

TAKEN FROM THE BRITISH GYMNASTIC CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY:

Bullying

Bullying and harassment occurs where repeated deliberate actions by one or more people cause hurt to an individual or group and where it is difficult for the bullied person(s) to prevent or deal with this person's actions. The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to young people, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm).

12 Anti bullying and abuse

'Kidscape' (www.kidscape.org.uk), a UK charity established specifically to prevent bullying and child sexual abuse, defines bullying as the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person that results in pain and distress to the victim. It splits bullying into the following categories:

- **Emotional** - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding belongings, 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 focusing on the issue of sexuality
- **Verbal** - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- **Cyber** - All areas of internet, such as email & internet chat room misuse, mobile threats by text messaging & calls, misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera & video facilities

Bullying can occur between:

- An adult and young person.
- A young person and young person.
- A parent and own child.

It is acknowledged that the competitive nature of sport can result in tensions that may lead to bullying but bullying cannot be condoned in any circumstances.

Examples of bullying within gymnastics could be:

- A gymnast who intimidates fellow gymnasts inappropriately i.e. abusive text messages, MSN, other social networking sites
- A coach who adopts a win-at-all costs philosophy i.e. shouting, name calling, or ignoring.
- A parent who pushes too hard i.e. shouting at child
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person
- Older coaches intimidating younger coaches under the age of 18 years i.e. Senior coach shouting or intimidating and assistant coach.

Responding to Bullying

Bullying by children or adults on children within a club must never be tolerated. Bullying may take many forms including physical, verbal, or through the written word, and may be conducted in person or through the actions of another person/other people. Cyber bullying is now recognized as a serious concern and must be dealt with in line with the BG Anti Bullying policy.

Strategies to Discourage Bullying

- Create an open environment and provide adequate supervision at all times
- Encourage children to speak out and share any concerns with the person in charge, the Welfare Officer or other responsible adults.
- Take all signs or allegations of possible bullying seriously.

Responding to victims of Bullying

- Anyone becoming aware that a child is being bullied should offer the child reassurance and try to gain the child's trust.
- Explain that someone in authority may need to be informed.
- Keep accurate records of what happened together with names of those involved and any action taken.
- Report suspicions or concerns to the person in charge.

Confronting the Bully(ies)

- Talk to the bully(ies), explain the situation and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their actions.
- Seek an apology from the bully(ies) to the victim.
- Inform the bully's parents.
- Insist that any borrowed items are returned to the victim.
- Impose sanctions or disciplinary action if necessary.
- Report and record all actions taken.
- Provide support for the victim and his/her coach.
- Encourage the bully(ies) to change his/her behaviour.

Anti bullying and abuse: Supporting bullied children

- Children who have been bullied will often need support from club officer's to deal with the impact of bullying. This may include having a specific person to whom concerns can be raised in specific situation or providing a named senior gymnast as a "buddy" in changing facilities.
- They will need support external to the club from parents, other relatives and sometimes school teachers.
- The club may consider holding a reconciliation meeting to help address the issues between the bully and the bullied young person.

The club can advise the child or parent to contact Kidscape, a charity that offers support to bullied children as well as day courses to help them deal with bullying and its after effects including how to avoid being bullied in future at www.kidscape.org.uk.