Sovereign gymnastics and Trampolining club

**Whistle Blowing Policy: Guidance for Employees**

This guidance is written for staff working for Sovereign Gymnastics and should be read in conjunction with the gym’s other Policy and Procedures.

 “Whistleblowing” means raising or reporting concerns relating to the welfare or safety of children and young people. All of those who come into contact with children and families in their everyday work have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

All staff have a responsibility to report abuse and malpractice to the relevant authorities when it is suspected or should they have concerns regarding the way in which children are being cared for.

Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of management and/or relevant agencies. Although this can be difficult this is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act, which came into effect in 1999, gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. Sovereign Gymnastics has endorsed the provisions set out below so as to ensure that no members of staff should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express your concerns out of a feeling that this would be disloyal to colleagues or you may fear harassment or victimisation; these feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember it is often the most vulnerable child or young person who is targeted. These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare.

Don't think what if I'm wrong - think what if I’m right

**Reasons for whistle blowing**

• Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour

• To prevent the problem worsening or widening

• To protect or reduce risks to others

• To prevent becoming implicated yourself

**What concerns should be reported?**

An allegation is defined as any complaint or concern that might indicate that a person:

• Has harmed a child or put a child at risk of harm

• Has displayed behaviour involving or related to a child that might constitute a criminal offence.

• Has behaved in a way that raises concern about the adult’s suitability to work with children.

**What stops people from whistle blowing**

• Starting a chain of events which spirals

• Disrupting the work or project

• Fear of getting it wrong

• Fear of repercussions or damaging careers

• Fear of not being believed

**How to raise a concern**

• You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as possible for action to be taken

• Try to pinpoint what practice is concerning you and why

• Approach someone you trust and who you will believe will respond

• Make sure you get a satisfactory response - don't let matters rest

• You should put your concerns in writing

• A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern

**What happens next:**

• You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries.

• Sovereign Gymnastics has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation

• No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.

• Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence

**Self-reporting:**

Staff have a responsibility to report any relevant changes of circumstance to their employer. These include any criminal investigations, convictions or warnings they may become the subject of and/or if their own children become involved in any child protection related concern

There may also be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, such as a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line manager so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

**Procedure within our setting**

Any member of staff having a concern should speak to their line manager. This should not be discussed with anyone else. The concerns should be put in writing.

If the concern is about the manager then they need to speak to the Welfare officer.

**Further advice and support**

It is recognised that whistle blowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from your line manager and/or your professional or trade union (if you belong to one)

Key Points:

•Sovereign gymnastics aims to promote a transparent culture with parents and staff where everyone feels able to raise any concerns they may have

• Remember that an allegation of child abuse or neglect may lead to a criminal investigation – don’t do anything that may jeopardise an investigation, such as asking a child leading questions or attempting to investigate the allegations of abuse yourself

• Don’t keep it to yourself, report it

• Do not rely on someone else to report the suspected abuse – you may be the only person to have noticed, or others may be relying on someone else to make the call

• Remember, there may be more than one child being harmed

• All concerns raised will be taken seriously and fully investigated

• Do not share information in an inappropriate manner

• It should not be deemed that someone is guilty of an offence or poor practice just because a concern has been reported about them.

• Always put the needs and welfare of the child first – excuses such as ‘not wanting to get involved’, ‘it would lead to a loss of business’ or ‘not wanting the hassle’ are reprehensible if they prevent you from reporting concerns

• How would you feel if you did nothing and found out later that the child had been abused?

**Everyone, without fail, has a duty to challenge poor practice or performance.**

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| This policy was adopted by | Sovereign Gymnastics |  |
| On |  |  |
| Date to be reviewed |  |  |
| Name of signatory |  |
| Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner) |  |