



# ANTI-BULLYING POLICY & GUIDANCE

For coaches, officials, helpers,  
volunteers and gymnasts within  
Scottish Gymnastics registered clubs

May 2019

**Scottish Gymnastics believes that every child has the right to take part in gymnastics in a safe fun environment free from bullying.**

## **Policy Statement**

Scottish Gymnastics is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of all children and young people in our care. We understand that children's wellbeing can be seriously impacted by bullying behaviour. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and should not be tolerated.

Raising awareness of children and young people's wellbeing, recognising what needs to be done and the requirement to act on this when a child or young person needs our help and support is crucial.

**It is our shared responsibility to make sure that children and young people know that:**

- **Yes, they are right to speak up**
- Yes, they will be listened to and taken seriously
- **No, it will not affect their place in a team or selection for an event or a competition, regardless of whether representing their club or their country**

If bullying does occur, all club members should be able to challenge this behaviour, to pass on concerns and to know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

You should tell either the club's safeguarding officer, coach or an adult you trust, or you can get advice from the Scottish Gymnastics ethics team at [safeguarding@scottishgymnastics.org](mailto:safeguarding@scottishgymnastics.org)

### **SCOTTISH GYMNASTICS WILL:**

- **Respect the rights of children as paramount**
- **Work together to develop positive relationships amongst children and adults which are mutually respectful, responsible and trusting; and promote their emotional health and wellbeing**

- **Seek to prevent, reduce and respond effectively to bullying behaviour, through the implementation of this policy and guidelines**
- Require clubs, members of staff, officials, volunteers and members of the Board to adopt and abide by this policy
- **Provide access to training and support for member clubs, coaches, officials, volunteers and members of the Board to adopt best practice to prevent, reduce and respond to bullying**
- Address the needs of children who are bullied as well as those who bully within a framework of respect, responsibility, resolution and support
- **Respond to any concerns raised including by children who have experienced poor practice/misconduct or abuse caused by an adult's bullying behaviour**
- Highlight bullying based on prejudice and perceived differences, to ensure our practices are effective in dealing with these issues
- **Regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of this policy and guidelines and include children's views in this process**

## Policy

For the purposes of this policy, a child is recognised as someone under the age of 18 years. This policy applies to all children regardless of age, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, socio-economic status, gender or family circumstance.

Gender reassignment is one of a number of protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010 and applies to people who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of living as their true gender identity.

Scottish Gymnastics recognises the information provided for children by Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service respectme - **Bullying is never acceptable. It doesn't make a child better or stronger to get through it. It should never be seen as a normal part of growing up.**

In Scotland, bullying is defined as: Bullying is both behaviour and impact; the impact is on a person's ability to feel in control of themselves. This is what is termed as their sense of 'agency'. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour happens face to face and online (respectme 2015)

Bullying may be seen as particularly hurtful behaviour where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. It can be a 'one-off' occurrence or repeated over a period of time, and can take many forms including children being bullied by adults, their peers and in some cases by members of their families.

Bullying can be difficult to identify because it often happens away from others and those who are bullied often do not tell anyone. They may feel it is somehow their fault or that there is something wrong with them which can result in feelings of depression and/or feelings of worthlessness, they could self-harm, think about suicide and in some cases may take their own life.

When talking about bullying, it's never helpful to label children as 'bullies' or 'victims'. Labels can stick for life and can isolate a child, rather than helping them to recover or change their behaviour. It is preferable to talk about someone displaying bullying behaviour rather than label them a 'bully' - behaviour can be changed with help and support.

#### **BULLYING CAN BE**

- **Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. threatening gestures)**
- **Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence**
- **Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures**
- **Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments**
- **Homophobic - because of, or focussing on, the issue of sexuality**
- **Transphobic - because of, or focussing on the issue of a trans person's identity**
- **Verbal name - calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing**
- **Cyber - all areas of social media misuse including abuse by text messaging and calls, misuse of camera and video technologies**

# Prevention

- Cultivate an ethos where there's an anti-bullying culture
  - it is especially important that adults are good role models for children
- Create an open environment
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns. Help those being bullied to speak out and tell a coach, the safeguarding officer or adult they trust who can support them
- The club should have written policies/codes of conduct, which include what is acceptable and proper behaviour for all members, of which this anti-bullying policy is one part
- All club members and parents should sign to accept the club's policies and procedures upon joining the club
- Ideally the club safeguarding officer should raise awareness about bullying, why it matters and also the consequences

## Procedures For Dealing With Concerns

**Bullying behaviour 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 is being bullied but **it is your responsibility to act if you have concerns.**

## WHAT TO DO

- **Take all signs, allegations and reports of bullying, whether online or offline/face to face, seriously and take action to ensure the child is safe**
- Reassure the child being bullied that it is not their fault and that it is okay to tell
- **Tell them that you can be trusted and will help them, although 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 that they can help**
- Listen to what the child says and take what they say seriously. 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 individuals
- **Explain what will happen next, and how they are going to be kept informed.**
- If the allegation of bullying involves a coach, the Scottish Gymnastics' Ethics, Welfare and Conduct Manager must be contacted for advice
- **Be sensitive and use good judgement when it comes to informing parents/carers of those whose negative behaviour is impacting on others. Put the child at the centre – will telling the parents/carers result in more problems for the child?**
- Speak with those being bullied and those displaying bullying behaviour separately
- **In cases of online/electronic bullying, advise children who are being bullied by text, email or online to retain the communication (screenshot) or to print it out**
- Talk with the child/children who have been displaying bullying behaviour. Explain the situation and try to get them to understand the consequences of their behaviour
- **Keep records of what is said i.e. what happened, by whom and when**

- In some cases, it might be worth considering seeking an apology from those involved in bullying behaviour (for example, where those on the receiving end wish reconciliation). Apologies are only of real value however, when they are genuine
- **Once you have completed your report, pass this on to the club safeguarding officer and or named person for action**

Please note that strategies and solutions do not come in 'one size fits all'. Each case is unique and requires an individual response to the individual situation. What might work in one situation might not work in another. You might have to adopt different strategies before finding one that is effective

## **MOVING FORWARD:**

- **Aim to restore positive relationships and only consider imposing consequences as necessary, e.g. exclusion from the team or particular activity until behaviour standards are improved**
- Encourage and support those displaying bullying behaviour to change this behaviour. Ask them to consider the impact their actions are having. If there is no change then the club must initiate their disciplinary proceedings, seeking advice from Scottish Gymnastics' Ethics team at the beginning of the process
- **In cases of serious bullying, the incidents must be referred to Scottish Gymnastics' Ethics Welfare and Conduct Manager on [welfare@scottishgymnastics.org](mailto:welfare@scottishgymnastics.org)**
- Keep a written record of action taken

*This policy takes into consideration the Scottish Government funded anti-bullying policy: respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service, managed in partnership with SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health), and LGBT Youth Scotland.*

**For more information, please read:**

**[Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People](#)**



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