

Safeguarding in Snowsport

➤➤ for staff working with U18 athletes



The following advice and guidance is for all those working with athletes aged under 18 on GB Snowsport (GBS) organised activities and events.

Remember - Safeguarding is Everyone's Responsibility

Safeguarding

These are the policies, procedures and practices that, if applied, will help safeguard our athletes and the staff who work with them. This guidance is in addition to the [Safeguarding SnowSafe Policy](#), available on the Safeguarding section of the GBS website.

A sequence of images showing a snowboarder in mid-air, performing a jump over a snow-covered slope. The snowboarder is wearing a dark jacket and pants, and is captured in various stages of the jump, from takeoff to landing. The background is a clear blue sky and a snowy mountain landscape.

Your Role

Child abuse and harassment can take place in many situations including home, school and sporting environments. Research shows that elite athletes are at greater risk of being abused than many others participating in sport.

Whether you are a coach, Camp Welfare Officer, manager, or other person working/volunteering for GBS, you need to know what to do if an athlete decides to talk to you about abuse and understand your duty of care towards them.

Good Practice

Good practice helps to protect the athletes, reduce the potential for misunderstandings or unsubstantiated allegations being made, and ensure snowsport is a positive and fun experience for all.

Good practice means:

- Treating all athletes equally, giving support, positive encouragement and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- The athlete's welfare comes first
 - before winning
- Working in an open environment, avoiding being alone with an athlete and encouraging open communication
- Not tolerating bullying
- Avoiding unnecessary physical contact with athletes:
- Being a role model – including abiding by GBS rules for smoking and drinking.
 - and there must always be one member of staff abstaining from alcohol in case of an emergency
- Respecting athletes as individuals, listening to their views and concerns
- Ensuring all Under 18s know what to do if they have concerns
- Keeping up-to-date with skills, qualifications, safeguarding training, first aid (as appropriate)
- Using an [Accident Report Form](#) to keep a written record of accidents or injuries, along with details of any treatment given
- Behaving professionally around the athletes. **Remember** - you are the responsible coach/welfare officer/ manager, they are the athlete

Physical contact can be appropriate:

- If you are qualified to provide it
- To Develop skills or technique
- To treat or prevent an injury (e.g. sports massage)

Where it is required, it should be provided openly and with the consent of the athlete

Poor Practice

Poor practice means you must never:

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with an athlete away from others
- Go unaccompanied into an athlete's bedroom (except in a medical emergency) or invite any athlete into your bedroom
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Make sexually provocative comments to an athlete, even in fun
- Engage in a sexual relationship with anyone aged under 18 (or over 18) in your care
- Allow athletes to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Text or use any form of social media to contact an athlete unless the content is professional and specifically and exclusively related to their Programme
- Take part in, or tolerate bullying or behaviour that embarrasses, demoralises or affects an athlete's self-esteem
- Allow any safeguarding allegations to go unchallenged, unrecorded or unreported

Offensive Texts and Indecent Images

If an athlete shows a staff member something they have received – do not ask the athlete to forward it, as the athlete may be committing a criminal offence. If a staff member receives an offensive text, or indecent image of a child, they **must not forward** it – as they too could be committing a criminal offence. *Immediately report it to the GBS Welfare Officer or if there is an immediate concern for the safety of a child, the Police.*





Reporting a concern

It is your **legal duty** to report any safeguarding concerns you have within 24 hours (Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Gov 2018).

If any of the below occur, report it to the GBS Welfare Officer:

- You accidentally hurt an athlete
 - An athlete appears distressed about something unrelated to their training
 - An athlete acts in a sexually inappropriate manner
 - An athlete makes a disclosure
 - Someone reports a suspicion or allegation
 - Someone observes inappropriate behaviour
 - There are signs or suspicions of abuse
 - A bullying allegation against a member of staff, or serious bullying amongst athletes
- This is not an exhaustive list.

If the GBS Welfare Officer is unavailable and it is an emergency, report it directly to the local Police and let the GBS Welfare Officer know as soon as possible.

Remember – it is not your responsibility to decide whether or not abuse has taken place, but it **IS** your responsibility to pass on information to the appropriate people.

Use the [Incident Reporting Form](#) to record the details. It is really important to record the information at the earliest opportunity. In the most serious of cases, a police investigation may take place - they will need this information.

5 Types of Child Abuse

Physical

Physical Abuse – may involve hitting, shaking, biting or other physical harm. In snowsport, it could also involve performance related drugs or excessive training beyond the athlete's level.

Emotional

Emotional Abuse - may involve telling the athlete they are no good, ignoring them, not allowing them to express their views, making fun of them or letting others make fun of them. In snowsport, it could also involve imposing unrealistic expectations on them, exposing them to constant criticism, sarcasm or bullying.

Sexual

Sexual abuse – may involve forcing or enticing an athlete to take part in sexual activities, watch sexual activities, look at sexual material or participate in sexual discussions. It may involve rape, oral sex, masturbation, kissing, rubbing or touching inappropriately outside of clothing or grooming an athlete in preparation for abuse. Men, women, boys and girls can be sexually abused: men, women and children can be the abusers. Any sexual activity between someone in a position of trust on a GBS camp, and someone under the age of 18 in their care is prohibited, will be subject to disciplinary action and will be reported to statutory agencies.

Neglect

Neglect – failure to meet an athlete’s basic physical or psychological needs including food, shelter, clothing or supervision.

In snowsport, it could be exposing them to unnecessary danger, cold, not allowing them to rest, or subjecting them to unnecessary risk of injury through pushing them too hard or beyond their capability.

Bullying

Bullying - is deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms but the main three types are: **physical** (hitting, kicking, stealing), **verbal** (including name calling, sexist, homophobic or racist comments, threats) and **emotional** (isolating them from their peers).

Cyberbullying can occur 24 hours a day, and the person being bullied cannot get away from the perpetrator/s.

Cyberbullying is when a person or group of people use the internet, mobile phone, online games or other kind of digital technology to threaten, tease, upset or humiliate someone else.

The **competitive** nature of snowsport makes it an ideal environment for bullies, whether they are competitive parents pushing their children too hard, coaches shouting or humiliating an athlete, or an athlete actively seeking to isolate or make fun of a fellow athlete.

What to do if someone is being bullied?

Take the concerns seriously. Investigate all incidents (even apparently “trivial” ones) and talk to bully(ies) and victim(s) separately. You can then decide on appropriate action such as obtaining an apology, informing the parents of the bully or ensure “borrowed” or stolen items are returned. Always inform the GBS Welfare Officer if it involves a coach or member of staff.

What to do if an athlete tells you about abuse?

➤ Respond ➤ Record ➤ Report

- Stay calm, don't appear shocked
- Do not promise to keep the information confidential (in case you need to pass it on to someone else to help them)
- Keep an open mind
- Don't dismiss the concern, make assumptions or judgements
- Listen carefully. Take the athlete and the problem seriously
- Ask open questions, and as few questions as possible (only for clarity)
- Reassure the athlete that it was the right thing to do to tell you and explain what will happen next
- Do not approach the alleged abuser to discuss the issue
- Record the information on an Incident Report Form
- Report the relevant information to the Welfare Officer. If she is unavailable or it is an emergency, you should contact the local police or Children's Social Care (if in UK), and let the Welfare Officer know as soon as possible

Our GBS Welfare Officer is Bridget Owen. To report or talk about a concern, you can contact her directly on:

Email: bridget.owen@gbsnowsport.com

Phone: +44 (0) 7807 026 247 | Emergency Services EU Telephone Number: 112

