

## Direction for Club Welfare Officers

This document reflects some of the guidance which has already been provided to clubs as part of the Step Forward Plan, which should be read in conjunction with this document.

It is intended to provide you with information and support, and we ask you to be proactive, when your club reopens, asking questions about the welfare of the gymnasts at your club and seeking to address any anxieties they or their parents may have.

Whilst the roles and responsibilities of a Club Welfare Officer continue the same as they always have, consideration should now be given where possible for Welfare Officers to physically attend the gym more frequently, particularly during the initial period that a club opens, in order to be on hand to provide advice and assurance.

You should establish or re-establish contact with your Regional Welfare Officer and British Gymnastics Safeguarding Area Officer or Home Nation equivalent, to ensure you are as up to date as possible and know what to do and who to contact should you require further advice or assistance. A list of all National and Regional Welfare Officers can be seen on our website. [Click here](#)

You should also establish or re-establish contact with the coaches at your club, making those who may be unaware of your responsibilities who you are and how you'll be on hand to provide advice.

### Speak to gymnasts and their families

While many families have coped well during lockdown, others may not have and for some the experience will have been very difficult. Some may be struggling for various reasons including:

- A lack of confidence, as they have either been or felt cut off from their friends
- Be confused and worried about how to behave because of social distancing
- They or someone they care about may have been or are still unwell
- Someone they know or care about may have died and they may still be grieving
- The increased time at home, in isolation from teachers who may normally look out for them, may have put them at increased risk of abuse. This is could take many forms including, physical, sexual or emotional or neglect. There may also have been a lack of food or care, or they may have been forced to care for relatives or siblings without support
- They may have experienced the consequences of family difficulties through finance, employment or poverty

- They may be concerned about racial issues and that people from the BAME community may be more vulnerable to COVID-19
- They may be concerned about current media attention concerning allegations of abuse and mistreatment within the sport
- People with learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders or those with sensory processing issues may find it particularly confusing as their routine has changed

During the pandemic, there have been increased reports from all parts of society and types of activity of domestic violence, online grooming, cyber-bullying and a lack of support services for vulnerable people. More recently there have also been public concerns raised about the experiences of some gymnasts within our sport.

Therefore, we want you to ask gymnasts and parents:

- How they have been since they were last at the club?
- How are they feeling now?
- Whether they have any current or previous concerns or things which may have upset, worried or hurt them?
- Is there anything which they want to tell you about?
- Is there anything which you should ask their parents about?

This will show that as their Welfare Officer, you care and want to support them. It also provides an opportunity for them to tell you anything which may be of a concern.

Their behaviour and demeanour should also be monitored by you and the coaches, as they may not disclose their feelings, but they may show signs of change or that something isn't quite right.

## Reporting

If a child discloses any abuse or concern, then the normal [reporting procedures](#) must be followed.

Please be reminded to obtain as much information as possible and as a minimum you should establish the names of the gymnast and coach(es) involved, details of any witnesses, when the incident occurred, what happened and whether anything was done about the matter.

If a complaint or concern is raised of an historic nature then all details should be emailed to [integrity@british-gymnastics.org](mailto:integrity@british-gymnastics.org)

If a complaint or concern has recently happened and the situation is current, then all details should be emailed to [safeguarding@british-gymnastics.org](mailto:safeguarding@british-gymnastics.org) or your British Gymnastics Area Safeguarding Officer or Regional Welfare Officer.

## General

It would be considered best practice that you also provide a reminder of safeguarding updates, policies and procedures to all coaches and staff, to include:

- Adopting a flexible approach towards gymnasts returning to training
- Managing expectations of performance from coaches, gymnasts and parents
- Understand any additional concerns regarding the impact of COVID-19
- Discussing any additional concerns following allegations of abuse and mistreatment
- Being able to recognise any signs of abuse. The latest revised definitions from the NSPCC are [here](#)
- Update on reporting procedures
- Where information and contact details can be found
- Codes of Conduct for coaches, parents and gymnasts

You should ensure that all safeguarding procedures and information including your contact details, are displayed publicly within the club, so that all members know how to contact you should they have an issue or concern.