



TAEKWONDO COUNCIL UK

Preventing the Abuse of Positions of Trust

Audience: This policy is applicable to all individuals involved in Taekwondo Council UK, including coaches, officials, volunteers, parents, and aims to foster responsible relationships within the sport and deter the manipulation and exploitation of young athletes. Those in authoritative roles play a significant part in the welfare of young athletes when they maintain appropriate, positive relationships. This policy should be read in conjunction with all other Taekwondo Council UK safeguarding policies and procedures.

Defining Positions of Trust: A position of trust involves an individual in a position of authority over another person. It is crucial to safeguard the welfare of young people between the ages of 16 and 17, as they are still considered vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation in specific circumstances. This includes sexual activity and relationships with adults who hold positions of trust, responsibility, or authority in relation to them, thereby possessing a substantial amount of power and influence over their lives.

Maintaining Appropriate Relationships: In a sports context, this policy focuses on the relationships between adults in authoritative positions and children and young athletes who may rely on their coach, mentor, or another adult for their sports development, success, or standing in a club or on a national team. These relationships should be supportive, positive, and aimed at enhancing the young person's skills and progress. It is imperative that the coach-participant relationship centres around the sport, and any romantic or sexual relationships between adults and young athletes should be clearly defined as a violation of the organisation's code of conduct.

Potential Abuses of Positions of Trust: Some individuals may abuse their authority and influence over young athletes to establish sexual relationships with them. Such relationships may not always violate criminal laws, and young athletes involved may not always perceive them as abusive or exploitative. Nevertheless, the presence of a significant power imbalance between an adult with authority and control over a substantial aspect of a young person's life raises concerns that the relationship might be unequal and constitute an abuse of the adult's position of trust.

Legal Framework: The UK's sexual offences legislation states that any sexual activity between adults and children under 16 is illegal and constitutes abuse. The law specifies particular roles and settings where sexual activity between 16 and 17-year-olds and individuals in positions of trust, responsibility, or authority constitutes a criminal offence. At present, coaches or officials in sports clubs are not considered specified roles under the law.

Positions of Trust in the Sports Context: The current legislation does not encompass sports roles (e.g., coaches, instructors, or helpers) or sports organisations and settings (e.g., clubs, leisure facilities, or events) within its definitions. The NSPCC suggests that, due to the vulnerability of young athletes and the unique nature of sports, legislation should be extended to include sports roles and settings. Regardless, sports organisations should establish codes of ethics and conduct that define acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, including any abuse of positions of trust. Violations of these codes should be addressed through complaints and disciplinary procedures.

Safeguarding Measures:

Sports organisations should:

- Review and update their codes of conduct and disciplinary processes to include language supporting healthy and positive relationships between sports coaches and young athletes.
- Define positions of trust within the organisation and prohibit sexual relationships or activity between adults in these roles and 16 - 17-year-old athletes for whom they have authority.
- Emphasise that the abuse of a position of trust is determined by the nature of the position concerning the young athlete, not solely by the frequency of contact.
- Provide safeguarding training that addresses issues of trust abuse and maintaining appropriate boundaries between adults and young athletes.
- Educate young athletes about relevant rules and their right to participate in sports without being pressured to comply with adults' sexual requests.
- Include a requirement in safeguarding and disciplinary policies for referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) when an individual is deemed unsuitable to work with young athletes.

Roles and Responsibilities of Sports Coaches and Others in Positions of Trust:

Sports coaches and others in authoritative roles should:

- Familiarise themselves with, sign up to, and adhere to the organisation's code of conduct.
- Maintain relationships with participants that reflect positively on the organisation.
- Avoid seeking or engaging in sexual activity or sexualized communication via social media with 16 - 17-year-old athletes.
- Report any signs of inappropriate relationships between young athletes and staff or volunteers to the organisation's Safeguarding Officer, Designated Safeguarding Lead, or manager immediately.

Reporting Concerns:

Individuals who suspect the abuse of a position of trust should:

- Report concerns to the Safeguarding Officer or Designated Safeguarding Lead, following the organisation's complaints or safeguarding policy and procedure.
- Maintain written records of concerns and relevant details.

If concerns are not addressed appropriately, or if there is no Safeguarding Lead, consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO - England only) or the NSPCC Helpline for guidance.

For any further inquiries or concerns, please contact the 24-hour NSPCC Helpline at 0808 800 5000. Contact the 24-hour NSPCC Helpline at 0808 800 5000.