or surrounding the issue, including those making the allegation, those who may be being abused and those against whom the allegation is made.

Scottish Gymnastics is primarily concerned with the wellbeing and safety of all its members, and will support anyone who, in good faith and where they have reasonable grounds for doing so, report their concerns.

Useful Contacts

Scottish Gymnastics Ethics,
Welfare & Conduct team
Caledonia House
1 Redheughs Rigg
Edinburgh
EH12 9DQ

Tel: 0131 271 9750 (option 5)

email:

welfare@scottishgymnastics.org

and confidential email address:

safegym@scottishgymnastics.org

UK Safer Internet:

saferinternet.org.uk

Children 1st Child Protection in
Sport Unit

Tel: 0141 418 5670

ParentLine Scotland

0808 800 2222

Childline Scotland

0800 1111

childline.org.uk

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline

0808 800 5000

Internet Safety:

thinkuknow.co.uk

The Child Exploitation and Online
Protection Centre (CEOP)

ceop.gov.uk

respectme

Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service

enquire@respectme.org.uk

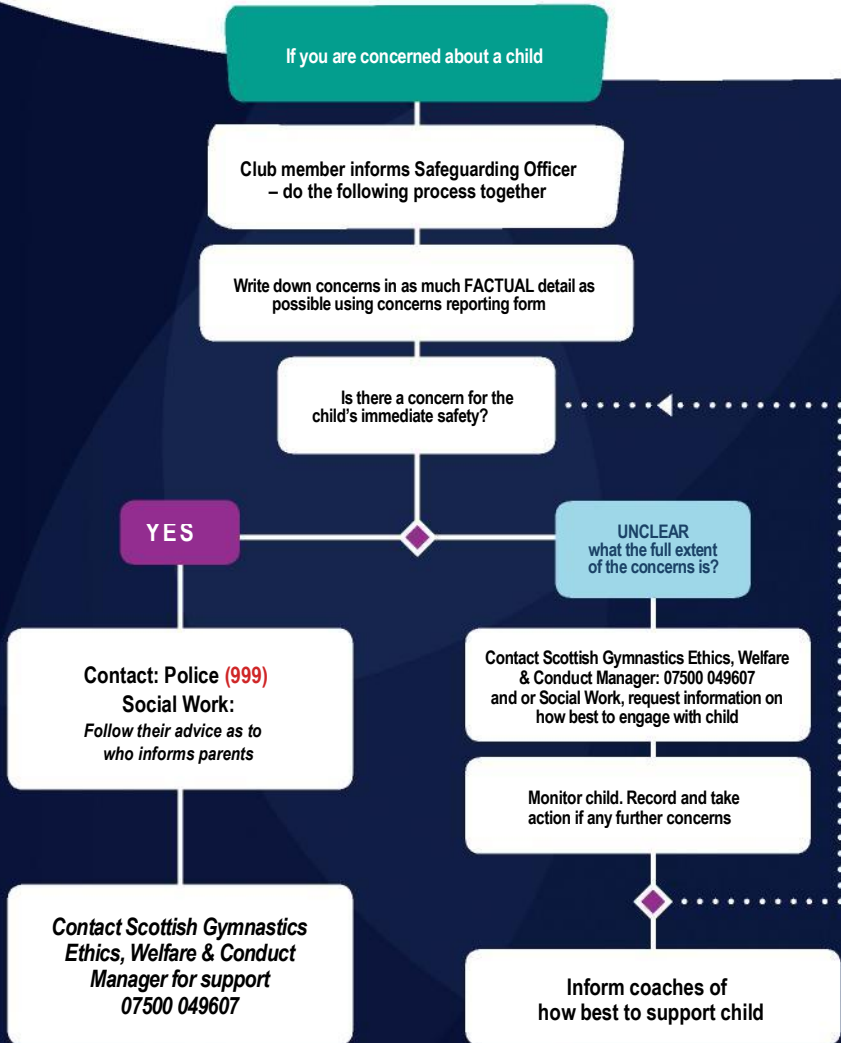
LGBT YOUTH SCOTLAND

info@lgbyouth.org.uk

(My) Local Social Work Department
(including out of hours contact
telephone number)

.....
(My) Local Police Family & Child
Protection Unit Contact telephone
number (in an emergency dial 999)

CHILD CONCERN FLOW CHART



COACH COMPLAINT FLOW CHART

If you are concerned about the conduct of coaches, helpers, staff or volunteers

Record the concern on the incident/concern report form.
Report to the Club Safeguarding Officer

A

Initial assessment to establish the facts

B

Consider precautionary suspension where appropriate

(seek advice from Scottish Gymnastics Ethics, Welfare & Conduct Manager)

**POOR PRACTICE,
POSSIBLE BREACH OF
CODE OF PRACTICE?**

Report concerns to the Safeguarding Officer ensuring a copy is sent to Scottish Gymnastics Ethics, Welfare & Conduct Manager

Safeguarding Officer or line manager will investigate in accordance with club procedures

Case to answer yes: Disciplinary procedures initiated, inform Scottish Gymnastics Ethics, Welfare & Conduct Manager. Case to answer no – Inform all parties

Possible outcomes:
Complaint upheld - Formal discussion, further training, referral to Scottish Gymnastics or no case to answer

**SERIOUS POOR PRACTICE
OR MISCONDUCT?**

Report concerns to Safeguarding Officer and to Scottish Gymnastics Ethics, Welfare & Conduct Manager, investigation initiated

Concerns will be managed in accordance with club disciplinary and Scottish Gymnastics conduct procedures

Case to answer yes: Disciplinary procedures initiated. Inform Scottish Gymnastics Ethics, Welfare & Conduct Manager. Case to answer no - inform all parties

Possible outcomes:
Complaint upheld – Disciplinary hearing, sanctions issued, referral to Scottish Gymnastics.
No case to answer

**POSSIBLE
CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR?**

Safeguarding Officer or Scottish Gymnastics Ethics, Welfare & Conduct Manager will report concerns to the Police

Case will be managed in accordance with legal proceedings

Would depend on the outcome of the judicial process

Possible outcomes: Criminal proceedings, Conduct in Sport hearing, referral to Disclosure Scotland where PVG criteria met

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Gymnastics

Caledonia House,
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E: welfare@scottishgymnastics.org
scottishgymnastics.org

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