



BRITISH MARTIAL ARTS
& BOXING ASSOCIATION

EST. 2012

TO HIGH PLACES BY NARROW ROADS

NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING POLICY

April 2023-2024 Edition

Next Review: 30th April 2024

1a. Chief Executive's Introduction

Over the past decade, British Martial Arts & Boxing Association has arguably done more than most to champion the provision of robust Safeguarding in Martial Arts. We've fiercely worked to introduce national policies, to upskill instructor and volunteer workforces with training. We've completed thousands of enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service Checks, promoted the Safeguarding Code in Martial Arts (SCiMA) and launched a flagship Club Colour's Programme for schools of excellence.

Whilst we're disappointed so many other peer organisations in our sector have failed to adequately safeguard their members, we remain determined to build on our successes and to ensure Safeguarding continues to enjoy as much resource, staffing and investment as it requires.

Safeguarding is everybody's concern. Nobody is above it and nobody may excuse themselves from the obligations it imposes on us all. Associations, officials, instructors, volunteers, parents – we all play a crucial role.

We've designed our national safeguarding policy to be transparent and comprehensive. It should offer a detailed look at best practice, poor practice, our reporting processes, obligations by each category of member and how we will respond if we are concerned about the welfare of a child or adults at risk.

I encourage you, whatever your stake in martial arts, to familiarise yourself with this document in its entirety, to ask questions where you are unsure and to scrutinise the suitability of our measures if you feel they are not sufficient.

Together we will continue to make martial arts safer for those who love it as dearly as we do.

Sincerely,



Giovanni Soffietto

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

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Call 999 and ask for the Police. For more information, visit bmaba.org.uk/safeguarding

1b. Terminology

Throughout our safeguarding policy we may use certain terminology which is not always universal outside of the BMABA. To ensure everyone is fully aware of what or who we're referencing, please refer to the below terminology;

Us, We, Our, Including Association or Foundation

This refers to our organisation collectively. For clarity, this is the British Martial Arts & Boxing Association (BMABA Limited, Reg. 10676965). For this reason, this safeguarding policy is universally applied across all areas of our operations to ensure consistency. The term Foundation refers to the association's charitable arm and either both incorporates our sister organisation (#MartialArtsDoneRight) which is controlled centrally by the core association.

Instructors, Coaches, Senseis, Staff also including the terms **Registered Club**

This refers to any registered instructor under our organisation. This may be a Sensei, Coach, Instructor or a Club as an entity in it's own right – be it an unincorporated association or a legally registered business or charity.

Club(s)

Refers to the collective group of instructor(s) and associated staff, volunteers or involved parties at a 'local' (see definition) level. This includes unincorporated groups and limited entities. All clubs shall be assumed to have a lead instructor, whom is ultimately responsible for management of the group.

Participant and Student

This is a collective term used for any person actively participating in training within a registered club.

Parent and Carer

Refers to any parent or carer of a participant under the age of 18 within a BMABA registered club.

Young Person(s), Child(ren)

This refers to any person under the age of 18.

Adults at risk and Vulnerable Adult

Refers to anybody legally classed as being an adults at risk of harm or exploitation

Vulnerable Groups

Refers to any of the above two groups as a collective, where referring more generally to safeguarding objectives, management or best practice.

Member refers to anyone holding active BMABA registration or membership – inclusive of both instructing staff and participants.

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Locally

Is a term used to describe matters of management, best practice and safeguarding at a club level (i.e: decisions and actions taken by the club and not the association)

Nationally

Is a term used to describe matters of management, best practice and safeguarding at a national, association-wide level (i.e: decisions and actions taken by the association and/or Foundation and not the individual clubs)

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2. National Safeguarding Policy

2A – INTRODUCTION & STATEMENT OF INTENT

We firmly believe that martial arts training presents a positive opportunity for everybody to learn self defence, improve self confidence and develop as an individual. Every participant is entitled to do so in a safe and properly managed environment under the guidance of leaders who have their best interest at heart and are suitably qualified and trained to deliver on this core mission. Accordingly, everyone involved in the delivery of martial arts has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that, when given responsibility for young persons or adults at risk, the highest standards of professionalism and care are exercised at all times. This same principle applies more broadly to all participants, including adults outside of the definition of 'at risk'.

The Association is committed to implementing policies so that everyone within the chain of command accept their responsibilities to safeguard children and / or Adults at risk from harm and abuse. This means following pre-decided procedures when working with, supervising or teaching vulnerable groups and reporting any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities without delay.

The aim of this policy is to promote best practice providing vulnerable groups within any club registered under our Association the appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of a leader. It is also to allow our members (instructors, coaches, senseis and associated supervising members) the opportunity to remain informed and confident on their obligations and requirements in relation to the safeguarding of children and / or Adults at risk.

Whilst the association takes all possible steps to safeguard and protect the welfare of vulnerable groups within the club or care of a registered or affiliated member, as the association has no legal or compulsory jurisdiction in relation to the club's operation, and as the association has no legal ownership or control over the recruitment of teaching staff or the club's operations, the ultimate responsibility for safeguarding must remain with the club. The individual club and lead instructor are expected to comply with all of our safeguarding policies but must also take their own necessary steps to ensure they safeguard vulnerable groups effectively at local club level, including the completion of a safeguarding qualification and the implementation of a safeguarding policy specific to their club. Every club must have a qualified and clearly designated safeguarding lead (also referred to as a welfare officer or by our definition - DSL) who takes ultimate responsibility for policy and training within the club.

This shall be considered a condition of membership without exception and any member found not to be doing so shall be liable to expulsion from the association, in line with our association guidelines and legal terms and conditions.

Key Considerations

- A child/young person is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children's Act 1989)
- Whilst the ultimate responsibility for safeguarding at club level must rest with the club's lead instructor / safeguarding lead, safeguarding is not specific to just coaches. Volunteers, staff

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and other adults within the club should be aware of their safeguarding obligations without question, and should know how to report concerns they may have

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and it's a matter that must be addressed with the gravity and seriousness it deserves
- If there is any uncertainty interpreting our National Safeguarding Policy the Lead Instructor / Safeguarding Officer should make contact with our head office without delay, where free and impartial advice shall be offered

2B – POLICY STATEMENT

Our organisation is committed to the following in respect of safeguarding vulnerable groups and will expect individual member(s) and club(s) affiliated with us to maintain the following priorities in relation to safeguarding at all times;

- The welfare of children and adults at risk is paramount
- All children and Adults at risk, regardless of age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial original, religious belief, sexual identify and/or discipline being practiced should be able to participate in martial arts, boxing, combat and/or self defence in a fun, safe environment.
- All members must take all reasonable steps to protect vulnerable groups and persons from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment. Furthermore, they must treat them with respect, dignity and care at all times
- Any suspicions or allegations of poor practice and/or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately, with proper records being kept
- All club lead instructors (or equivalents) and further instructors – assistant or full (or equivalents thereof) shall be designated that responsibility based upon suitability and on the condition that he/she will meet the requirements set by the association in regard to safeguarding and best practice. He/she will also be made aware of the association's guidelines on safeguarding and must be made aware of the club's local procedure in relation to this matter also.
- All instructors of all levels (and equivalents) are required to work to maintain a positive, open, transparent and professional relationship with the parents and / or guardians of any students, to promote a culture of good standard and community welfare throughout
- The uptake of and refresher of suitable safeguarding qualifications is essential for all persons coming into unsupervised contact with vulnerable groups

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2C – MONITORING & REVIEWING OF POLICY & PROCEDURES

The implementation of procedures within the club should be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure up to date best practice. This is the responsibility of the club and/or the safeguarding lead and is a condition of membership. The club's designated welfare officer should regularly report progress, challenges, difficulties, achievement gaps and areas where changes are required to the club's committee or the associated management board.

As an association and foundation, we shall ensure national safeguarding policies and procedures are monitored and reviewed to make sure they are up to date and fit for purpose. The association's chief executive team and/or lead welfare officer will regularly report back to the committee and wider membership base on progress, challenges, difficulties, achievement gaps and areas where changes are required to better manage our own procedures and processes.

Policies, both locally and nationally, must be reviewed at minimum every 2 years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or relevant legislation.

It will remain the responsibility of the club to keep on top of any changes in law, legislation or structure, however the association agrees to do what it can to try and encourage good practice, including it's goals of ensuring affordable, up to date safeguarding training is readily available.

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3. Promoting Best Practice

3A – INTRODUCTION

In order to provide vulnerable groups with the best possible experience and opportunities within martial arts, boxing, combat and self defence training everyone must operate within the accepted ethical framework as set out in the association's charter, association's guidelines and the instructor's code of conduct agreement.

As it is often not easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse it will not be a responsibility of the club and/or lead instructor (or equivalent) to make a judgement about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is, however, their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns, regardless of how minor, in relation to the welfare of a vulnerable person as explained in this document.

The Association and Foundation shall, on a national basis, do all that is reasonably possible to promote best practice by way of guidelines, articles and support to its members. As the association has no legal or compulsory jurisdiction over the affiliated club, and as the association has no legal or regulatory control over the clubs operations and / or structure it may not be reasonable to expect the Association to be able to readily identify instances of poor practice unless concerns are brought forward by other affiliated or non-affiliated members however we shall endeavour to do so through our national records database, community intelligence, mystery student and other safeguarding measures. Therefore, it is paramount the club has solid safeguarding procedures in place, including club rules and guidelines to ensure everyone is clear on their expectations and responsibilities.

The association shall be expected to introduce reasonable checks and balances to encourage and promote best practice, and to raise the alarm where-ever it suspects an instructor or club to be failing to take their safeguarding obligations seriously.

3B – BEST PRACTICE

All registered members shall adhere to the below principles and action in relation to best practice with regards to safeguarding children and / or Adults at risk;

- Treat all young persons aged under 18 years of age, and all adults at risk, with respect, dignity and courtesy as would be expected to all other club members.
- Treat all children and / or Adults at risk equally.
- Always put the welfare of children and / or Adults at risk first.
- Always work in an open environment avoiding any isolation, unobserved situation, encouraging an open and transparent club community.
- Keep physical contact to an absolute minimum.
- Never be alone with a child and / or Adults at risk.

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- Where physical contact is essential as part of the safe and structured learning process of the art, discipline or sport being practiced, the instructor and/or teaching person must only do so with the consent of the child and/or Adult at risk, remaining appropriate, non-intrusive and ensuring that where physical contact is essential (for example, when assisting in an essential physical process for the purposes of safety, such as breakfalls) ensuring there is always two fully vetted and suitable adults present at all times.
- The involvement of parents / guardians is encouraged wherever possible, provided safeguarding of children and / or Adults at risk remains the top priority and that any adult may not be given the opportunity to cause harm, distress or abuse to any children and / or Adult at risk present.
- Not take photographs, videos or create any other forms of media featuring any children and / or Adults at risk without written consent from the carer, guardian or parent in advance.
- Ensure that if the club embarks on any extra-curricular activities, safeguarding of children and / or Adults at risk shall remain a top priority and furthermore, if classes are mixed in gender, both a vetted male and female member of the club must be present when out of the dojo.
- Remain an excellent role model both in and out of the dojo. This includes not smoking, drinking alcohol or using any foul language in front of any children and / or Adults at risk.
- Ensure that any contact via social media or other digital formats are recorded and minimised. No instructor and/or club official should have any communication with children and / or Adults at risk via any forms of social media.
- Recognise the development needs and capacity of the children and / or Adults at risk in the class and not risk sacrificing welfare or safety for the club or instructor's personal gain.
- In relation to the above this also means avoiding excessive training and / or competitions and not pushing the student if they are not fully confident.
- Secure written parental consent for the club to act in loco parentis, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises, ensuring medical conditions and pre-existing injuries and allergies are recorded.
- Keep thorough records of any injuries or near misses that have occurred, along with details of any treatment given and further communication had with parents / guardians and/or children and / or Adults at risk.
- Follow association guidelines and other association policy relating to good practice or best practice
- In conjunction with the club and/or lead instructor's (or equivalent's) responsibilities to ensure best practice, Association shall also have a responsibility to ensure best practice in its administration and management of membership expectations and licensing provisions.
- Accordingly, the Association shall do all possible to protect and safeguard the welfare and safety of children and / or Adults at risk participating in the clubs of its registered members.
- Where a registered member does not license or register a student and/or their club in full, the association's ability to maintain good practice may be limited. Therefore, it is

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reminded that the club and/or instructor (or equivalent) must ensure they are in-keeping with association guidelines and must ensure they take ultimate responsibility for the safeguarding of its members regardless of whether or not they are registered students within the association.

Accordingly, the association shall engage the following best practice principles and actions with regards to children and / or Adults at risk safeguarding measures;

- Screening of all members prior to membership being granted to check against our known records of reported dishonesty or complaints, and to verify to the best of our ability the grade held by the applicant is genuine and suitable as to warrant membership and any subsequent licensing.
- The association shall keep records that, in the event of any complaint or criminal proceedings in relation to the safeguarding of children and / or Adults at risk, shall allow the relevant authorities to identify the member concerned. Furthermore, the association shall do all possible to ensure that in such a circumstance the original declarations, sign up forms or disclosure of any information relating the member's competency to maintain the safeguarding of children and / or Adults at risk within that members club may be produced on request.
- The association will endeavour to ensure that the welfare, safety and safeguarding of children and / or Adults at risk shall remain it's highest priority and that such an objective shall be placed ahead of commercial or financial reward without question.
- The association shall do all possible to encourage members to ensure they have relevant safeguarding training and qualifications, including the re-enforcing of incentives for clubs whom take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously, as well as penalties for clubs whom do not
- The association shall ensure that all students are offered a Student Liaison Officer that shall be DBS checked and hold a relevant safeguarding qualification, who may act as a joint welfare officer. This Student Liaison Officer shall be available via a digital format and contact details shall be provided for student's uses, however this will relay somewhat on the local club and/or instructor (or equivalent) distributing such information.
- The association shall follow it's own procedures and guidelines in line with the association charter to further develop the participation of safe, professional and enjoyable martial arts, boxing, self defence and combat training.
- The association shall promote best practice and do all possible to reinforce the importance of clubs and/or instructors (or equivalents) holding suitable safeguarding qualifications and making safeguarding procedures for their club (or equivalent).
- The association shall endeavour to, where possible and without guarantee, offer public records relating to the status of safeguarding qualifications and/or professional certification relating to it's members, so that any member of the public may be able to make a reasonable assessment as to the suitability of any member of the association. On request, a detailed examination of an instructor's safeguarding competencies (safeguarding qualifications and DBS check) will be freely available, and the association shall keep records of all documents presented for verification of these status.

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3C – POOR PRACTICE

The following (which is not exhaustive) shall be considered poor practice in relation to the safeguarding of children and / or Adults at risk, and any registered member must avoid without exception;

- Spending un-necessarily excessive amounts of time alone with a child and / or Adults at risk away from others.
- Making un-necessary or excessive amounts of physical contact at any point
- Transporting or accompanying any children and / or Adults at risk home and/or to any other port of call via any mode of transport alone
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay either during class or before / after
- Allowing or engaging in any inappropriate touching of any form, or permitting any such activity from any other member of teaching staff, volunteers, visitors, guardians parents or other students.
- Allowing any children and / or Adults at risk to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Making any sexually suggestive comment to children and / or Adults at risk – even ‘for fun’ or ‘in gest’.
- Reducing children and / or Adults at risk to tears as a form of control.
- Allowing any allegations made by a child and / or Adults at risk to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Do things of a personal nature that any children and / or Adults at risk may be able to do for themselves.

The following shall be regarded as poor practice in respect of safeguarding children and / or Adults at risk by the association and/or any of it’s committee;

- Not doing all possible to make the importance of safeguarding procedures and the responsibility of instructors to take this issue seriously clear from the off-set of membership being issued.
- Not referring all concerns relating to safeguarding procedure to the association’s nominated safeguarding body and/or provider.
- Not acting upon complaints relating to the safety and / or welfare of children and / or Adults at risk within any clubs of it’s registered member(s).
- Not acting in a way that is open and honest regarding safeguarding procedures and any relevant changes to that procedure.

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Where it is deemed there may be a complaint or safeguarding query relating to any club and/or registered member (or associated instructor or equivalent) the association shall be obliged to launch an investigation, guidelines of which will be provided separately in the Association's complaints and investigations policy.

Where the association does not have immediate concerns relating to the safeguarding of children and / or Adults at risk within the club or instruction of any of its registered member(s), on the basis that the association has no legal or compulsory right or jurisdiction and / or control over the mentioned club, the Association may discharge from its membership the club and expel the registered member(s) without delay or remuneration.

For this reason, the Association and Foundation wishes to stress that whilst the Association shall do all possible to avoid poor practice in relation to safeguarding standards within BMABA registered clubs, it must ultimately be the responsibility of the lead instructor and/or club welfare officer to maintain best practice, rather than the association.

If during the care of the club anyone should accidentally hurt a child or Adults at risk or / and the child or Adults at risk seems distressed in any manner and /or appears to be sexually aroused by the instructor or adults actions and/or if the child or Adults at risk misunderstands or misinterprets something done by the instructor or associated staff member, the incident must be reported without delay and written copies kept. Parents and / or guardians (as appropriate) must also be informed without delay. **This is a serious point to consider, and must not be considered optional.**

4. Defining Child Abuse

4A – INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. It commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a child or Adults at risk regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

There are five main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, bullying / harassment and neglect.** The abuser may be a family member or someone the child or Adults at risk encounters in residential care or in the community, including sports and leisure activities. Any individual may abuse or neglect a child or Adults at risk directly. They may also be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming a vulnerable person.

Abuse in all of its forms can affect a child or Adults at risk at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated, it may follow the individual into adulthood.

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Vulnerable Persons with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse had occurred.

It is not the role of a club or member to identify what form of abuse is taking place, but it is the responsibility of every member of society to raise concerns – however small – with authorities and via relevant channels.

4B – TYPES OF ABUSE

- **Physical Abuse:** where adults physically hurt or injure a child or Adults at risk e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning. Giving a child or Adults at risk alcohol or inappropriate drugs may also constitute abuse.

This category of abuse can also include when a parent/carer reports non-existent symptoms or illness deliberately causes ill health in a child or Adults at risk person they are looking after. This is called Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.

In a sports situation, physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training disregard the capacity of the child or Adults at risk's body.

- **Emotional Abuse:** the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or Adults at risk, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child or Adults at risk's emotional development or health. It may involve telling a child or Adults at risk they are useless, worthless, unloved, inadequate or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. It may feature expectations of a child or Adults at risk that are not appropriate to their age, development or ability. It may cause a child or Adults at risk to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the young person frightened or withdrawn.

Ill treatment of a child or Adults at risk, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse in sport may occur when the child or Adults at risk is constantly criticised, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling and bullying, which has been categorised as another form of abuse but for all intents and purposes will have some form of emotional abuse attached.

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- **Bullying & Harassment** may come from another young person or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are three main types of bullying.

It may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

In sport bullying may arise when a parent or coach pushes the child or Adults at risk too hard to succeed, or a rival athlete or official uses bullying behaviour.

- **Neglect** occurs when an adult fails to meet the child or Adults at risk's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the child or Adults at risk's health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Refusal to give love, affection and attention can also be a form of neglect.

Neglect in sport could occur when a coach does not keep the child or Adults at risk safe, or exposing them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury.

- **Sexual Abuse** occurs when adults (male and female) use children or Adults at risk to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing a child or Adults at risk pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.

In sport, activities which might involve physical contact with a child or Adults at risk could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also the power of the coach over a child or Adults at risk athlete, if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing.

4C – INDICIATIONS OF ABUSE

If you have any immediate concerns regarding a young person or adults at risk you should not delay seeking assistance.
Call 999 and ask for the Police. For more information, visit bmaba.org.uk/safeguarding

Even for those experienced in working with abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition and nor should they be expected to be, but indications that a child or Adults at risk is being abused may include one or more of the following;

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- an injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent
- the child or Adults at risk describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- another child or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a child or Adults at risk
- unexplained changes in a child or Adults at risk's behaviour e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- inappropriate sexual awareness
- engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- distrust of adult's, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- difficulty in making friends
- being prevented from socialising with others
- displaying variations in eating patterns including over eating or loss of appetite
- losing weight for no apparent reason
- becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

Signs of bullying include:

- behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go training or competitions
- an unexplained drop off in performance
- physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes
- a shortage of money or frequents loss of possessions

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It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indications is not proof that abuse is taking place. It is **NOT** the responsibility of those within the club or the instructor(s) (or equivalents) to decide that abuse is occurring. It **IS** their responsibility to act on any concerns in line with local and nationally safeguarding policy.

All persons are also reminded that given the nature of martial arts and combat sports – especially combat sports in which physical contact, often of an increased physical nature to that of other non-contact sports, may give rise to certain injuries by way of it's very nature.

No person should disregard any signs of abuse to simply be a result of any martial art or combat styles 'rough and tumble' nature. Instead they must act with due diligence to such an assumption being used by any perpetrator.

4D – USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC OR FILMING EQUIPMENT

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events, inter club events or normal 'day to day' training as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children and/or Adults at risk. All clubs and instructors (or equivalents) should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the Club welfare officer.

All parents and performers should be made aware when coaches use video equipment as a coaching aid or by way of any advertising / marketing material with consent provided in advance.

Clubs must ensure parents and any other volunteers viewing or interacting with classes and participants are aware of the club's local photographic and videography policies.

The association shall not permit the use of any photographic or videographic material on its website or within publications unless confirmation of consent has been explicitly given by the club in relation to its own responsibilities to maintain safeguarding standards in line with their own safeguarding policy.

5. Responding To Suspicions & Allegations

5A – INTRODUCTION

It is not the responsibility of any person within the club, be that in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse or the abuse of a Adults at risk has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the child and/or Adults at risk. This

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applies **BOTH** to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within any club or lesson and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere, even if completely removed from the martial arts setting.

5B – EVIDENCE OF POSSIBLE ABUSE

Instructors and volunteers may become aware of abuse in various ways. The instructor (or equivalent) may see it happening, may suspect it because of symptoms or signs (such as those previously listed) or it may be reported to the instructor by the child / adult, or another third party.

Especially in the case that a child or Adults at risk might directly confide to any form of abuse the club **must** take **immediate** steps to safeguard that person effectively.

If a child or Adults at risk indicates that they are being abused, the instructor to whom the disclosure is made should;

- **stay calm** so as not to frighten the child or Adults at risk.
- **reassure** the child or Adults at risk that they are not to blame and that it was right to inform you.
- **listen** to the child or Adults at risk, showing that you are taking them seriously.
- **keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child / Adults at risk abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child or Adults at risk has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Accordingly, the instructor must only ask questions to clarify details – not to question further.
- **inform** the child or Adults at risk that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the child or Adults at risk this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- **safety of the child or Adults at risk** is paramount. If the child or Adults at risk needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection / safeguarding issue.
- **record** all information
- **report** the incident to the club/welfare officer and, where appropriate to the association without delay

If the instructor / club is not clear on what action is required and there is a real or immediate threat to the child or Adults at risk, they should contact the Police on 999. Where there is confusion on what should happen next, the instructor should not delay by contacting the association and should instead contact a relevant statutory authority, such as the local authority designated officer (LADO) or the NSPCC on their 24 hour help line, the number of which will be publicly available.

If information is made available to the association at a national level, either through direct or indirect contact with any member of the public or any member of the club / association, the

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association will be bound to seek immediate guidance from either their own safeguarding provider or, in the case of immediate or real potential threat, the emergency services / LADO. The member (or instructor / club) in question shall not have the opportunity to over-ride the Association's response to a safeguarding alert where it is deemed a child or Adults at risk may be being abused. Depending on the nature of the allegation, the association may not be able to share or disclose details with the instructor or club prior to involvement of law enforcement.

5C – RECORDING INFORMATION

To ensure that information is as accurate and helpful as possible in any subsequent police or local authority investigation, clubs and the association will be required to keep detailed documentation relating to any disclosure or suspicion.

It is for this reason that a compulsory membership regulation is in place ensuring that written copies must be made at the soonest opportunity post disclosure. The instructor or other person to whom the disclosure was made must be confined to facts and distinguish as clearly as possible what is the instructor's personal knowledge and what is that of other people.

No opinions should be included. Information should include (but not necessarily be limited to) the following;

- the child or Adults at risk name, age and date of birth
- the child or Adults at risk home address and telephone number
- whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's
- the nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- a description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- details of witnesses to the incidents
- the child or Adults at risk account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred
- have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?
- has anyone else been consulted? If so record details
- has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record detail
- Confidentiality must be maintained on a 'need to know' basis.

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As part of the association's safeguarding policy, the above records shall also be kept, where appropriate or possible, in relation to any concerns raised directly to the body.

5D – REPORTING A CONCERN

All suspicions and allegations **MUST** be reported appropriately and without delay. Although it must be up to the individual club / instructor to distinguish what course of action is appropriate in each instance in their own safeguarding policy, it is recognised by the association that misplaced loyalty to a fellow martial artists or colleague may cause strong emotional conflicts.

The association will not allow such loyalties to affect the process of due notification, and any club / member is bound to the same obligation. Members found not to be acting accordingly will be reported as such to the relevant authority and their membership will be terminated without delay or remuneration.

The Association expects all registered or affiliated members and committee members to discuss any concerns they may have for the welfare of a child or Adults at risk immediately with the person in charge of safeguarding 'locally' within the club or school, and to check that appropriate action has been taken. Where any individual is not satisfied with the course of action or response at a local level, or where any allegation concerns the local club's safeguarding officer, the individual should immediately and without delay escalate their concerns to the Association's safeguarding and welfare officer.

If this advice can not be followed for any reason, the individual should take responsibility for reporting and seek advice from the NSPCC helpline, the duty officer at the local social services department or the police. Telephone numbers can be found in the local directory or online.

Where there is a complaint against an instructor or member of any club, there may be three types of investigation;

- **Criminal** in which case the police are immediately involved
- **Child protection** in which case the social services (and possibly) the police will be involved
- **Disciplinary or misconduct** in which case the 'local' club will be involved and the association will likely intervene, depending on the nature of the allegations

As previously referenced, the instructor (or equivalent) nor the association are child protection experts and it is neither's responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations must be shared with professional agencies that are responsible for child

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protection so that qualified persons external to the circumstance being reported can make an informed assessment.

Social services have a legal responsibility under The Children Act 1989 to investigate all child protection referrals by talking to the child and family (where appropriate), gathering information from other people who know the child and making inquiries jointly with the police.

NB: If there is any doubt, the instructor or individual must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidences which together cause concern.

The association can not stress this strongly enough. Every person within the club has a moral and legal duty to safeguard effectively. You must, always and without question, report any concerns promptly. This is absolutely critical. There is no concern too foolish or unimportant to warrant escalation.

Any suspicion that a child or Adults at risk has been abused by an instructor or a volunteer should be reported to the club's safeguarding officer who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child or Adults at risk in question and any other child or Adults at risk who may be at risk. This may differ depending on individual club policy, however the association recommends that at minimum the following be considered;

- The club or instructor (or the club / instructor's safeguarding officer if separate) should refer the matter to social services department
- the parent/carer of the child or Adults at risk should be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department
- the British Martial Arts & Boxing Association's safeguarding officer should be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- the club welfare officer should also notify the Association's management team or head office
- if the Club welfare officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to the British Martial Arts & Boxing Association's safeguarding officer who will refer the matter to social services

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such allegation is made, the instructor or club should follow the same procedures and have the matter reported to social services with just as much urgency. This is because other children or Adults at risk in the sport or outside it may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children or Adults at risk.

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Such checks are mandatory under the Association's compulsory guidelines and any person(s) or club(s) found not to be employing such procedure will be immediately expelled from the Association without delay or remuneration.

The minimum standard of checks required by the Association is an enhanced disclosure with barring checks and a recognised safeguarding qualification for any instructor or person that will be teaching any person aged below the age of 18 and / or any Adults at risk. Failure to comply will result in termination of membership or immediate disciplinary action.

5E – CONCERNS OUTSIDE OF THE IMMEDIATE TEACHING ENVIRONMENT OR CLUB

All members have a responsibility to remain vigilant in all areas of their professional or personal lives for signs of abuse. Where any concerns may be noted outside of the immediate teaching environment or gym, the following is recommended as a minimum course of action but may also be accompanied by additional 'local' club safeguarding guidelines if appropriate;

- Concerns should be initially reported to the club's safeguarding officer if they are relevant in anyway to the club's safeguarding duties
- If the club's safeguarding officer is not available, the person being told or discovering the abuse should contact their local social services department or the police immediately
- Social Services and the club's safeguarding officer will decide how to inform the parents/carers
- The club or instructor (or equivalent) should also report the incident to the Association's Safeguarding Officer without delay. The Association should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the organisation and act accordingly based upon the guidelines stated within the BMABA's safeguarding policy.
- Confidentiality must be maintained on a 'need to know' basis.

5F – CONFIDENTIALITY

It is important that all information is only ever discussed or shared on a need-to-know basis. The instructor or club has a duty to ensure confidentiality, as does the association. Information should only be shared where absolutely required, or under the guidance of the police or other relevant authority.

Where a disclosure is made to the association, even if this is only a request for information or guidance, there are certain circumstances in which the association will be legally bound to report this onto a relevant authority.

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5G – INTERNAL ENQUIRIES & SUSPENSIONS

It is deemed to be the clubs responsibility to ensure that the following is properly addressed within their local safeguarding policy;

- Whether or not the accused should be temporarily suspended pending further police or social services investigations. Clubs can and should ask the police or relevant authorities for guidance on this.
- Irrespective of the findings of the police or social service, the club shall have an obligation to report such incidents to the Association's safeguarding officer or management team for review of conduct and, if required, disciplinary proceedings. The outcome of such an investigation shall be handled as per the below guidance from the Association.
- Whilst the club or instructor may have their own internal guidance as per their local safeguarding policy procedure, ultimate disciplinary outcomes shall be overruled by the association. Whilst it is recognised that the association has no legal or compulsory authority or jurisdiction over the club and it's members, where there is conflicting disciplinary advice and no medium can be found, or the association deems there to be an on-going risk of future incidents, they may take the action to expel without delay or remuneration, the club (and any associated members of that club) and if required, make a necessary report to any local authority for further observation.

Irrespective of the findings of the police or social services, the Association will make the following decisions and processes in relation to any suspected or reported breach of safeguarding protocol;

- The association shall ensure the safety of the child or Adults at risk is paramount and will take any such action that is reasonably possible to prohibit the accused from having any opportunity to have further contact with any other children or Adults at risk.
- Where police or social services do not press charges, the association may not automatically discount the possibility of abuse having taken place and must reach a decision by mutual agreement of the committee, whereby atleast 3 members of the committee must debate and agree, that it is more likely than not that the allegation is true or that the incident was not properly handled by the club or it's safeguarding officer at a local level. The association shall have the final ruling on such a matter and may take any action, including expulsion with justification, delay or remuneration in such a situation.

As it is recognised that the Association does not have any compulsory or legal control over any club or member, it may only act in a way that is in keeping with its duties to protect other members of the Association and the representation it holds, so that it may continue to provide support to reputable members and clubs.

In such an instance the Association may discharge a member or club without notice, delay or remuneration to inhibit any further opportunity for potential unprofessional conduct or safeguarding

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concerns. Where this happens, the association must take a view as to whether or not it deems there to be sufficient evidence to further raise concerns with relevant authorities after expulsion.

As the Association has no legal governance of the instructor or club, aside from expulsion it may only report to local authorities, any expelled member where it feels there is reasonable suggestion that malpractice or safeguarding offences have occurred.

It is the Association's role to always try and provide as much impartial and easy to digest safeguarding guidance to clubs and instructors, however a member's lack of knowledge on the subject will not be an excusable defence in the event of disciplinary action occurring.

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6. Useful Contacts & Summary Notes

6A – KEY CONTACTS

Clubs and members whom wish to make a safeguarding disclosure, or wish to obtain any additional guidance and information on how to effectively safeguard at club level are welcome to contact the association's executive team and committee directly at any time.

It is worth checking – *especially in the instance of making a disclosure* – that this information remains up to date.

You can find the latest contact details for our association's team from bmaba.org.uk.

KEY CONTACTS

Chief Executive Officer & On-Duty DSL

Giovanni Soffietto

Deputy Safeguarding Contact & Strategic Operations Lead

(The deputy's role has been designated to provide a neutral third party contact you may turn to if you have concerns about our lead safeguarding officer's ability to address your concerns)

Aimee Little

For Safeguarding Disclosures: safeguarding@bmaba.org.uk

6B – SUMMARY NOTES FOR INSTRUCTORS & CLUBS

Safeguarding can seem like a sometimes over the top and perhaps overwhelming topic but it is essential, and there are no exceptions; you **must** take this seriously. You are both expected and held to compulsory obligation to ensure safeguarding at club level is effectively managed.

This includes ensuring;

- **That our national safeguarding policy is administered and respected**
- **That you hold an appropriate Safeguarding Qualification**
- **That you have an appropriate Enhanced DBS Check, Including Barring**
- **That your club has a full safeguarding policy & statement in place**
- **That you have rules and regulations on medical disclosures, conduct, safeguarding and the hiring/vetting of staff and volunteers**
- **Following any other BMABA regulation or guideline around best practice and safeguarding in martial arts**

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What the association is keen to stress is that we are here to help, not hinder. Our legal duty to escalate safeguarding concerns notwithstanding, where a club or instructor approaches us for guidance, advice or help getting everything together, our door will always be open.

We actively encourage proactive approaches to safeguarding. Please do not feel you can't pick up the phone, drop us an e-mail or start a conversation in our instructor's forum. There's never a silly question when it comes to safeguarding, and you can be sure it's been asked or thought about by another club or instructor too.

Don't take chance and don't be lazy; safeguarding is not only about prevent harm to a vulnerable person, it's also a key part of your professional competency and will help to protect you and your club from unfounded allegations.

6C – SUMMARY NOTES FOR PARENTS & CARERS

Safeguarding is the primary role and concern of the lead instructor and club, but that doesn't exclude you as a parent or carer from playing an active role in keeping vulnerable people safe.

We would fully recommend studying this safeguarding policy – especially the sections from what abuse is through to identifying abuse, and how to report concerns – to ensure you are equipped to deal with any concerns you may spot.

Your club's safeguarding officer or lead instructor should take any questions or concerns you raise seriously.

If you feel they are not doing so, or if the concern is regarding the club or lead instructor specifically, you can escalate questions and queries to us directly and in complete confidence.

Please contact our office via e-mail on safeguarding@bmaba.org.uk. This is a secure inbox that is only monitored by the Safeguarding Lead and the Deputy Safeguarding lead. Your disclosure will not be disclosed to any other staff, executives, committee members or instructors. We respond to all safeguarding e-mails immediately during working hours.

Remember to trust your instincts, and don't be afraid to escalate concerns without delay to the relevant authorities.

Where you feel there is an immediate risk to the safety of a vulnerable person, please bypass our association's safeguarding contact and call 999. If, after the disclosure and when cleared to do so by the police, you could make a disclosure to us so we can ensure it is properly monitored from a martial arts perspective, that would be appreciated.

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6D – SUMMARY NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS & VULNERABLE PERSONS

As a martial arts participant you absolutely have the right to train in a club that is safe and friendly, free of abuse and bullying. The association through which your club is affiliated has a zero-tolerance approach to any form of bullying or safeguarding neglect, and we will take action to keep you safe.

If you are under the age of 18, we would recommend raising any concerns with your parent or carer whom can raise the matter on your behalf.

If you are at risk of immediate harm, or you are frightened for the safety of another vulnerable person, call 999 immediately and ask for the police.

If you do need to reach out to us for advice or guidance, or if you wish to make a complaint about your club or instructor, please e-mail us on safeguarding@bmaba.org.uk.

Please DO NOT use Facebook Messenger for safeguarding disclosures as this is a channel of communication monitored by numerous employees throughout the Association and Foundation.

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Call 999 and ask for the Police. For more information, visit bmaba.org.uk/safeguarding

7. Suitability Of Instructors (And Volunteers Etc) To Work In Contact With Vulnerable Persons

7A - INTRODUCTION

It is essential to take all reasonable steps to prevent unsuitable people from working with children or Adults at risk. This applies equally and without prejudice to all persons, regardless of position, voluntary or paid status or background. This is the lead instructor's responsibility at all times.

7B – CONTROLLING ACCESS TO CHILDREN & ADULTS AT RISK

To prevent unsuitable persons from working with children the club / instructor (or equivalent) MUST:

- Properly vet any persons – whether within the club or from an external source – prior to assisting with any class for their suitability to be in contact with children or Adults at risk.
- Insist that suitable references are taken and followed up for any person whom the instructor has not known in a professional position for more than 3 years.
- Insist that, without fail, any person is required to obtain an enhanced DBS check with the relevant barred and referred list checks and complete safeguarding training. The results of the DBS check MUST be confirmed and found to be suitable for that person to be working in close contact or unsupervised contact with children or Adults at risk.
- Ensure that all persons must be suitably graded / certified, and must be registered with a UK based professional association for martial arts or boxing / combat professionals.
- Follow in-house or 'local' safeguarding policy issued by the club.
- Follow Association based guidelines on safeguarding.
- Provide suitable training opportunities to the individual that will allow them to analyse their own safeguarding practice and ensure their practice is considered 'best practice' (see above) and is not likely to facilitate any false accusations about their conduct.

Whilst it is **not** reasonable for the Association to ensure that all persons working in direct or indirect contact with children or Adults at risk within any given member club are suitable, because the Association is not a legal or compulsory authority and has no jurisdiction or control over the club, the club or instructor (or equivalent) has the ability to ensure this at a local level.

It is therefore deemed to be the ultimate responsibility and duty of the club at a local level to ensure that only suitable persons may be allowed access to work or supervise children or Adults at risk. The club or lead instructor (or equivalent) must therefore ensure they are suitable and safe for their purpose based upon their own local safeguarding policy.

The Association, although without any ultimate control or responsibility, will do the following to try and prevent any unsuitable person from coming into contact with a child or Adults at risk;

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- Ensure that instructor certification is only issued to those who provide proof of grade that may be reasonably considered to be accurate and genuine.
- To with-hold an instructor's license until all relevant DBS checks and safeguarding qualifications have been completed, and evidence has been provided to our Association for verification.
- To mark all new accounts as unsuitable to teach until such professional competency and safeguarding controls have been established and confirmed to the best of the Association's ability.
- Confirm that no past convictions of a sexual or violent nature – regardless of time lapsed – shall enable any person to obtain membership or affiliation to the British Martial Arts & Boxing Association.
- Shall do all possible to raise the awareness of safeguarding procedures and the importance of due diligence for all clubs to follow
- Shall incentivise a range of licensing and resources to be made available only to those who have provided evidence of such checks and procedures
- Shall do all possible to advise students and members of the public to seek a 'local' safeguarding policy and report any concerns to our Association
- Shall follow up on any concerns or complaints in line with our safeguarding policy and shall make recommendations to clubs / instructors at a local level if we deem there to be a concern
- To take action – including expulsion and barring – of any club or member that does not take their safeguarding duties seriously, or fails when requested to provide safeguarding policies and qualifications where concerns have been raised or information has not been provided

As the Association has no legal or compulsory jurisdiction or control over the operation of any of its members or their club, it must remain the instructor's or club's responsibility to ensure safeguarding procedures are in place on a local level.

The Association shall do all that is reasonably possible to aid instructors and members in fulfilling their safeguarding duties, however the ultimate responsibility and duty of care to protect members and raise concerns must remain at a local level where instruction, training or contact is taking place.

In line with Association guidelines, the Association Charter and the Association's legal policy, terms and conditions, membership to the Association and any form of interaction, certification or affiliation is hereby binding the named club, individual, instructor or entity to follow in full this safeguarding policy.

Clubs must enforce a local safeguarding policy and that must be considered in line with the Association's national safeguarding policy.

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