



## SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN POLICY

Excel Gymnastics Academy is fully committed to the safeguarding and protection of all members. The welfare of every gymnast is paramount and we recognise our responsibility to provide a safe and enjoyable environment where children can learn gymnastics without the risk of harm, abuse or exploitation.

### Policy Introduction

**Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.** Everyone who is involved at Excel has a responsibility for keeping every child safe, irrespective of their role at the club.

There is a risk that children may be harmed in any environment, including the home, at school or in a sports club. Due to the nature of gymnastics, we acknowledge that gymnastics provides significant access to children and young people and can provide opportunities for an individual to cause harm to children. It is however, also recognised that individuals who have regular contact with young people play a key role in promoting their welfare and identifying early signs of abuse. It is therefore essential that individuals who have contact with children and young people are fully aware of the early signs of abuse and/or neglect and understand the appropriate steps to report these concerns.

In addition, it is important to be aware that some children may be more vulnerable than others. These may include disabled children with specific additional needs, children with special educational needs and children training at a high performance level within the sport.

We are fully committed to providing support, information and training opportunities to make certain that individuals understand their role and responsibilities and fully understand the risk factors linked to abuse within the sport.

We strive to create a fun and safe learning environment where all children can develop and achieve their potential in the sport. We recognise that as a club, as well as all members of the Excel Team have a '**duty of care**' towards all members and will ensure that high standards are met with best practice being followed at all times when working with children.

### Key Principles

This Policy is based upon the following fundamental principles:

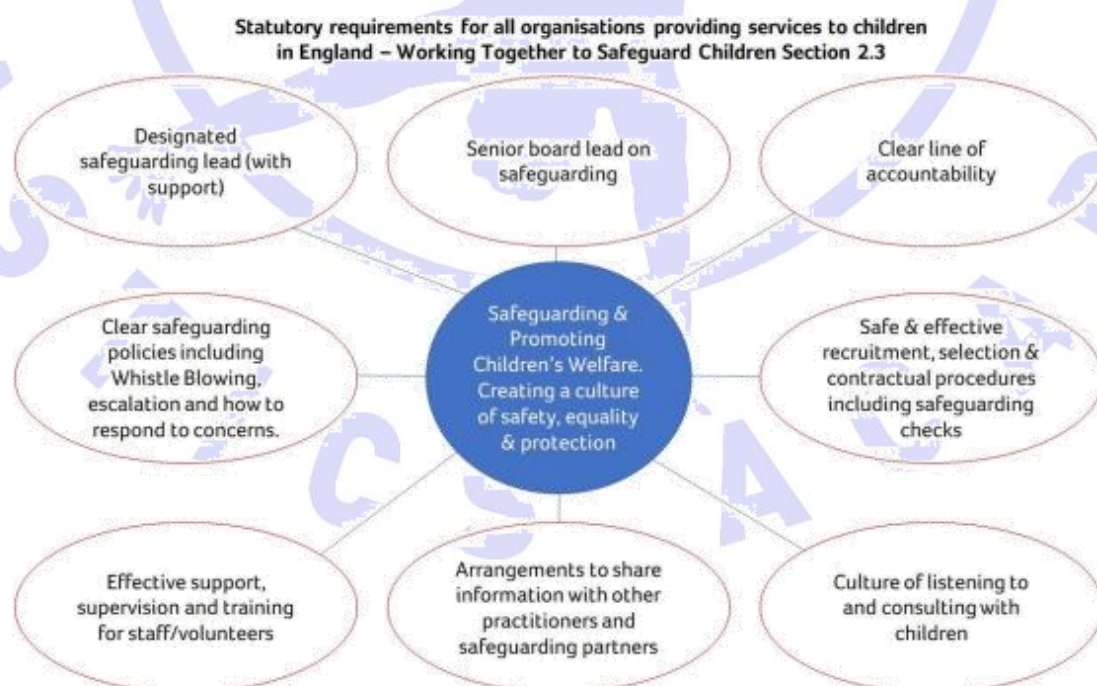
- The welfare of children (anyone under the age of 18 years) is paramount.
- All children, regardless of ability, age, disability, sexual orientation, parental status, race, religion or belief or socio/economic background have a right to be protected from abuse.
- Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility: every individual as well as the club must play their part in ensuring the sport is safe.
- A child-centred approach: keep the child in focus when making decisions about their lives and working in partnership with them and their families. Gymnastics provision will better meet the needs of children if it is informed by a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.

### Excel Gymnastics Academy will:

- Ensure that all measures are taken to minimise potential risk of injury or abuse.
- Ensure that all coaches work within the boundaries of their training and qualifications and implement best practice at all times.
- Ensure all coaches and staff have suitable training in Safeguarding and Protecting Children to minimise potential risks to children and also to protect themselves.
- Ensure that all coaches and staff that have direct contact with the gymnasts have a valid Enhanced DBS.
- Appoint a Welfare Officer who will deal with any complaints or grievances promptly and confidentially.
- Ensure that a minimum of 2 responsible adults are present at all times during training sessions.
- Ensure that adequate arrangements are in place in the event of an accident or fire.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of this Policy and these procedures.
- Implement zero tolerance on bullying, abuse or poor practice and take active steps to eradicate any potential risks.
- Not let gymnasts leave the gym after a session until their parent or guardian has safely arrived to collect them.

### Background

'Working Together to Safeguard Children' provides the overall framework on which this policy is based. The guidance highlights the need for organisations working together, to take a coordinated approach to ensure effective safeguarding arrangements, the important role played by voluntary organisations and private sector providers in the delivery of services to children and expects such organisations to put in place arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Working Together also highlights that both the paid and voluntary workforce need to be aware of their individual responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and how they should respond to child protection concerns and make a referral to local authority children's social care or the Police if necessary.



## Excel Responsibilities

This policy puts these requirements into a gymnastics context, outlining the minimum standards to which all Excel staff, members and volunteers must adhere. In addition to the main policy, there are various additional policies that must also be applied.

The overall aim of the policy is to ensure that everyone participating in the sport of gymnastics does so in a safe, holistic and child-centred environment that supports children to meet their potential. This can only be achieved if everyone involved in the sport is fully compliant with the policy.

### **The key objectives of the policy are as follows:**

- To ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding.
- To ensure everyone who comes into contact with children is able to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people.
- To promote positive practice and challenge poor practice.
- To ensure robust systems are in place to manage any concerns or allegations.
- To develop a skilled and competent safeguarding workforce.
- To ensure everyone who is involved in a role with children completes training at a level appropriate to their role in the sport, which covers the above areas.
- To ensure everyone who is involved in a role with children has been through appropriate prerecruitment checks, including the appropriate level criminal record checks.
- To ensure young people and their parents/carers are consulted and, where appropriate, fully involved in decisions that affect them.

We will ensure that any allegations or suspicions of abuse or significant harm to any child are reported without delay to the relevant Statutory Authorities in line with established information sharing protocols.

We will comply with the principles set out in current Data Protection legislation and Information Sharing for Practitioners (HM Government guidance) in relation to confidentiality and information sharing. Information that is confidential in nature may be shared, without consent, where there is a legitimate and lawful reason for disclosure.

In the event of an abuse allegation against an Excel Team Member, we will take action to ensure all children and young people are protected and, where appropriate, will support the prosecution of individuals accused of a criminal offence against a child/children.

All other misconduct or poor practice issues/non-compliance with policy and procedure will normally be managed by the Director of Coaching and Club Welfare Officer.

We will ensure that every effort is made to help prevent people who present a risk to children from becoming involved in the sport and to support the removal of anyone who is considered unsuitable.



## Club Responsibilities

### Excel will ensure that:

- there is at least one suitably trained and competent Welfare Officer designated within the club to take the lead role in dealing with safeguarding issues.
- All staff and volunteers, who are working with children receive appropriate safeguarding training, updated every three years, and have access to advice on child protection, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children through the Club Welfare Officer.
- All gymnasts and their parents are aware of the club codes of conduct and recognise behaviour that is not acceptable and how they can help to keep themselves safe.
- Support Whistle Blowing and take steps to ensure members, parents/carers, and other individuals linked to the club feel able to raise concerns without fear of negative repercussions.
- confidentiality is maintained in relation to concerns and referrals and information is only shared on a genuine 'need to know' basis in line with confidentiality and Information Sharing Guidance.
- Carry out Safe Recruitment to prevent unsuitable people from obtaining, or remaining in, positions of trust or responsibility.
- Promptly identify and respond to any deficiencies or weaknesses in the arrangements for safeguarding and promoting welfare of children.
- Ensure any poor practice is addressed immediately and any required remedial action is taken.

It is not the role of Club Officials to investigate possible abuse or neglect, however they have a key role to play by referring concerns to Children's Social Care Services/Police and providing information for their investigations.

### Welfare Officers

Although the responsibility for safeguarding falls on everyone, there will always be at least one designated Welfare Officer who is responsible for all safeguarding matters and promoting the welfare of all members.

### The Club Welfare Officer(s) must:

- Hold a valid Enhanced DBS.
- Hold a valid Safeguarding and Protecting Children Certificate.
- Keep up to date with any changes in legislation and best practice guidelines that relate to safeguarding children.

### Responsibilities of the Welfare Officer(s) include:

- Promoting the welfare of children and importance of safeguarding.
- Ensuring that children and young people are listened to and are involved in decision making.
- Ensuring that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding/child protection.
- Responding to safeguarding/child protection and poor practice concerns.
- Liaising with Local Statutory Agencies.
- Working with other organisations as required.

## Club Registration

When you register your child with us, it is essential that we obtain appropriate personal information about yourself and your child before they are able to participate in a session. The information we collect enables us to risk assess each gymnast based on the medical information provided, obtain the necessary parental consent required by law, as well as the information required in the event of an accident or emergency.

### The information we collect is:

- Gymnast Name and address
- Gymnast Date of birth
- Parent/Guardian information
- Emergency Contacts
- Medical Information
- First Aid Consent
- Photo/Video Consent

All data is securely held in line with the **Data Protection Act 1998**.

## Provision of Safe Environment

To effectively safeguard children, it is vitally important that we provide a safe environment where all members can participate in gymnastics. To minimise the potential risk of injury or abuse while children participate at the club we will:

- Provide an open training environment – Offering a parent viewing session each term in the event there is not a viewing gallery at a venue.
- Ensure there is a clear policy for use of changing rooms and toilets.
- Regularly check and maintain apparatus, equipment and other club property. Anything deemed unsafe for use will be removed from the gym and either repaired or replaced.
- Ensure first aid provision (Qualified first aider in the gym at all times, a correctly stocked first aid kit and phone in case of emergency).
- Provide safe storage of personal and sensitive information.

## Changing Facilities and Toilet Provision

We currently operate all of our classes from multi-use facilities, therefore we must honour their individual venue policies as well as ensure we have the necessary procedures in place to minimise any risk of potential abuse while using the toilet and changing facilities. As we operate from multi-use facilities **every effort must be made to ensure that your child arrives at the venue already changed and having been to the toilet**. This will minimise the chance that your child will need to use the facilities at the venue.

### When using the facilities at the venue the following must be adhered to at all times:

- An adult is not permitted to enter a children's changing facility at any time, either to assist a child with getting changed or to get changed themselves.\*
- Males and Females must not use the same changing facility at the same time. There will be separate changing facilities for males and females, alternatively if there is only one changing facility at the venue, there will be separate times when males and females can use the facility.
- Mobile phones must not be used in changing rooms.
- The club codes of conduct regarding behaviour must be followed at all times when using the changing facilities.

- Everyone should be aware that they must report any concerns or incidents to the Director of Coaching/Lead coach without delay.

\*Should you need to assist your child with getting changed or going to the toilet then you must use the disabled toilet facilities and not the children's changing facilities.

**In the event your child needs the toilet during their session, this is the procedure the coaches will follow if we are not the exclusive user of the venue:**

- A coach will direct your child to the toilet facility, however will remain outside the facility and in full view of other adults at all times.
- Wherever possible the child will use the disabled toilet to eliminate the risk of others using the toilet at the same time.
- If the disabled toilet is not available then the children will go to the toilet in groups (2 or more children).

If your child requires assistance going to the toilet or if you are not happy with the provisions in place, then you must notify the Head Office in writing by way of an email to [paul@excelgym.co.uk](mailto:paul@excelgym.co.uk) so that we can discuss suitable arrangements.

## **Bullying**

Bullying is behaviour, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group; physically or emotionally. There is often a power imbalance that makes it hard for the victim(s) to prevent or deal with the perpetrator's actions. The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm).

We operate a zero tolerance policy on bullying at the club and any form of bullying will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly and appropriately.

### **Bullying can occur between:**

- An adult and a child
- A child and another child
- A parent and their own child

Bullying can take many forms and can be conducted in person or through the actions of another person/other people. These include:

- **Emotional:** for example, being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding belongings, threatening gestures), name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing/taunts, graffiti.
- **Physical:** for example, pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.
- **Sexual:** for example, unwanted physical contact or sexually offensive comment(s).
- **Cyber:** for example, email & internet chat room misuse, mobile phone threats by text messaging & calls, misuse of technology (camera & video footage).

Bullying can also take the form of singling out individuals because they belong to a particular group or are different in some way from others (prejudice-based bullying) and may include:

- **Racist and religious based bullying**
- **Homophobic/ bi-phobic/ trans-phobic:** because of their sexual orientation, or perceived, or actual gender identity.
- **Disablist:** may focus on, or exploits, a particular aspect of the individual's disability.

We acknowledge that the competitive nature of sport can result in tensions that may lead to bullying, however bullying will not be condoned in any circumstance.



### **Examples of bullying in gymnastics:**

- A gymnast who intimidates fellow gymnasts inappropriately
- A coach who adopts a win-at-all costs philosophy
- A parent who pushes their child too hard
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person

### **Procedures to Discourage Bullying**

- Provide an open environment with adequate supervision at all times.
- Ensure all coaches are approachable so children do not fear talking to them.
- Encourage children to speak out and share any concerns with the Director of Coaching/Lead Coach, the Welfare Officer or other responsible adults at the club.
- Take all signs or allegations of possible bullying seriously.

### **Responding to Victims of Bullying**

- We will seek to gain the trust of the child by providing them with reassurance that they have done the right thing by bringing the concern to our attention.
- Explain that we will do everything we can to ensure that the issue is resolved and in order to do that the Director of Coaching and Welfare Officer may need to be informed.
- The details of the conversation will be correctly documented by the responsible adult who the child has confided in, including the date, time and names of those involved.
- The Director of Coaching will be provided with full details of the conversation in order to make an informed decision on the appropriate next steps.
- In minor cases, the Director of Coaching will aim to resolve the issue by talking with all the individuals involved and highlighting the gymnast codes of conduct and the acceptable ways to behave at the club. In more serious cases the information will be provided to the Welfare Officer and necessary authorities.
- All actions taken will be documented.
- If necessary, the club will provide support to the victim and their family.

### **Addressing the Bully(ies)**

- We will find a suitable time and place to talk to the individual(s) who have been accused of bullying. The situation will be explained to them and we will ask them for an explanation about the incident(s). We will try to make them understand the consequences of their actions.
- We will then seek an apology from the bully (or bullies) to the victim.
- Inform the bully's parents about the incident and actions taken.
- If any items have been taken from the victim then we will insist that these are returned.
- If necessary we will impose reasonable sanctions or disciplinary action.
- We will report and record all actions taken.
- Encourage the bully (or bullies) to change their behaviour.

### **Supporting the Bullied**

- We will work with the child and their parents to ensure that the issue is resolved quickly and effectively in order to minimise any lasting impact on the individual.
- We will provide any further support needed to ensure that the individual feels safe and happy when attending our sessions. This may involve designating a responsible adult that they can always go straight to if they have any concerns, or providing a 'gym buddy' who they trust to work with in their group and to accompany them to the toilet.
- If the issue is not exclusive to the club, we can work with the parents as well as the child's school or other external clubs to help support the individual.

- We may consider holding a reconciliation meeting if we feel it would be beneficial, to help address the issues between the bully and the bullied child.
- In extreme circumstances we may advise the parent to contact Kidscape (contact details in the information section), a charity that offers support to bullied children as well as day courses to help them deal with bullying and its after effects, including how to avoid being bullied in future.

## **Communication and Social Media**

In the modern world where everyone, of all ages, has access to a mobile phone and the internet it is vitally important to address the correct and safe methods of communication at the club. The development of technology has many benefits, however it does provide a large platform for bullying and abuse.

**Please acknowledge the acceptable communication channels below and ensure that your children are fully aware of them as well:**

- Mobile phones must not be used in the gym by members or coaches for personal use. The only exception is for lead coaches, however the use of the phone must be restricted to accessing the club app for gymnast data and taking the attendance registers, acting as the club contact number, or being used in the event of an emergency.
- Adult members must not communicate with gymnasts under the age of 18 years by:
  - Text message
  - Through internet chat rooms/networking sites
  - E-mail
- All communication by the above methods must be through the parent.
- Subject to parental consent, coaches can communicate with young people over the age of 16 years either by group e-mails/texts or by copying correspondence to either the child's parent, Director of Coaching or Welfare Officer, however this communication must be limited to work matters.
- In the event of a gymnast showing a coach a text message, image or email that is considered to be inappropriate for a child to have, the coach must inform the Welfare Officer.
- When contacting the club, either the Head Office or a coach directly, please ensure that you as the parent or guardian makes the call or sends the email and not your child. We fully appreciate that you are empowering your child to be responsible, however from a safeguarding perspective at the club we must only communicate with parents or individuals over the age of 18 years.

## **Social Media**

- Coaches or adult members must not add gymnasts on any of their social media platforms, nor must they accept a friend request from a gymnast who is under the age of 18 years.
- Please ensure you emphasise to your children that they must not try to add a coach on their social media platforms.
- Children under the age of 18 years are more than welcome to follow the official club pages, however they must not communicate with an individual coach through these platforms.
- If you become aware that a coach or adult member has added your child on social media or has started communicating with your child via social media, you must notify the Director of Coaching and/or Welfare Officer immediately.

Paul Reeve (Director of Coaching):

[paul@excelgym.co.uk](mailto:paul@excelgym.co.uk)

Ben Brown (Welfare Officer):

[ben@excelgym.co.uk](mailto:ben@excelgym.co.uk)



## Spotting and Manual Support

Supporting and shaping the gymnast is an essential part of coaching gymnastics, in that it helps the gymnast to understand shapes, movement patterns and complex skills, but also reduces the risk of injury due to a fall or error in performance.

### When Spotting or providing Manual Support:

- The coach must ensure that support is only used when necessary and “over-handling” is avoided.
- The support must follow the official training received, either on a British Gymnastics Course or by way of the Excel Training Scheme. It is the responsibility of the coach to keep up to date with the best practice guidelines for supporting gymnastic elements and only teach within their level of qualification.
- The support must not inhibit the gymnasts performance.
- Physical contact must not be invasive of sensitive areas of the body.

Due to the nature of the sport, non-intentional physical contact can arise accidentally out of error on the performer or coach's part. Such incidents should not occur frequently and can arise in situations where a coach has to quickly catch a gymnast if a skill goes wrong, in order to prevent them falling and causing injury. Such situations should not be ignored and need to be acknowledged through an apology to the gymnast, and if necessary, reported to the Director of Coaching, Club Welfare Officer as well as the parents. A written report should be made of any significant incident. Gymnasts or parents who have any concerns should raise them with the Director of Coaching and/or Club Welfare Officer.

**In any circumstance where abuse is suspected you must follow the complaints and grievance procedure.**

## Flexibility/Stretching Exercises

Flexibility is an essential part of gymnastics to increase the range of movement required to perform gymnastics elements and to prevent injury. In order to increase flexibility, gymnasts are required to stretch on a regular basis. Stretching will cause discomfort as a certain level of force needs to be applied for a prolonged period of time in order to increase flexibility. Some stretches will require the coach to assist the gymnasts and in these circumstances the coach must:

- Use slow, progressive and prolonged stretching exercises, within the “discomfort zone”, rather than what might be considered to be excessive force.
- Avoid exercises that place the coaches and gymnasts body in “close proximity” and might be seen as unnecessary by the less-informed parent or observer.
- Be sensitive to how the exercise might be perceived by the parents and children.
- Consider holding a parents forum to explain the flexibility training techniques, so that the parent is more aware and therefore less likely to misinterpret the techniques being used.
- Use partner exercises with more experienced gymnasts where possible.

## Photography and Use of Imagery

Occasionally we do take individual and group publicity photos and videos at the Excel venues or during events. These images are solely for use in Excel's publicity and advertising such as on flyer's, the club's website and the club's social media. Your consent is requested at the time of registration, however if your preference changes during your time at the club then you must notify us in writing. This can be done in the form of an email to: paul@excelgym.co.uk.

### **When taking and using photographs or videos we will adhere to the following guidelines:**

- A minimum of two club officials (with valid DBS) must be present at all times when filming or taking photos.
- A photograph, video clip or other image of a gymnast will not be published whether in print or electronically (e.g. on a website) without consent from the parent or guardian.
- No personal information, other than their first name and their club venue, will accompany published images (particular provisions apply in connection to photography at public events such as competitions and displays).
- While some editing of images is acceptable, images taken of gymnasts will not be modified, merged or manipulated in a way which might cause embarrassment or distress to the individual or cause the final image to be inappropriate.
- Ensure the dress of the gymnast and their position in the image/video is not deemed inappropriate.
- Ensure secure storage of video and photographic materials to avoid misuse.

If you have any concerns relating to images or videos that have been taken or published by the club, you must raise these concerns with the Director of Coaching and/or Welfare Officer immediately.

### **Transporting Gymnasts**

From time to time gymnasts may be required to travel in order to take part in events, such as competitions and displays. In order to safeguard the gymnasts and coaches, coaches are not permitted to take children in their car alone, except in unforeseen circumstances.\*

#### **Please be aware of the following:**

- A coach has a responsibility to coach your child and not to provide transport for them.
- It is the responsibility of the parent to make the necessary transport arrangements for training, competitions and displays.
- If you need help with transport, speak to other parents and try to share lifts.

It is unacceptable for coaches to transport one child alone, and in the case of transporting a group of gymnasts, best practice would require two responsible adults in the car. However, in exceptional circumstances where this is not possible, and subject to prior consent from all relevant parents, a coach could transport a group of gymnasts without another adult present.

#### **This is subject to the following conditions:**

- The driver must ensure there are central pick-up and drop-off points to ensure they are not alone with a child.
- The driver should also provide parents with full details of any planned breaks in the journey and departure and arrival times.
- Gymnasts must be seated in the back of the car with booster seats if required.
- The Club Welfare Officer should be made aware of the arrangements.

\* Unforeseen would only apply in the event of an accident or where something unexpected has happened and there is no other alternative but to take a child alone in the car and to fail to act would put the child at risk of harm. Where these situations are unavoidable, and whenever possible, the full consent of either the Welfare Officer, Director of Coaching or Official in the club and/or the child's parents should be obtained.

## **Late Collection of Children**

In the event that you are delayed for any reason and will not be at the club to collect your child at the end of their session you must:

- Contact the Director of Coaching or Head Office at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Provide clear instruction on what you wish the club to do, e.g. to keep your child in the gym until you arrive, or to provide consent for another parent to transport your child home.

### **The Lead Coach must:**

- Have access to a list of parent contact details and emergency numbers.
- Never leave a child or young person alone unless she/he is over 16 and then only with parent's permission.
- Carry out appropriate assessments of situations as they arise, acknowledging that some young people aged 16 and over can go home alone if their parent is delayed and has provided consent.

### **A Coach must never:**

- Take a child home or to another location.
- Ask a child to wait in a vehicle or the club with them alone.
- Send a child home with another person without permission.

### **If a parent is considered to be unduly late, the Lead Coach will:**

1. Attempt to contact the child's parent using the contact details stored on the system.
2. Attempt to contact the child's emergency contact (If different from the parent).
3. If there is no reply from the emergency contact the child will be asked if there is another family member who may be contacted.
4. Wait with the child/children at the club with at least one other official/coach/teacher/volunteer or parent.
5. Respond to any instructions received from the parent.
6. If no-one can be reached after a reasonable amount of time, contact the local police or Children's Social Care Services to enquire about the best course of action.

## **Persistent Failure to Collect a Child on Time**

If you persistently fail to collect your child on time and do not make any effort to contact the club or provide a reasonable explanation for the delays, the Club Welfare Officer may be informed and a meeting with yourself, the Welfare Officer and another Club Official will be arranged to discuss the matter. Following a meeting, if there is no change then the Club Welfare Officer will contact the children's team at the local Children's Social Care Services to seek further advice.



## Policy Review

**This Policy and these Procedures will be regularly reviewed:**

- In accordance with changes in legislation and guidance on the protection of children or following any changes within the Club.
- Following any issues or concerns raised about the protection of children within the Club.
- In all other circumstances the policy will be reviewed annually.

## Definitions

*You, Your, Yourself* –

The parent/guardian of a member at Excel Gymnastics Academy

*Member, Child, children* –

The person or persons who are taking part in classes at Excel Gymnastics Academy (normally the child or children of the customer)

*We, Us, The Club, Excel* –

Excel Gymnastics Academy Ltd

*Venue* –

Excel Gymnastics Academy run classes at a number of different venues.