SAFE & FAIR SPORT

Safeguarding Policy

PAIN, INJURY + ILLNESS

V1/ JUNE 2024

British Gymnastics
ENGLISH GYMNASTICS
GYMNASTICS NORTHERN IRELAND
Scottish Gymnastics
Welsh Gymnastics
Gymnasteg Cymru

What's included in the Safeguarding Policy:

PAIN, INJURY + ILLNESS

- Introduction
  - Key responsibilities
  - Associated policies & guidance
  - Key definitions
  - Important considerations
- Safeguarding Policy: **Pain, Injury & Illness**
- Support and preventing poor practice
  - Useful links
  - Contact information

Introduction

- Everyone in gymnastics has a responsibility to create safe and uplifting experiences for all. British Gymnastics acknowledges we all have a duty of care to safeguard the physical, emotional, and mental health of gymnasts.

- All British Gymnastics clubs and activity providers have a responsibility to ensure participants are protected from unreasonable risk of harm due to their acts and omissions. This is legally termed 'duty of care', and more detail can be found in the **British Gymnastics Safeguarding Children: Safe Environment** document. To fulfil their 'duty of care', clubs and gymnastics activity providers must ensure that health and safety policies and procedures are in place and implemented around the provision of suitable first aid support and emergency procedures.

- This document is not a replacement for a club or venue's health and safety policy. The need for this document is to provide mandatory requirements to prevent inappropriate practices around pain, injury, and illness. For more information concerning the health and safety requirements for clubs and gymnastics activity providers, please see the **British Gymnastics Health, Safety & Welfare Policy and Health and Safety FAQs**. For access to the British Gymnastics Health & Safety Management toolkit and supporting resources please see **Club Hub Resources**. For members of Scottish Gymnastics, please see the **Scottish Gymnastics Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy**. For members of Welsh Gymnastics, please see the **Safeguarding and Wellbeing Policy**.

- Gymnastics is a complex sport, and as with many sports, pain, injury, and illness are always a possibility but must be managed carefully to minimise any risks. Pain is highly individual and needs to be managed sensitively and collaboratively between the gymnast, parent/carer, coach, club and, where appropriate, wider support team.

- The mandatory requirements on pain, injury & illness detailed in this document, are underpinned by the British Gymnastics Safeguarding Policy or Home Nation equivalent, which contains information about who this policy applies to, the scope and purpose. After reading this document, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Welfare and Safe Sport team at British Gymnastics or Home Nation equivalent.

- For clarity and conciseness, the term 'coaches' used in this document represents British Gymnastics members who are coaches, helpers, gymnastics activity instructors and volunteers. The term 'clubs' used in this document represents registered clubs, which includes all gymnastics activity providers and environments. The points in this document apply to all clubs or venues affiliated with British Gymnastics or Home Nations and at any events affiliated with British Gymnastics or Home Nations.

- This document was developed for the gymnastics community following consultation with advisory panels, UK Sports Institute practitioners and other external organisations to ensure gymnasts welfare is at the centre of any decision making around pain, injury, and illness.

- This document also contains information about additional support and preventing poor practices, with further information about the complaints process detailed in the British Gymnastics Complaints and Disciplinary Policy and Procedures or Home Nation equivalent. Alongside this document, clubs and coaches should implement good pain, injury, and illness practices, please see our **Pain, Injury & Illness Guidance for Good Practice document**

Key responsibilities

- Clubs, coaches, and support practitioners have a responsibility to prevent harm and promote healthy practice. They must follow the points contained in this document within gymnastics activity, to ensure they implement safe practices around pain, injury, and illness.

- To ensure safe pain, injury and illness practices are implemented, supporting information for parents/carers and gymnasts can be found in the 'What do I need to know' resources. It is important that gymnasts and or parents/carers report any pain, injury or illness to clubs and coaches.

Associated policies & guidance

British Gymnastics

British Gymnastics Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

British Gymnastics Standards of Conduct for Coaches, Officials & Instructors

British Gymnastics Standards of Conduct for Registered Clubs

British Gymnastics Complaints & Disciplinary Policy & Procedure

British Gymnastics Health, Safety & Welfare Policy, Health & Safety FAQs and, Incident Reporting and Procedures FAQs

Scottish Gymnastics

Scottish Gymnastics Child Wellbeing & Protection Policy & Guidance

Scottish Gymnastics Code of Practice for Coaches & Officials

Scottish Gymnastics Complaints: Process and Guidance for clubs affiliated to Scottish Gymnastics

Scottish Gymnastics Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Welsh Gymnastics

Welsh Gymnastics Safeguarding & Wellbeing Policy & Procedures

Welsh Gymnastics Code of Conduct for Coaches, Volunteers, Officials and Staff

Welsh Gymnastics Membership Rules

UK Concussion Guidelines for Non-Elite (Grassroots) Sport

New Resources on Concussion Guidance

Key definitions

- **Gymnastics**
  Used as a generic term for any type of gymnastics, activity, session, training, or competition, and includes all British Gymnastics recognised disciplines (Acrobatics, Aerobics, Recreational Gymnastics, TeamGym, Disability Gymnastics, Preschool, Men's Artistic, Rhythmic, Trampolining & DMT, Tumbling, Women's Artistic) and gymnastics activities (e.g., freestyle).

- **Pain**
  An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage or described in terms of such damage.

- **Injury**
  Tissue damage or other derangement of normal physical function, resulting from rapid or repetitive transfer of kinetic energy.

- **Illness**
  A complaint or disorder experienced by a gymnast, not related to injury or illnesses including health-related problems in physical (e.g., influenza), mental (e.g., depression) or social well-being, or removal or loss of vital elements (air, water, warmth).

- **Physical health**
  Normal functioning of the body.

- **Emotional health**
  Ability to cope with positive and negative emotions.

- **Mental health**
  How people think, feel, and behave.

- **Gaslighting**
  Manipulating someone into questioning their own perception of reality.

Pain, Injury & Illness

There are a few things to remember about pain, injury, and illness:

Mental and emotional health is just as important as physical health

Pain is always a personal experience that is influenced by many different factors (such as emotions, developmental factors, culture, current context, and previous pain experiences), and should always be respected.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

A verbal description of pain is just one of several behaviours to express pain.

NHS guidelines should be followed in the case of illness.

Safeguarding Policy
Pain, Injury & Illness

Please note for any head injuries or suspected head injuries, 'if in doubt, sit them out' and follow the UK Concussion Guidelines for Grassroots Sport.

1. If a gymnast, parent/carer or a coach, as per their Duty of Care, believes or has reason to believe the gymnast is unable to participate in gymnastics (fully or partially, i.e. performing specific skills), due to any pain, injury, or illness, this must be respected and responded to by all individuals.

2. Discrimination, the use of threats, coercion or any behaviours that could be deemed that of gaslighting, abuse of power imbalance or emotional abuse concerning a gymnast's pain, injury, or illness must not occur under any circumstance.

3. **Prior to the start of the gymnastics activity**, the gymnast or parent/carer must notify the club or coach if a gymnast is experiencing pain, injury, or illness which they believe or have reason to believe will impact their participation in gymnastics, or they have received medical advice concerning pain, injury, or illness. **Clubs and coaches must follow the steps below:**

Step 1
Any information must be both respected and responded to with care.

Step 2
Any decision concerning a gymnast's participation in gymnastics with pain, injury, or illness, must:

a. Consider the gymnast's short and long-term physical, emotional, and/or mental health.

b. Have the gymnast's interest at the centre of the decision being made.

c. Be a collaborative decision between the gymnast, coach, parent/carer (in the case of a person under 16 or adult at risk), and where appropriate medical practitioners and wider support team.

d. Minimise any risk or potential risk to the gymnast's physical, emotional, or mental health.

Step 3
In collaboration with the gymnast, any required adaptations or reasonable adjustments must be made to the gymnastics environment or activity to accommodate the reported or diagnosed health complaint, condition, or concern. Adapting gymnastics could range from adjusting an activity to avoid the use of the injured or painful body region whilst minimising any increased risk of loading to other body parts, removing an activity reported to cause mental or emotional distress, or preventing any participation.

Step 4
During gymnastics, continue to check in with the gymnast around their pain, injury, or illness to continually minimise any risks or potential risks to the gymnast's physical, emotional, or mental health.

4. During gymnastics, if a gymnast reports they are experiencing pain, injury, or illness, or if a club or coach suspects a gymnast is experiencing any pain, injury, or illness **clubs and coaches must follow the steps below:**

Step 1
For any pain, injury or illness concerns that are deemed to require any immediate medical attention, stop the activity, and follow your club, venue, or event emergency procedures.

Step 2
Where emergency procedures are not required, pause the activity at the earliest opportunity and discuss the pain, injury or illness complaint or concern with the gymnast.

Step 3
Any decision concerning a gymnast's participation in gymnastics with pain, injury, or illness, must:

a. Consider the gymnast's short and long-term physical, emotional, and/or mental health.

b. Have the gymnast's interest at the centre of the decision being made.

c. Minimise any risk or potential risk to the gymnast's physical, emotional, or mental health.

d. Be a collaborative decision between the gymnast, coach, and where appropriate medical practitioners* and wider support team.

e. Involve the parent/carer (in the case of a person under 16 or person at risk) by informing them at the earliest available opportunity** of any pain, injury, or illness that has impacted the gymnast's participation in gymnastics, or the gymnast and/or coach believes will impact their daily life or future participation in gymnastics.

* In the case of a competition or event, clubs and coaches must follow the regulations set out in the respective competition handbook concerning a gymnast's pain, injury, or illness. Where an appointed medical officer is present, any decision regarding a gymnast's health and medical status and their ability to compete at the event will be made by the appointed medical officer, or the competition organiser on the recommendation of the appointed medical officer. This decision is absolute and final.

**Earliest available opportunity may vary depending on the situation, being mindful of the club and coaches' duty of care to the gymnast (some of the considerations should include the severity of the pain, injury or illness, or the level of participation in the activity). It may not always be necessary to notify the parent/carer immediately at the time of the gymnast reporting or presenting with pain, injury, or illness. For some situations it may be more appropriate to notify the parent/carer as soon as practical, whereas other times it may be at the end of the gymnastics activity. Clubs should have procedures in place for notifying a parent/carer of pain, injury, or illness (for example an accident form).

Step 4
In collaboration with the gymnast, any required adaptations or reasonable adjustments must be made to the gymnastics environment or activity to accommodate the reported or diagnosed health complaint, condition, or concern. Adapting gymnastics could range from adjusting an activity to avoid the use of the injured or painful body region whilst minimising any increased risk of loading to other body parts, removing an activity reported to cause mental or emotional distress, or preventing any participation.

Step 5
If the gymnast continues to participate in gymnastics, or stays in the gymnastics environment, continue to check in with the gymnast around their pain, injury, or illness to continually minimise any risks or potential risks to the gymnast's physical, emotional, or mental health.

Step 6
Any accidents and first aid treatments must be recorded, no matter how minor they are. Record as much detail as possible in an accident report form. For more information, please see the **British Gymnastics Incident Reporting and Procedures FAQs** and **Accident Reporting** resource on Club Hub. For members of Scottish Gymnastics, please see the **Scottish Gymnastics information on Reporting an Accident or Incident.** For members of Welsh Gymnastics, please see the incident forms in **Sport80**.

5. If the club and coach have any doubt concerning the gymnast's pain, injury, or illness, they should advise gymnasts and parents/carers to seek medical advice from appropriately qualified practitioners (GP's, Sports Doctors, Physiotherapists).

6. For any ongoing pain, injury, or illness concerns, clubs and coaches must continue to collaborate with the gymnast and parents/carers (in the case of a person under 16 or person at risk) and continue to adapt gymnastics to minimise any further risk to the gymnast's physical, emotional, or mental health.

7. Clubs and coaches must ensure a gymnast progresses gradually, safely, and appropriately through any gymnastics activity when returning to full or partial training from an absence due to pain, injury, or illness. Continue to collaborate with the gymnast, parents/carers (in the case of a person under 16 or person at risk) and if appropriate wider support team and continue to adapt gymnastics to minimise any risk to the gymnast's health. Any medical or sports science advice from a qualified practitioner (e.g., strength and conditioning, psychological) must be respected to minimise any risk to the gymnast's physical, emotional, or mental health.

Support & preventing poor practice

Everyone should feel able to ask a question, ask for help, or raise a concern; no matter who you are, or how you are involved in gymnastics. Use the information below to help say something if you see or experience something that doesn't feel right.

Query

If you are not sure or feel uncomfortable about a practice or comment you implemented, experienced, or observed, it is ok to raise a query with someone you feel comfortable with. This could be with a coach, gymnast, friend, welfare officer, parent or carer, or club manager.

Reflect

Take the time to reflect on what has happened and whether anything could have been done differently. Would it be acceptable outside of gymnastics?

Seek

It is ok if you are not sure or do not know the answer, there are lots of people that can help including other coaches, welfare officers and British Gymnastics Welfare Officer Team (**welfareofficer@british-gymnastics.org**), Scottish Gymnastics Wellbeing and Safe Sport team (**safegym@scottishgymnastics.org**), Welsh Gymnastics Safeguarding (**safeguarding@welshgymnastics.org**) or the Northern Ireland Welfare Officer (**welfareofficergni@gmail.com**). You can contact British Gymnastics, Scottish Gymnastics or Welsh Gymnastics for advice at any point, this will not be taken as an official complaint.

NOTE: All Home Nation governing bodies have a duty of care, therefore if they have any concerns this will be escalated appropriately.

Making mistakes

It is ok to make a mistake. If this happens, take accountability for it, apologise, and learn from it to stop it happening again.

Raise

If you believe you need to raise a concern, contact your club welfare officer. They will then be able to deal with your concern accordingly.

Recommendations

Create a psychologically safe environment for everyone in gymnastics by promoting open, honest, and transparent conversations, with regular opportunities for feedback. Encourage and promote and environment for asking questions and respectful challenge. Regularly reflect on the day, session, or event (see the British Gymnastics Positive Coaching module for more information on reflective practice. Encourage everyone to reflect daily).

Useful links

Click here to access the following additional resources:

- **Pain, injury, and illness / Guidance for good practices**
- **Pain, injury, and illness / Key policy points poster**
- **What do I need to know if I'm a gymnast?**
- **What do I need to know if I'm a parent/carer?**
- **Explainer video**

Contact information

British Gymnastics
Welfare & Safe Sport
T. 0345 129 7129
E. welfareandsafesport@british-gymnastics.org / welfareofficer@british-gymnastics.org

Welsh Gymnastics
Welsh Gymnastics Safeguarding and Wellbeing
T. 029 2033 4978
E. safeguarding@welshgymnastics.org

Scottish Gymnastics
Scottish Gymnastics Wellbeing and Safe Sport
T. 0131 271 9733
E. safegym@scottishgymnastics.org

Northern Ireland
E. welfareofficergni@gmail.com

Regional Welfare Officer details
british-gymnastics.org/safesport/safeguarding#14