ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

South Durham Gymnastics Club
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REVIEW PERIOD	REVIEW DATE	SIGNED
Issue Date	March 2023	Management
Review Date	October 2024	Management
Review Date	September 2025	Becca Armstrong – Operations and Admin Coordinator
Review Date	March 2025	Becca Armstrong – Operations and Admin Coordinator
Review Date	**September 2026**	Becca Armstrong – Operations and Admin Coordinator

Statement of Intent
South Durham Gymnastics (SDG) & South Durham Gymnastics Club (SDGC) is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our members. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our Club. We believe it is important that participants (gymnasts and gym users, coaches, staff, administrators, officials, volunteers, directors, visitors and parents/guardians should, at all times, show respect and understanding for the welfare of others. Our **Anti-Bullying Policy** has been designed with our entire membership in mind and applies to everyone within the SDG & SDGC community; we recognise that an abuser may be from different groups within our organisation and that bullying can take different forms.

If bullying does occur, members should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with effectively. We are a transparent Club. This means that ANYONE who knows or suspects that bullying is happening is expected to tell a member of the team and/or one of the Club Welfare Officers.

For any concerns or to report an incident, please contact our **Welfare Officers**:
Becca Armstrong - 07795095407
Melissa Spence - 07930119288
Alison Gargan - 07946163099
welfare@southdurhamgym.co.uk

The South Durham Gymnastics Club Community will:

- Create and support an inclusive environment that promotes a culture of mutual respect, consideration and care for others, which will be upheld by all;
- Recognise that bullying can be perpetrated or experienced by any member of the Club community, including adults and children (peer on peer abuse);
- Openly discuss differences between people that could motivate bullying, such as: religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality or appearance related difference. Also, children with different family situations, such as looked after children or those with caring responsibilities;
- Challenge practice and language which does not uphold the values of tolerance, non-discrimination and respect towards others;
- Be encouraged to use technology, especially mobile phones and social media positively and responsibly;
- Work with staff, the wider community and outside agencies to prevent and tackle concerns including all forms of prejudice-driven bullying;
- Create an environment where children and young people feel safe, included and able to speak up about concerns.
- Celebrate success and achievements to promote and build a positive Club ethos.

Links with other SDG & SDGC Policies and Practices
This policy links with a number of other SDG & SDGC policies & procedures, including:

- **Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy**
- **Social Media Policy**

Links to Legislation
This policy has been developed with regard to relevant legislation and guidance, including the **Equality Act 2010** and relevant safeguarding and anti-bullying guidance applicable in England.

There are a number of pieces of legislation that set out measures and actions in response to bullying, as well as criminal and civil law. These may include (but are not limited to):

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children Act 1989
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Public Order Act 1986

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?
Nobody deserves to be a victim of bullying; everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Bullying is not tolerated at South Durham Gymnastics Club.

Objectives of this Policy
- All officials, coaching and non-coaching staff, volunteers, directors, children and parents/guardians should have an understanding of what bullying is;
- All officials, coaching and non-coaching staff, volunteers and directors should know what the Club Policy is on bullying and follow it when bullying is reported;
- All children and parents/guardians should know what the Club Policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises;
- This Policy aims to produce a consistent response to any bullying incidents that may occur.

Responsibilities
It is the responsibility of:
- The SDG & SDGC Directors, Managers and Welfare Officers to communicate this Policy to the SDG & SDGC Community; to ensure that disciplinary measures are applied fairly, consistently and reasonably and that a member of the Senior Management Team has been identified to take overall responsibility;
- The SDG & SDGC Directors, in conjunction with the Welfare Officers, to take a lead role in monitoring and reviewing this Policy;
- All staff, including directors, trustees, volunteers, management and coaches (full and part-time) to support, uphold and implement this Policy accordingly;
- Parents/carers to support their children and work in partnership with the Club;
- Gymnasts/participants to abide by the policy and show respect, tolerance and teamwork with peers and coaches.

Policy Procedures
1. Report bullying incidents to a member of Club Management and/or one of the Club Welfare Officers; complete an Incident Report Form;
2. Where the alleged bully is a child (children), if applicable, parents should be informed and will be asked to come to a meeting to discuss the problem;
3. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and stopped;
4. An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour through discussion about bullying;
5. Bullies may be asked to sign a Behaviour Contract;
6. If bullying continues the bully will be asked to leave the Club.

DEFINING & UNDERSTANDING BULLYING

Definition of Bullying
- Bullying is "*unwanted behaviour by an individual or group that causes harm, intimidation or offence. Bullying can be repeated over time, but a one-off incident may also be treated as bullying depending on its nature, impact and circumstances. Bullying can be physical, verbal, emotional, psychological or online, and may involve a power imbalance, although this is not always the case.*" (DfE "Preventing and Tackling Bullying" 2017);
- Bullying can include name calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive comments, kicking, hitting, taking belongings, producing offensive graffiti, gossiping, excluding people from groups and spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours;
- This includes the same unacceptable behaviours expressed online, sometimes called online or cyberbullying. This can include sending offensive, upsetting and inappropriate messages by phone, text, instant messenger, through gaming, websites, social media sites and apps, and sending offensive or degrading photos or videos;
- Bullying can be a form of peer on peer abuse and can be emotionally abusive; it can cause severe and adverse effects on children's emotional development;

- Bullying is action taken by one or more person(s) with the deliberate intention of hurting another person over a period of time.

Bullying Can Be

- **Emotional or psychological:** excluding, isolating, humiliating, threatening or deliberately undermining someone
- **Physical:** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or other physical aggression
- **Verbal:** name-calling, teasing, mocking, sarcasm, insults or spreading rumours
- **Prejudice-related:** bullying related to race, religion or belief, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, appearance or other personal characteristics
- **Sexual:** unwanted sexual comments, sexualised behaviour or unwanted physical contact
- **Online/cyberbullying:** harmful behaviour through social media, messaging, gaming platforms, websites, email or other technology

Forms of Bullying

Bullying can happen to anyone. This Policy covers all types of bullying including:

- Bullying related to race, religion, nationality or culture
- Bullying related to SEND (Special Educational Needs or Disability)
- Bullying related to appearance or physical/mental health conditions
- Bullying related to sexual orientation, including homophobic bullying
- Bullying of young carers, children in care or otherwise related to home circumstances
- Sexist, sexual, transphobic or other identity-based bullying
- Bullying via technology, known as online or cyberbullying

Signs and Symptoms of Bullying:

A child or young person may show signs or changes in behaviour that could indicate they are experiencing bullying. These signs can vary from person to person. It is important for adults to be aware of these possible signs and should investigate if a person:

- Is frightened, anxious or reluctant/unwilling of coming to gym
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious, or is lacking in confidence
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Feels ill during sessions
- Begins to do poorly in their performance
- Has possessions that are damaged or 'go missing'
- Has unexplained cuts and bruises (see **Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy**)
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Changes eating habits
- Is frightened to say what's wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is nervous and jumpy when a cyber message is received
- Becomes unusually quiet, upset or reluctant to talk about what is happening

These signs and behaviours could also indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and be investigated.

SDG & SDGC recognises that bullying, especially if left unaddressed, can have a devastating effect on individuals; it can create a barrier to not only the performance of a gymnast, but more importantly it can have serious consequences for mental wellbeing. By effectively preventing and tackling bullying, our Club can help to create a safe and disciplined environment, where members are able to fulfil their potential in a fun, safe and secure setting.

PREVENTING & TACKLING BULLYING

To support our anti-bullying ethos, South Durham Gymnastics Club:

- Monitors and reviews our **Anti-Bullying Policy** and practices on a regular basis;
- Supports staff to promote positive relationships, to help prevent bullying;

- Recognises that some members of our community may be more vulnerable to bullying and its impact than others; being aware of this will help us to develop effective strategies to prevent bullying from happening and provide appropriate support, if required;
- Will intervene by identifying and tackling bullying behaviour appropriately and promptly;
- Ensures our members are aware that bullying concerns will be dealt with sensitively and effectively; that everyone should feel safe to learn and abide by the **Anti-Bullying Policy**;
- Requires all members of the Club community to work with us to uphold the **Anti-Bullying Policy**;
- Reports back to parents/carers regarding concerns on bullying, dealing promptly with incidents/complaints;
- Seeks to learn from good anti-bullying practice elsewhere;
- Utilises support from other relevant organisations when appropriate (e.g. NSPCC).

Responding to Bullying Allegations

The following steps may be taken when dealing with all incidents of bullying reported to SDG & SDGC:

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member staff who has been approached or witnessed the concern. Where bullying is persistent, recurring, particularly serious or raises a safeguarding concern the matter will be referred to the Club Welfare Officer(s);
- The Welfare Officer(s) will provide appropriate support for the person being bullied – making sure they are not at risk of immediate harm and will involve them in any decision-making, as appropriate;
- The Welfare Officer(s) will speak to the relevant individuals and gather information as appropriate;
- The Welfare Officer(s) will inform other staff members, and parents/carers, where appropriate;
- Sanctions and support for individuals will be implemented, in consultation with all parties concerned;
- If necessary, other agencies may be consulted or involved, such as: the police (if a criminal offence has been committed) or other local services including early help or children's social care (if a child is felt to be at risk of significant harm);
- Where the bullying takes place off site or outside of the Club times (including cyberbullying), the Club will ensure that the concern is fully investigated. Appropriate action will be taken, including providing support and implementing sanctions in the Club in accordance with the relevant **Code of Conduct**;
- A clear and precise account of the incident will be recorded by the Welfare Officer(s) in accordance with existing procedures. This will include recording appropriate details regarding decisions and action taken.

Cyberbullying

When responding to cyberbullying concerns, the Club will:

- Act as soon as an incident has been reported or identified;
- Provide appropriate support for the person who has been cyberbullied and work with the person who has carried out the bullying to ensure that it does not happen again;
- Encourage the person being bullied to keep any evidence (screenshots) of the bullying activity to assist any investigation;
- Take all available steps where possible to identify the person responsible. This may include:
    - Looking at the use of the procedures and systems;
    - Identifying and interviewing possible witnesses;
    - Contacting the service provider and the police, if necessary.
- Work with the individuals and online service providers to prevent the incident from spreading and assist in removing offensive or upsetting material from circulation. This may include:
    - Support reports to a service provider to remove content if those involved are unable to be identified or if those involved refuse to or are unable to delete content;

- Banning or restricting the use of mobile devices within the gymnastics hall and child led areas;
- Requesting the deletion of locally held content and content posted online if they contravene behavioural/conduct policies.

Support

Gymnasts who have been bullied will be supported by:

- Reassuring the child and providing continuous support;
- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with the Welfare Officer(s) or a staff member of their choice that they are comfortable with;
- Being advised to keep a record of the bullying as evidence and discuss how to respond to concerns and build resilience as appropriate;
- Working towards restoring self-esteem and confidence;
- Providing ongoing support; this may include working and speaking with staff, offering welfare meetings or drop-ins, engaging with parents/carers.

Gymnasts who have perpetrated the bullying will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened, establishing the concern and the need to change;
- Informing parents/carers to help change the attitude and behaviour of the child;
- Providing appropriate knowledge and support regarding their behaviour or actions;
- If online, requesting that content be removed and reporting accounts/content to service provider
- Sanctioning, in line with the relevant **Code of Conduct** (in extreme circumstances this may mean the removal of membership from the Club);
- Where necessary, working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance.

SUPPORTING ADULTS

SDG & SDGC takes measures to prevent and tackle bullying among gymnasts; however, it is equally important to recognise that bullying of staff, volunteers and parents/carers, whether by gymnasts, parents or other staff members, is also unacceptable.

Adults who have been bullied or affected will be supported by:

- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the concern with the Club Welfare Officer(s);
- Advising them to keep a record of the bullying as evidence and discuss how to respond to concerns and build resilience, as appropriate;
- Where the bullying takes place off site or outside of normal hours (including online), the Club will still investigate the concern and ensure that appropriate action is taken in accordance with the relevant **Code of Conduct**;
- Reporting offensive or upsetting content and/or accounts to the service provider, where the bullying has occurred online;
- Reassuring and offering appropriate support;
- Working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Useful links and supporting organisations:

- Anti-Bullying Alliance: www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
- Childline: www.childline.org.uk
- Family Lives: www.familylives.org.uk
- Kidscape: www.kidscape.org.uk
- MindEd: www.minded.org.uk
- NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk
- Victim Support: www.victimsupport.org.uk
- Young Minds: www.youngminds.org.uk

SEND:

- Changing Faces: www.changingfaces.org.uk
- Mencap: www.mencap.org.uk
- Contact: www.contact.org.uk
- DfE: SEND Code of Practice: www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

Cyberbullying:

- Childnet International: www.childnet.com
- Internet Watch Foundation: www.iwf.org.uk
- Think U Know: www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- UK Safer Internet Centre: www.saferinternet.org.uk
- The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS): www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis

Suggested Review Date: After significant changes, or biennially

Reviewed By:	Becca Armstrong
Date:	September 2024
Comments:	No policy / legislation updates NGB details updated
Next Suggested Review Date:	March 2026

Reviewed By:	Becca Armstrong
Date:	27/03/2025
Comments:	No policy / legislation updates Useful links to supporting organisations updated. Welfare Officer details included.
Next Suggested Review Date:	March 2027

Reviewed By:	**Becca Armstrong**
Date:	**29/09/2026**
Comments:	Since SDG & SGDC have gone independent, the policies have been combined and references to IGA have been removed.
Next Suggested Review Date:	September 2028

Reviewed By:	
Date:	
Comments:	
Next Suggested Review Date:	