

Out East Fencing Club

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Document status: Club policy

Approved by: Board of Directors

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1. Purpose

1.1. Out East Fencing Club (the **Club**) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people who participate in its activities.

1.2. The Club recognises that everyone involved in the Club has a role in creating an environment in which children and young people can participate in fencing safely, confidently and free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination and inappropriate behaviour.

1.3. This policy sets out the Club's approach to safeguarding and child protection, including:

- the responsibilities of the Club and those acting on its behalf;
- safer recruitment and suitability checks;
- appropriate conduct around children and young people;
- responding to safeguarding concerns;
- reporting and escalation;
- allegations involving coaches, volunteers or other adults;
- information sharing and confidentiality; and
- the Club's relationship with British Fencing and relevant statutory safeguarding arrangements.

1.4. This policy applies to all Club activities involving children and young people, whether delivered directly by the Club or on the Club's behalf.

2. Scope

2.1. This policy applies to:

- Directors;
- coaches and instructors;
- employees;
- volunteers;
- sessional staff;
- contractors working with children on behalf of the Club;
- parents and guardians where relevant to Club activities; and
- any other person whose conduct may affect children participating in Club activities.

2.2. The policy applies to Club activities including:

- regular youth training sessions;
- youth beginner courses and taster sessions;
- competitions and events;
- trips and activities away from the usual venue;
- one-to-one or small-group coaching;
- communications with young participants;
- Club-organised social activities; and
- online activity undertaken on behalf of the Club.

2.3. The policy applies whether activities take place at the Club's usual premises, another venue or elsewhere.

3. Safeguarding Principles

3.1. The Club will seek to:

- put the welfare and best interests of children first;
- provide a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment;
- take concerns seriously and respond appropriately;
- act promptly where a child may be at risk of harm;
- ensure adults working with children understand their safeguarding responsibilities;
- maintain appropriate boundaries between adults and young participants;
- recruit and supervise adults appropriately;
- work cooperatively with parents and guardians where appropriate;

- cooperate with British Fencing and statutory agencies where necessary; and
- continually review safeguarding arrangements in light of experience, guidance and changes to the Club's activities.

3.2. Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone involved in the Club. It is not solely the responsibility of the Welfare Officer or a particular Director.

4. Definitions

4.1. For the purposes of this policy, a **child** or **young person** means anyone under the age of 18.

4.2. **Safeguarding** means the measures taken to promote children's welfare and protect them from harm.

4.3. **Child protection** refers particularly to action taken where there is a concern that a child is suffering, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm.

4.4. Abuse may be physical, emotional or psychological, sexual, or may involve neglect. Children may also experience harm through exploitation, bullying, discrimination, online abuse, domestic abuse or other forms of harmful behaviour.

5. Responsibility for Safeguarding

5.1. Board of Directors

The Board is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Club maintains appropriate safeguarding arrangements.

The Board shall:

- approve and periodically review this policy;
- appoint or designate an appropriate Welfare / Safeguarding Officer;
- ensure safeguarding responsibilities are appropriately resourced;
- ensure appropriate recruitment and suitability checks are undertaken;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are dealt with appropriately;
- ensure appropriate records are maintained;
- review significant safeguarding incidents and lessons arising from them; and

- cooperate with relevant governing bodies and statutory agencies.

5.2. Welfare / Safeguarding Officer

5.2.1. The Club shall designate an appropriate person to act as its Welfare / Safeguarding Officer.

5.2.2. The Welfare / Safeguarding Officer shall act as a principal point of contact for safeguarding concerns within the Club.

5.2.3. Their responsibilities may include:

- receiving and recording safeguarding concerns;
- providing advice to coaches, volunteers and others;
- determining appropriate escalation in accordance with relevant guidance;
- liaising with British Fencing or relevant statutory safeguarding services where necessary;
- maintaining appropriate safeguarding records;
- supporting the implementation of safeguarding procedures; and
- keeping the Board appropriately informed about safeguarding matters while respecting confidentiality.

5.2.4. The Welfare / Safeguarding Officer should not investigate allegations beyond their competence or where an investigation should properly be undertaken by an external or statutory body.

5.3. Coaches and Volunteers

Anyone working with children on behalf of the Club must:

- follow this policy and associated procedures;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- report safeguarding concerns promptly;
- cooperate with reasonable safeguarding measures and investigations; and
- undertake required safeguarding training and suitability checks.

5.4. Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians are expected to support the Club's safeguarding arrangements and raise concerns promptly where they believe a child may be at risk.

6. Safer Recruitment and Suitability

6.1. The Club shall take reasonable and proportionate steps to ensure that people undertaking regulated or otherwise appropriate roles involving children are suitable to do so.

6.2. Depending on the role and applicable requirements, this may include:

- appropriate applications and interviews;
- references;
- identity verification;
- relevant safeguarding qualifications or training;
- appropriate criminal-record or other suitability checks;
- verification of relevant coaching qualifications; and
- consideration of any relevant disciplinary or safeguarding history.

6.3. The level of checking shall reflect the nature of the role, frequency of contact with children, degree of responsibility and applicable legal or governing-body requirements.

6.4. The Club shall follow applicable British Fencing requirements and relevant UK safeguarding and disclosure-check arrangements.

6.5. A satisfactory disclosure or background check does not by itself establish that an individual is suitable for every role. Suitability shall be considered as a whole.

6.6. Where a role requires a particular qualification, registration or check, the individual should not undertake that role until the relevant requirement has been satisfied unless an appropriate exception applies.

7. Safeguarding Training

7.1. Adults with safeguarding responsibilities shall receive appropriate safeguarding information or training.

7.2. Coaches, Welfare / Safeguarding Officers and others working regularly with children should maintain any training required by British Fencing or applicable safeguarding guidance.

7.3. The Club shall keep appropriate records of safeguarding training and relevant qualifications.

7.4. The Board shall periodically review whether the Club's training arrangements remain appropriate to its activities.

8. Standards of Conduct Around Children

8.1. Adults working with children must maintain appropriate professional boundaries at all times.

8.2. Adults should:

- treat children with dignity and respect;
- use age-appropriate language and behaviour;
- provide appropriate supervision;
- avoid unnecessary physical contact;
- explain physical contact where it is genuinely required for coaching, safety or first aid;
- avoid favouritism or behaviour that could reasonably be interpreted as grooming;
- avoid being alone with a child where this can reasonably be avoided;
- maintain appropriate boundaries in electronic communication; and
- report concerns about another adult's behaviour.

8.3. Adults must not:

- engage in sexual or romantic behaviour with a child;
- use humiliating, threatening, degrading or abusive language;
- use corporal punishment;
- deliberately isolate a child from appropriate supervision;
- communicate with children inappropriately or secretly;
- request or share inappropriate images;
- engage in inappropriate online or social-media interactions; or
- use their position within the Club to exploit, intimidate or manipulate a child.

8.4. The Club's Code of Conduct provides further standards of behaviour for members, coaches, volunteers, parents and others participating in Club activities.

9. Physical Contact and Fencing Instruction

9.1. Fencing instruction may sometimes require appropriate physical contact, including for demonstrations, positioning, correction of technique or safety.

9.2. Such contact should:

- have a clear coaching or safety purpose;
- be proportionate and appropriate to the child's age and circumstances;
- be explained where appropriate;
- avoid intimate areas of the body; and
- cease if the child indicates discomfort or objects, unless immediate contact is necessary to prevent injury.

9.3. Coaches should use verbal instruction, demonstrations or other methods instead of physical contact wherever reasonably practicable.

9.4. Physical intervention to prevent immediate injury may be necessary in some circumstances. Any significant or unusual intervention should be reported appropriately and recorded where necessary.

10. One-to-One Coaching and Supervision

10.1. The Club recognises that fencing instruction may occasionally involve individual coaching.

10.2. One-to-one interaction with a child should, where reasonably practicable:

- take place in an observable or appropriately supervised environment;
- occur within normal Club activities or agreed coaching arrangements;
- avoid unnecessary isolation;
- use appropriate communication channels; and
- be transparent to the parent or guardian where appropriate.

10.3. Private or informal arrangements between adults acting for the Club and young participants should not take place without appropriate safeguards.

11. Communication with Children

11.1. Communications with children should be appropriate to their age and the purpose of the Club activity.

11.2. Where reasonably practicable, Club communications concerning youth activities should be directed through parents or guardians or through Club-controlled channels.

11.3. Adults acting on behalf of the Club should avoid:

- private or secret communications with children;
- inappropriate personal conversations;
- disappearing-message communications for Club business;
- requests for inappropriate photographs or information; and
- communication at inappropriate times unless there is a legitimate reason.

11.4. Any Club-managed online group or communication channel involving children should have appropriate adult oversight.

12. Photography and Recording

12.1. The Club shall take appropriate steps to protect children in relation to photography, video and other recordings.

12.2. Photographs or recordings of children should only be taken or used in accordance with the Club's Photography & Social Media Policy and relevant consent arrangements.

12.3. Adults should not take or retain photographs or recordings of children for personal purposes in connection with Club activities.

12.4. The Club shall take particular care where images could identify a child's location, school, routine or other sensitive information.

13. Recognising Safeguarding Concerns

13.1. A safeguarding concern may arise from:

- something a child says or discloses;

- an observation of a child's behaviour or condition;
- an allegation made by another person;
- concern about an adult's behaviour;
- an injury or unexplained change in behaviour;
- information received from a parent, guardian or another organisation; or
- information indicating that a child may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

13.2. Concerns do not need to be proven before they are reported.

13.3. Adults should not attempt to determine for themselves whether abuse has occurred. Their responsibility is to recognise concerns, respond appropriately and report them.

14. Responding to a Child's Disclosure

14.1. Where a child tells an adult about something that may indicate abuse or another safeguarding concern, the adult should:

- remain calm;
- listen carefully;
- take the child seriously;
- allow the child to speak in their own words;
- avoid leading questions;
- avoid promising secrecy;
- explain that the information may need to be shared with people who can help;
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking up; and
- record the concern as soon as practicable.

14.2. The adult should not:

- investigate the allegation;
- interrogate the child;
- suggest possible answers;
- express disbelief or shock;
- make promises that cannot be kept; or
- confront an alleged perpetrator.

15. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

15.1. Any person who has a safeguarding concern should report it promptly to the Club's Welfare / Safeguarding Officer.

15.2. Concerns should be reported even where the person making the report is uncertain whether the concern meets a formal threshold.

15.3. The Club shall maintain a **Safeguarding Concern / Incident Form** for recording concerns.

15.4. Where there is an immediate risk of serious harm, the concern should be escalated without waiting for a routine Club process.

15.5. The Welfare / Safeguarding Officer shall determine, in accordance with applicable guidance and the circumstances of the case, whether the matter should be referred to:

- British Fencing or its designated safeguarding arrangements;
- local authority children's social care;
- the police;
- another appropriate statutory or professional service; or
- another relevant safeguarding organisation.

15.6. Where required, a referral shall be made without unnecessary delay.

15.7. A person should not delay reporting a serious concern because the Welfare / Safeguarding Officer is unavailable.

16. Immediate Risk and Emergency Situations

16.1. Where a child is in immediate danger or requires urgent medical assistance, the priority is to secure the child's immediate safety and obtain appropriate emergency assistance.

16.2. Club safeguarding procedures should not delay necessary emergency action.

16.3. Once the immediate risk has been addressed, the matter should be reported through the Club's safeguarding arrangements and recorded appropriately.

17. Allegations Concerning Adults Working for the Club

17.1. The Club shall take allegations concerning coaches, Directors, employees, volunteers or other adults acting on behalf of the Club seriously.

17.2. An allegation should not be dismissed solely because the person involved is well known to the Club or is otherwise trusted.

17.3. The Club shall avoid conducting an internal investigation where doing so could interfere with a statutory or governing-body investigation.

17.4. The Welfare / Safeguarding Officer or another appropriate person shall seek relevant advice and make referrals where required.

17.5. Where the concern involves the Welfare / Safeguarding Officer, the matter should be reported to an appropriate alternative person, such as the Chair or another Director, or directly to the relevant external safeguarding body where appropriate.

17.6. Where the concern involves the entire Board or there is no sufficiently independent person within the Club to manage the matter, the Club should seek external safeguarding advice.

18. Allegations Concerning the Welfare / Safeguarding Officer

18.1. A concern involving the Welfare / Safeguarding Officer must not be investigated solely by that person.

18.2. The concern should be reported to another appropriate Club representative or directly to the relevant external safeguarding organisation where appropriate.

18.3. The Club shall take reasonable steps to ensure that the person who is the subject of the concern does not control the handling of the matter.

19. Safeguarding Concerns Involving Directors

19.1. Where a safeguarding concern relates to a Director, the Club shall ensure that the Director concerned does not improperly participate in handling the matter.

19.2. Any conflict of interest shall be managed in accordance with the Club's Conflicts of Interest Policy & Procedure.

19.3. Where there is insufficient independence within the Club to deal appropriately with the matter, the Club shall seek external advice or refer the matter to the appropriate statutory or governing body.

20. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

20.1. Safeguarding information shall be handled sensitively and shared only where there is a legitimate reason to do so.

20.2. Confidentiality does not prevent information from being shared where this is necessary to protect a child or is required by law.

20.3. The Club shall not promise a child or another person that safeguarding information will remain secret.

20.4. Safeguarding information should be shared on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with applicable data protection requirements.

20.5. Where there is uncertainty about whether information should be shared, the Club should seek appropriate safeguarding or professional advice.

21. Records

21.1. The Club shall maintain appropriate records of safeguarding concerns, referrals, actions and outcomes.

21.2. Records should be:

- factual and objective;
- made as soon as reasonably practicable;
- dated and attributable to the person making the record;
- stored securely; and
- retained only for as long as appropriate.

21.3. Records should distinguish between facts, observations, information provided by others and the person's own assessment or opinion.

21.4. Safeguarding records shall be handled in accordance with the Club's data protection arrangements.

22. Parents and Guardians

22.1. The Club recognises parents and guardians as important partners in safeguarding children.

22.2. The Club will seek to communicate appropriately with parents or guardians concerning safeguarding matters affecting their child where this is safe and appropriate.

22.3. The Club may withhold information from a parent or guardian where sharing it could place a child or another person at greater risk, prejudice an investigation, or otherwise be inappropriate or unlawful.

22.4. Parents and guardians should raise safeguarding concerns promptly with the Club or, where appropriate, directly with relevant external authorities.

23. Youth Participation and Supervision

23.1. The Club shall consider safeguarding when planning youth sessions, including:

- appropriate staffing and supervision;
- venue suitability;
- changing and toilet arrangements;
- arrival and collection arrangements;
- supervision during breaks;
- travel and off-site activities; and
- emergency arrangements.

23.2. The Club shall establish clear arrangements for the supervision and collection of younger participants appropriate to their age and the activity.

23.3. Parents or guardians shall be informed of any specific arrangements relevant to their child's participation.

24. Safeguarding at Competitions and Away Activities

24.1. Additional safeguarding considerations shall be made where children participate in competitions, trips, training camps or other activities away from the Club's usual venue.

24.2. The Club should consider:

- who is responsible for supervision;
- accommodation arrangements where applicable;
- travel arrangements;
- emergency contacts;
- parental consent;
- appropriate adult-to-child supervision;
- safeguarding arrangements at the host venue; and
- procedures for dealing with illness, injury or safeguarding concerns.

24.3. Where an event is organised by British Fencing or another organisation, the Club should follow the relevant safeguarding arrangements of the event organiser as well as its own requirements.

25. British Fencing and External Requirements

25.1. The Club recognises British Fencing as the national governing body for fencing in Great Britain and will take account of its safeguarding policies, procedures, guidance and requirements applicable to affiliated clubs and participants.

25.2. Where British Fencing requirements impose a higher or more specific safeguarding standard than this policy, the Club shall seek to comply with those requirements.

25.3. The Club shall also comply with applicable UK legislation and relevant statutory safeguarding guidance.

25.4. Nothing in this policy prevents the Club from seeking advice from British Fencing, local safeguarding services, the police or another appropriate organisation.

26. Safeguarding and the Club's Other Policies

26.1. This policy should be read alongside the Club's:

- Welfare Policy / Welfare & Safeguarding Procedure;
- Code of Conduct;
- Complaints Policy & Procedure;
- Disciplinary Procedure;
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy;
- Health & Safety Policy;
- Photography & Social Media Policy;
- Data Protection Policy; and
- relevant youth membership and parental consent documentation.

26.2. Where a safeguarding concern also constitutes a complaint, disciplinary matter, health and safety incident or data protection issue, the relevant procedures should be followed in addition to this policy.

26.3. Safeguarding concerns should take priority where there is a risk of harm to a child.

27. Review

27.1. This policy shall be reviewed at least annually and sooner where appropriate.

27.2. The Board shall review the policy following any significant safeguarding incident, material change to the Club's youth activities, or significant change in applicable law, British Fencing requirements or safeguarding guidance.

27.3. The Board shall ensure that any lessons identified through safeguarding incidents or reviews are reflected in the Club's practices where appropriate.

28. Approval

This policy was approved by the Board of Directors of Out East Fencing Club on:

Date: 11/08/2026

Chair / Director: Pel Houlihan

Next review date: 11/08/2027