



RUGBY GYMNASTICS CLUB

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines Promoting the welfare of children within our sport

The following procedures and guidelines were produced by the Rugby Gymnastics Club (RGC) Management Committee in conjunction with British Gymnastics (BG). The membership of the RGC Management Committee includes representatives from the club who are elected annually by the membership of the club.

FOREWORD

At RGC we believe that children's welfare is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to protecting children from abuse. Everyone in gymnastics - administrator, club official, coach, parent, friend, children themselves, everyone - can help.

Abuse can occur anywhere there are children - at home, at school, in the park, at the club. Sadly, there are some people who will seek to be where children are simply in order to abuse them. We believe that everyone at RGC has a part to play in looking after the children with whom we are working. This is both a moral and, arguably, a legal obligation. The Children Act 1989 indicates that anyone who has the care of a child should "do what is reasonable in all the circumstances for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the child's welfare."

These child protection procedures stem from the following fundamental principles:

- The Children Act defines a child or young person as anyone under 18 years of age
- All young people and vulnerable adults, regardless of age, gender, disability, racial origin, religious belief and sexual orientation have a right to be protected from abuse.
- It is the responsibility of the child protection experts to determine whether or not abuse has taken place but it is everyone's responsibility to report it.
- The welfare of young people and vulnerable adults is paramount and all concerns and allegations of potential poor practice and abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Confidentiality should be upheld in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the common law of confidentiality.

We know that if the procedures are to help to protect children, everyone involved in gymnastics needs to see and discuss them. Therefore, these procedures and guidelines are available for all members of RGC to read and discuss.

Finally, please remember that RGC and BG will support anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concerns that a child is at risk of, or may actually be, being abused.

RECOGNITION OF POOR PRACTICE, ABUSE AND BULLYING

POOR PRACTICE

Poor practice may be defined as any action or behaviour that contravenes the following:

- Best coaching practice as advocated through the British Gymnastics coach education programme or resource materials.
- The BG Code of Conduct or Code of Ethics.
- The BG Equity Policy.
- The accepted roles and responsibilities of a coach.
- The BG Child Protection Policy and Health, Safety and Welfare Policy.

ABUSE

Abuse can and does occur in a wide range of settings, including sport. The effects of abuse can be so damaging, they may follow a person into adulthood. For example, a person who has been abused as a young person may find it difficult or impossible to maintain stable, trusting relationships, become involved with drugs, experience mental health problems or self-harm. A child who has been neglected can experience serious impairment in their health and development.

Racial Discrimination and Equity

It is likely that people from black and minority ethnic groups may experience harassment, discrimination and institutional racism. Although racism clearly causes harm, it is not itself a category of abuse. However, it may be considered emotional abuse and recent legislation has made racism illegal.

Equal opportunities must be provided for all, regardless of gender, race or culture and we must endeavour to protect ethnic minority groups from racial harassment, racial discrimination and institutional racism. Through adherence to the BG Equity Policy, problems such as discrimination against ethnic minority groups should be avoided.

People with a Disability

People with a disability or impairment may be vulnerable to abuse or poor practice, since they may not be suitably able to express their concerns or protect themselves or understand what is happening. Coaches, officials and organisations must avoid discrimination against people with a disability and must be vigilant in caring for these vulnerable people.

Abuse and Neglect

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Children and vulnerable adults may be abused within their family, at school and sometimes in the sporting environment. There is growing evidence to suggest that peer abuse is an increasing concern for young people.

Physical Abuse

Where someone:

- Physically hurts or injures a child intentionally by hitting, shaking, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning or any other physical harm.
- Gives alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison to a child
- Uses drugs to enhance performance or delay puberty.
- Inappropriately restricts a child's diet out of a desire to increase chances of success but without concern for the child's health and nutritional needs.
- Inflicts a type and intensity of training which exceeds the capacity of the child's maturation.

Sexual Abuse

Where adults or other children (male and female) sexually abuse boys or girls to satisfy their own sexual needs, or where children are encouraged or forced to observe or participate in any form of sexual activity.

This could include:

- Full sexual intercourse, fondling, masturbation or oral sex.
- Taking or possessing inappropriate photographic materials involving children.
- Showing inappropriate, pornographic materials to children.

It should be noted that in sports situations where physical contact is made i.e. in stretching exercises or supporting, sexual abuse may go unnoticed. These situations also provide the opportunity for abuse to occur.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse can be described as the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child, which can cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. Examples of this may include when:

- The child is constantly shouted at, taunted, humiliated or ignored.
- The child is subjected to constant criticism, name calling, sarcasm or bullying.
- An unrealistic pressure to perform consistently to high expectations is placed upon the child by the coach, club officials or parents.

Neglect

Failure of an adult to provide food, shelter and clothing for a child, or failure to protect a child from danger or physical harm, may constitute neglect. Failure to access appropriate medical care or provide love and affection may be clarified as neglect.

Coaches who allow children to be exposed to unnecessary risk of injury or harm are being neglectful.

Neglect can also occur when a child's personal or intimate needs are ignored, particularly if they are disabled.

BULLYING

It is important to recognise that in some cases it may not be an adult who is carrying out the abuse. In the case of bullying, the abuser is often another young person. Bullying may be defined as deliberate, hurtful behaviour in the form of physical, psychological or aggressive verbal conduct against another person. The chances of bullying happening in a club can be greatly reduced if there is a general atmosphere where members are valued and cared for. The following strategies are an attempt to prevent bullying:

- Encourage an ethos of mutual respect for difference throughout the club.
- Give positive encouragement and promote the value of self and others.
- Raise awareness of all to the possible cause and effect of bullying.
- Make it clear that bullying will not be tolerated and is unacceptable, but that both victims and bullies will be given the necessary support.
- Encourage gymnasts, coaches and teachers to understand that no form of bullying be it physical, verbal or emotional will be tolerated.
- Encourage members to feel confident that their concerns will be listened to and taken seriously.
- Any person who witnesses bullying but does not address the situation will be considered to be breaching the RGC Code of Ethics.

ABUSE OF POSITION OF TRUST

This guidance is primarily intended to protect young people over the age of sexual consent but under 18 years of age and vulnerable adults where a relationship of trust with an adult exists. Although young people of 16 or 17 years of age can legally consent to some types of sexual activity, they may still be relatively immature emotionally. It is essential that those who may be in a position of responsibility and trust recognise this vulnerability and ensure that it is not exploited. There is no simple definition of a vulnerable adult but the position of trust and the vulnerability of adults must not be abused.

The principles and guidance apply, irrespective of sexual orientation: neither homosexual nor heterosexual relationships are acceptable in a position of trust.

- A relationship of trust can be described as one in which one party is in a position of power or influence over another by virtue of their position.
- Any sexual activity, which is not freely consenting, is criminal. The sexual activity covered by abuse of trust may be ostensibly consensual, but rendered unacceptable because of the relative positions of the parties concerned.

Code on Abuse of Trust

The Code of Conduct on sexual activity between individuals in a relationship of trust aims to:

- Protect a young person or vulnerable adult from an unequal and potentially damaging relationship.
- Protect the person in a position of trust by preventing him/her from entering into such a relationship deliberately or accidentally by providing clear and enforceable guidance on what behaviour is acceptable.
- Any behaviour, which might allow a sexual relationship to develop between the person in a position of trust and the individual(s) in their care, must be avoided.
- Any sexual relationship within a relationship of trust is unacceptable so long as the relationship of trust continues.
- All those in organisation have a duty to raise concerns about behaviour by coaches, staff, volunteers, managers and others, which may be harmful to those in their care, without prejudice to their own position.

SOME INDICATIONS OF ABUSE

Recognising child abuse is not always easy - even for the experts. The examples listed below are not a complete list and they are only indicators - not confirmation:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, bites or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- The child has an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent or which has not been adequately treated.
- The child says that she/he is being abused, or another person says they believe (or actually know) that abuse is occurring.
- The child's behaviour changes, either over time or quite suddenly, and he/she becomes quiet and withdrawn, or alternatively becomes aggressive.
- Refusal to remove clothing for normal activities or keeping covered up in warm weather.
- The child appears not to trust adults, e.g. a parent or coach with whom she/he would be expected to have, or once had, a close relationship, and does not seem to be able to make friends.
- The child becomes increasingly neglected-looking in appearance, or loses or puts on weight for no apparent reason.
- The child shows inappropriate sexual awareness for his/her age and sometimes behaves in a sexually explicit way.

This list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these symptoms is not proof that abuse has taken place, but it should raise concerns.

Bear in mind that physically disabled children and young people are particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them. Dependency on others for primary needs such as feeding, clothing and intimate care may make a young person feel powerless to report abusive treatment. A fear of retribution for "telling" can be a powerful "silencer". Difficulty in identifying abusive situations or behaviour may allow it to continue.

It is not the responsibility of the coach or official to decide that the child is being abused but it is their responsibility to act upon their concerns.

GOOD PRACTICE WHICH CAN HELP TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE

All participants have the right to be safe and be treated with dignity and respect. The promotion of good practice will reduce the possibility of abusive situations occurring. Although these guidelines are written with coaches in mind, they are applicable to all adults with access to children through gymnastics.

- Avoid situations where a coach and child or vulnerable adult are alone or cannot be observed. RGC acknowledges that occasionally there may be no alternative – for example, a child may fall ill and have to be taken home. We would stress, however, that one to one contact must never be allowed to occur on a regular basis.
- Ascertain the child's and parent's/carer's views about manual support. Recognised/advised techniques for supporting should be used. Avoid inappropriate contact.
- Where possible, parents should be responsible for young children in the changing rooms or toilets. If it is necessary to do things of a personal nature for young or disabled children, make sure that there is another adult present. Get the child's consent if at all possible and also get consent from the parent/carer.
- Ensure that mixed teams are always accompanied by male and female coaches/officials.
- Always place the safety and welfare of the gymnasts as the highest priority.
- Don't allow any physically rough or sexually provocative games, or inappropriate talking or touching by anyone.
- Don't abuse the privileged position of power or trust by resorting to bullying tactics, verbal abuse or reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Ensure that all coaches, volunteers and officials have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau.

On occasions there may be situations where the unexpected does occur. In these situations, you should report immediately to another coach or official and make a brief written note of the event. Where appropriate ensure that the parent/carer is informed of any incident. Examples could include:

- If a young person becomes distressed in your presence.
- If you accidentally hurt a child.
- If a young person misunderstands/misinterprets something you have said or done.
- If a performer appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.

If the procedure and guidelines contained here are implemented properly, they can offer safeguards to everyone involved in gymnastics and in doing so help to maintain the credibility of RGC and BG. Most of all, they can help to prevent children from being abused.

Strategies to Discourage Bullying

- Create an open environment and provide adequate supervision at all times.
- Encourage children to speak out and share any concerns with the person in charge, the Welfare Officer if there is one or other responsible adults.
- Take all signs of bullying seriously.
- Create an open environment and provide adequate supervision at all times.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE, SUSPICIONS AND ALLEGATIONS

Responding to Disclosure of Abuse

If a child indicates that he/she is being abused, or information is received which gives rise to concern that the child may be being abused, the person receiving the information should:

- Stay calm and ensure that the child is safe and feels safe.
- Reassure the child that he/she is not to blame and was right to tell you.
- Show and tell the child that you are taking what he/she says seriously, but explain, carefully and tactfully, that you may have to tell someone else in order to help and protect them.
- Make an immediate and careful record of what has been said, using the child's actual words wherever possible (not your interpretation of them). If you record opinions, make sure they cannot be mistaken for facts.

When RGC has a designated Welfare Officer, any concerns should be shared with them. It is the responsibility of the Welfare Officer to contact the Social Services. If a designated person has not been appointed, contact the person in charge or, if they are not available or the concerns are about him/her, you should contact the Ethics and Welfare Officer at British Gymnastics, the NSPCC or Social Services who will be able to advise you on any action that should be taken.

Actions to avoid:

- Do not allow your shock or distaste to show.
- Do not dismiss the concern.
- Do not probe for more information than is offered.
- Do not speculate or make assumptions.
- Do not make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
- Do not approach the alleged abuser.
- Do not make any promises you cannot keep: such as agreeing not to tell someone else.

Sharing Concerns with Parents

In most circumstances it would be important to talk to parents to clarify any initial concerns. For example if a young person seemed withdrawn, there may be a reasonable explanation. The child may have experienced an upset in the family, such as a parental separation/divorce or bereavement. However, if you are suspicious that a parent, guardian or carer may be the abuser or you believe that the parent may not be able to respond appropriately to the situation, speaking to them regarding the matter might place the child at greater risk. In these circumstances, if concerns still exist you should report the suspicion or allegation to the senior person or designated person. Advice must be sought with respect to consulting with parents.

Responding to Suspected Bullying

The same procedures that would be implemented for suspected abuse should be followed for suspected bullying.

Supporting the Victim of Bullying:

- Reassure the victim that you support them and can be trusted.
- Explain that you may have to inform someone in authority.
- Report suspicions or concerns to the person in charge.
- Keep accurate records of what happened together with names of those involved and any action taken.

Confronting the Bully(ies)

- Talk to the bully(ies), explain the situation and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their actions.
- Seek an apology from the bully(ies) to the victim.
- Inform the bully(ies) parents.
- Insist that any borrowed items are returned to the victim.
- Impose sanctions or disciplinary action if necessary. Report and record all actions taken.
- Provide support for the victim and his/her coach.
- Encourage the bully(ies) to change his/her behaviour.

Responding to Suspected Abuse of a Position of Trust

The same procedures that would be implemented for suspicion of abuse should be followed if abuse of a position of trust is suspected. It is still worth informing Social Services, as in some instances they may become involved. All concerns or allegations relating to a breach of the code of trust will be investigated according to the BG complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST COACHES, OFFICIALS OR OTHER MEMBERS

An allegation may involve volunteers or paid staff within RGC. Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse has occurred within a sporting situation. It is crucial that everyone involved with RGC recognises this possibility and takes seriously any allegations made against a coach, helper, official or anyone else working closely with children.

The designated person or senior person must be notified immediately of any circumstances that cause concern or raise suspicions. The circumstances may indicate poor practise, abuse or harassment and may need to be referred to the Police or Social Services.

If you have reasonable grounds for being concerned about a particular case involving a coach, official or other club member, it is not your responsibility to decide if abuse is being perpetrated nor to investigate it but, **it is your responsibility to act on those concerns and do something about it.**

Issues of Poor Practice

- If, following consideration the allegation is clearly poor practice, then it can be dealt with as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice of the Welfare Officer or where a poor practice allegation continues to remain a concern, BG must be informed and sent an incident report.
- If the incident of poor practice raises any suspicions or concerns about abuse, all details should be recorded and reported without delay to BG.

Suspected Abuse

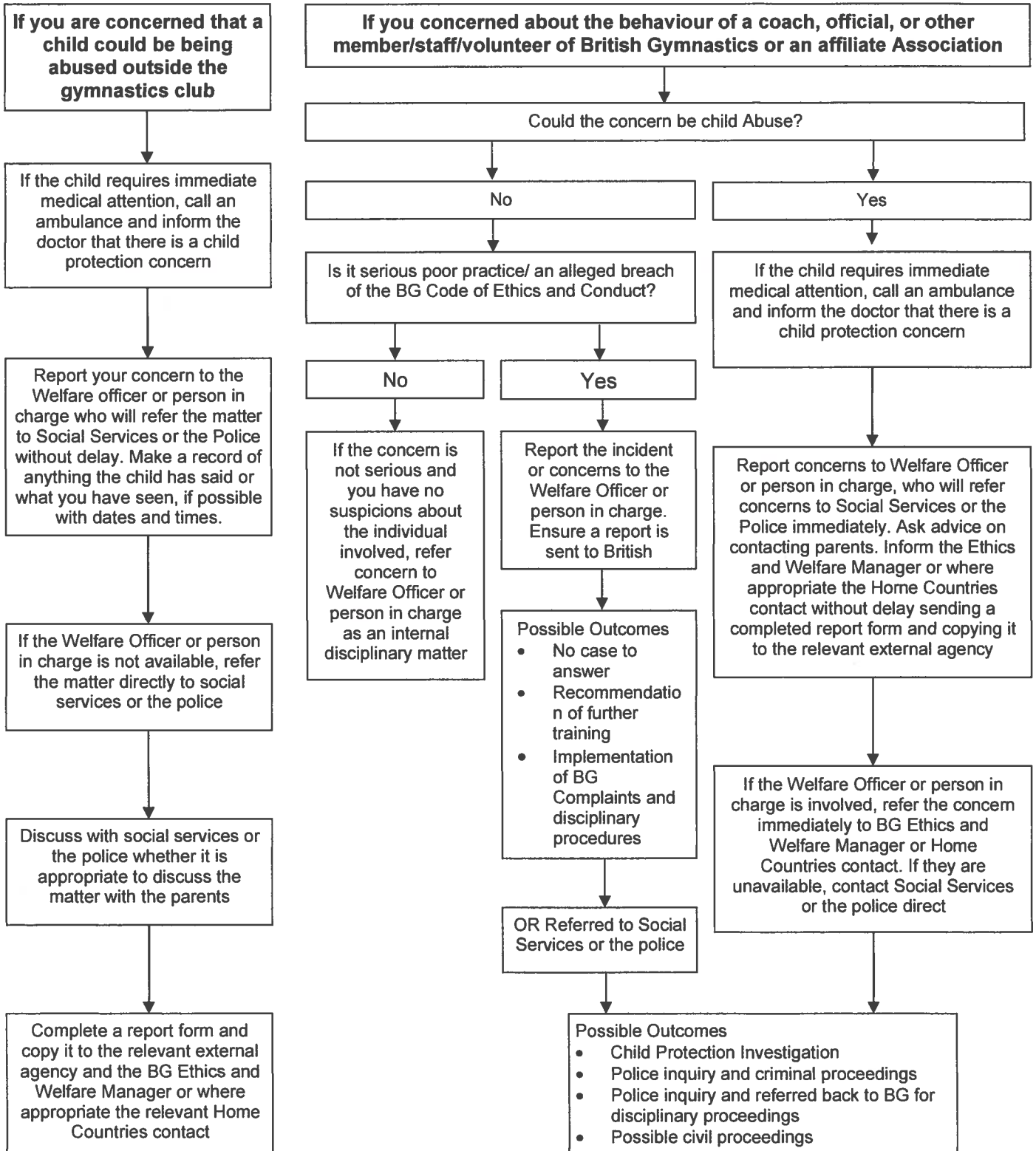
If there is any suspicion that a child has been abused, by either a staff member or volunteer, the Welfare Officer or senior member should immediately be informed so that they can either refer the incident to Social Services or, if necessary, go directly to the Police. BG should also be informed without delay and an incident report completed. **Any delay may place a child at risk.**

If the allegation concerns the Welfare Officer or senior member, then the incident should be referred to Social Services or, if necessary, to the Police. BG should also be informed without delay and an incident report completed.

EXTRACT FROM BRITISH GYMNASTICS CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

5.6 A QUICK GUIDE TO PROCEDURES IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE

This quick guide is designed to advise on the most appropriate action to be taken if you suspect abuse or witness repeated poor practice or breaches of BG Code of Ethics and Conduct. If you are uncertain at any stage, contact BG Ethics and Welfare Manager or NSPCC Helpline on 0804 800 5000. All reports should be made on the BG Child Protection Incident Report form contained in the *Sample Forms* section.



GUIDELINES FOR USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC AND FILMING EQUIPMENT AT COMPETITIONS

It is not the intention of RGC to prevent parents from taking pictures of their children but rather to ensure photographic practises are monitored to prevent inappropriate imagery from being circulated and to deter anyone with undesirable intentions.

Professional photographers/filming/video operators wishing to record the event should seek accreditation with the event organiser by producing their professional identification for the details to be recorded. Ideally they should request this at least 5 working days before the event.

Students or amateur photographers/film/video operators wishing to record the event should seek accreditation with the event organiser by producing their student or club registration card and a letter from their club/educational establishment outlining their motive for attending the event.

All other spectators wishing to use photographic/film/video equipment/mobile phone with camera should register their intent with the promoter of the event.

Accreditation procedure: a system is established whereby a record should be made of the individual's name and address and club. Professionals should register prior to the event and their identification details also recorded. Ideally, identification details should be checked with the issuing authority prior to the event. On registering, an identification label can be issued on the day which can serve to highlight those who have accreditation. Where regular events occur, the identifying label should be changed to prevent unofficial replication.

Public Information: the specific details concerning photographic/video and filming equipment/mobile phone cameras registration should, where possible, be published prominently in event programmes and announced over the public address system prior to the start of the event.

The recommended wording is:

In line with the recommendation of British Gymnastics, the promoters of this event request that any person wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close photography should register their details with staff at the spectator entry desk before carrying out any such photography.

Guidelines for Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment at Club Sessions

There is no intention to prevent club coaches and teachers using videoing as a legitimate coaching aid. However, gymnasts and their parents should be made aware that this is part of the coaching programme and care should be taken in the storing of such films.

If coaches are concerned that someone they do not know is using their sessions for photographic or filming purposes, they should ask them to leave and contact the RGC Management Committee.

During Competitions a sign at the entrance control should be displayed which reads:

Rugby Gymnastics Club Child Protection Programme

Use of Video, Zoom, or Close Range Photography

The British Gymnastics Association recommends that all clubs should record the name and address of any spectator who wishes to use video, zoom or close range photography to record activities at a competition.

In line with this recommendation, Rugby Gymnastics Club require that any person wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close range photography should register their details with staff at the spectator entry desk before carrying out such photography.

Rugby Gymnastics Club reserves the right to decline entry to this event to any person unable to meet or abide by these conditions.

If you are concerned about photography taking place at this event, please contact the competition organiser who will be pleased to discuss the matter with you.

Thank you for co-operation in this matter.