



**The International Pole and Aerial Sports  
Federation Safeguarding & Protecting  
Children in Pole and Aerial Sports Policy  
2024 WORKING DOCUMENT**

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## **Foreword**

The International Pole and Aerial Sports Federation (IPSF) Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy 2013 is the first document produced as guidelines for the protection of children in Pole Sports. This document will be continually updated to fall in line with both government and athletic regulations.

IPSF policy and procedures comply with government guidance to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This guidance sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The definition of safeguarding Children focuses on safeguarding and promoting children and young people's welfare. The key elements of safeguarding include the protection of children from abuse and neglect, the prevention of practices that may be detrimental to children's health and well-being and ensuring a safe and effective environment for young people.

As IPSF is a worldwide Governing Body of Sport our policy is unable to meet the legal requirements of every country. The IPSF's policy is based on the English guidance and legislation, but in the light of the common principles and similar approaches taken by many countries; most of the procedures in this document are fully applicable to all members and affiliated organisations.

The development of the policy is one of the continued functions for the IPSF in its role to support national federations, competitions, studios, schools and clubs to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This reflects the fact that anyone who provides or delivers Pole Sports activities has a duty of care towards the young people who are participating in the sport.

The International Pole and Aerial Sports Federation committee agreed the Safeguarding and Protecting Children policy on the 15th February 2013. The policy is an open working document and will be continually updated in line with any changes in law and legislation.

## **Definitions**

### ***“Child”***

A child is anyone who has not yet reached his or her 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, does not change their status or entitlement to services or protection under the Children Act 1989. The word child/children will be used throughout this policy to denote all persons under the age of 18.

### ***“Safeguarding and Promoting the welfare of children”***

The process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances with the provision of safe and effective care that enables children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully.

### ***“Child Protection”***

Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are at risk of suffering significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect. Effective child protection is essential as part of the wider work to safeguard and promote welfare of children. However all agencies and individuals should proactively aim to safeguard and promote the welfare of children through good practice so that the need for action to protect children from harm is reduced.

### ***“Abuse”***

For definitions of the different types of abuse, and common indicators of abuse please see the Anti Bullying and Abuse Policy and Procedures section on definitions.

### ***Who is responsible for Safeguarding?***

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is the responsibility of the local authority (LA) working in partnership with other public organisations, the voluntary sector, children and young people, parents and carers, and the wider community" i.e. We are ALL responsible.

# **Introduction to the International Pole and Aerial Sports Federation**

## **Safeguarding Policy**

Pole Sports, in common with other sporting activities, can provide valuable life experiences for young people, and has the potential to offer significant opportunities for children to develop social skills, self-esteem, confidence, teamwork and leadership qualities that develop a well-rounded individual. The IPSF and the IPSF committee is fully committed to supporting all young people to fulfil their potential in the sport both directly through IPSF run activities and indirectly through affiliated clubs, schools and coaches. It is recognised that the provision of a positive environment where young people are protected from harm is critical to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people and conducive to promoting high performance. Thus safeguarding the welfare of children needs to be a priority for everyone involved in Pole Sports.

People who have regular contact with young people are ideally placed to recognise signs that a child may be being abused and take appropriate steps to report these concerns. IPSF accepts that the welfare and safety of young people is the responsibility of everyone in the sport, whether paid staff or volunteers. Instructors, coaches and officials may be best placed to help in identifying welfare concerns, and indicators of possible abuse or neglect, at an early stage and referring those concerns to the IPSF and the appropriate statutory organisation. It is therefore essential that anyone in contact with young people through their involvement in Pole Sports is fully aware of the common indicators of abuse and how to respond to concerns.

Abuse of children can occur in any environment where there are young people, including the home, at school or in a sport club, school or studio. Although young people are more likely to be abused by people they know and trust in their family, cases of abuse have occurred and continue to occur. The IPSF acknowledges that as Pole Sports provides significant access to young people; it can present opportunities for an individual who wants to harm children. It is therefore recognised that it is vital to provide policy and guidance to all members who may come across concerns of this nature within the context of their involvement in the sport and set out the required standards across all areas of safeguarding.

The IPSF has a duty of care towards young people and is committed to providing information and training opportunities to make certain that those working with children adopt best practice, to ensure the safety and welfare of the participants. It is imperative that everyone involved in the sport understands their roles and responsibilities and those of others in relation to safeguarding children. Safeguarding must form an integral part of all IPSF activities and be about creating an environment where young people can thrive and realise their potential.

## **Background**

Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government Guidance 2006) (England) and the all Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 (Wales) provides the overall framework on which the IPSF policy is based. In line with this guidance, the IPSF policy requires that all affiliated organisations and their staff, members and volunteers that work with children must:

- be alert to the possible indicators of abuse and neglect;
- be alert to the risks that individual abusers or potential abusers, may pose to children;
- contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote the child's welfare; and
- work cooperatively with parents, unless this is inconsistent with ensuring the child's safety
- pass on all concerns as set out in the IPSF policy (this is mandatory)



Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government Guidance 2006) states that to fulfil their commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children all organisations that provide services for children, or work with children, need to have in place:

- Clear priorities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children explicitly stated in strategic policy documents.
- A clear commitment by senior management to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare.
- A clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Recruitment and human resources management procedures that take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people including arrangements for appropriate checks on new staff and volunteers.
- Procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers.
- Arrangements to ensure that all staff undertake appropriate training to equip them to carry out their responsibilities effectively, and keep this up to date by refresher training at regular intervals; and that all staff, including temporary staff and volunteers who work with children, are made aware of the establishment's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and their responsibilities for that;
- Have policies in place for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (for example, pupils/students), including a child protection policy, and procedures that are in accordance with the guidance from the local authority and locally agreed inter-agency procedures.
- Have arrangements in place to work effectively with other organisations to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including arrangements for sharing information.
- A culture of listening to and engaging in dialogue with children – seeking their views in ways appropriate to their age and understanding, and taking account of those both in individual decisions and the establishment or development of services.
- Whistle blowing procedures and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding the welfare of children to be addressed.

The procedures section of the document puts into a Pole Sports context the requirements set out in Working Together 2006, outlining the minimum standards to which all Pole Sports members must adhere. In addition to the main policy, there are a number of complementary policies that must also be applied:

- **Being healthy:** enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle;
- **Staying safe:** being protected from harm and neglect;
- **Enjoying and achieving:** getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood;
- **Making a positive contribution:** being involved with the community and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour;
- **Economic well-being:** not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

The IPSF places the responsibility for safeguarding children with all adults who play a role with them. In the context of the sport, this would include coaches who have direct contact with children and those who perform an administrative function but who may not themselves have regular face-to-face contact with children.

## **Core principles**

The Policy is based upon the following fundamental principles:

- The welfare of children (anyone under the age of 18 years) is paramount;
- All young people, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, parental status, disability, religion or belief, colour, race, ethnic or national origins, or socio/economic background have a right to be protected from abuse;
- Everyone has a duty to promote and safeguard the welfare of children;
- Joint working in partnership with statutory authorities, other organisations, children and their parents/carers is fundamental to safeguarding;
- The child should be central throughout and their concerns and views should be acknowledged and addressed

## **Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA)**

The Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) has been created to help prevent unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults. This is done by working in partnership with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and other delivery partners.

It is now a criminal offence for individuals barred by the ISA to work or apply to work with children or vulnerable adults in a wide range of posts, including most hospital jobs, Prison Service, education and childcare. Employers also face criminal sanctions for knowingly employing a barred individual across a wider range of work;

The three former barred lists (POCA, POVA and List 99) are being replaced by two new ISA-barred lists; Employers, local authorities, professional regulators and other bodies have a duty to refer to the ISA, information about individuals working with children or vulnerable adults where they consider them to have caused harm or pose a risk of harm.

## **Aims and objectives of the policy**

The aim of this IPSF policy is to ensure that anyone participating in Pole sports can do so in an environment where all appropriate safeguards are in place. It is important that the culture in the sport is one where young people are at the centre (and, together with their parents/carers) are consulted and where appropriate fully involved in decisions that affect them. This can only be achieved if everyone involved in the sport is fully compliant with the policy. The key objectives of the policy are as follows: -

- To ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and there are robust procedures, support and guidance available.
- To ensure all IPSF members are able to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people
- To promote safe practice and challenge poor practice
- To ensure that appropriate action is taken as a result of any concerns or allegations.
- To ensure that all IPSF members who are involved in a role with children have been through appropriate pre-recruitment checks.
- To ensure that all IPSF members who are involved in a role with children have attended safeguarding training at a level appropriate to their role in the sport, which covers the above areas.

## **Responsibilities for Safeguarding**

The IPSF is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children engaged in Pole Sport. The IPSF has prepared a clear policy and associated mandatory procedures that provide a framework for any National Federation, school, studio or individual working with children.

The overall responsibility for safeguarding children in Pole Sports rests with the IPSF committee, who are fully committed to ensuring the welfare and interests of young people are central to all decision-making and programs.

Central to the policy is the commitment to ensuring that there is a designated welfare officer for any IPSF activity or event involving young people. IPSF also requires any organisation that wishes to register with the federation to appoint a welfare officer who will have the key responsibility for safeguarding within the organisation.

IPSF recognises that it has a duty to help ensure members accept their responsibilities through the provision of clear guidance and instruction. IPSF guidance has been formulated with the underlying aim of minimising risk to children and wherever possible, avoiding situations where it is known that abuse or neglect can occur. IPSF will support this duty through the development and provision of learning opportunities for members.

IPSF has established an Ethics and Welfare Management Committee that is responsible for:

- Monitoring the implementation of the policy and procedures.
- Agreeing training needs.
- Monitoring compliance with the policy.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and procedures and reviewing the policy as required.
- Providing reports to the Committee on all matters relating to safeguarding.
- Development of policy, rules and regulations.

The IPSF, in the position as regulator for Pole Sports worldwide, will work in partnership with national federations, Pole Sports organisations and competitions to ensure that all allegations or suspicions of abuse or significant harm to any child are reported to the Police and/or Social Care Services department. IPSF will share all relevant information with the respective statutory child protection agencies (children's social care services and/or police) without delay and within agreed protocols.

The IPSF will ensure that it fulfils its responsibilities to work jointly with others to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

The IPSF aims to establish a youth committee, which is responsible for determining: -

- The referral route for all cases that deal with the welfare of children
- Whether suspension of IPSF membership is required
- The appropriate course of remedial action

The IPSF will comply with the principles set out in the Data Protection Act 1998 and Information Sharing for Practitioners (HM Government, 2006) in relation to confidentiality and information sharing. Information that is confidential in nature may be shared without consent where there is a legitimate and lawful reason for disclosure.

## **Case Referral Management Team Terms of Reference**

1. The members of the Case Referral Management Team will have experience in dealing with welfare issues.
2. The Team will be managed and co-ordinate by the Ethics Committee and advised by the Youth Committee. The Ethics Committee will be the first point of contact for any referral.
3. The Team will be chaired by the Chair of the Ethics and Welfare Committee
4. The Team will operate independently from the President and disciplinary panel members to ensure the separation of each of the four stages of the process; referral, suspension, disciplinary and appeals.

### ***Procedures***

1. The Team will determine the referral route for all cases that deal with the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Consideration will be given to any signed written evidence including any written representation from the accused.  
(Any preliminary collection of information will be carried out by the Safeguarding and Compliance Officer).
2. Within seven (7) days, the Safeguarding and Compliance Officer shall write to the accused to notify them of any investigation that is to take place, the nature of the investigation and the reasons for this.
3. The President will sit outside this group and cannot intervene in any decisions unless there has been concern raised about a significant prior relationship, connection or interest between the accused and a member of the team.
4. Where abuse is suspected and any delay in action may compromise the welfare of a child/children, the IPSF is authorised to inform the relevant Children's Social Care services/Social services or police.
5. Members of the team must meet or be consulted within ten working days of the receipt of any referral where it is unclear if a case should be considered potential poor practice. Although it is not the responsibility of the panel to decide if abuse has taken place, the panel must quickly decide if the case needs to be referred to social services or the police.
6. Any case that has already been referred to the police or Children's Social Care service/Social services will only be considered in relation to whether suspension from Pole Sports is required. The group will only reconsider referral of the matter on completion of any investigation or action by Children's Social Care service/Social services or the police. Anyone who is convicted of a child protection related offence or receives a caution in respect of an offence will be deemed to be in breach of the Association Rules.
7. In cases of potential poor practice or where convictions information is received from a CRB disclosure, the group may decide on an appropriate course of action. The matter will be passed back to the Safeguarding and Compliance Officer to manage the implementation of the agreed actions. Any actions will be reached after a fair appraisal of the case and will be in proportion with the severity of the incident. Previous allegations of a similar nature will also be considered.

## **POSSIBLE ACTIONS**

- a) Recommendation that no further action be taken
- b) A warning and remedial action plan
- c) Referral out/back to National Federation, Competition organiser, School, Studio, Club Line Manager etc to deal with advice on how to proceed
- d) Further Enquiries/interviews
- e) Referral to President for full disciplinary hearing
- f) Recommendation made to President to suspend member

- g) Devolvement to independent review panel
  - h) Referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority by the Governing Body
8. Members of the Team should declare immediately (to the team) any significant prior relationship, connection or interest which could disqualify them from any discussion on the referral pathway of a case.
  9. Any concerns over the independence of the Team on a case-to-case basis should be raised with the President. This can be done without fear of victimisation or reprisal. This or any other valid reason can be just cause for the PRESIDENT to request the resignation of the member from the team.
  10. All group decisions will be communicated to the PRESIDENT for information and any necessary further action.
  11. An individual has the right to appeal against any course of action determined by the team. This must be done within ten working days of receipt of the letter informing the individual of the decision reached by the group. If a member of the team is unhappy with the final decision taken by the team, the matter should be referred to the Child Protection in Sport unit for an independent determination.
  12. The team can choose to call on Legal or other advice where deemed necessary.
  13. The team will carry out a case monitoring function and should refer back to the steering group any recommendations about changes to policy, procedures and practice
  14. All case information is regarded as highly confidential and should not be disclosed outside the team except when it is relevant to inform an external agency.

## **National Federations Responsibilities**

In partnership with IPSF, the responsibility for leading the implementation of this policy rests with the national pole sports federations and they will therefore need to:

- adopt the IPSF policy and procedures or have in place a full or supplementary policy and procedures that are compliant with relevant country legislation and guidance;
- ensure there is a Lead Officer operating at a senior level in the organisation responsible for safeguarding children;
- establish and strengthen Welfare Officer networks;
- provide support and professional development for Welfare Officers;
- offer sufficient learning opportunities to meet local needs; and
- work in partnership with IPSF to provide timely solutions to the resolution of poor practice concerns and disputes.

## **Club/Studio/Instructor Responsibilities**

All Studios who provide services to children or young people have a common law duty of care. Pole Studio's are responsible to ensure that the young person is safe. The IPSF policy and procedures sets out the minimum standards that clubs should adopt. The adoption of these procedures will ensure that clubs fulfil their duty of care towards young people. All clubs must ensure that:

- The overall responsibility for safeguarding lies at the most senior level of their organisation.
- There is at least one individual designated within the club/studio to take the lead role in dealing with safeguarding issues.
- All staff and volunteers who are working directly or indirectly with children receive appropriate training and have access to advice on child protection and safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children through the club welfare officer.
- All young people and their parents are aware of behaviour that is not acceptable and how they can help to keep themselves safe.
- They adopt the IPSF whistle blowing procedures and steps are taken to ensure members, their parents/carers and others feel able to raise concerns without fear of negative repercussions.
- Confidentiality is maintained in relation to concerns and referrals and information is only shared on a 'need to know' basis in line with IPSF Confidentiality and Information Sharing Guidance.

- They comply with the IPSF procedure on safe recruitment to prevent unsuitable people from obtaining or remaining in positions of trust or responsibility. Clubs/Studio's must ensure that anyone who is operating in a regulated position meets the requirements of the IPSF safeguarding licence.
- Work in partnership with IPSF to ensure poor practice is addressed and any required remedial action is taken.

It is not the role of studio/club officials to investigate possible abuse or neglect, however they have a key role to play by referring concerns about those issues to Children's Social Care Services and/or IPSF and providing information for police investigations.

## **Equality**

Children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable and at greater risk of all forms of abuse. The presence of multiple disabilities increases the risk of both abuse and neglect. Some of the common factors that can lead to increased vulnerability include social isolation, communication and learning difficulties, lack of understanding of boundaries, need for assistance with personal care and more likely target for bullying and abuse. Children with disabilities have the same rights to protection as any other child and clubs working with these children need to be especially alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse and have strategies in place to ensure all children are able to raise concerns.

## **Monitoring**

The IPSF will review its Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy on an annual basis and in the following circumstances:

- Changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- As required by the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit, UK Sport and National Country Sports Councils
- Following the introduction of any new internal or external safeguarding process, including the Vetting and Barring Scheme.
- As a result of any significant child protection case within Pole Sports or other sports

## **Anti Bullying and Abuse Policy and Procedures**

### ***Contained within this section is:***

Objectives of this policy

Indicators of Abuse

Definitions of Physical, Emotional, Sexual, Neglect and Bullying

Abuse of position of Trust

Poor Practice

### **Objectives of this policy**

- All Pole Sports staff, volunteers, members, and parents should have an understanding of what abuse is.
- All Pole Sports staff, volunteers and members should know what the clubs policy is on any form of abuse, and follow it when abuse is reported.
- All children and parents should know what the club/studio/competition policy is on abuse and what they need to do should abuse arise.
- As a club/studio/competition you take bullying seriously. Children and parents should be assured that they would be supported when abuse is reported.
- Any form of abuse will not be tolerated

IPSF is committed to providing a supportive, friendly, safe and positive environment free of offensive or abusive behaviour.

### **Indicators of Abuse**

It is important to acknowledge that the majority of children do not find it easy to disclose their concerns and that some groups in society will find it harder than others, specifically children from ethnic minority groups and children with disabilities.

Children from ethnic minority groups have also been found to be at greater risk of abuse because of a failure to respond to abusive practices or neglect. This failure has been attributed to causes such as racial stereotyping, language barriers and cultural, racial or religious misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

It is known that the majority of referrals to the statutory agencies are from adults who are expressing concerns for a child or children identified by them as a result of the child's behaviour or presentation. The referrals made to the IPSF are also predominantly made by concerned adults and only a small proportion result from a disclosure made to the adult by a child. However, it is critical that clubs treat with the utmost seriousness all reports of observed or identified indicators of possible abuse and respond appropriately.

Abuse is not always easy to identify. There may be many innocent reasons for young people to have bruises especially with Pole Sports. In adolescence, children can be moody and unpredictable in their behaviour. Children can react to external circumstances by a change in behaviour such as bereavement or parental divorce/separation. However some signs may not have an obvious explanation and may indicate that a child may be being abused.

### **Some indicators of abuse are:**

- The child or young person discloses a concern and describes what may be an abusive act.
- Another person raises concern about the well being of a child or young person.
- Unexplained or concerning injuries such as burns, cuts, and bruises situated in areas of the child's body which are not normally prone to injury through for example play activity.
- Physical injury where the explanation given is inconsistent.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour such as a child becoming withdrawn, quiet or aggressive/verbally violent.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness and/or behaving in a sexualised manner.
- Eating disorder i.e. a child is overeating or showing a loss of appetite.
- Excessive weight loss or weight gain for no obvious reason.
- Physical appearance becomes unkempt.
- The child or young person is withdrawn and isolated themselves from the group and seems unable to make friends.
- The child or young person is prevented from socialising with other children.
- The child or young person displays a distrust of adults.
- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go to school, training or sports club.
- A drop in performance at school or in the sport.
- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed-wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes and bingeing, for example, on food, cigarettes or alcohol.
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.
- A high turnover of club/studio/class members.

**This is not an exhaustive list of indicators and alone cannot be seen to be definitive proof a child or young person is being abused.**

***The IPSF does not expect the adults involved in the sport to decide whether a child has been abused but it is everyone's responsibility to act upon their concerns and report any incident immediately.***

## **Abuse**

Abuse can and does occur in a wide range of settings, including sport. The psychological effects of abuse can be life-long, especially if the individual has not been able to disclose the abuse or access support. Anyone who has been abused as a young person may find it difficult or impossible to maintain stable, trusting relationships, and may become involved with drugs, and experience mental health problems or self-harm. A child who has been neglected can experience serious impairment in their health and development.

A child may be abused or neglected though:

- Inflicting harm.
- Failing to act to prevent harm.

A child may be abused by:

- A family member.
- By a person within an institutional or community setting.
- By a person known to them or more rarely by a stranger\*.
- An adult or adults, or another child or children.

\*It is recognised through research that children are more likely to be abused by a member of their immediate or extended family, someone within their community or a person in a position of trust than by a stranger.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

In Pole Sports an example of physical abuse could include: -

- Provision of performance enhancing drugs or encouragement to take other medication to enhance performance.
- Setting a training regime that exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.
- Inflicting pain on a child that is beyond an acceptable level of discomfort involved in physical preparation and training.
- Forcing a child into a highly restricted and unhealthy diet that may lead to extreme weight loss.
- Physically pushing, poking, or prodding a child

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

- It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
- It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Within Pole Sports examples of emotional abuse may include: -

- Continually belittling a child's efforts.
- Placing extreme pressure on a child to perform.
- Shouting, laughing, humiliating a child

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This may include:

- activities that involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts.
- non-contact activities, such as involving children in viewing, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Within Pole Sports examples of Sexual abuse may include: -

- Inappropriate sexual touching
- Coach to athletes sexual relationship
- Taking inappropriate images
- Use of sexual innuendoes direct or indirect
- Displaying sexual behaviour in front of or towards children
- Making comments about a child's developing body which causes embarrassment or discomfort

Child sex abusers can come from any occupational, racial or religious background, and can be male or female. They are not always adults - children and young people can also behave in a sexually abusive way. Usually the abuser is a family member or someone known to the child, such as a family friend. Some individuals will target a sport that allows access to children specifically to commit acts of sexual abuse.

Abusers may act alone or as part of an organised group. After the abuse, they will put the child under great pressure not to tell anyone about it. They will go to great lengths to get close to children and win their trust, for example, by choosing employment that brings them into contact with children, or by pretending to be children in Internet chat rooms run for children and young people.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment).
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers).
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Neglect in a sports situation might occur if a teacher or coach fails to ensure children are safe or exposes them to unduly cold temperatures at their training venue or not taking action to stop young people from doing things that put them at risk of injury.

Within Pole Sports examples of neglect abuse may include: -

- Not providing suitable sustenance during training sessions
- Dirty and dangerous equipment or environment
- Inadequate coaching supervision

### **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).

Bullying can be split 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 Pole Sports could be:

- A athlete who intimidates fellow athletes 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 an assistant coach.



## **Responding to Bullying**

Bullying by children or adults on children within a club/school/competition 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 recognised as a serious concern and must be dealt with in line with the IPSF 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.

### Supporting bullied children

- Children who have been bullied will often need support from the club/school/studio leader to deal with the impact of bullying. This may include having a specific person to whom concerns can be raised in specific situations or providing a named senior athlete or instructor 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](http://www.kidscape.org.uk).

## **Abuse of Position of Trust**

A relationship of trust exists where an adult, by virtue of their role, is in a position of power or influence over a young person. Although an adult engaging in any sexual activity with a young person under the age of sixteen (in Northern Ireland the age of consent is 17) would be committing a criminal offence, in some circumstances, engaging in sexual activity within a relationship of trust is also a criminal offence.

The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000 introduced the offence of abuse of a position of trust. The Act set out a series of occupations to which the legislation applied, which was extended in the Sexual Offences Act (2003).

The legislation states that it is a criminal offence for a person in a position of trust to engage in any sexual activity with a person under the age of 18 with whom they have a relationship of trust, irrespective of the whether the young person has ostensibly consented to the relationship.

Proposed amendments to the law have called for the inclusion of coaches and others involved in sports clubs who hold positions of trust but currently it is unlikely that these positions would be covered by the legislation unless the adult was working in one of the settings identified in the legislation.

Irrespective of the current legal position the IPSF believes anyone who engages in sexual activity within a relationship of trust is in serious breach of the IPSF Policy and codes of ethics/conduct and is likely to be considered unsuitable to work with children in Pole Sports.

It is acknowledged that in some situations a shared attraction may develop between two people within a relationship of trust. In such circumstances, it is essential that the individual who holds the position of trust behaves in an open manner, makes the Club/Studio/School head instructor aware of the situation, and resigns from this position of trust if the parties involved wish the relationship to develop beyond the existing professional one. This will ensure that the previous power differential is not a factor in any future relationship. It is strongly advised that the young person is given an opportunity for reflection before any sexual relationship develops. It is the responsibility of the adult to ensure that his or her conduct is fully in line with the IPSF Policy.

## **Poor Practice**

Poor Practice can be split into a number of groupings. These include: -

- Practices that may be on the fringe of abuse and/or if repeated again and again, would amount to abuse. Most of the examples are linked to emotional abuse.

Examples include:

- Name-calling
- Excessive monitoring of weight
- Constant criticism of a child
- Exerting excessive pressure
- Forcing a child to do something against their will
- Use of inappropriate language
- Harassment.
- **Breaches of the IPSF Safeguarding policy and procedures**  
Examples include:
  - No allocated welfare officer within a club/school/studio/competition
  - Inadequate safeguarding arrangements
  - Providing inadequate supervision and/or care
  - Failure to respond appropriately to concerns
  - Expelling anyone from the club who raises a concern
  - Excluding parents from observing or asking questions about training
  - Inappropriate use of photographic equipment or materials.
- **Breaches of recognised best practice in coaching:**  
Examples include:
  - Providing coaching or running a session without another responsible adult present
  - Exceeding level of competence and/or qualification
  - Employing practices that are inappropriate for the stage of psychological and physical development of the individual
  - Excessive training or competition
  - Inappropriate/excessive supporting or stretching.
- **Practices that may be carried out with the best intentions but that fall into a category of behaviours that are used by people who sexually abuse children to 'groom' their victim:**  
Examples include:
  - Offering to give a child a lift home alone
  - Giving a child gifts
  - Having unnecessary physical contact with young people e.g. excessive handling/supporting, cuddling, kissing, 'friendly' taps etc
  - Socialising/having friendships with young people outside training.

- **Practices that are known to be significant risk factors in cases of abuse and can never to be condoned:**

Examples include:

- Taking children to one's home or other secluded place unaccompanied by others.
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games.
- Sharing a room with a child.
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Making sexually suggestive remarks.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Allowing allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Carrying out personal care for a child that the child can do unaided
- Departing from the premises without first supervising the safe dispersal of the children.
- Abusing a privileged position of power or trust.
- Resorting to bullying tactics, or verbal abuse.
- Causing a participant to lose self-esteem by embarrassing, humiliating or undermining the individual.
- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from other adults.

It is essential that everyone challenges poor practice, even where there is a belief that the motives of an individual are well meaning.

Failure to challenge poor practice can lead to an environment where abuse is more likely to remain unnoticed.

The IPSF accepts that on occasion there may be unplanned situations where the unexpected does occur, which leads to a responsible person being alone with a child. In addition, situations arise where a young person may:

- become distressed
- be accidentally hurt by someone else
- misunderstand/misinterpret something that has been said or done
- appear to become sexually aroused

In these situations, the individual involved must report the incident immediately to the welfare officer or a senior colleague and compile a brief written report of the event. The parent should also be informed of any significant incident.

**For information on how to respond to allegations please visit the Responding to Allegations of Abuse Policy and Procedures.**

## **Confidentiality Policy**

### ***Introduction***

The International Pole and Aerial Sports Federation (IPSF) recognises that a guarantee that members' personal information is kept safe and secure is vital to ensure trust and confidence in the organisation.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- establish a clear and agreed understanding of what confidentiality means within the IPSF
- encourage uniformity in practice
- ensure that the IPSF members volunteers and external agencies working with the IPSF are aware of the standards they can expect

There are some situations where information that is confidential may be shared without consent. These circumstances are sets out in the IPSF Information sharing to safeguard children policy.

This policy applies to all IPSF members and continues to apply after their service or involvement with the IPSF has come to an end.

### ***Responsibilities***

The Committee has the overall and final responsibility for ensuring that the IPSF meets its legal responsibilities regarding confidentiality in relation to the Data Protection Act 1998, Human Rights legislation and the common law duty of confidentiality. Committee Members must also maintain confidentiality as a requirement of the Company Act 1989

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Confidentiality Policy is put into practice. In particular the Chief Executive will ensure that:

- Managers and IPSF Officials are aware of their responsibilities to their staff and volunteers
- Arrangements are in place to monitor and implement this policy
- Breaches of the policy are dealt with proportional to the implications of the breach

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 The IPSF is required to register with the Information Commissioner. The Act regulates the handling of all personal data held on an individual. While the majority of IPSF affiliated organisations will be exempt from registration if the data they hold is purely to service their membership, everyone must comply with the eight data protection principals\* set out in the Act.

### ***General Principles***

- Information belongs to the person or agency entrusting it to a member of staff, a member or volunteer of the IPSF.
- Information provided by an individual or organization should be treated as confidential unless it has been expressly confirmed otherwise.
- Once received by IPSF, information may not be used for any purpose other than that for which it was given; nor may it be passed on to any person or agency outside the IPSF without the express permission of the data subject.

### ***Operational Practice***

- IPSF keeps extensive records, using paper files and computers. Where necessary, personal details of IPSF Staff and members are recorded in these systems.
- Every IPSF member or employee has a right of access to any personal information that the IPSF holds on them in a 'relevant filing system'\*\* and to have changed any information that is inaccurate. Confidential information that has been provided by a third party may be removed from a file prior to its examination.
- The IPSF will maintain an appropriate level of security, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will adequately protect information about individuals that is held in these systems. Paper files will be kept in a locked area and computer-based files will be password protected.
- The use of information for reports, monitoring and funding applications will avoid any specific detail about members that might lead to their identification unless they have given their prior consent.
- Consent must be obtained from the relevant individuals prior to any personal information being publicised either in print or on a website. The accuracy of the information must also be confirmed.
- The IPSF will seek permission from the relevant member, volunteer, employee or organisation before any information that is held by the IPSF is passed on to a third party where that information specifically identifies them or might lead to their identification. In the case of employees, this does not include their professional contact details.

### ***Staff or Membership Suspensions***

Where an IPSF member or member of staff is temporarily suspended, the PRESIDENT has overall responsibility for determining who should be informed. The suspension and the reasons behind the decision will be treated as a confidential matter and will not be disclosed unless there is a justifiable reason. When deciding whether or not to disclose information, it is vital to consider if a proposed disclosure is a proportionate response to protect the welfare of children or other members. The amount of confidential information disclosed and to whom should be no more than is strictly necessary to ensure the welfare of the IPSF members and young people.

### ***Sharing information within the IPSF***

It is sometimes desirable to share information with other IPSF staff or officials to allow them to fulfil their role. Information given to staff members or officials acting on behalf of the IPSF will only be given on a 'need to know' basis. It should be absolutely clear to all attending meetings or taking on a role on behalf of the IPSF that they must comply with the rules of confidentiality and ensure confidential matters are not disclosed.

The IPSF Committee members include individuals from various backgrounds, some of whom are there in a formal capacity on behalf of other agencies which have statutory duties, e.g. members of the Case Referral Management Team. Such representatives should normally regard information that they learn in their capacity as members of a IPSF Committee as confidential, however, if, as a result of their membership of the Committee, they become aware of information that they feel needs to be shared, the individual should bring this to the attention of the relevant Committee so that the statutory or other implications can be formally acknowledged.

## ***Subject access requests***

The Data Protection Act 1998 provides all data subjects with the right to request access to their personal file. The IPSF holds membership files and other records for young people under the age of eighteen. As a general rule a person with parental responsibility will have the right to apply for access to information held on file or in a membership record relating to their child if the young person is under the age of sixteen. Where a child is considered capable of making their own decisions, their consent will be sought before a person with parental responsibility will be given access to their file or record. Where an individual is over the age of 16, subject access requests must come direct from the individual unless it can be demonstrated that the data subject has insufficient level of understanding to make their own decisions.

## ***Electronic Information***

Each user is responsible for securing (or limiting access to) documents and folders, which can be accessed via the IPSF network. On no account should confidential work be stored in shared folders. All IPSF Computers that contain sensitive or confidential data are password protected. Users should not disclose passwords or security details to others except when required to do so by a manager.

## ***Email Addresses***

Personal email addresses should be treated in the same manner as private telephone numbers and should only be given out with the explicit consent from the individual.

IPSF staff should use standard signatures, which refer to the confidentiality policy when posting email externally.

1. Personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully and, in particular, shall not be processed unless – at least one of the conditions in Schedule 2 is met; and in the case of sensitive personal data, at least one of the conditions in Schedule 3 is also met.
2. Personal data shall be obtained only for one or more specified and lawful purposes, and shall not be further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes.
3. Personal data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose or purposes for which they are processed.
4. Personal data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date.
5. Personal data processed for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes.
6. Personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under this Act.
7. Appropriate technical and organisational measures shall be taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to, personal data.
8. Personal data shall not be transferred to a country or territory outside the European Economic Area, unless that country or territory ensures an adequate level of protection of the rights and freedoms of data subjects in relation to the processing of personal data.

\*\* To fall under the Data Protection Act 1998, personal data held manually must be organised into a 'relevant filing system'. Manual files would only fall within the scope of the Act if the filing system is sufficiently sophisticated to provide the same or similar speed of accessibility as computerised files.

## **Duty of Care Policy and Procedures**

### ***Duty of care***

Clubs have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of athletes, Instructors, coaches, volunteers, officials and visitors. This responsibility applies to all clubs, school, studios and competitions, regardless of their size or structure. There is a legal responsibility to ensure that participants are protected against harm or danger whilst taking part in Pole Sports or related activities. This is legally termed the 'Duty of Care'. This becomes particularly relevant when dealing with children.

When working with children, an adult who carries out a supervisory role would take on certain responsibilities while the child was in their care. This may include:

- Holding a responsibility for care and well-being during training
- Safe dispersal after training
- Providing first aid
- Providing/consenting to emergency medical treatment
- Chaperoning
- Team Managing

The legal terminology for this relationship is that the person would be acting 'in loco-parentis'. The literal definition is 'for the parents'. In IPSF terms we refer to this as 'in place of a parent' and acting as a reasonable trained adult.

The expected standard for behaviour is based on reasonableness. The Duty of Care starts from the time a child arrives at a club or event, until the child is returned to their parent.

In order to fulfil the 'Duty of Care', Pole Sports activity providers must make sure that the following areas are properly covered:

- Safeguarding and welfare
- Safe environment including safe apparatus and equipment
- Safe development of the individual through appropriate physical and psychological preparation and progressive skill development
- Provision of suitable first aid support and emergency procedures
- Exercising reasonable care at all times.

Those with an overall responsibility for running a club, school, studio or providing a Pole Sports activity must ensure that policies and procedures are in place and implemented to ensure that the 'Duty of Care' is met. However, the IPSF Policy, training courses and resource materials are designed to provide the prudent club, welfare officer, coach, instructor, judge, official and parent with a sufficient basis of knowledge and guidance to enable them to make informed judgements in respect of safeguarding and the promotion of the welfare of young people in their care.

The guidance in this section will assist Pole Sports providers to ensure the approach to safeguarding and the promotion of welfare fulfils the 'duty of care' and meets reasonable expectations in relation to the standards required by organisations that provide services for young people. Any reports of failure to comply with the guidance in this section will be investigated as breach of Policy.

## **Good Practice and Poor Practice - Policy and Guidance**

### ***Good Practice for Coaches and Club Officials***

All participants have the right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect. The promotion of good practice will reduce the possibility of abusive situations occurring. A good caring coach/instructor will continually reflect upon their own coaching style, physiology and practices to ensure the safety and well-being of the participant at all times. Although this policy and Guidelines are written with coaches in mind they are applicable to all adults with access to children through Pole Sports. Failure to comply may lead to disciplinary action.

The following are examples of good practice:

- Always be publicly open when working with children. Ensure that a coach and an individual child or vulnerable adult can always be seen.
- Always ensure there is at least one other responsible adult present at all times during training sessions.
- Care should be taken when providing manual support (spotting). Recognised techniques for spotting should be used.
- Treat all participants with respect and dignity
- Always place the safety and the welfare of the participants as the highest priority
- Behave in an exemplary manner and provide a role model for excellent behaviour within the club and at all IPSF recognised events/competitions
- Keep up to date with your knowledge and technical skills
- Do not exceed the level of your qualifications
- Respect the needs and wishes of all participants.
- Recognise the stage of psychological and physical development of the individual and avoid excessive training or competitions
- Motivate the participants through positive feedback and constructive criticism

- Create a safe and enjoyable situation
- Maintain a written report of any accident, incident or near miss regardless of the injury together with any subsequent treatment or action
- Ensure all members of IPSF adhere to the codes of ethics and code of conduct and anti doping policy
- Do not take a child in a car alone except in unforeseen circumstances (i.e. hospital)

### ***Practice never to be condoned***

You should never:

Take children to your home or other secluded place where they will be alone with you

Engage in rough physical or sexual provocative games

- Share a room with a child
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour
- Engage in any form of sexual related relationship with a child
- Make sexually suggestive remarks to a child or vulnerable adult – even in fun
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Encourage other children to bully other children verbally, racially or physically
- Allow allegations made by a child go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature that they can do for themselves, unless you have been instructed to do so by the parents
- Depart from the premises until you have supervised the safe dispersal of all the children
- Abuse your privileged position of power or trust with children or adults
- Resort to bullying tactics, or verbal abuse (i.e. Shouting, screaming, physically poke or make fun of)
- Cause a participant to lose self esteem by embarrassing, humiliating or undermining the individual
- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
- Allow children to form an inappropriate relationship with a coach
- Text, or use any social networking sites to engage in conversation with athletes. Always communicate with parents. See communication policy
- Coaches/instructors must not provide intimate care e.g. toileting, assisting with changing

### ***Good Practice for Clubs/Schools/Studios***

It is essential that child welfare and safety is paramount for all club, studio, class and competition activities, not only to provide the best possible protection for children in Pole Sports, but also to avoid allegations of poor practice and to ensure the safety of staff and participants. Failure to follow guidelines could place young people, coaches and the club in a vulnerable situation. Further guidance can be found under 'Running a Safe Club'.

Clubs/Studios/Competitions must:

- Provide a designated person (Welfare Officer) for dealing with safeguarding within the club/studio/school/competition. (See Recruiting a Welfare Officer)
- Provide an open door policy where parents can observe their child if they wish to
- Adopt the Pole Sports Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy as part of their registration to the organisation
- Promote the policy to all members and parents to show the club/studio/school/competition commitment to a safe environment
- Promote an environment where all legitimate concerns can be raised without fear of victimisation or reprisal (See Whistle Blowing)
- Establish procedures through which complaints or concerns can be voiced and dealt with confidentially
- Ensure that all staff, coaches, volunteers and helpers who have regular contact with children or vulnerable adults are Criminal Record Bureau checked
- Keep written records of any poor practice or child protection related incidents and accidents and any action taken
- Provide provision for regular training for all coaches, instructors, assistance and officials including access to the IPSF Safeguarding and Protecting Children Awareness training
- Ensuring that there are at least two responsible adults present at all training sessions
- That coaches, staff, helpers or volunteers are not placed in a position by the club that will place them in breach of the IPSF policies and procedures, rules and regulations
- Ensure that good practice is in place for all trips away from the normal training venue. (See Overnight Stays policy)
- Ensure that equal opportunities and equity policies are adhered to, and that discrimination is prohibited at all levels

- Ensure careful screening of coaches, helper, volunteers or officials according to the safe recruitment guidelines
- Adopt the IPSF policy on photography
- Keep parents fully informed of their child's development and any changes to the child's normal training routine.

### ***Guidance for parents***

It is important that parents are able to feel confident that their child/children will be protected from harm while attending a Pole Sports club, lesson or competition. The following information will allow parents to make informed decisions about whether a club has taken an appropriate response to safeguarding young people in its care. Parents should be encouraged to talk to their children about training and ensure that each child feels able, and knows how, to voice concerns if the child is unhappy about any situations that may arise.

Parents should check that:

- The club has a published safeguarding and protecting children policy
- The club has an anti-bullying policy.
- The club has codes of conduct for all members including coaches, staff and volunteers, parents and athletes.
- There is a designated person (Welfare Officer) in place with a responsibility for safeguarding
- The club encourages members and their parents to raise concerns without fear of victimisation or reprisal.
- There are procedures in place for dealing with complaints and disciplinary issues.
- The club has procedures in place for safe recruitment including the use of CRB disclosures.
- All coaches have the IPSF qualifications and only coach to the level of their qualification
- There are always at least two responsible adults present during training sessions. (NB the second adult could be a parent helper or club/studio official)
- Coaches must not provide intimate care e.g. toileting, assisting with changing
- All staff and volunteers have attended IPSF Safeguarding and Protecting Children Awareness module or equivalent.
- All staff and volunteers have a Criminal Records Disclosure
- The club has a transport policy
- The club has a changing-room policy
- Parents are not discouraged from watching or becoming involved.
- The club has an Equality policy 21

## **Hosting Gymnasts Policy and Procedures**

### ***Hosting Gymnasts***

The IPSF is unable to regulate or insure against the hosting of athletes in any situation other than within establishments licensed for the provision of overnight accommodation. Clubs who wish to host athletes under the age of 18 years with families or accommodate athletes within gymnasium facilities, school halls etc should seek advice from the local Children's Social Care Services and may need to seek additional insurance cover as IPSF insurance may not provide cover in these circumstances.

### **Hosting with families**

If the club does not have appropriate procedures in place to ensure families are suitably vetted, hosting should not be considered as an option. Clubs that are prepared to carry out vetting procedures should undertake appropriate risk assessment prior to hosting taking place and they must consider the following: -

- Seek parental consent
- Ensure the host family has knowledge of any medical or dietary needs of their guests
- Ensure children are hosted in pairs that are appropriately matched
- Host families should be clear about the arrangements for transporting the children
- Children staying with host families should have easy access to a telephone and to their coach and welfare officer



## **Hosting in unlicensed establishments e.g. gymnasiums or schools**

It is recognised that groups attending large Pole Sports festivals are often accommodated within 'dormitories' in schools or Pole Sports centres. This arrangement may not be ideal but may be the only available option. The following guidance should be considered: -

- Ensure groups are sharing with other groups they know.
- Ensure there are separate sleeping and washing areas for males and females, staff and athletes. It would also be appropriate to allocate rooms in age groups where possible.
- Adults should not share the dormitory with young people but should be accommodated in a nearby room.
- Ensure that there are waking night staff to conduct regular patrols of the accommodation and prevent unauthorised entry.
- Ensure accommodation is safe and secure (fire exits, emergency procedures etc).
- Ensure Welfare Manager/Event Organiser visits the accommodation prior to the event to ensure it is satisfactory and address any concerns.

## **Information Sharing Policy and Procedures**

### ***IPSF information sharing to safeguard children***

#### **Introduction**

Information relating to safeguarding concerns is often highly sensitive and needs to be kept confidential. However, where the welfare, rights and liberties of children or the child\* disclosing the information may be seriously at risk it may be necessary to breach confidentiality.

Confidential information should be shared if the public interest in safeguarding the welfare of a child or children overrides the need for

confidentiality. In addition, there may be situations where disclosure is required under a court order or other legal obligation, regardless of whether consent is obtained.

This document outlines the principles that IPSF will apply when considering whether information should be shared and sets out the relevant circumstances where confidential information may be shared without consent. The IPSF policy has been informed by the HM Government document Information Sharing: Guidance for practitioners and managers (date) and the NSPCC CPSU Protocol for Information Sharing.

#### **Core Principles**

When making a decision whether or not to share information, the welfare of the child/children is the paramount consideration. The following points outline the IPSF approach for sharing information relating to child protection concerns.

- IPSF will share information where there is a reasonable belief that it is necessary to share in order to protect or safeguard a child/children
- IPSF will explain openly and honestly, or at least notify, at the outset what information will or could be shared, and why, and seek agreement – except where doing so puts the child or others at risk of significant harm
- Consent to share information will usually be sought  
Consent to share information will usually be sought from the individual to whom the information relates unless:
  - This may put children or other parties at risk of harm
  - Refusal to consent is unreasonable or not in the public interest
  - Consent cannot be obtained
  - The IPSF is advised by a statutory agency not to do so, or there is a Court order which so directs
- If consent is refused or there are good reasons not to seek consent, consideration will be given as to whether there is a sufficient public interest for the information to be shared (principles of openness, consultation and inclusion)
- The IPSF will respect the wishes of children or families who do not consent to share confidential information unless it is judged that there is sufficient reason to override that lack of consent
- The IPSF will share no more information than is necessary for the specific purposes of sharing that relevant information (principle of proportionality)

- In order to ensure there is transparency in the application of this policy, the IPSF will ensure that people to whom this policy applies are aware of the content and ensuing implications
- The IPSF will indicate when sharing information which aspects of the disclosure is factual (to the best of our knowledge) and which is an expression of professional opinion (principle of certainty of facts)
- IPSF will ensure that the way that information is shared is appropriate to the level of urgency but in the event that information is shared by phone, it will be supported by a written report
- Information that is shared will be accurate, up to date, necessary for the purpose for which it is being shared, shared only with those with a need to see it and shared securely
- Records will always be kept of the decision to share, or not to share, information and the reasons for this decision
- Where information is shared during the course of an investigation, the outcome will be shared with those to whom the original information was sent

### **Type of Information that will be shared**

- Information relating to safeguarding/welfare/child protection concerns which meet the threshold for referral to external safeguarding agencies (Police or Social Services) will be shared in all cases
- In respect of CRB information which raises safeguarding concerns, IPSF will disclose on a need to know basis the personal details of any individual that the IPSF Case Referral Management groups determined unsuitable to work with children
- Information indicating safeguarding/child protection concerns but which is not acted on by statutory agencies (for example, where prosecution is not possible, or has been unsuccessful; where a referral is 'bounced back' by Social Services or the Police as not meeting their threshold, but the CRMG believes that concerns remain; or where risks are identified from information arising as a result of recruitment or other internal processes
- Information relating to poor practice cases (for example, breach of codes of conduct/ethics) involving a perceived risk to children, but not meeting the threshold for referral to external safeguarding agencies, and:
  - Where the IPSF has either suspended or excluded the individual, or
  - Has put in place special arrangements or monitoring to ensure children's welfare as a result of its disciplinary process

Abuse concerns meeting the threshold for police or Social Services action should be managed by those agencies. In circumstances where the IPSF believes that a concerning individual may be operating with children in another organisation(s), the IPSF will seek the advice of the statutory agencies when consideration is being given to sharing information with the other organisation(s).

*\*The Children Act (1989) defines a child as anyone under the age of 18.*

## **Involving Children and Young People Policy and Procedures**

### ***Involving Children and Young People***

All IPSF clubs should ensure that young people have a right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and be taken seriously. They should be given the opportunity to be consulted and, where appropriate, be involved in decisions that relate to their involvement in the sport as well as within the specific area of safeguarding policy and procedures.

Key principles when involving young people

- The extent that a child can be involved in decision making will depend on their age and level of maturity and understanding.
- Children and young people's involvement and opinions must be acknowledged and appreciated.
- Children and young people should be treated honestly. Their expectations need to be managed and boundaries that may limit their involvement explained.
- Children and young people should be provided with timely feedback about how their involvement has shaped or influenced a policy or approach.
- All children and young people should be given the opportunity to be involved irrespective of race, religion, culture, disability, age, ethnic origin, language or the area in which they live.
- Children should always be provided with age appropriate information to help them understand.
- Information for young people should be clear and accessible and in appropriate language and style of communication.
- Children should be supported to enable them to make a positive and effective contribution e.g. by the welfare officer.

Some ideas on involving young people include:

- Establishing a young person's forum to seek the views of children in the club.
- Identifying a young person's representative to communicate young persons' views in formal settings such as Club Committee Meetings.
- Involving young people in helping develop literature, posters and website information on child safeguarding issues.
- Carrying out questionnaire based surveys to seek views and comments from young people.
- Holding meetings with young people when considering changes to policies and gather their views.

## ***Late Collection of Children***

The following information provides guidance for clubs on how to respond where a parent, for whatever reason, does not arrive at the required time to collect their child.

All parents must be advised that in the event that they are delayed for any reason, they must:

- Contact the school, club, studio or competition at the earliest opportunity
- Provide clear guidance on what they wish the club to do e.g. consent for another parent to transport their child home.

The studio/club must:

- Maintain a list of parent contact details and emergency numbers
- Never leave a child or young person alone unless she/he is over 16 and then only with parent's permission
- Carry out appropriate assessments of situations as they arise, acknowledging that some young people aged 16 and over can go home alone if their parent is delayed
- Have written consent from the parent/legal guardian for a child to be allowed to travel to and from the school/club/studio by way of public transportation without parental supervision

The instructor or group leader must not

- Take the child home or to another location.
- Ask the child to wait in a vehicle or the club with them alone.
- Send the child home with another person without permission.

If the parent is considered by the club/studio/competition as being unduly late, the official should:

1. Attempt to contact the parent
2. Attempt to contact the emergency contact person nominated.
3. If there is no reply from the emergency contact, ask the child if there is another family member who may be contacted.
4. Wait with the young person(s) at the club with at least one other official/coach/ teacher/volunteers or parents.
5. Respond to any instructions received from the parent
6. If no-one can be reached, contact the local police or Children's Social Care Services to enquire about the best course of action.

### **Persistent Failure to Collect a Child/Young Person on Time**

Parents, who persistently fail to collect a child on time or have not arrived after a reasonable period of time, and have given no prior notice or informed the studio/club they are delayed, may be failing to provide adequate care for their child.

If the parent makes no effort to contact the studio/club or provide reasonable explanation for the delays, the club/studio Welfare Officer and another club officer should arrange to meet with the parent to discuss the matter.

If there is no change the club Welfare Officer should either contact the children's team at the local Children's Social Care Services or seek advice from the IPSF Head of Membership or IPSF Safeguarding and Compliance Officer.

If a parent arrives to collect a child and there is concern that the parent's ability to take appropriate care of the child may be impaired (e.g. the parent is considered to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs to the extent that she/he is unfit to drive, and/or take care of the child) the club should seek advice from the police or Children's Social Care Service immediately.

## **Missing Children Policy and Procedures**

### ***Missing Children***

In the rare event that a child goes missing from a studio/competition/club, the following guidelines have been devised to outline the actions that should be taken. At the point that a child has been identified as missing the instructor should:

- Ensure that other children in the group are looked after appropriately while a search for the child concerned is conducted.
- Inform the child's parents if they are present, or nominate an appropriate person to telephone them and advise them of the concern. Reassure them that everything is being done to locate the child.
- Organise all available responsible adults by areas to be searched. It is best to take a short time to organise the search properly so that all places are searched fully.
- Search the area in which the child has gone missing including changing rooms, toilets, public and private areas and the club/studio/competition grounds.
- Request all those searching report back to a nominated adult at a specific point.
- Make a note of the circumstances in which the child has gone missing and where he/she was last seen
- Prepare a detailed physical description of the child, including:
  - Approximate height
  - Build
  - Hair and eye colour
  - Clothing he/she was wearing, as this will be required by the police
  - Report the concern to the police if the search is unsuccessful. This must happen no later than 30 minutes after the young person's disappearance is noted, even if the search is incomplete.
- Follow police guidance if further action is recommended and maintain close contact with the police
- Ensure that you inform all adults involved including the parents, searchers and police if at any stage the child is located
- Refer the concern ASAP to the IPSF Child Safeguarding Manager.

## **Overnight Stays Policy and Procedures**

### ***Overnight Stays***

The IPSF requires that when a club takes a athlete(s) under the age of 18 years on a journey involving an overnight stay, the club/studio must ensure that there is a designated trained person responsible for child protection on the trip. To adhere to the CPSU child protection standards this person must not be related to or in a relationship with the coach attending the trip.

The training for the designated person should be the IPSF Safeguarding and Protecting Children Awareness Course or an IPSF approved equivalent.

To enable you to have adequate insurance cover when taking athletes abroad, The IPSF is obliged to approve your arrangements.

Please complete the forms relating to overseas travel which can be found on the IPSF website under Events & Travel/Downloads/ Overseas travel application

Please note that the IPSF Insurance does not cover Travel or Emergency Medical Expenses, we recommend that you either take out Travel Insurance with ourselves available at [www.polesports.org](http://www.polesports.org) or provide details of an alternative insurer.

When an event is local, it is often the case that clubs arrange for everyone to meet at the event venue. However, where an event is further away, the best option is often for the club to co-ordinate transport arrangements. It is good practice for a club to ensure the following steps are taken in advance of any trip:

- Check on driving licence, car insurance and MOT (if the car is over three years old)
- Ensure there are seatbelts for each passenger and booster seats as required
- Check driving experience (additional training may be required for anyone driving a mini-bus – contact Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) for further details)
- Additional check on driver (see policies for recruitment of staff/volunteers)
- Organise central pick-up and drop-off points (to avoid the driver being alone with a athlete)
- Obtain consent from parents to allow their children to be transported to an event
- Plan the route and breaks (if necessary)
- Obtain contact numbers for parents

At non-residential events the designated person need not always be on site but must be contactable and ready to act if required. Everyone should be made aware of the designated person's name and contact details if they are not at the event. Contact details must be included in the event programmes.

Where events involve an over-night stay, it is vital to have a designated trained person who is not involved in the delivery of the training. (NB: Please note this is only applicable if the club/studio is responsible for the provision of overnight accommodation). This person's role will depend on the scale of the event, but in addition to the responsibility for responding to concerns, tasks could include supervision and co-ordination of accommodation, holding pre-event welfare briefings and daily de-briefs and monitoring compliance with codes of conduct.

Ensure that when taking mixed gender teams away on trips, at least one male and one female of staff accompany the athletes.

In non-residential events, the role of the Welfare Officer could be undertaken by an existing member of staff or volunteer but it is vital that the person identified is able to take a child-centred approach and has the confidence of young people taking part in the event.

It is important to have contingency plans in place before departing on any trip. It may be helpful to consider a 'worst case scenario' and to have procedures, and all the necessary information, in place to deal with any problem that might arise. At the least, the following issues need to be addressed to ensure a stress free trip: -

- **Risk Assessments:** The Team Manager/Group Leader will need to ensure an ongoing process of risk assessment.
- **Supervision:** The IPSF recommends a minimum of 1:10 adult to child ratio as a minimum level for supervision on trips. This ratio may need to be increased if the group is made up of primary school aged children, or people with disabilities, or the trip is of a nature where more supervision may be required- i.e. trips abroad. If the group is mixed sex there should be at least one male and one female supervisor.
- **Medical issues/first aid:** A list of emergency contact numbers, medical information on each child attending the event and a first aid box should be taken on any trip.
- **Club/studio/instructor Insurance:** Studios must arrange adequate travel insurance.
- **Overnight stays:** When large groups are travelling it is advisable to ensure accommodation is booked well in advance. This can help to ensure that groups are kept together in a hotel. It is not good practice for anyone over the age of eighteen to share a room with anyone under the age of sixteen. Room allocation should, if possible, be planned prior to the trip.
- **Facility providers/Tour Operators:** To help ensure that any arrangements made with facility providers or tour operators are formalised, the IPSF recommends the use of a Service Provision checklist.
- **Consent forms:** It is essential for parents to complete a consent form for a trip. This is especially important when the event involves an overnight stay.

Communication with parents: Parents need to be fully informed of all details in relation to the trip. As a minimum, parents should be informed of:

- Transport arrangements
- Key timings – Pick up, Departure and Return
- Destination and contact details
- Room allocation
- Code of conduct
- Contact details for trip staff
- Trip requirements – pocket money, kit etc

This is not a full list of factors that should be considered, but it should assist with planning for a trip. The checklist in appendices of this document will also support clubs when planning a trip.

## ***Accommodation***

Where accommodation is required for overnight stays athletes must be suitably accommodated according to their age and gender.

- It is unsuitable for 18-year-old athletes to share a room with any other athletes under the age of 16 years.
- Coaches, helpers, volunteers are not permitted to share a room with any athletes regardless of the situation.
- It is advisable that the coaches should arrange their accommodation so that they are at least on the same floor as the athletes and if possible arrange for them to be in the room next door to the athletes.
- Gymnasts should be supplied with an emergency contact number for them to call in the night should they need to.
- Parents may be accommodated with only their own children.

## ***Areas of responsibility for Welfare Officers at Events (including Competitions) or Trips***

Role of the welfare officer at events

- Ensuring that parents and children are aware of the role and responsibilities
- Reporting any incidents in line with the IPSF reporting procedures (Welfare Officers should have access to all emergency contact numbers including the IPSF)
- Taking a child-focused approach and responding to the needs of children during the event
- Working in partnership with other staff to resolve any welfare related issues that need to be addressed at the event
- Assisting the event organiser with the implementation of procedures for photography and the use of video cameras at the event and managing any issues that arise out of these policies

Further roles applicable to residential events

- Supervision and co-ordination of accommodation at the event
- Leading the supervising of the athletes during non-training periods

Ensuring all participants fully understand their responsibilities in relation to the code of conduct.

## **Recruiting a Welfare Officer; Policy and Procedures**

### ***Welfare Officers***

#### **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 Pole Sports studios/clubs/schools and Pole Sports 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 be more 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/school/studio 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/school/studio newsletter
- Advertising on the club/school/studio 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/school/studio/competition 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 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 Welfare Officer ensure they are 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/school/studio/competition 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/school/studio/competition 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 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 Pole Sports 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.

## **Responding to Allegations of Abuse Policy and Procedures**

### ***Child Protection and Safeguarding concerns***

In addition to ensuring all IPSF members are fully aware of the importance of safeguarding, it is essential that anyone who comes into contact with young people as part of their role in the sport understands what action should be taken in response to concerns, disclosures and allegations against others involved in the sport.

It is not the role of the IPSF or anyone in the sport to conduct enquiries into possible child abuse concerns. The following procedures outline the responses that should be taken in the event of an allegation or suspicions of abuse or significant harm. This section also provides guidance sharing relevant information with Children's Social Care Services/Social Services and/or police and other relevant organisations without delay and within agreed protocols.

Child Protection concerns fall into two categories:

- Pole Sports related
- External to the sport e.g. at home

The concern may relate to a current situation or past events and may be about allegations or disclosures of abuse or poor practice by an individual or relating to perceived failure to safeguard by an IPSF registered organisation.

Concerns may arise from:

- A disclosure from a child or young person
- Direct or reported observations of possible abuse, neglect, suspicious behaviour or poor practice
- Significant or multiple changes in the child or young person's behaviour, appearance, attitude or relationship
- Reports from external agencies or individuals

Everyone has a responsibility to respond to these concerns whether they relate to a child's home/family or community situation or involve incidents within the Pole Sports community.

It is important to note that some children or young people are unable to recognise or share concerns and often rely on adults with whom they are in contact to be alert to the possibility that they may be experiencing harm in some area of their lives.

Pole Sports' primary responsibility is to ensure that concerns relating to possible abuse together with any relevant information are passed on to Children's Social Care Services and/or the Police without delay. It is vital that individuals within a club are aware of what action is required and ensure any concerns are referred to the appropriate welfare officer as shown below:

- **IPSF Committee** – The IPSF committee (Head of Safeguarding and Compliance Officer) must be informed of all abuse concerns.
- **Regional Welfare Officer** – The RWO should be informed of any concern that occurred at Regional level. The RWO should also be a source of advice and support for their network of CWO.
- **Club Welfare Officer** – The CWO should usually be the first point of call for any concerns that relate to a member of his or her club.
- **Event Welfare Officer** – There should always be a welfare officer assigned to a squad or event. Although they may not be present, they should be 'on-call' at the time of the squad/event and be contacted in the event of any concern relating to the specific squad or event.

Contact details of IPSF Officers can be found on the IPSF website.

## ***Responding to disclosure of abuse***

If a child indicates that he/she is being abused, or information is received which gives rise to concern that the child may be being abused, the person receiving the information should:

- Stay calm and ensure that the child is safe and feels safe.
- Listen carefully to what is said, allowing the child to continue at his/her own pace.
- Explain that it is likely the information will have to be shared with others - do not promise to keep secrets.
- Keep questions to a minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in revealing the information.
- Show and tell the child that what he/she says is being taken seriously and recognise any difficulties inherent in interpreting what the child says.
- Tell the child what will be done next, and with whom the information will be shared.
- Record in writing what was said using the child's own words as soon as possible. The following information should be recorded:
  - Dates and times
  - Any names mentioned
  - To whom the information was given
  - Information that fact, hearsay or opinion should be notes as such
  - Ensure the record is signed and dated make a record.

If the child indicates that he/she does not wish others to be informed about the allegations, carefully and tactfully explain the reasons why it may be in the interests of everybody if the matter is referred to the appropriate person or department (i.e. Children's Social Care Services/Social Services).



The person to whom the disclosure is made is presented with a great responsibility and it is advisable, if there is any uncertainty, to seek advice on how to deal with the issue, from Children's Social Care Services, the IPSF Head youth committee or Safeguarding and Compliance Officer.

### **Actions to avoid**

- Dismissing the concern
- Panicking
- Allowing shock or distaste to show
- Probing for more information than is offered
- Making promises that cannot be kept, such as agreeing not to tell someone else
- Speculating or make assumptions
- Approaching the person who is the subject of an allegation or suspicion (this may put a child or young person at further risk and/or jeopardise a criminal investigation).
- Conducting a personal investigation of the case.
- Making negative comments about the accused person.
- Irrespective of whether the person receiving the information personally believes what has been said, they must always report the disclosure. Untrue disclosures, even when the source is anonymous, are very rare.

### **Reporting the concern**

In the event that a child or children may be at risk of significant harm, the concern must be reported to Children's Social Care Services or the Police without delay. The welfare officer is responsible for making this referral but in the event that he or she is unavailable, a senior person at the club should be advised and the matter referred directly to the Children's Social Care Services/Social Service and/or the Police

and the Welfare Officer informed of the action taken. The IPSF should also be informed at the earliest opportunity and can also make the referral on their behalf. The person advising the IPSF may be required to also speak to the Statutory agents to clarified any details and may be required as part of their investigation.

If the concern relates to the welfare officer, a senior person at the club should be informed and the matter should be referred to Children's Social Care Services/Social Services and/or the Police and the IPSF should be notified without delay.

Whoever makes the referral must ensure that the contact details of the person to whom the referral was made are provided to IPSF or the relevant Home Country, together with the details of the referral without delay.

In the event that there is any uncertainty as to whether a referral is appropriate, the IPSF Head of youth committee or Safeguarding and Compliance Officer or Children's Social Care Services/Social Services will be able to offer advice on what action should be taken.

If there is any suspicion that a child has been abused by someone in the sport, the IPSF Case Referral Management Group will, following consultation with the statutory agencies consider whether it is necessary to place the individual under suspension pending further Children's Social Care Services/Social Services or Police enquiries. The Chief Executive Officer will have the overall authority to suspend membership from the IPSF. The IPSF MUST be kept fully informed of any concerns as it is essential that an early decision is made about whether to suspend any member to avoid placing young people at risk.

### **Children's Social Care Services/Social Services**

When a referral is made to Children's Social Care Services/Social Services they have a legal responsibility to make enquiries where a child or young person may be at risk of significant harm. This may involve gathering information from others who know the child or talking to the young person and their family. Enquiries may be carried out jointly with the police when a criminal offence is suspected. If a child is at immediate risk and action needs to be taken urgently, contact the Police by dialling your respective emergency number. If concerns are identified out of hours, the police and Children's Social Care Services/Social Services provide an out-of-hours service.

## **Confidentiality and Information sharing**

Sharing information is vital to ensure that young people's needs are met and critical in ensuring children are protected from significant harm. However, there is often uncertainty about the circumstances in which information can be lawfully shared. Consent should normally be sought from the subject/s of the information in order for it to be shared, but it may be necessary for information to be shared with the Welfare Officer, Children's Social Care Services/Social Services, the Police and the IPSF without consent if there is reason to believe that seeking consent could:

Place the child or others at increased risk of significant harm, or

Place an adult at risk of serious harm, or

Undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime (i.e. any crime which causes or is likely to cause significant harm to a child or serious harm to an adult) including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation.

Following initial enquiries, it may be deemed necessary to share some information with others, particularly those who have contact with the subject of the allegations. Information must only be passed to those who require access to these details in the course of their safeguarding duties. A record must be maintained of all those to whom information is disclosed, and the details of the information provided. Case information must only be shared on a 'need to know' basis. Further guidance on confidentiality and information sharing can be found within the appendices.

All IPSF registered organisations and individual members must ensure that in dealing with information relating to safeguarding concerns, there are no unacceptable breaches of confidentiality. In addition, there is a responsibility to ensure that parents, athletes and their families understand the need to avoid unnecessary discussion of safeguarding concerns. Not only can such a breach be highly damaging to the young person and others involved but may also prejudice a police investigation.

Case information should:

- (Where the call is incoming) only be given out over the telephone where there is absolute certainty of the identity of the person making the call or the identity of the caller is confirmed by returning the call through a switchboard number;
- (Where the call is outgoing) only be given out over the telephone and connected through a switchboard, and there is absolute certainty of the identity of the person receiving the call;
- Be backed-up in writing if any significant advice/case details is given over the phone;
- Be securely stored in a locked cabinet in a lockable room and not unnecessarily taken out of the building; and
- Be marked 'private and confidential' and sent by recorded delivery if sent by post.

## **Sharing concerns with parents**

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents where there are concerns about their children. Therefore, in most circumstances it would be important to talk to parents to clarify any initial concerns. For example if a young person seemed withdrawn, there may be a reasonable explanation. The child may have experienced an upset in the family, such as a parental separation/divorce or bereavement.

In cases where a child or children may be at risk of significant harm, the Welfare Officer or person making the referral should, at the same time seek advice on what information should be provided to the parent and the child from Children's Social Care Services/Social Services or the Police.

## **Records and Information**

Any information passed to the Children's Social Care Services/Social Services or the Police must be as accurate and helpful as possible and, ideally, should be accompanied by a detailed record providing:

- Personal details of the child concerned including age or date of birth, full name, gender, race, ethnic origin and address.
- Details of Parent/carer and an indication of what, if any, information has been shared.
- The nature of the allegation.
- Full details of the person about whom the concern/allegation is made including full name, date of birth, address, relationship the child concerned and/or position held in the club, if any.
- Description of any visible injuries or bruising.
- Detailed description of the child's account of how the injuries or bruising occurred.
- Any times and dates or other relevant information.
- A clear distinction between what is fact, hearsay or opinion.

Reporting the matter to police or Children's Social Care Services/Social Services should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. Wherever possible, referrals made by telephone, should be followed up with a copy of the incident report form within 48 hours this form is within the Sample Forms section. The Welfare Officer should record on the incident form, the name and designation of the Children's Social Care Services/Social Services member of staff to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call.

A copy of the incident report form including all case information should also be sent to Pole Sports Head of Membership or Safeguarding and Compliance Officer and the appropriate regional governing body Lead Child Protection Officer.

## **Concerns within the Sport**

Allegations involving IPSF members or employees are sensitive and difficult issues to manage. It is crucial that everyone involved in Pole Sports takes seriously any allegations made against a coach, instructor, helper, official or anyone else working with young people and responds appropriately. The Welfare Officer must be notified immediately of any circumstances that cause concern or raise suspicions. If the welfare officer is unclear about what action to take, advice should be sought from the IPSF Youth Committee or Safeguarding and Compliance Officer, the Children's Social Care Services/Social Services. In the event that the allegations could amount to abuse and/or a child or children are at risk of significant harm, the matter should be reported to Children's Social Care Services/Social Services and/or the Police in line with the procedures above.

If, following the receipt of a disclosure, an allegation or an observation of behaviour that caused concern, and where it is agreed that a referral to Children's Social Care Services or the Police is not required the club/school/studio/competition or organisation should consider the appropriate course of action. In the event that the concern is considered to be an isolated incident of poor practice, then together with the Welfare Officer, a senior person at the club should discuss the matter with the individual of the concern and agree appropriate remedial action in line with IPSF policy and guidance. In all cases of poor practice, the matter should be reported to IPSF without delay for the IPSF CRMG to determine the appropriate course of action. This includes:

- Allegations of poor practice concerning the Welfare Officer
- Poor practice allegations that have been previously addressed by the club but continue to remain a concern.
- Any incidents of poor practice that raise suspicions or concerns about abuse.

In some cases, it has only become apparent that a poor practice concern has been an indicator of abuse after IPSF has collated information from a variety of sources. It may not be possible to form a view of the significance of an isolated piece of information but it is essential that in the above circumstances information is always reported to the IPSF.

Action to be taken if abuse or poor practice is observed during a training session or event

It is not unknown for an act of abuse and more frequently, poor practice to occur within a training or competition environment. The following information provides instruction on what action should be taken at the point that the act of abuse or poor practice is observed. It may be helpful to note that, based on the experience of case referrals, the most likely types of abuse to be encountered in the gym environment are physical and emotional abuse. An act of possible abuse or poor practice needs to be reported without delay in line with the IPSF reporting procedures described above.

The individual regarding the concern should be approached immediately by the senior official and another official, ideally the Welfare Officer, (if they are on site) and informed of the concern. If the abuse or poor practice is ongoing, he/she must be instructed to stop immediately and an emergency call made to the police to provide assistance if required. It should be noted, however, that if the matter of concern is poor practice, possibly due to lack of awareness rather than abuse and young people are not at significant risk, a more subtle approach would be appropriate and the Welfare Officer may not need to be involved at this stage. Consideration should be given to informing the individual in a manner that will not undermine his/her position with the young people.

If the concern relates to abuse, the priority is to ensure that the child/children are made safe. The Welfare Officer or another responsible adult must remain with the children until their needs have been fully addressed.

If the child concerned requires immediate medical treatment this should be sought without delay by dialling the emergency services and informing the police/children social care service/social services that this action is being taken. It is important the medical staff involved are made aware that the issue is potentially one of a child protection nature.

All IPSF registered clubs/schools/studios/competitions must put in place a procedure to deal with complaints over staff and volunteers. Parents and all members should be made aware of the procedures for raising a complaint or concern. Provision should be made in the club rules or constitution to allow complaints and disciplinary procedures to be implemented.

## ***Allegations of historical abuse***

It is possible that allegations of abuse may be made some considerable time after the event. Where a historical allegation is made the Welfare Officer should report the matter to the Children's Social Care Services/Social Services and the Police Child Protection Unit and make sure that the IPSF and the relevant national and regional Governing Body are informed without delay. Although the allegation is historical, it is necessary to respond without delay as other children may currently be at risk from the accused person.

## ***A quick guide to procedures if abuse is suspected***

This quick guide (overleaf) is designed to provide guidance for IPSF members on the most appropriate action to be taken if abuse is suspected or repeated or suspicious poor practice or breaches of IPSF Code of Ethics and Conduct are witnessed. Further guidance can be obtained at any stage, by contacting the IPSF Head of youth committee, Safeguarding and Compliance Officer. All reports should be made on the IPSF Child Protection Incident Report form contained on the website.

What happens next?

Where a complaint/concern of poor practice or abuse is made there may be three types of investigation:

- Criminal - Conducted by the police
- Child protection - Carried out under section 47 (1) of the Children Act 1989
- IPSF enquiry – Determined by the IPSF CRMG (Case Referral Management Group)

The person that made the allegation, or their family, may also initiate civil proceedings.

Where a statutory agency investigation is ongoing, the IPSF will only act following full consultation with the relevant agencies or at the request of the statutory agency.

The IPSF CRMG would consider the outcome of any criminal and/or child protection investigation when determining what action should be taken.

The IPSF disciplinary panels will comply with the principles of natural justice. The applicable standard of proof shall be the civil standard, of the balance of probability: whether it was more likely for the allegations to have occurred. The IPSF will make a referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority in any instance where a decision is reached to exclude a member from the Governing Body. Throughout these processes the welfare of children will remain paramount and the IPSF will endeavour to provide appropriate support to children, parents, coaches and volunteers who are affected.

## **Running a Safe Club Policy and Procedures**

### ***Club Registration***

When athletes register with a club/school/studio/competition it is essential that they obtain appropriate personal information about them. The type of information that should be collected at the point of registration would include:

- Name and address
- Date of birth
- Parent/Carer information
- Emergency contacts
- Medical details – allergies, existing conditions
- Information on any disability or special needs, including English not being the first language
- Medical consent
- Consent for participation in Pole Sports
- Consent to film athletes for training purposes
- Equality profile

Clubs should ensure that this information is collected at the earliest opportunity to enable any necessary risk assessments based on medical information and/or disability to be completed prior to participation.

Parental Consent should always be sought prior to participation in 'regular club/school/studio/competition activity'. In addition, consent should be requested if there is an intention to film athletes for training purposes as a standard part of club/school/studio/competition training.

Additional informed consent must also be sought in the following circumstances:

- For participation in other activities beyond regular training e.g. competitions
- For using membership information for other reasons beyond that which was originally collected
- Photography/filming that leads to the publication of images, or use of the images for any purpose other than training (if a blanket consent has already been obtained for this purpose).

Informed consent would require the person providing the consent to have a full understanding of the circumstances for which consent is sought and should be obtained on every occasion.

## **Safeguarding letter**

It is very important that new members and/or their parents/carers are provided with information about the club's approach to safeguarding. It is advisable that all clubs prepare a new member information pack which, in addition to providing information on training times and other club activities, should include a letter to parents highlighting the following policies and where they can be accessed:

- Child safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Anti bullying policy
- Details of what parents/carers should do if they have a concern regarding the welfare of a child
- Communication policy
- Transport policy
- Photography policy
- Equality policy
- Complaints procedure

This letter should include names and contact details of the following key club officials:

- Welfare Officer.
- Chairman/Manager
- Secretary
- Coach/instructor

The letter should highlight that the IPSF and the club are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and include the following statement:

*In a situation where a child is at risk of significant harm or has been harmed in connection with their involvement in Pole Sports, the parent/carer should contact the club Welfare Officer who has the responsibility of referring any concerns of possible abuse to Children's Social Care Services/Social Services and/or the Police and informing Pole Sports. Alternatively the parent/carer can contact Children's Social Care Services/Social Services and/or the Police direct. It is requested that where a parent/carer has made a direct referral to Children's Social Care Services/Social Services and/or the Police, that the IPSF Safeguarding and Compliance Officer and, if appropriate the club/school/studio/competition Welfare Officer is provided with the details of the concern as soon as possible so that any necessary action can be taken to safeguard all children in the sport.*

The club should also clearly outline the expectations that it has of its members and their parents/carers. This information may be published in the form of set of club rules and a code of conduct.

## **Codes of Conduct**

### **Parental responsibilities**

Parents play an important role in the success of their child. With the right kind of support and encouragement, young people will progress steadily and enjoy a rewarding experience. It is likely that with the right support at home alongside a positive club environment a child will remain in the sport.

Good communication between the club/coaches and parents is essential to avoid misunderstandings and to ensure co-operation.

It is good practice to clearly outline what is expected of parents when their child joins the club.

## Other responsibilities

- If parents wish to raise a concern about their children's welfare, they should contact the club/school/studio/competition Welfare Officer. If they feel they are unable to discuss this concern with the Welfare Officer, they should contact the Regional Welfare Officer for advice.
- If parents do have concerns about the coaching that their child is receiving they should arrange to meet with the coach involved. Coaches should always have the best interests of the athletes in mind. A disagreement with a coach should never be made known to the child as this could destroy a positive relationship between coach and athlete.
- If parents remain unhappy about their child's training and wish to move club/school/studio/competition, they should discuss the matter initially with their child and the coach before approaching another club. Parents should remember that although the child may no longer train at the current club, they are likely to come across the coaches and athletes at future competitions and events. Therefore it is important that any transfer is conducted with the minimum of upset for the child.
- If parents wish to make a complaint about any matter other than safeguarding or child protection, they should put the complaint in writing and address it to the Club Secretary. For more information, please refer to the Club Complaints Procedure.
- Parents of any athlete under the age of eighteen years will be informed in writing if their child is subject to any disciplinary action.
- Parents are welcome to observe training if they sit in the designated viewing area but they should not interfere or interrupt the session. It is imperative that coaches have the child's full attention at this time. Any parent who disrupts training may be refused access to the viewing area.
- During competitions parents and family members should adopt a positive and sporting attitude and remain in the spectator area, and not enter the competition arena. They should never dispute results and rulings of judges, coaches and officials or behave in an inappropriate way towards other spectators.
- All families are encouraged to participate in club/school/studio/competition related activities.

## Example of Parent Code of Conduct

Parents should: -

- Ensure that they and their children abide by club rules.
- Ensure that their children arrive at training and competitions on time and that they arrive on time to take them home. It is the responsibility of the parents to make any necessary transport arrangements to get their children to any training sessions. Parents should not put coaches in a difficult position by requesting that they provide transport for their children although on occasion the Club may make arrangements to transport groups of athletes together, subject to parental consent.
- Talk to their children and ensure that they are aware that they have the right to be protected and free from harm. Parents should make sure that their children know that if they feel they are being bullied or are concerned about the way their coach, a club official or another member of the club is treating them, they can talk to their parents or the Club Welfare Officer without fear of getting into trouble.
- Ensure that they and their children are aware of the identity of the Club Welfare Officer.
- Be patient with their children's progress. Gymnasts progress according to their age, ability and stage of maturation. Parents should bear in mind that long-term improvement is the ultimate goal and that later developers often succeed in Pole Sports.
- Be a supportive and a stabilising influence through the inevitable ups and downs of training and competition. Parents should encourage their children and provide positive feedback.
- Leave the coaching to the coaches. Parents should not pressure their children, offer coaching advice or try to change or undermine any goals agreed between the coach and athlete. It is the coaches' role to offer constructive advice relating to the athlete's performance. It is helpful if parents can offer the support and encouragement necessary to help their children feel good about themselves.
- Help their children to develop good healthy eating habits, especially meals prior to training and competition and ensure each child has sufficient rest.
- Re-enforce high standards of behaviour and dress expected in the gym and at competition and help their children to maintain a positive attitude.
- Stay informed by checking the club newsletter, notice board and any letters distributed at training. If a response or payment is required, this should be made promptly and on time.

Parents are very important and greatly valued in Pole Sports and it is hoped that as many parents as possible will volunteer to help at the club/school/studio/competition. Without the support of parent volunteers, the Club and the Governing Body would not function effectively.

## ***Provision of a safe environment***

Safeguarding is fundamental in the delivery of Pole Sports and the conduct of those involved. Everyone must place the protection of young people as the paramount consideration, and ensure that the environment where the Pole Sports activity takes place is one where young people are safe and helps to reduce the risk of young people being abused through their participation within the sport.

National Federations, Organisations and Competitions must address the following environmental factors:

- Providing open warm up and training environment
- Ensuring there is a clear policy for use of changing rooms and toilets
- Maintenance of apparatus, equipment and other property utilised in conjunction with children
- Provision of first aid facilities
- Storage of personal and sensitive information

\* These areas are covered in detail in the IPSF Health & Safety Policy.

Open training environment

It is essential that clubs/schools/studios/competitions work in partnership with parents/carers and are open about training sessions. Clubs should welcome parents who wish to observe and in the case of new or potential members, encourage them to view a session and remain with their child until the child is happy to be left.

In some facilities there may be logistical problems in providing a suitable area for viewing. Clubs/schools/studios without viewing areas should designate a small area of the gym for viewing. This will need to be carefully managed and there may need to be limits on the number of spectators that can be safely accommodated. Clubs should also ensure that a viewing policy covering acceptable standards of conduct is in place.

The IPSF will not support clubs who actively discourage parents from viewing by:

- Obscuring windows
- Refusing reasonable requests to view
- Asking parents to leave without due cause
- Justifying the prohibition of viewing on spurious health and safety grounds.

The provision of an open training environment is much wider than simply providing parents with a viewing area. It involves creating a culture of openness between the club/Studio and parents. This will include:

- Regular written and oral communication with parents
- Providing regular feedback on a child's progress
- Opportunities to discuss the child's progress and training regime
- Opportunity to raise concerns and receive feedback on the outcome
- Encouraging parents to become involved in the club
- Inviting parents to attend welfare briefings prior to an away event
- Encouraging parents to attend events or keep in close contact with their child
- Setting up parent forums
- Appointing a parent liaison officer who is responsible for communication, information and encouraging involvement

## ***Changing facilities***

All IPSF clubs/studios/classes/competitions must have a policy or rules relating to the use of changing facilities. There can be difficulties where the Pole Sports activity is provided within a multi-use sports centre and will have to be subject to the availability and access to facilities, whether groups are mixed gender, and whether the changing facilities are open for public use.

Although clubs should develop a policy that best meets their specific circumstances, the following underlying principles must be adopted:

- Where a club is fully responsible for changing facilities, adults must not be permitted to get changed in these facilities at the same time as children\*
- There must be separate changing facilities or times for males and females
- No-one should enter changing rooms whilst these are being used by members of the opposite sex
- Mobile phones must not be used in changing rooms
- Codes of conduct should address behaviour while using changing facilities
- Everyone should be aware that they must report any concerns or incidents without delay.

Parents should only be in the changing room with their children if the children age range of the session is for an age group where parental help is generally required. This is normally around 7 or 8 years old. Additional arrangements may be required if there are young people with disabilities in the group.

Clubs which are unable to provide safe changing room facilities must ensure all members arrive wearing their leotards/shorts under their clothes.

\* Where a club has to use a shared changing facility that is accessible by adults, the club should ensure that the changing policy provides guidance for young people on what they should do in the event that they have a concern about an adult who is also making use of the facility.

Where possible, parents should be responsible for their own children in the changing rooms or toilets. If a group of children must be supervised in the changing rooms ensure that adults work in pairs to supervise the children.

### ***Spotting and Manual Support***

Supporting and shaping the athlete is an essential part of coaching Pole Sports in that it helps the athlete to understand shapes, movement patterns and complex skills, but also reduces the risk of injury due to a fall or error in performance. Detailed guidance on appropriate supporting techniques should be part of each coach/instructors training.

The key points on safe spotting and manual support are:

- the coach/instructor must ensure that support is only used when necessary and “over-handling” is avoided, however;
- the coach must always be alert to the possibility of performance errors or anxiety, which may increase the risk of injury;
- supporting techniques must not inhibit performance;
- physical contact should not be invasive of sensitive areas of the body i.e. genital areas, buttocks or breasts.

Infrequent non-intentional physical contact can arise out of error on the performer or coach’s/instructors part. Such situations should not be ignored and need to be acknowledged through an apology to the athlete and reported to the Club Welfare Officer or head coach and parents. Any written report should be made of any incident.

It is also good practice to explain and provide some written guidance, perhaps as part of an induction pack, to new members and parents that some physical contact will be required but that only appropriate non-invasive techniques should be used. If a athlete or parent has any concerns, they should be raised with the club welfare officer. In any circumstance where abuse is suspected, the IPSF reporting procedures should be followed.

### ***Flexibility/Stretching exercises***

There is a range of techniques and types of exercise for extending flexibility that involve the application of force. These techniques can also lead to the person applying the force coming into close proximity with the athlete and having prolonged contact with areas of the athlete’s body.

Coaches/instructors must follow the following guidelines:

- Use slow, progressive and prolonged stretching exercises, within the “discomfort zone”, rather than what might be considered to be excessive force.
- Avoid exercises that place the coaches and athletes body in “close proximity” and might be seen as unnecessary by the less- informed parent or observer.
- Be sensitive to how the exercise might be perceived by the parents and children.
- Consider holding a parents’ forum to explain the flexibility training techniques, so that the parent is more aware and therefore less likely to misinterpret the techniques being used.
- Use partner exercises with more experienced athletes where possible.

### ***High Performance Coaching***

Key factors in safeguarding young people include always ensuring there are at least two responsible adults present during training and avoiding situations where a responsible person is alone with a child. However, a small proportion of young people involved in Pole Sports who are training at the high performance levels may find that these principles are in conflict with the practicalities of intensive training.



One-to-one coaching has clear benefits for a small proportion of appropriately prepared and highly experienced athletes and is recognised as the best way to achieve excellence. The number of athletes who would benefit from training in this manner is small. In addition, due to the fact that this training tends to take place during the school day and outside standard club hours it can be very difficult to ensure there are always two responsible adults present.

Therefore, while it is always desirable that an additional responsible adult is present, in circumstances where it is not possible athletes within the national system may train in a one-to-one situation, subject however to prior approval by the IPSF Youth Committee and National federations, and in liaison with parents/guardians. The studio/club/school/competition welfare officer must also confirm the athlete's readiness to train in this manner and that there are appropriate support mechanisms in place. Requests will only be confirmed on the proviso that there are additional support staff in the building, available to assist in the event of an emergency.

Requests should be made in writing to the IPSF Youth Committee will only be granted if it is believed that it is in the best interest of the athlete, and the governing body is assured that suitable provision is available to ensure the athlete's welfare needs are met.

## **Safe Recruitment Policy and Procedures**

### ***Safe Recruitment***

Safe recruitment requires safeguarding issues to be considered at every stage of the recruitment process. Although the vast majority of coaches and officials/helpers are committed, dedicated people who are motivated to work within the sport for commendable reasons, it is vital that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that any unsuitable people or people who may abuse children are prevented from working with young people.

The following procedures should be adopted and applied consistently to help ensure that Pole Sports organisations recruit individuals who share the organisation's values and approach to safeguarding.

As people who want to abuse children may seek out various avenues to gain access to children. These practices must be followed at all times, even where there is only one applicant for a position.

### **One-off volunteers**

The only current exception to this is in the case of one-off volunteers who will only have contact with children for a limited period of time. This may include:

- Parents or other volunteers helping out at a studio/club/school/competition fundraiser or event
- Young people attending the studio/club/school/competition for a work experience

Studios/clubs/schools/competitions who run a dedicated facility should ensure they operate a sign-in and out system for these volunteers/visitors.

Where one-off volunteering becomes more regular e.g. more than once a month, the recruitment procedures must be fully applied.

### **Parents**

It should be noted that it is inappropriate, and in respect of the use of CRB disclosures would be unlawful, to require recruitment checks in the case of parents whose only role is to care for their own child e.g. a parent of a child with a disability. However, in the event that the individual in question wishes to take on a role within the club that will bring responsibility for other young people, the full recruitment procedures must be applied.

It is essential that the following recruitment and selection procedures are applied without unlawfully discriminating against candidates on grounds of race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or age, and are fully compliant with data protection law.

The key elements of a robust safe recruitment process will include:

- **Preparing candidate information**  
This should include: -
  - Job description that makes reference to the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
  - Person specification ensuring specific reference is made to suitability to work with children
  - Application form, which contains appropriate safeguarding sections
- **Obtaining references**  
References that specifically address the applicant's suitability to work with children should ideally be taken before interview so that any issues can be addressed at this stage
- **Interview**  
In addition to the candidates' suitability for the role, the interview process should investigate the candidate's suitability to work with children.
- **Verifying**
  - Applicant's identity
  - Right to work in UK (or relevant country)
  - Qualifications
- **ISA registration & CRB disclosure** (or equivalent from residing country)  
An enhanced CRB disclosure must be completed for anyone who has not completed a CRB disclosure through the IPSF within the last three years.

The Vetting and Barring Scheme will require anyone wishing to work with children (and/or vulnerable adults) to be registered with the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

From 12 October 2009 additional "regulated activities" will be brought into force under the Vetting and Barring Scheme. This will significantly extend the scope of activities and workplaces covered by barring. It will be an offence for any barred person to work in regulated activities, and for any employer to employ someone he knows to be barred, either paid or voluntary.

More information regarding the Vetting and Barring Scheme can be obtained by going to <http://www.isa-gov.org.uk/default.aspx?page=2>

When recruiting for a position working with young people, safeguarding needs to feature strongly in any advertising. The recruiting organisation should prepare a safeguarding statement that should feature in any publicity about the role. In addition, the organisation should include a statement advising that a CRB disclosure will be required as part of the recruitment process.

## Obtaining references

Prior to the interview references should be sought and where appropriate, relevant qualifications or previous experience should be confirmed.

In the event that someone is being interviewed who has indicated she/he has previous qualifications/experience in Pole Sports, the recruiting organisations should request, in writing on formal headed paper, confirmation from IPSF/PDC of: -

- IPSF/PDC membership
- Date of last CRB disclosure from residing country
- Any IPSF/PDC qualifications/awards
- Any known reason for not employing/appointing the named person.

Seeking references prior to interview is always preferable in order that any concerns can be addressed with the applicant. An applicant who does not agree to their current employer being approached should be advised that in the event they are the preferred candidate for the job, they will be required to address any issues raised by the current employer prior to their appointment being confirmed.

In addition to the current employer, references should also be sought from any previous organisations where the applicant worked in a paid or voluntary position with children. It is useful to make use of the IPSF reference form for positions working with children to ensure the referee covers all the required information.

## Interviewing

Where a position involves significant contact with young people a formal interview should be held according to correct procedures and protocol. The purpose of the interview is to carry out an assessment of the qualities of candidates in relation to the requirements of the job and their suitability to work with children. There should always be a face-to-face interview, even if there is only one candidate.

Additional information can be requested at interview to support the details contained in the application form and address/ask questions relating to any information disclosed in the self-declaration of convictions. It is also important to explore any discrepancies between the information on the application form and the information obtained in pre-interview checks.

Where the post involves working with children, it is always preferable that there is a minimum of two interviewers to allow for a full assessment of the candidate's responses. The members of an interview panel must have attended safeguarding awareness training as a minimum and have the authority to make the recruitment decision.

It is important to agree in advance the process for the interview and the questions that will be asked. These should include a number of questions that focus on suitability to work with children. These questions should aim to identify underlying attitudes and may require the interview panel members to be probing in their questioning techniques. Possible ways to obtain this type of information include asking the applicant how they would behave in an actual situation involving young people, or to question why they believe specific aspects of the safeguarding policy are important.

The interview panel should take the opportunity to address any concerns arising from the information on the application form or as part of a reference. The panel should also confirm the details made in the self-declaration are correct and the willingness to complete a CRB disclosure.

## **Verification processes**

Anyone recruiting people to work with children should adopt a checklist to be applied following the selection process, without satisfactory completion of which a firm employment offer should not be made. The checklist should include:

- Verification of identity
- Confirmation of the right to work in their respective country
- Verification of qualifications

To avoid any unnecessary delays, all candidates should be instructed to bring their identity documents to the interview. Candidates must also bring with them any qualification and awards certificates.

## **Identity checks**

It is vital to be sure that the person is who he or she claims to be. As identity verification is required as part of the CRB process, the Welfare Officer or other nominated CRB designated person should conduct the identity verification process using the CRB Identity Verification Form (IVF). Original identity documents must be provided and verification must be conducted in the presence of the applicant to ensure they are the person shown in photographic evidence. The IVF can be found on the IPSF site.

## ***ISA Registration & CRB Disclosures***

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 has provided the legislative framework for introducing the Vetting and Barring Scheme. Although the Independent Safeguarding Authority has been established and is now taking barring decisions.

This Scheme will require anyone working or volunteering with children and/or vulnerable adults in a regulated activity to register, unless they are self employed. For the purpose of Pole Sports, regulated activity would cover any activity that involves contact with children or vulnerable adults frequently (once a month or more) and/or intensively (takes place on three or more days in a 30-day period) and/or overnight. This is likely to cover the majority of Pole Sports activity. Once registered the individual will be subject to continuous monitoring and updating of their status. In other words, once an individual is registered, any new information that becomes available will be reviewed to determine whether the individual presents a risk to children and/or vulnerable adults.

Enhanced CRB disclosures are also required in line with the IPSF Use of CRB Disclosures and Recruitment of ex offenders Policy contained in the Appendices (members operating in Scotland or Northern Ireland should complete disclosures through the relevant NGB). The IPSF Case Referral Management Group (CRMG) is responsible for making the recruitment decision based on the information contained on the disclosure. The IPSF registered organisations must abide by the IPSF recruitment decisions.

The IPSF requires all members who are in regulated activity to complete an enhanced CRB disclosure through IPSF every three years. Where an organisation is recruiting a new member of staff or volunteers who is already a member of IPSF and has a current disclosure, a new IPSF CRB Disclosure is optional.

If a CRB disclosure is required, or where the successful candidate has not previously completed a IPSF CRB disclosure, the individual should be provided with the required application at the earliest opportunity. The disclosure should ideally be obtained before an individual commences a role within the club. PDC registered clubs will be able to confirm the status of disclosure applications using the IPSF online membership system.

Although an individual may be permitted to commence aspects of the role that do not involve contact with children (and/or vulnerable adults), the club must ensure the disclosure is approved before an appointment is confirmed. The IPSF will contact the recruiting club without delay in the event that the CRB disclosure contains information of concern.

CRB disclosures for children

The IPSF requires anyone over the age of 14 who is in a position of trust to complete a CRB disclosure. This does not automatically include young people taking the 'Level 0' Course, unless they take on training or a supervisory role within their club.

## ***Use of Criminal Records Disclosures and Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy***

### **1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE**

- 1.1 This policy outlines The IPSF policy on the recruitment of staff or volunteers with criminal convictions, the use of criminal record disclosures and  
The storage and use of information on convictions.
- 1.2 The appropriate bodies for these checks are as follows: -  
Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) (England and Wales)  
Disclosure Scotland/CRBS (Scotland)  
Assist NI (Northern Ireland)
- 1.3 Anyone involved in recruitment must also be familiar with the recruitment procedures contained in the IPSF Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy 2009.
- 1.4 The following legislation advises this policy: -  
Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974  
Data Protection Act 1998
- 1.5 This policy applies to all members and volunteers. A copy of this policy should be made available to any job applicants at the outset of the recruitment process where a CRB disclosure will be required as part of the recruitment process.

### **2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 Existing legislation ensures that ex-offenders are not required to disclose to prospective employers, convictions defined as 'spent'. Any applications for posts working with children and/or vulnerable adults or a managerial positions that would give influence over one or more people working in a role with children and/or vulnerable adults is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, in other words, all cautions, reprimands, final warnings and convictions must be declared, even those that are considered 'spent'. Thus, it is the IPSF policy to require these job applicants (including voluntary positions) to disclose any 'unspent' criminal convictions as part of their application.
- 2.2 The IPSF is commencing a rolling programme of retrospective checks on existing members or volunteers in any positions covered by the above description and will require members or volunteers to consent to disclosure on request. Failure to comply with a request for disclosure could lead to suspension.
- 2.3 The IPSF will not discriminate unfairly against applicants with a criminal record. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar an applicant from working for the IPSF or any affiliate organisation. The nature of a disclosed conviction and its relevance to the post in question, will be considered however any cautions, reprimands, final warnings relating to offences against children are likely to be incompatible with working or volunteering for the IPSF. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. age of offender at the time of a conviction), the Case Referral Management Group may offer an individual the alternative of a risk assessment.

- 2.4 Where a conviction has been disclosed in an individual's application or on a Coach education exam application, the Case Referral Management Group will discuss the matter and make a recommendation to the appropriate club/individual involved in the recruitment decision. Failure to reveal information relating to unspent convictions that later shows up on a CRB disclosure could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment/voluntary role or the retention of a coaching qualification.
- 2.5 The IPSF uses the CRB disclosure services to obtain information to enable it to assess the suitability of applicants. The IPSF complies fully with the CRB code of practice and does not discriminate unfairly against any subject of a CRB disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.
- 2.6 The IPSF complies with the CRB code of practice in relation to the secure storage, handling, use, retention & disposal of CRB disclosures and disclosure information and with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **3. APPOINTMENTS REQUIRING A CRB DISCLOSURE**

- 3.1 An appointee will be requested to submit to a criminal records disclosure request only where the assessment of the role identifies a requirement to work with children, vulnerable adults or influence over others in this position. For posts where a criminal records disclosure will be required, the further particulars of the post will contain an indication that a disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position. All subjects of a disclosure request will be made aware of the relevant Code of Practice. Any information revealed in a disclosure that is likely to lead to the withdrawal of a job offer will be discussed with the applicant before the offer is withdrawn.
- 3.2 **Storage & Access:** Information obtained from a disclosure will not be stored on an employee/member's personnel file but will be stored separately in lockable storage with access limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties. The only information stored on a personal file will be the record of the date of issue of a disclosure, the name of the subject, the type of disclosure requested, and the unique reference number of the disclosure and the details of the recruitment decision taken. This information is necessary for monitoring purposes. A record will be maintained of all those to whom disclosure information has been revealed as it is a criminal offence to pass this information to anyone who is not entitled to receive it.
- 3.3 **Usage:** Disclosure information will only be used for the specific purpose for which it was requested and for which the applicant's full consent will have been obtained.
- 3.4 **Retention:** Once a recruitment (or other relevant) decision has been made, disclosure information will not be stored for longer than necessary and will be destroyed within six months.

**Disposal:** Once the retention period has elapsed, the IPSF will ensure that any disclosure information is destroyed.

### ***Monitoring and Appraisal***

All staff and volunteers should be given the opportunity to receive feedback, either through a formal appraisal or more informally through mentoring. Although this is good practice for any voluntary or paid position, appraisals are essential for positions that involve significant contact with young people. Appraisals should be offered at regular intervals, initially at the end of a probation period and thereafter at yearly intervals. An appraisal can help to establish learning needs, review targets and consider any concerns.

All IPSF registered clubs must put in place a procedure to deal with complaints over staff and volunteers. Parents and all members should be made aware of the procedures for raising a complaint or concern. Provision should be made in the club rules or constitution to allow complaints and disciplinary procedures to be implemented.

## ***Safeguarding and Training***

'Every Child Matters' identifies that basic skills and knowledge are required by these adults, both paid and voluntary, to meet these identified outcomes. As part of the Children's Workforce Strategy, the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce identifies the following six categories as fundamental requirements for those who work with young people:

- Effective communication and engagement with children, young people and families.
- Child and young person development.
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child.
- Supporting transitions.
- Multi-agency working.
- Sharing information

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 (4.15) states that all training in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children should create an ethos which values working collaboratively with others, respects diversity (including culture, race and disability), promotes equality, is child-centred and promotes the participation of children and families in the safeguarding processes.

IPSF has developed a Safeguarding and Protecting Children Awareness module that was designed to meet the ECM Common Core of Skills and Knowledge.

It is a requirement that anyone working or volunteering with children should complete a Safeguarding and Protecting Children Awareness training course. It is however mandatory for all Club Welfare Officers to have completed the Safeguarding and Protecting training and a IPSF specific version of the NSPCC CPSU Time to Listen course.

## ***Club Welfare Officer***

### **Terms of Reference**

- Assist the club to put in place policies and implementation plans for safeguarding and promoting welfare of young people.
- Be the first point of contact for club staff and volunteers, young people and parents for any issue concerning safeguarding, poor practice or potential/alleged abuse
- Ensure that all incidents are correctly reported and referred out in accordance with IPSF guidelines
- Ensure that all relevant club members have the opportunity to access appropriate safeguarding training
- Ensure that IPSF procedures for recruitment of staff and volunteers are followed and all appropriate existing staff or volunteers have up-to-date CRB disclosures
- Maintain local contact details for Children's Social Care Services, the Police and Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB)
- Ensure that codes of conduct are in place for club staff and volunteers, young people and parents
- Advise club management on safeguarding issues
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained and information is only shared on a 'need to know' basis

### **Core Skills**

- Basic administration and record maintenance
- Child-centred approach
- Communication skills
- Confidence in relation to referring cases externally
- Ability to ensure policy and procedures are effectively implemented

## **Training Requirements**

- IPSF Safeguarding and Protecting Children Awareness Module or equivalent (scUK, LSCB training or recognised training within another NGB)
- NSPCC CPSU Time to Listen training for designated persons for child protection/welfare in sport (Club Level)
- Must also be CRB/ISA checked
- Must submit Welfare Officer details to the Regional Secretary, Regional Welfare Officer and IPSF Lead Officer
- Must submit resignation in writing when post ends

The above courses are 3-hour training modules that are essential for welfare officers. The additional courses are additional recommended training:

- IPSF Club Management Awareness Module (includes equality training)
- A Club for All (Equality training)

## ***Regional Welfare Officer***

### **Terms of Reference**

- Assist the Region and technical committees to put in place policies and implementation plans for safeguarding and promoting welfare of young people.
- Ensure that technical committees and event organisers are aware of the requirement to have a nominated welfare officer at all Regional events (This person must be contactable at all times throughout the event. An appropriately trained welfare officer must accompany any trips that involve an over-night stay. This role may be taken on by any one of the existing staff/volunteers, providing they have completed the required training).
- Offer advice and support clubs in relation to safeguarding issues
- Ensure that all incidents are correctly reported and referred out in accordance with IPSF guidelines
- Help ensure adequate provision of IPSF/Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) safeguarding training courses
- Deliver (following training) or attend Regional based courses for Club level Time to Listen module
- Ensure that IPSF procedures for recruitment of staff and volunteers are followed and all appropriate existing Regional staff or volunteers have up-to-date CRB disclosures
- Maintain local contact details for Children's Social Care Services, the Police and Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB)
- Ensure that codes of conduct are in place at Regional events for staff, and volunteers, young people and parents
- Sit on Regional management committee to advise on safeguarding issues
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained and information is only shared on a 'need to know' basis

### **Core Skills**

- Basic administration and record maintenance
- Child-centred approach and implementation plan across the Region
- Communication skills
- Confidence in relation to referring cases externally
- Ability to ensure policy and procedures are effectively implemented
- Ability to influence key people and ensure ownership of policy and implementation plans across the Region

### **Training Requirements**

- IPSF Safeguarding and Protecting Children Awareness Module or equivalent (scUK, LSCB training or recognised training within another NGB)
- NSPCC CPSU Time to Listen training for designated persons for child protection/welfare in sport (Regional Level)
- Optional: -
- Tutor training to deliver IPSF CP modules and Child Protection in Sport "Time to Listen" Club Level Module (if appropriate prior knowledge and experience)

The above courses are 3-hour training modules that are essential for welfare officers. The additional courses are additional recommended training:

- IPSF Club Management Awareness Module (includes equality training)
- A Club for All (Equality training)

## **National Lead Officer**

### **Terms of Reference**

- Take a lead role in ensuring there is a safeguarding policy in place that is mandatory for all staff, members and volunteers and plans in place to drive its implementation.
- Ensure any required Safeguarding Standards are achieved
- Take a lead role in managing, monitoring and reviewing the safeguarding policy and implementation plans
- Ensure that IPSF members, employees, committees and event organisers are aware of their responsibilities in respect of safeguarding
- Be available to advise and support to clubs and technical committees in relation to safeguarding and welfare issues
- Ensure that all incidents are correctly managed and referred out in accordance with IPSF (Home Country) guidelines
- Ensure there is a strategy in place for the provision of safeguarding learning opportunities and support its delivery, including the provision of CPD for welfare officers
- Take a lead role in identification, support and monitoring of Welfare Officers
- Ensure that IPSF (or appropriate Home Country) internal procedures for recruitment of staff and volunteers are appropriate and existing National staff and volunteers complete a CRB disclosures and attend safeguarding awareness training at least every three years
- Establish National links with NSPCC CPSU or equivalent and represent the governing body at external safeguarding meetings
- Ensure access to national and local contact details for Children's Social Care Services, the Police and LSCB
- Ensure that the safeguarding policies and procedures are well published among all staff, members (including athletes), volunteers and parents
- Ensure that codes of conduct are in place at National events for staff and volunteers, young people and parents
- Sit on relevant National committees to advise on safeguarding issues
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained and information is only shared on a 'need to know' basis

### **Core Skills**

- Knowledge of key legislation and government guidance on safeguarding and protecting children
- Understanding the roles of external agencies in terms of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people
- Ability to manage systems for administration and record maintenance
- Child-centred approach
- Communication skills
- Confidence in relation to referring cases externally
- Ability to ensure policy and procedures are effectively implemented
- Ability to influence key people and ensure ownership or policy and implementation plan across the governing body

### **Training Requirements**

- IPSF Safeguarding and Protecting Children Awareness Module or equivalent (Home Country, scUK, LSCB training or recognised training within another NGB)
- CPSU Time to Listen training for lead officers or Home Country equivalent Appropriate Equality training

## **IPSF Child Protection Case Referral Management Group (CRMG)**

The IPSF CRMG has the authority to decide on the direction of cases involving the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The case route will be determined by considering if a case reaches a certain threshold, i.e. would a case be considered potential poor practice or potential abuse.

The IPSF Safeguarding and Compliance Officer will be the first point of contact for all Welfare related cases. On receipt of any concerns, allegations or information that may cause Pole Sports to reasonably believe an individual may pose a risk to young people, the CRMG will be consulted on the referral route. In some instances, this may be done by telephone.

The CRMG will be made up of the following: -



- Chair of Ethics Committee
- IPSF Safeguarding and Compliance Officer
- Director of Coach/Judge Education
- Relevant IPSF Managers (when appropriate)
- Child Protection Advisors: - Individuals with relevant experience in Child Protection. Experience may involve Social Services or Police background, Specific experience of child protection in sport, Legal expertise in Children's Law

## **Terms of Reference**

1. The members of the CRMG will have experience in dealing with welfare issues.
2. The CRMG will be managed and co-ordinated by the IPSF Safeguarding and Compliance Officer, who will be the first point of contact for any referral.
3. The CRMG will be chaired by the Chair of the Ethics and Welfare Committee
4. The CRMG will operate independently from the PRESIDENT and disciplinary panel members to ensure the separation of each of the four stages of the process; referral, suspension, disciplinary and appeals.

## **Procedures**

1. The CRMG will determine the referral route for all cases that deal with the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Consideration will be given to any signed written evidence including any written representation from the accused. (Any preliminary collection of information will be carried out by the IPSF Safeguarding and Compliance Officer)
2. The PRESIDENT will sit outside this group and cannot intervene in any decisions unless there has been concern raised about a significant prior relationship, connection or interest between the accused and a member of the group.
3. Where abuse is suspected and any delay in action may compromise the welfare of a child/children, IPSF is authorised to inform the relevant Children's Social Care Services or Police.
4. Members of the CRMG must meet or be consulted within ten working days of the receipt of any referral where it is unclear if a case should be considered potential poor practice. Although it is not the responsibility of the panel to decide if abuse has taken place, the panel must quickly decide if the case needs to be referred to social services or the police.
5. Any case that has already been referred to Children's Social Care Services or Police will only be considered in relation to whether suspension from the IPSF is required. The CRMG will only reconsider referral of the matter on completion of any investigation or action by Children's Social Care Services or Police. Anyone who is convicted of a child protection related offence or receives a caution in respect of an offence will be deemed to be in breach of the Association Rules.
6. In cases of potential poor practice or where convictions information is received from a CRB disclosure, the group may decide on an appropriate course of action. The matter will be passed back to the IPSF Case Manager to manage the implementation of the agreed actions. Any actions will be reached after a fair appraisal of the case and will be in proportion with the severity of the incident. Previous allegations of a similar nature will also be considered.

### **POSSIBLE ACTIONS**

- a) Recommendation that no further action be taken
  - b) A warning and remedial action plan
  - c) Referral out/back to Club/studio/competition, Region, Line Manager etc to deal with advice on how to proceed
  - d) Further Enquiries/interviews
  - e) Referral to PRESIDENT for full disciplinary hearing
  - f) Recommendation made to PRESIDENT to suspend member
  - g) Devolvement to independent review panel
  - h) Referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA)
1. Members of the CRMG should declare immediately (to the group) any significant prior relationship, connection or interest which could disqualify them from any discussion on the referral pathway of a case.
  2. Any concerns over the independence of a CRMG member on a case-to-case basis should be raised with the PRESIDENT. This can be done without fear of victimisation or reprisal. This or any other valid reason can be just cause for the PRESIDENT to request the resignation of the member from the group.
  3. All group decisions will be communicated to the PRESIDENT for information and any necessary further action.
  4. An individual has the right to appeal against any course of action determined by the CRMG. This must be done within ten working days of receipt of the letter informing the individual of the decision reached by the group. If a

member of the group is unhappy with the final decision taken by the group, the matter should be referred to the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) for an independent determination.

5. The CRMG can choose to call on Legal or other advice where deemed necessary.
6. The CRMG will carry out a case monitoring function.

All case information is regarded as highly confidential and should not be disclosed outside the CRMG except when it is relevant to inform an external agency.

## **Transporting Policy and Procedures**

### ***Transporting Gymnasts***

The following guidance relates to coaches who transport athletes to training or events/competitions. Additional guidance is provided for the official provision of transport by a club for away events.

Gymnasts are required to train a large number of hours to achieve high levels of performance therefore great commitment is required not only from the athletes but also from their parents. In the past, it has often been the case that well-meaning coaches or officials have provided transport to members of their clubs to assist parents. However, it has been identified that some adults in the sport have used this as an opportunity to get young people alone and abuse has occurred. As a result, IPSF Safeguarding Policy requires that IPSF Coaches do not take children alone on car journeys, except in \*unforeseen circumstances.

The following are practical suggestions to help alleviate transport problems:

- Make parents aware (preferably when their child joins the club) that it is the coaches' responsibility to coach and not to provide transport for their child
- When a child accepts a place in a squad, the parent should be asked to commit to ensuring the child attends all training sessions and to be responsible for making the necessary transport arrangements
- Encourage parents to share transport with other parents
- Transport athletes in groups

It is unacceptable for coaches to transport one child alone and in the case of transporting a group of athletes, best practice would require two responsible adults in the car. However, in exceptional circumstances where this is not possible, and subject to prior consent from all relevant parents, a coach could transport a group of athletes without another adult present. This is subject to the following conditions:

- The driver must ensure there are central pick-up and drop-off points to ensure they are not alone with a child.
- The driver should also provide parents with full details of any planned breaks in the journey and departure and arrival times.
- Gymnasts must be seated in the back of the car with booster seats if required.
- The Club Welfare Officer should be made aware of the arrangements.

In the case of athletes attending National squad training, parents should be encouraged to team up with the parents of another squad member who lives closest to them. On occasion that the parents are unable to provide transport, a coach or official could then transport the athletes as a pair.

\*Unforeseen would only apply in the event of an accident or where something unexpected has happened and there is no other alternative but to take a child alone in the car and to fail to act would put the child at risk of harm. Where these situations are unavoidable and whenever possible the full consent of either the Welfare Officer, Head coach or Official in the club and/or the child's parents should be obtained.

\*In the case of international travel and for financial reasons, the exception of a coach also acting as a temporary guardian, where there is written consent from both parent/legal guardian and athlete, the IPSF may grant special permission to allow this exception on a case to case basis.

## **Whistle Blowing Policy and Procedures**

### ***Whistle Blowing***

Safeguarding children and young people requires everyone to be committed to the highest possible standards of openness, integrity and accountability. The IPSF supports an environment where people feel free to raise their concerns with the knowledge that all concerns will be taken seriously.

The term 'whistle blowing' is often used in such circumstances to describe the raising of a concern about practices, procedures or conduct of an individual. In Pole Sports context a whistleblower may be:

A coach or official

A athlete

A parent

A member of the public

Concerns should be raised without delay to either the Club Welfare Officer or the IPSF Lead Officer or IPSF Safeguarding and Compliance Officer. The earlier concerns are reported, the easier it will be to take action.

Anyone reporting a concern should provide as much information and detail as possible. This could include:

- Names of the people involved
- Other witnesses
- Dates of events
- Any other relevant documentation

IPSF understands that whistleblowers are often very reluctant to report concerns. Thus, the IPSF recognises that whistleblowers may wish to raise concerns in confidence. In these circumstances, the identity of the whistleblower will be kept confidential. Any subsequent reason why disclosure may be required will be discussed in detail with the whistleblower before any action is taken.

It must be recognised that concerns that are reported anonymously are frequently very difficult to investigate. The decision whether to investigate an anonymous allegation will be made by the CRMG based on the seriousness of the concerns and the credibility of the referral and the likelihood of identifying others who can confirm the allegations. Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

All concerns raised under this procedure will be treated seriously and a decision made about whether or not an investigation is appropriate. Depending upon the nature of the matter it may be referred to the police. In these circumstances, the whistleblower may be asked to provide a written statement and give evidence to the police and/or at a IPSF hearing. The IPSF will provide support to the whistleblower during this process.

The IPSF will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect anyone who has raised a concern in good faith. Anyone who is found to have victimised or harassed a whistleblower will face disciplinary action. Anyone who raises concerns known to be untrue may also be subject to disciplinary action.