



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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Contents

1. Policy Statement
2. Purpose of the Policy
3. Legal and Regulatory Framework
4. Scope of the Policy
5. Definition of Bullying
6. Our Anti-Bullying Principles
7. Club Responsibilities
8. Creating a Positive Club Culture
9. Recognising the Signs of Bullying
10. How to Report Bullying
11. What Happens After a Report is Made
12. Monitoring and Evaluation
13. Safeguarding and Welfare Officer Role
14. Training and Education Requirements
15. Confidentiality and Data Protection
16. Policy Review and Updates

Policy Statement

At IGA, we believe that every member has the right to participate in an environment that is safe, respectful, inclusive, and free from bullying or harassment. Bullying, in any form, undermines our values and the wellbeing of our gymnasts, coaches, volunteers, and families. We are committed to maintaining a culture that promotes kindness, equality, and fairness.

This policy applies to all forms of bullying – whether face-to-face, online, in private settings or during organised activities – and provides a clear framework for prevention, identification, reporting, and resolution.

Purpose of the Policy

This policy exists to:

- Clearly define what constitutes bullying and its different forms;
- Outline the procedures for preventing, recognising, reporting, and responding to bullying;
- Support victims of bullying and challenge inappropriate behaviour;
- Educate staff, volunteers, and members about their responsibilities;
- Demonstrate our legal and ethical obligation to safeguard all individuals involved in IGA activities.

We aim to ensure that everyone involved in our clubs understands that bullying will be addressed seriously and consistently. Creating a safe and supportive environment is everyone's responsibility.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by and aligns with the following UK legislation and guidance:

- **Children Act 1989 and 2004** – Emphasises the welfare of the child as paramount and introduces a duty to safeguard children from harm.
- **Equality Act 2010** – Protects individuals from discrimination, harassment and victimisation based on protected characteristics.
- **Protection from Harassment Act 1997** – Defines harassment as a criminal offence, including repeated threatening or abusive behaviour.
- **Human Rights Act 1998** – Guarantees the right to dignity, safety, and respect for all.
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018, updated 2022)** – Statutory guidance outlining duties for safeguarding children, applicable to voluntary organisations and sports clubs.
- **Keeping Children Safe in Out-of-School Settings (DfE 2020)** – Reinforces the duty of providers (including sports clubs) to ensure children's safety in settings outside formal education.
- **NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU)** – Provides specialist advice and standards for safeguarding in sports clubs.



Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All children, young people, and adults involved in any IGA-affiliated programme, activity, or club;
- All IGA staff, volunteers, trustees, officials, and coaches;
- All parents, carers, visitors and third-party service providers who interact within the IGA environment.

Bullying can occur in person, via social media, or through other forms of communication (including messaging apps, texts, or calls). It can happen during club sessions, competitions, transport to and from events, or outside of the club if it affects a member's involvement or wellbeing.

This policy applies regardless of age, gender identity, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or belief. It acknowledges that anyone can be a target or perpetrator of bullying, and that all cases must be treated seriously and without bias.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is defined as the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can be physical, verbal, emotional, social, or online and often involves a pattern of behaviour over time. Bullying may be direct (face-to-face) or indirect (such as spreading rumours or isolating someone socially). Bullying is not always visible to others and may be subtle, but it can have serious long-term impacts on a person's wellbeing.

The following subtypes of bullying are acknowledged and addressed under this policy:



PHYSICAL BULLYING

This involves the use of physical force or aggression to intimidate, harm, or control another person. Examples include:

Hitting, kicking, punching, slapping, or tripping.

Pushing or shoving

Interfering with another person's belongings (Stealing, hiding, damaging)

Physical threats or gestures intended to cause fear

Initiation rituals or hazing that involve unwanted physical contact

VERBAL BULLYING

This includes the use of words or language to cause harm, hurt feelings, or degrade someone. It is often the most visible and frequently occurring form of bullying. Examples include:

Name-calling, teasing, or mocking

Use of slurs or discriminatory language

Shouting, swearing at, or humiliating someone in front of others

Belittling a person's abilities, appearance, family background, or identity

Threats of violence or intimidation

SOCIAL BULLYING

This form of bullying involves harming someone's social relationships or reputation, often through manipulation or exclusion. It is typically covert and harder to detect. Examples include:

Deliberate exclusion from activities, games, or social groups

Encouraging others to ignore, isolate, or reject a person

Spreading rumours or false stories

Public embarrassment or humiliation intended to damage someone's social standing

Telling others not to be friends with someone



CYBER BULLYING

Cyberbullying occurs when technology is used to harass, threaten, or embarrass someone. It can take place 24/7 and reach a person even when they are alone. Examples include:

- Sending abusive, threatening, or upsetting texts, emails, or social media messages
- Posting hurtful comments, images, or videos online
- Sharing or forwarding personal or humiliating content without consent
- Impersonating someone to damage their reputation or relationships
- Using online platforms or apps to exclude or ridicule others

EMOTIONAL BULLYING

Emotional bullying, also known as psychological bullying, is designed to hurt someone's feelings, mental state, or sense of self-worth. It may accompany other types of bullying and can be very damaging. Examples include:

- Intimidation or constant criticism
- Undermining a person's confidence or self-esteem
- Manipulation to create fear or dependency
- Gaslighting – making someone doubt their perception of events or reality
- Threatening to expose secrets or private information

DISCRIMINATORY BULLYING

This occurs when bullying is based on someone's actual or perceived characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010. This type of bullying is considered unlawful and may include:

- Racist bullying – targeting someone based on their ethnicity, nationality, culture, or skin colour
- Sexist or misogynistic bullying – based on gender or gender stereotypes
- Homophobic or biphobic bullying – targeting someone for their sexual orientation
- Transphobic bullying – directed at individuals who are transgender or perceived to be
- Disablist bullying – targeting someone for a physical or learning disability, or mental health condition
- Religious bullying – based on beliefs, dress, practices or faith

OUR ANTI-BULLYING PRINCIPLES

At IGA, we believe that everyone has the right to participate in gymnastics in a safe and respectful environment, free from fear, abuse, intimidation, or discrimination. These principles underpin our policy and our approach to managing behaviour within our clubs.

Respect and Dignity

Every individual involved with IGA – whether athlete, coach, volunteer, official, or parent – deserves to be treated with respect. We expect all members to uphold a standard of behaviour that reflects the values of kindness, equality, and inclusion. Disrespectful or hurtful actions, whether intended or perceived as 'banter', are not acceptable and will be addressed.

Shared Responsibility

Creating a safe environment is everyone's responsibility. All members of our gymnastics community have a role to play in:

- Promoting respectful and inclusive behaviour;
- Challenging inappropriate conduct when it occurs;
- Supporting individuals who report concerns;
- Setting an example through their own actions.

Staff, coaches, and volunteers are held to the highest standards as role models and duty-bearers for young people in their care.

Zero Tolerance of Bullying

We maintain a zero-tolerance stance toward bullying. This means that:

- No form of bullying will be excused, justified, or ignored;
- Reports of bullying will be investigated and taken seriously regardless of the status of those involved;
- Repeated or serious bullying behaviours will result in disciplinary action.

We acknowledge that early intervention is key. Even low-level issues should be addressed before they escalate.



Victim-Centred Support

We recognise that bullying can have a lasting impact on a person's wellbeing, confidence, and participation in sport. Our response will prioritise the needs and wishes of the person affected by the bullying. They will be supported throughout the process with empathy, confidentiality, and clear communication.

Support for victims may include:

- Designated adult contact for check-ins;
- Counselling or signposting to mental health support services;
- Adjustments to club participation if needed to protect safety or wellbeing;
- Positive peer reinforcement and team rebuilding activities.

Education and Empowerment

We believe that education is key to preventing bullying. Our clubs commit to educating young people and adults alike on:

- What bullying is and why it's harmful;
- How to recognise and respond to bullying safely;
- The value of inclusion and empathy in sport;
- How to build healthy relationships and resolve conflict without aggression.

We will empower young people to speak up, support peers, and be confident that they will be listened to.

CLUB RESPONSIBILITIES

IGA-affiliated clubs have a legal, moral, and organisational responsibility to provide a safe and inclusive environment where bullying is neither tolerated nor ignored. Clubs must ensure that safeguarding and anti-bullying measures are actively upheld, enforced, and understood by all individuals—coaches, gymnasts, staff, volunteers, and parents.



Policy Implementation and Integration

Each club must formally adopt this Anti-Bullying Policy and ensure it is integrated into all aspects of club life:

- Include the policy in all induction packs for new members, coaches, and volunteers.
- Ensure the policy is reviewed and endorsed annually by the club's management or committee.
- Make the policy accessible in digital and printed formats (e.g., club noticeboards, newsletters, and websites).
- Refer to the policy in behaviour management plans, event briefings, and any safeguarding communications.

Designation and Role of the Welfare Officer

All clubs must appoint a named Welfare Officer who is responsible for overseeing safeguarding and welfare issues, including bullying prevention and response. This person must:

- Have up-to-date safeguarding qualifications including "Time to Listen" or equivalent training.
- Be independent of coaching leadership where possible to avoid conflicts of interest.
- Be clearly identified in the club, with contact information displayed in all common areas.
- Manage safeguarding records securely and confidentially, ensuring timely and accurate documentation of concerns, investigations, and resolutions.

The Welfare Officer must also serve as a neutral, trustworthy figure that children feel safe approaching with concerns.

Preventative Culture and Behaviour Standards

Prevention begins with culture. Clubs must foster an environment that values respect, responsibility, and inclusion. This involves:

- Developing and enforcing Codes of Conduct for gymnasts, parents, staff, and volunteers, signed annually.
- Ensuring that bullying, discrimination, exclusion, and harassment are explicitly identified as prohibited behaviours.
- Holding regular discussions about respect, empathy, and teamwork during sessions.
- Promoting peer leadership and inclusive team-building activities that build community across age groups and abilities.
- Running annual awareness weeks (e.g., Anti-Bullying Week) and visible campaigns to reinforce expectations and values.



Training and Education

Education is a critical tool in preventing bullying:

- All staff and volunteers must complete mandatory safeguarding and anti-bullying training.
- Annual refresher sessions should include updates on club policies, new threats (e.g., cyberbullying), and reflective learning from past incidents.
- Gymnasts should be supported in learning how to:
 - Identify bullying in its different forms,
 - Safely report concerns,
 - Build emotional resilience and positive relationships.

Parents should also be invited to participate in training events and encouraged to reinforce the club's behavioural expectations at home.

Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying

Clubs must maintain clear, child-friendly procedures for reporting bullying:

- Gymnasts and families must know who they can report concerns to and how (verbal, form, email, or confidential box).
- Clubs must provide at least one anonymous method for reporting.
- Reports must be acknowledged within 48 hours and investigated fairly and promptly.

When bullying is reported:

- The Welfare Officer must conduct a structured investigation, including speaking to all parties and reviewing any evidence.
- The victim must be supported with sensitivity and confidentiality.
- The alleged perpetrator must be given a fair opportunity to respond.

Depending on the severity, responses may include:

- Informal resolution and mediated discussion (only when safe),
- Written warnings or behavioural contracts,
- Suspension or expulsion for persistent or severe behaviour,
- Referral to external agencies (e.g., police, LADO, social services).

Support and Intervention

Clubs must provide practical and emotional support to those involved in bullying incidents:

- Victims should be monitored regularly, assigned a staff mentor, and offered counselling or external support if necessary.
- The accused individual may require behavioural intervention or peer relationship support to correct harmful patterns.
- All efforts must be made to restore a sense of safety, belonging, and mutual respect in the group environment.



Documentation and Confidentiality

Every bullying-related incident must be recorded using the club's safeguarding incident form.

Records must include:

- Who was involved and what was reported,
- Witness accounts or supplementary evidence,
- Actions taken and outcomes,
- Any referrals made.

All records must be stored securely and retained until the individual turns 25, in accordance with data protection law and safeguarding best practices.

Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

Each club must regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its anti-bullying strategy:

- Conduct anonymous feedback surveys with gymnasts, staff, and parents.
- Track the number, type, and resolution of incidents reported.
- Discuss safeguarding issues at regular committee meetings.
- Use lessons learned to revise training, culture initiatives, and response protocols.

IGA may request to audit club safeguarding practices where there are concerns about compliance or repeated complaints.

CREATING A POSITIVE CLUB CULTURE

A positive club culture is the foundation of all safeguarding and anti-bullying efforts. IGA believes that fostering a respectful, inclusive, and connected club environment reduces the risk of bullying and empowers all participants to thrive. A proactive and preventive approach to culture-building is essential.

Code of Conduct

A well-developed Code of Conduct is a core tool in shaping behaviour. All IGA-affiliated clubs must:

- Develop clear, age-appropriate Codes of Conduct for gymnasts, coaches, volunteers, and parents/carers.
- Include expectations around respect, inclusion, teamwork, safe communication (including online behaviour), and consequences for misconduct.
- Present these codes during club inductions and require signed agreement from all parties annually.
- Display simplified versions of the codes in accessible areas of the club (e.g., posters or handouts).



The Code should emphasise not only rules, but shared values – such as empathy, encouragement, resilience, and responsibility.

Welcoming New Members

The process of integrating new gymnasts and families is a crucial opportunity to build inclusion and prevent marginalisation. Clubs must:

- Provide a structured and friendly induction process, including an introduction to coaches, welfare officers, and teammates.
- Assign a peer “buddy” to help new members feel welcomed and supported during their first weeks.
- Ensure parents and carers are also welcomed, informed about policies, and given access to communication channels.
- Offer an introductory session on club values, safeguarding principles, and behaviour expectations.

New members who feel included from day one are less likely to experience or engage in bullying.

Inclusion and Diversity

An inclusive club respects and celebrates the differences of all its members. IGA clubs should:

- Adopt a non-discrimination statement that affirms all members are welcomed regardless of race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic background.
- Ensure materials, communications, and facilities reflect and accommodate diverse needs (e.g., use of pronouns, accessibility measures, inclusive language).
- Educate members about protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- Actively challenge prejudice, stereotypes, or exclusionary language or behaviour.
- Encourage diverse leadership, role models, and representation across club activities.

Promoting diversity builds mutual respect and discourages othering or exclusion, both of which can be precursors to bullying.



Promoting Kindness and Respect

Culture is shaped by daily interactions. Clubs should intentionally promote kindness as a shared expectation. This includes:

- Leading by example: Coaches, officials, and senior gymnasts must model calm, respectful, and supportive communication.
- Recognition schemes: Highlight acts of kindness, teamwork, or bravery with weekly “values awards” or shout-outs.
- Dialogue-based coaching: Use positive reinforcement and constructive feedback instead of criticism or fear-based methods.
- Conflict management: Teach gymnasts how to resolve disagreements respectfully and safely.
- Community-building events: Schedule team bonding days, parent socials, and celebration events that create cohesion and shared pride.

Embedding kindness into the club’s identity normalises positive behaviour and creates a setting where bullying is less likely to thrive.

A culture of respect does not mean avoiding discipline—it means consistent, fair boundaries enforced in a way that values dignity for all. Staff must intervene early when minor disrespect is observed to prevent escalation and send a clear message about expectations.

RECOGNISING SIGNS OF BULLYING

Recognising bullying is essential to addressing it effectively. Bullying often goes unreported, especially by victims who may fear retaliation, blame, or shame. Therefore, it is critical for all adults in a club environment—including coaches, volunteers, and parents—to be observant, knowledgeable, and responsive to potential signs.

This section outlines the psychological, physical, behavioural, and digital indicators that may suggest bullying is occurring, either overtly or covertly. Staff and volunteers must use their judgement, contextual understanding, and training to interpret signs sensitively and act appropriately.

Emotional and Psychological Indicators

Children and young people who are experiencing bullying may exhibit a wide range of emotional responses. These reactions are not always expressed through direct communication, so observation is key. Clubs must consider the following warning signs:

- **Withdrawal and Isolation:** A child may become noticeably more withdrawn or reluctant to engage in social situations where they previously participated confidently.
- **Anxiety or Panic:** Heightened nervousness, panic attacks, or physical signs of distress around specific people or places.
- **Depression or Sadness:** Tearfulness, persistent low mood, hopelessness, or loss of interest in gymnastics or social activities.
- **Low Self-Esteem:** Negative self-talk, lack of confidence, or an apparent loss of personal pride and motivation.
- **Anger or Aggression:** Outbursts, defiance, or irritability, particularly if they are uncharacteristic or increase without clear reason.

Physical and Behavioural Changes

Observable behavioural shifts may be a reflection of emotional distress caused by bullying:

- **Unexplained Injuries:** Bruises, cuts, or torn clothing, often with vague or implausible explanations.
- **Avoidance Behaviours:** Repeated lateness, feigned illness, or reluctance to attend club sessions.
- **Changes in Performance:** Sudden drop in energy, skill level, or focus.
- **Possession Loss or Damage:** Missing or damaged belongings may be an indication of physical bullying or coercion.

Social Shifts and Group Dynamics

Bullying is often enabled by peer culture or social hierarchies. Staff should be alert to:

- **Exclusion:** A gymnast being consistently left out of partner work, group chats, or team activities.
- **Imbalance of Power:** One or more individuals controlling decisions, interactions, or social standing in the group.
- **Mocking or Gossiping:** Regular use of nicknames, whispering, laughter, or inside jokes aimed at one individual.



Online and Cyber Behaviour

Digital bullying can be hidden from adult view but just as harmful:

- **Device Avoidance or Anxiety:** A gymnast who previously used technology comfortably may suddenly avoid it, become secretive, or show signs of distress after using their phone.
- **Deleting Social Accounts:** Sudden disappearance from group chats or social media accounts.
- **Monitoring Peers Online:** Staff may be aware of inappropriate content shared online involving gymnasts (e.g. memes, rumours, group exclusion).

Signs in Those Engaging in Bullying

It's essential to understand the behaviours of those who bully. They may:

- Display controlling or dominating behaviour over peers.
- Minimise, deny, or deflect blame when challenged about unkind actions.
- Appear indifferent to others' distress.
- Use humour or sarcasm to mask aggressive intent.
- Encourage group exclusion, intimidation, or ridicule.

Indirect Signs and Third-Party Reports

Children may disclose bullying in indirect ways:

- Talking hypothetically about someone else's experience.
- Making casual comments about being unwanted, disliked, or mocked.
- Disclosure by a peer, parent, or sibling.

Any suggestion of bullying—no matter how subtle—must be taken seriously and followed up promptly using the club's safeguarding and reporting procedures.

HOW TO REPORT BULLYING

Document the Incident:

Keep a record of the bullying incidents, including dates, times, locations, individuals involved, and details of what occurred. Documenting the incidents can provide evidence and clarity when reporting.

Inform Club Officials:

Report the bullying to the designated club officials or leaders responsible for handling such matters. This could be coaches, team managers, or safeguarding officers. Provide them with the documented evidence and any relevant information.

Follow Club Procedures:

Follow the club's established procedures for reporting bullying. Many sports clubs have specific protocols in place for handling complaints and concerns related to bullying. Adhering to these procedures ensures that the issue is addressed appropriately and effectively.

Seek Support:

If necessary, seek support from our safeguarding team or authorities, such as local sports governing bodies, child protection services, or anti-bullying organisations. They can provide guidance, intervention, and support.



IGA is committed to making the process of reporting bullying straightforward, supportive, and safe. We recognise that reporting bullying can be a difficult step, and we are committed to ensuring that everyone involved in our clubs—particularly children and young people—feel confident and supported when doing so.

This section explains the options available to individuals who wish to report bullying, the importance of early disclosure, and how clubs must respond to reports in line with safeguarding standards.

Internal Reporting Procedures

All clubs must have clear and child-friendly procedures for reporting bullying. These procedures must:

- Be communicated to all members and parents upon joining the club.
- Be displayed prominently in training areas and shared regularly.
- Include both verbal and written options for raising concerns.

Who Can Report:

- Gymnasts themselves
- Parents or carers
- Coaches or volunteers
- Peers or bystanders

How to Report:

- Speak directly with the club's designated Welfare Officer or a trusted adult.
- Complete a bullying concern form and submit it confidentially.
- Use an anonymous reporting system if available (e.g., locked dropbox, online form).

When to Report: Reports should be made as soon as possible after the incident to ensure timely and effective response. However, we recognise that some individuals may take time to come forward, and all reports will be treated with the same seriousness regardless of when they are made.

What to Include:

- A factual description of what occurred, including dates, times, people involved, and what was said or done.
- The names of any witnesses, if applicable.
- Whether the issue has been reported before and to whom.



External Support and Escalation Pathways

In certain situations, particularly if the bullying is ongoing or not resolved effectively at club level, or if the alleged perpetrator is in a position of power (e.g., a coach or senior official), individuals have the right to escalate concerns to external bodies.

These include:

- IGA Safeguarding Lead – safeguarding@igauk.com
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – For concerns involving staff or volunteers who work with children.
- NSPCC Helpline – Call 0808 800 5000 for confidential advice and support.
- Childline – Call 0800 1111 for free, 24/7 support for young people.
- Police or social services – For immediate danger or where a crime may have occurred.

Clubs must never prevent someone from escalating a safeguarding or bullying concern. All members have a right to be heard and supported, including if they choose to bypass internal processes.

Supporting Safe Disclosures

Clubs must:

- Reassure individuals that they have done the right thing in speaking up.
- Emphasise confidentiality and explain what will happen next.
- Avoid asking leading questions or conducting detailed questioning—this is the responsibility of trained safeguarding leads.
- Make written records of disclosures using appropriate forms.
- Avoid confrontation between alleged bully and victim during early stages.

It is the duty of all adults in the club—coaches, volunteers, and committee members—to respond to concerns of bullying promptly and seriously. Turning a blind eye or dismissing a child's disclosure as trivial may cause further harm and breaches the club's safeguarding obligations.

Every report, no matter how minor it may seem, provides an opportunity to intervene, resolve the issue, and create a safer environment for all.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A REPORT IS MADE

Responding to bullying concerns requires a structured, fair, and timely process. Clubs must act with professionalism, empathy, and transparency to ensure the matter is addressed appropriately and the wellbeing of all parties is safeguarded. This section outlines the key steps that clubs must take once a report of bullying has been received.

Investigating and Responding to Bullying

Once a report is received, the Welfare Officer (or designated safeguarding lead) must initiate a confidential review of the situation. This includes:

- Acknowledging receipt of the concern within 48 hours.
- Conducting an initial risk assessment to determine whether immediate protective action is needed (e.g., separating individuals, modifying supervision).
- Gathering information from all relevant parties, including:
 - The person who made the report (victim or witness);
 - The alleged perpetrator;
 - Any relevant coaches, teammates, or witnesses.

Investigations must be objective, fact-based, and proportionate. Clubs should avoid making assumptions or passing judgement before the facts are gathered. In complex or serious cases, an independent panel or external safeguarding advisor may be engaged to support the process.

Where applicable, staff should consult club records to determine whether the issue is part of a wider pattern.

Supporting Victims

The welfare and psychological safety of the victim must remain the club's highest priority throughout the process. Support must be immediate, ongoing, and tailored to the individual's needs. This may include:

- Regular check-ins with a trusted adult or mentor;
- Ensuring the gymnast is not left alone with the alleged bully;
- Providing reassurance, validation, and clarity on what actions the club is taking;
- Offering access to counselling, emotional support, or signposting to appropriate services (e.g., CAMHS, Childline);
- Involving parents/carers (if appropriate) in planning support steps and safeguarding measures.

The goal is not only to stop the bullying but to help the young person recover confidence, emotional safety, and full inclusion in club activities.



Addressing Bullying Behaviour

When bullying is confirmed or strongly suspected, the club must intervene in a way that is restorative where possible, but protective and firm where necessary. The response should be proportionate to the severity and persistence of the behaviour.

Possible actions include:

- A formal conversation or written warning;
- Behaviour contracts setting clear expectations and consequences;
- Apology and reconciliation sessions (only if safe and agreed to by the victim);
- Temporary or permanent removal from sessions, teams, or events;
- Suspension or exclusion from the club in extreme or repeated cases.

In all cases, the person exhibiting bullying behaviour should also receive:

- Support to understand the impact of their actions;
- Guidance in developing empathy and emotional regulation;
- Monitoring and positive reinforcement for improved behaviour.

Clubs must not tolerate retaliation or “blame reversal.” Addressing bullying does not mean labelling the individual, but it does mean holding them accountable in a way that protects the victim and supports a change in behaviour.

Follow-Up Actions

Follow-up is essential to ensure the bullying has ceased and the outcomes are effective and sustainable. This includes:

- Checking in regularly with the victim and their family to assess ongoing wellbeing;
- Monitoring the dynamics of the group or training environment for further signs of tension;
- Revisiting behaviour plans or disciplinary conditions as needed;
- Reviewing club practices, coach awareness, and peer relationships.

Where systemic issues are identified—such as a culture of exclusion or weak supervision—club leaders must take broader corrective action. This may include:

- Additional training for staff or volunteers;
- Revisions to club policies or routines;
- Consulting external safeguarding experts for recommendations.

A bullying case is not closed when a punishment is issued—it is closed when the club can be confident that the behaviour has stopped, the victim feels safe and supported, and the environment reflects respect, safety, and inclusion.



MONITORING & EVALUATION

Effective monitoring and evaluation of bullying prevention and response efforts is essential to ensuring the long-term success of this policy. Clubs must not only react to individual incidents but also learn from them to improve the safety, culture, and effectiveness of their environments.

Monitoring allows clubs to identify patterns, assess the impact of their interventions, and ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are consistently met. Evaluation provides a formal opportunity to reflect on practices, engage stakeholders, and strengthen the club's safeguarding framework over time.

Ongoing Monitoring Responsibilities

IGA clubs must establish systems to track and review bullying-related information throughout the year. These systems should include:

- Maintaining up-to-date records of all reported bullying incidents, including the type of bullying, people involved, actions taken, and outcomes.
- Logging informal concerns and low-level disclosures as part of a broader picture of group dynamics.
- Analysing trends over time—such as repeated concerns linked to particular training groups, coaches, or locations.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of specific interventions (e.g. behaviour contracts, mediation, exclusion).
- Gathering feedback from those involved in previous incidents to assess how well their concerns were handled.

All monitoring should respect data protection laws and be overseen by the club Welfare Officer or safeguarding lead.

Annual Review of Anti-Bullying Practice

Each IGA club must conduct a formal annual review of its bullying prevention and response procedures. This review should be documented and discussed at committee or governance level. Key components include:

- Reviewing the total number and nature of incidents reported in the past year.
- Evaluating the club's response time, communication effectiveness, and resolution outcomes.
- Assessing whether club values, rules, and codes of conduct are clearly understood and consistently applied.
- Identifying any staff or volunteer training needs.
- Reviewing whether anonymous reporting mechanisms are being used appropriately and effectively.



The review process should inform updates to the Anti-Bullying Policy, training provision, and safeguarding procedures for the year ahead.

Stakeholder Feedback and Participation

Children, parents, and staff should be actively involved in evaluating the club's anti-bullying culture. This may be achieved through:

- Anonymous surveys or feedback forms for gymnasts, families, and coaches.
- Feedback sessions or forums for parents and older gymnasts.
- Focus groups to explore the lived experiences of underrepresented groups within the club.
- Safe opportunities for young people to contribute ideas for improving inclusion and respect.

Feedback must be reviewed by the club committee or safeguarding team and responded to openly.

Learning from Incidents

Each bullying incident must be viewed as an opportunity to improve. Following resolution, the Welfare Officer should:

- Reflect on whether the issue could have been prevented.
- Assess the clarity and accessibility of reporting mechanisms.
- Identify whether training, supervision, or policy weaknesses contributed to the issue.
- Capture key learning and build it into staff briefings, policy updates, and practice improvements.

This reflective practice ensures that the club evolves in its ability to prevent and respond to bullying. It also helps demonstrate the club's commitment to creating a safe and respectful environment.

IGA will provide resources, templates, and guidance to support clubs in their monitoring and evaluation responsibilities, and may request records as part of quality assurance or safeguarding audits.



SAFEGUARDING & WELFARE OFFICER

The Safeguarding and Welfare Officer (SWO) plays a central and specialist role in maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment across all IGA clubs. This individual serves as the primary point of contact for all safeguarding and welfare concerns, including bullying. Clubs must ensure that the role is clearly defined, well-resourced, and respected at every level of the organisation.

Appointment and Position

Each club must formally appoint at least one Welfare Officer. Clubs with a large membership base or multiple training sites should consider appointing multiple SWOs to ensure accessibility and appropriate workload management.

Key criteria for appointment:

- No conflict of interest (Not the Head Coach or main disciplinary authority).
- Recognised by all members (introductions should be made during induction and welcome events).
- Visible within the club: name, photo, and contact information must be displayed prominently in common areas and online.

Training and Qualifications

The SWO must be appropriately qualified and stay up to date with safeguarding developments:

- Completion of safeguarding training (Training must be CPD accredited) (renewed every 3 years).
- Completion of sport-specific safeguarding courses.
- Additional CPD on topics such as bullying, mental health, discrimination, and trauma-informed approaches is encouraged.
- Ongoing engagement with IGA's Safeguarding Network or equivalent forums to stay current with legislation and best practice.



Core Responsibilities

The Safeguarding and Welfare Officer is responsible for:

- Receiving and managing reports of bullying or other safeguarding concerns: Listening non-judgementally, documenting concerns accurately, and initiating appropriate responses.
- Providing advice and support: Offering guidance to victims, families, and staff, including emotional support and referrals.
- Liaising with external agencies: This includes the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), police, social services, NSPCC, and other safeguarding bodies when necessary.
- Ensuring safeguarding policy compliance: Overseeing the club's implementation of anti-bullying and safeguarding policies.
- Maintaining confidentiality: Ensuring information is only shared on a need-to-know basis, in line with data protection legislation.
- Maintaining safeguarding records: Securely storing incident reports, actions taken, and outcomes, in accordance with retention guidance.
- Reporting to the club committee: Providing regular safeguarding updates and contributing to club reviews and development planning.

Accessibility and Communication

It is essential that children and adults know who the Welfare Officer is and how to reach them. The club must:

- Regularly remind members how to access the Welfare Officer.
- Make time for informal check-ins and presence at club sessions.
- Encourage an open-door approach where concerns can be raised at any time.

The Welfare Officer must be approachable, empathetic, and skilled in working with children and families. They must also be able to operate with authority and impartiality when managing conflicts or serious allegations.

Supporting a Safe Club Culture

Beyond reactive duties, the SWO should play an active role in shaping a positive club environment:

- Delivering or coordinating safeguarding training.
- Leading annual policy reviews.
- Monitoring trends or hotspots for bullying or conflict.
- Helping to design and promote anti-bullying initiatives.

This leadership is vital to ensuring safeguarding and anti-bullying are not just policies—but core values embedded in the daily culture of the club.



TRAINING & EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

Effective safeguarding and bullying prevention rely on informed, confident, and well-trained individuals at every level of the club. IGA places a strong emphasis on continuous education to ensure that all staff, volunteers, athletes, and parents understand their responsibilities and have the knowledge and tools necessary to uphold a safe and respectful environment.

Training must not be treated as a one-off requirement. Instead, it should be part of an ongoing process of learning, reflection, and improvement that strengthens club culture and empowers individuals to intervene when necessary.

Training for Coaches, Staff, and Volunteers

All adults who work directly with children and young people in IGA clubs must complete the following:

- Core Safeguarding Training: This must be renewed every three years and cover key topics including abuse types, whistleblowing, and how to report a concern.
- Anti-Bullying Training: Specific modules or workshops that address types of bullying, group dynamics, and how to respond effectively and proportionately.
- Induction Training: New staff and volunteers must complete an induction covering the club's safeguarding policies, Codes of Conduct, and reporting procedures within the first month of involvement.

Additional learning is encouraged, including:

- Conflict resolution
- Mental health first aid
- Cultural competence and unconscious bias
- Positive behaviour support
- Trauma-informed coaching

Child and Young Person Education

IGA clubs are responsible for equipping children and young people with the knowledge and confidence to:

- Understand what bullying is and how it differs from normal conflict
- Recognise safe and unsafe behaviour in themselves and others
- Know how and when to speak up or seek help
- Be an active bystander and support peers in distress



Parent and Carer Engagement

Parents and carers are essential partners in maintaining a safe club environment. Clubs must:

- Provide clear information about the Anti-Bullying Policy during enrolment and induction
- Offer opportunities for parents to attend safeguarding briefings or Q&A sessions
- Communicate clearly how to raise a concern or support a child who may be experiencing bullying
- Share updates on relevant safeguarding developments, campaigns, and events

An informed parent community reinforces club messages and supports children in accessing help when needed.

Monitoring and Evaluating Training Effectiveness

All training programmes must be tracked, recorded, and reviewed regularly:

- Maintain a training matrix or log for all staff and volunteers
- Evaluate participant feedback after sessions
- Update training content based on new legislation, guidance, or incident learning
- Include safeguarding education in club development plans and committee agendas

Clubs are encouraged to work with IGA's Safeguarding Lead or external providers to ensure training is up-to-date, relevant, and tailored to their specific context.

Training is not simply a compliance task—it is a foundational tool for shaping a culture where bullying is prevented, challenged, and resolved constructively.

CONFIDENTIALITY & DATA PROTECTION

Confidentiality and data protection are critical pillars of effective safeguarding practice. Clubs must ensure that all information related to bullying and welfare concerns is handled with the highest standards of discretion, sensitivity, and legal compliance. Improper handling of such information not only undermines trust—it can also place children and vulnerable individuals at greater risk.

This section outlines the principles, procedures, and legal obligations for ensuring confidentiality and data security within IGA-affiliated clubs.



Legal Framework and Ethical Principles

Clubs are required to manage all safeguarding data in compliance with:

- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018, updated 2022)
- Statutory guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

Core principles include:

- Lawfulness, fairness, and transparency in data processing
- Purpose limitation—only collecting data relevant to safeguarding
- Data minimisation—only sharing what is necessary to keep individuals safe
- Accuracy and timeliness in recordkeeping
- Storage limitation and secure disposal
- Accountability for all decisions around data access and use

Confidentiality in Practice

When a child, parent, or staff member discloses bullying or any safeguarding concern, the club must:

- Reassure the individual that their concern will be treated seriously and sensitively.
- Explain the limits of confidentiality: that disclosures cannot always remain secret, especially when a child's safety is at risk.
- Ensure that disclosures are only shared with those who have a direct role in protecting the child and responding appropriately (e.g. Welfare Officer, Club Manager, external authorities).

Conversations about bullying or safeguarding should never be held in public areas or discussed informally with unauthorised personnel.

Secure Storage and Access Controls

All bullying and safeguarding records must be:

- Documented using club-approved forms that include full dates, signatures, actions taken, and follow-up steps.
- Stored in a locked, fireproof cabinet (for hard copies) or on a password-protected digital system with access restrictions.
- Accessible only by trained and authorised safeguarding personnel.

Clubs must also:

- Use encrypted digital storage tools where possible.
- Ensure cloud services used for safeguarding data meet UK security standards.
- Conduct periodic checks to ensure access permissions are current.



Information Sharing and Consent

In general, consent should be obtained before sharing personal information. However, there are lawful and necessary exceptions:

- When there is a risk of significant harm to a child or vulnerable adult
- When a criminal offence may have occurred
- When there is an overriding public interest (e.g. to protect others from harm)
- When the concern involves a person in a position of trust (e.g. a coach or club official)

In such cases:

- The Welfare Officer must make a clear, documented decision about what is shared, with whom, and why.
- The club may contact statutory services such as the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), children's social care, or the police.
- All disclosures, decisions, and advice received from external agencies must be recorded in full.

If in doubt, clubs should consult IGA's Safeguarding Lead or the NSPCC's safeguarding helpline.

Data Retention and Secure Disposal

To align with safeguarding best practice:

- Safeguarding and bullying records must be retained until the child reaches age 25.
- In cases involving adults or staff, clubs must follow employment law guidance for retention (typically 6 years after employment ends).

When records are no longer needed, they must be destroyed securely:

- Paper records should be shredded or disposed of via a secure document destruction service.
- Digital records must be permanently deleted and removed from all backups or archived systems.

Staff Awareness and Responsibility

All staff and volunteers must:

- Be trained in the basics of confidentiality and data protection as part of their safeguarding induction.
- Know who is responsible for maintaining records in their club.
- Immediately report any data breaches or suspected misuse to the Club Welfare Officer.



The Welfare Officer must ensure that systems are in place to protect data and must periodically audit safeguarding practices, especially where digital tools or third-party systems are involved.

Confidentiality is not a barrier to safeguarding—it is a tool to be used wisely, legally, and ethically to protect the rights and safety of every member of the IGA community.

POLICY REVIEW & UPDATES

To remain effective, relevant, and legally compliant, the IGA Anti-Bullying Policy must be regularly reviewed and updated in line with evolving best practice, changes in legislation, and the lived experiences of children, families, and staff.

A static policy cannot adequately protect children or respond to changing risks. Therefore, a commitment to dynamic, evidence-led policy review is a core safeguarding obligation.

Review Frequency and Process

This policy must be formally reviewed and updated:

- At least annually by the club's designated safeguarding lead and management committee;
- Following any significant bullying incident that exposes a gap or shortcoming in procedure;
- In response to new legislation, safeguarding guidance, or regulatory changes (e.g. amendments to Working Together to Safeguard Children);
- After external safeguarding audits or inspections;
- In response to stakeholder feedback or anonymous club surveys.

The review process must include:

- A review of all incidents recorded over the previous year;
- Assessment of how incidents were resolved and their outcomes;
- Evaluation of club member satisfaction and confidence in the policy;
- Consultation with children, young people, parents, and staff to ensure the policy reflects their real-life needs and concerns.

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for reviewing and updating this policy lies with:

- The Club Welfare Officer – to provide frontline safeguarding insights;
- The Club Committee or Board – to approve revisions and monitor implementation;

The IGA Safeguarding Lead – to support policy coherence across clubs and share updates in national practice.



Any updates made must be:

- Clearly dated and version-controlled;
- Communicated to all staff, volunteers, gymnasts, and parents in writing;
- Replaced in all public-facing formats (website, noticeboards, handbooks);
- Highlighted through club-wide announcements or safeguarding briefings.

Continuous Improvement

A safeguarding culture demands more than compliance—it requires curiosity, openness to learning, and humility. Clubs must:

- Reflect on whether the policy is meaningfully understood and followed in daily practice;
- Use every incident, concern, and feedback form as a source of learning;
- Celebrate good practice but also challenge complacency or resistance to change.

Through regular and rigorous review, this Anti-Bullying Policy will remain a living document—one that protects, empowers, and evolves with the needs of every child and adult in our care.