

Recruiting a Welfare Officer

Responsibilities

Although the responsibility for safeguarding falls on everyone, a critical element in safeguarding is the designation of an individual who is responsible for safeguarding and promoting welfare of young people within the club. All BG clubs and gymnastics events are required to have a welfare officer to be responsible for:

- Responding to child protection and poor practice concerns
- Providing support and advice in the implementation of procedures that safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Assisting the club to more be child-focused in its activities e.g. involving children in decision making processes.

In order to avoid any potential conflicts of interest, the role must not be taken on by a key member of the coaching team or member of her/his immediate family, however an individual who has a more limited involvement in coaching can take on the role in the event that there is no other acceptable alternative.

The ideal candidate may be a parent or other volunteer with professional experience in child protection and/or safeguarding e.g. police officer, social worker, teacher, nursery nurse etc. As it can often be very difficult to find a suitable candidate for the role, the following information provides some suggestions on how this might be addressed and how the organisation can assist with the role.

Raising awareness of the role

It is important that everyone connected with the club or organisation is aware of the need to appoint a welfare officer. Some of the methods that have proved successful include:

- Writing to anyone who may be interested in the position
- Circulating a profile of the role in the club newsletter
- Advertising on the club notice board or website
- 'Head hunting' - making direct approaches to individuals who have the appropriate experience
- Holding an open evening for parents and inviting the regional welfare officer or a welfare officer from another club to talk about the position
- Arranging a safeguarding and protecting children awareness module as an introduction for potential volunteers.

It is important that prospective candidates are provided with full details of what the role entails and how they will be supported in the position (sample job/task descriptions and person specifications for the different levels/types of welfare officer are contained in the appendices). It is also useful to provide potential candidates with relevant information about the club/squad e.g. policy for volunteers, codes of conduct etc.

What support structures should be in place?

Before finalising the appointment of a welfare officer, the club should ensure that the safe recruitment procedures contained in Section 3 have been fully applied.

The organisation must ensure that the welfare officer is fully empowered to fulfil the role and has the full support from the relevant committee/management/owners to make any appropriate changes to procedures and practices.

How can the club ensure that the welfare officer is visible and known to club members?

The welfare officer does not need to attend every training session or competition but it is critical that everyone understands the role and the responsibilities it entails. It is important that the welfare officer is fully involved in the club's activities and children and parents are fully aware of how to raise concerns. The following are suggestions may help clubs to ensure that everyone knows the welfare officer and understands her/his role

- Put a poster on the club notice board with the welfare officer's name and contact details. This might include a photograph and a list of times when the welfare officer will be present at the club.
- Make sure that all club paperwork includes the welfare officer's contact details
- Ensure the welfare officer details are included in new member information packs
- Introduce the welfare officer at club events
- Allow the welfare officer to hold an introduction evening

Allow the welfare officer to engage with young people in the club. This may include developing/revising codes of conduct, electing a young persons' representative to represent young people's views, involve young people in decision making etc.