



Safeguarding Policy

QUB Fencing Club has a duty of care to safeguard all children (defined by The Children Act 1989 as people under the age of 18) and vulnerable adults in fencing from harm. QUB Fencing will strive to ensure that:

- the welfare of its members is paramount;
- all of its fencers, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse;
- all allegations of abuse are taken seriously and responded to in a timely manner;
- all members and volunteers involved in the club have a responsibility to report concerns to the 'Safeguarding' and/or 'Equality and Diversity' officer(s).

The Safeguarding Policy guidelines adopted by QUB Fencing Club promote good practice and are as follows:

- Work in an open environment to avoid private or unobserved situations.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with fencers.
- Ensure that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and following consent from the fencer.
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empower fencers to share in decision-making.
- Treat all members with respect and dignity.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of younger and/or disabled members – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Make the sport fun and promote fair play.
- Keep up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance.
- Secure consent in writing to act on behalf of the fencer, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Request written consent if club officials are required to transport young and/or vulnerable individuals in their cars.

Practices that should never be sanctioned include:

- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
 - Allowing members to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
 - Making sexually suggestive comments to a child.
 - Reducing a child or vulnerable adult to tears as a form of control.
 - Doing things of a personal nature for young and/or disabled fencers without the full understanding and consent of the fencer involved and the fencer's parents/carers.
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Incidents to be Reported

If a fencer is accidentally hurt, distressed in any manner, or misunderstands something that a coach has done, the incident should be recorded and reported to another colleague (i.e. the 'Safeguarding' or 'Equality and Diversity' officer) and the fencer's parents/carers.

➤ Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment

Photographs and videos can be used as coaching aids; however, they must be stored safely, and fencers and their parents/carers should be made aware that they are part of the coaching programme. Any concerns regarding the inappropriate use of photographic/filming equipment at sporting events should be reported to the 'Safeguarding' and/or 'Equality and Diversity' officer(s).

Recruitment and Training of Staff and Volunteers

QUB Fencing Club ensures all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with its members. Pre-selection checks should be made to substantiate the qualifications of potential staff and volunteers. The process includes safeguarding training after recruitment to help volunteers ensure their practice is exemplary. Additionally, relevant personnel should undergo first aid training (where necessary).

Responding to Allegations or Suspensions

It is not the responsibility of anyone volunteering for QUB Fencing to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities. Where there is a complaint against a volunteer there may be three types of investigation: criminal, child protection and disciplinary/misconduct. The results of the criminal and child protection investigations may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

❖ Concerns about poor practice:

If, following consideration, the allegation is about poor practice, the Safeguarding Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue. If the allegation is about poor practice by the Safeguarding Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the club's Captain who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

❖ Concerns about suspected abuse:

Any suspicion that a fencer has been abused by either a QUB Fencing volunteer should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer, who will take steps to ensure the safety of the fencer in question and any other fencer who may be at risk e.g. temporary suspension of the alleged perpetrator. The Safeguarding Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department which may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours. The parents/carers of the fencer should be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department. If the Safeguarding Officer is the subject of the contention, the report must be made to the Captain who will refer the allegation to social services.

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries, the QUB Fencing Club Disciplinary Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether the volunteer in question can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled.

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only. It should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse for children, parents, volunteers and alleged perpetrators is available from: The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189. www.bacp.co.uk

NB: Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event because other fencers, either within or outside the sport, may be at risk from this person. Furthermore, anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children (Protection of Children Act 1999) and vulnerable adults.

❖ Concerns outside the immediate sporting environment:

Concerns should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer who, in turn, should contact social services or the police as soon as possible. If the Safeguarding Officer is unavailable, social services or the police should be contacted directly. Social services and the Safeguarding Officer can then decide how to involve the parents/carers. The Safeguarding Officer should also report the incident to Northern Ireland Fencing.

Information for Social Services or the Police about Suspected Abuse:

A detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern and include the following:

- ❖ The fencer's name, age, date of birth, home address and telephone number.
- ❖ Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- ❖ The nature of the allegation i.e. dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- ❖ Clear distinctions between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- ❖ Descriptions of any visible bruising or other injuries as well as indirect signs like behavioural changes.
- ❖ Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- ❖ Details of the alleged abuser(s) if available.
- ❖ The fencer's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- ❖ Whether the parents/carers or anyone else was contacted and if so, details of what was said.

Where possible, referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact:

- social services or the police directly;
- the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000; or
- Childline on 0800 1111.