



Preventing Abuse of Positions of Trust in Sport

Introduction

All involved in karate and other sports - coaches, officials, volunteers and parents – should help promote responsible relationships within sport and prevent the manipulation and exploitation of young people. Those in authority positions within sport have a positive contribution to make to a young person's welfare providing that appropriate, positive relationships are maintained. All staff, coaches, officials, participants and volunteers should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with children and young people.

Position Of Trust

A position of trust involves a person in a position of authority over another person. Examples of where such relationships exist include between child and staff, coaches, officials and/or volunteers.

There is a need to protect young people ages 16-17 that, despite reaching the age of consent for sexual activity, are considered to be vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, in defined circumstances. This includes sexual activity and relationships with adults who hold a position of trust, responsibility or authority in relation to them and, as a result, have a considerable amount of power and influence in their lives.

All coaches, staff, officials and volunteers should ensure their relationships with our child members are appropriate to the age and gender of the member. They should be supportive, positive and aimed at improving the young person's skills, and progress. All should take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when members are dealing with Children and Young People under 18 years of age.

The coach-participant relationship should focus on the sport, and any romantic or sexual relationships between the adult and child or young person under the age of 18 should be clearly defined as a breach of the organisation's code of conduct.

How May Positions Of Trust Be Abused In Sport?

Some individuals use their authority and influence over young people in order to groom and establish a sexual relationship with them. Such a relationship may not always be a breach of the criminal law and the young person involved may not always view it as abusive or exploitative. However, the existence of a significant power differential between an adult with authority, control or influence over a significant aspect of young person's life, always raises the possibility that the relationship is unequal and constitutes an abuse of the adult's position of trust.

The Law

The sexual offences legislation in the UK states that any sexual activity between adults and with children under 16 is illegal and constitutes abuse. The law defines specific roles and settings where sexual activity between 16 and 17 year olds and those in positions of trust, responsibility or authority constitutes a criminal offence. Currently, being a coach/official in a sports club is not considered under the law as a specified role.

This legislation does not include sports roles (e.g. coaches, instructors or helpers) or sports organisations and settings (e.g. clubs, leisure facilities or events) within these definitions. Thus, at present, an abuse of a position of trust within most sport contexts will not be illegal, although there may be circumstances in which the law does apply to sports coaches - for example if they are employed by and operating within a school.

Advice & Reporting Concerns About Possible Abuse Of A Position Of Trust

- If you suspect that an abuse of a position of trust has occurred, is occurring or may occur you should report this to the Safeguarding Officer or Designated Safeguarding Lead for the organisation in line with the complaints or safeguarding policy and procedure.
- Make a written record of your concerns and relevant details.
- If you feel your concern has not been dealt with appropriately, or there is no Safeguarding Lead, you can consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO - England only) whose details should be available through your local authority's Children's Social Care Department and whose duties include responding to concerns about potential breaches of positions of trust.
- Alternatively, you can seek advice from the 24 hour NSPCC Helpline – 0808 800 5000