

# **Child Protection Policy**

## 1.1 Introduction

Everyone who participates in J Star Gymnastics and Trampoline Club is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. J Star Gymnastics has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, coaches and volunteers provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

J Star is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone in sport accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children from harm and abuse. This means to follow procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of J Star Gymnastics and to allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

A child/young person is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children's Act 1989)

### **Policy Statement**

J Star Gymnastics is committed to the following:

- the welfare of the child is paramount
- all children, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in gymnastics and trampoline in a fun and safe environment
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- all J Star Gymnastics employees who work with children will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, and will be provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and child protection procedures
- working in partnership with parents and children is essential for the protection of children

### **Monitor and review the policy and procedures**

The implementation of procedures should be regularly monitored and reviewed. The welfare officer should regularly report progress, challenges, difficulties, achievements gaps and areas where changes are required to the management committee.

The policy should be reviewed every 3 years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

### **Promoting Good Practice**

#### **Introduction**

To provide children with the best possible experience and opportunities in gymnastics and trampolining everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework and follow all club procedures.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of employees or participants in gymnastics and trampolining to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child, as explained in section 4.

This section will help you identify what is meant by good practice and poor practice.

### **Good Practice**

All personnel should adhere to the following principles and action:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. Avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- Make the experience of gymnastics and trampolining fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying
- Treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity
- Always put the welfare of the young person first, before any competitive element
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with children (e.g. It is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them)
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the young person's consent has been given
- Involve parents/carers wherever possible, e.g. Where young people need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms always ensure parents, coaches etc work in pairs
- Request written parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people in their cars
- Gain written parental consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g. Overnight stays
- Ensure that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- Ensure that at away events adults should not enter a young person's room or invite young people to their rooms
- Be an excellent role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people
- Always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of the young person and do not risk sacrificing welfare in a desire for club or personal achievements. This means avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will
- Secure written parental consent for the club to act in loco parentis, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given

### **Poor Practice**

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by all personnel:

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- Taking young people alone in a car on journeys, however short
- Taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- Sharing a room with a young person
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allowing young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged, all incidents should be recorded for the welfare officer
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun
- Reducing a young person to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon

- Do things of a personal nature that the young person can do for themselves
- When a case arises where it is impractical/impossible to avoid certain situations e.g. Transporting a young person in your car, the tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/carer and the young person involved.
- If during your care you accidentally hurt a young person, the young person seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions and/or if the young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

## **Responding to Suspicions and Allegations**

### Introduction

It is not the responsibility of anyone working J Star Gymnastics in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the young person. This applies BOTH to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within J Star Gymnastics and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

This section explains how to respond to allegations/suspicions.

### **Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse**

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed in section 3 of this document, it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a young person says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

- Stay calm so as not to frighten the young person
- Reassure the child that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- Listen to the child, showing that you are taking them seriously
- Keep questions to a minimum so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify
- Inform the child that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the child this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- Safety of the child is paramount. If the child needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection issue
- Record all information
- Report the incident to the club/welfare officer

For further information please go to

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/england>

### **Recording Information**

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions.

Information should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth
- The child's home address and telephone number
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's
- The nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- A description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. 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/injuries occurred
- Have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record detail

### **Reporting the Concern**

All suspicions and allegations **MUST** be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

J Star Gymnastics expects its members and staff to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the person in charge and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

If the nominated club welfare officer is not available you should take responsibility and seek advice from the NSPCC helpline, the duty officer at your local social services department or the police. Telephone numbers can be found in your local directory and will be displayed on the club noticeboard.

Reporting procedures can be found in the staff handbook. Where there is a complaint against an employee or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation.

- Criminal in which case the police are immediately involved
- Child protection in which case the social services (and possibly) the police will be involved
- Disciplinary or misconduct in which J Star Gymnastics will be involved

As mentioned previously in this document the J Star Gymnastics are not child protection experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations must be shared with professional agencies that are responsible for child protection.

Social services have a legal responsibility under The Children Act 1989 to investigate all child protection referrals by talking to the child and family (where appropriate), gathering information from other people who know the child and making inquiries jointly with the police.

NB: If there is any doubt, you must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidences which together cause concern

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by an employee or a volunteer should be reported to the J Star Gymnastics welfare officer who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk. This will include the following:

Any allegations made against a member of staff should be discussed with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

If the allegation is about a lead person in your organisation then the matter should again be discussed with the LADO.

The worker must ensure that that the child is safe and away from the person against whom the allegation is made.

Regardless of whether a police and/or Children Social Work Service investigation follows, an internal investigation should take place and consideration is given to the operation of disciplinary procedures. This may involve an immediate suspension and/or ultimate dismissal dependant on the nature of the incident.

The contact details of the LADO can be found on the LSCB website under: Managing Allegations. The J Star Gymnastics welfare officer will refer the matter to social services department

the parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department

the manager of J Star should be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings

the Club welfare officer should also notify the relevant sport governing body – British Gymnastics

if the Club welfare officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to the appropriate manager who will refer the matter to social services

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures and have the matter reported to social services. This is because other children in the sport or outside it may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children.

### **Concerns outside the immediate Sporting Environment (e.g. a parent or carer)**

Report your concerns to the Club welfare officer

If the Club welfare officer is not available, the person being told or discovering the abuse should contact their local social services department or the police immediately

Social Services and the Club welfare officer will decide how to inform the parents/carers

The Club welfare officer should also report the incident to the J Star Gymnastics management. The management should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the organisation and act accordingly

Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis

### **4.6 Confidentiality**

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

The Club Welfare Officer

The parents of the child

The person making the allegation

Social Services/police

Sport Governing Body Club welfare officer

The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

#### **4.7 Internal Inquiries and Suspension**

J Star Gymnastics 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

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the J Star Gymnastics management will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; especially where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases the J Star Gymnastics Club management must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on the 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.

#### **Recruiting and Selecting Personnel with Children**

##### **Introduction**

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. This applies equally to paid staff and volunteers, both full and part time. To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children the following steps should be taken when recruiting.

##### **Controlling Access to Children**

All staff and volunteers should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about the applicants past and a self disclosure about any criminal record.

Consent should be obtained from the applicant to seek information from the DBS.

Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children should be obtained. These references MUST be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.

Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo)

##### **Interview and Induction**

All employees and volunteers will be required to undertake an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers should receive formal or informal induction during which:

A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full, including sections on criminal records and self disclosures

Their qualifications should be substantiated

The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified

Child Protection Procedures are explained and training needs identified e.g. basic child protection awareness

## Training

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

Analyse their own practice against what is deemed good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations

Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice and/or abuse

Respond to concerns expressed by a child

Work safely and effectively with children

J Star Gymnastics requires:

All staff and volunteers who have access to children to undergo a DBS check

All employees, volunteers, coaches, welfare officers and team managers to undertake relevant child protection training, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of positive culture towards good practice and child protection

All staff and volunteers to receive advisory information outlining good/bad practice and informing them what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person

All coaches, trainee coaches and leaders should have an up to date first aid qualification