

Northern Freestyle Karate Association



Safeguarding Children Guidelines

Written	Feb 2026	Robin Harper-Coulson
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Introduction

The NFKA is a large association of karate clubs in the North of England and has developed a Safeguarding Children Policy for implementation throughout its member clubs in England. We have signed up as an association to the following statement to keep children and young people safe

- **All sporting organisations, which make provision for children and young people, have a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that:**
- **The welfare of the child is paramount;**
- **All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse;**
- **All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;**
- **All staff (paid /unpaid) working in sport have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.**
- **The Children Act 1989 defines a child as a person under 18.**

This Safeguarding Children Policy has been accepted by the NFKA Management committee and is mandatory for all our member clubs.

The NFKA is committed to working in partnership with all agencies to ensure that information and training opportunities are available to ensure best practice when working with children and young people.

Adopting best practice will help to safeguard those participants from potential abuse as well as protecting instructors and other adults in positions of responsibility from any potential allegation of abuse.

This document is binding for all our member clubs and provides procedures and guidance to everyone in the NFKA, whether working on a voluntary or professional capacity.

1. Policy statement

Karate as a sport and pastime has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in Karate from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. The NFKA will ensure the safety and protection of all

children involved in our sport through adherence to the Safeguarding Children guidelines adopted by the NFKA committee in February 2026.

The policy will be implemented by all our member clubs and is applicable to all of the Association. Sport can and does have a very powerful and positive influence on people, especially young people.

Not only can it provide opportunities for enjoyment and achievement; it helps to develop and enhance valuable qualities such as self-esteem, leadership and teamwork. We have to ensure that for these children positive experiences take place in sport, secure in the hands of those who have the welfare of young people uppermost in their mind and that we have proper procedures and practices to support, and empower them.

1.2 Policy aims

The aim of the NFKA's Safeguarding Children Policy is to promote good practice:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of Karate clubs and instructors affiliated to the NFKA
- Ensure that all incidents of poor practice or suspicions of poor practice and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Allow all instructors /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.
- The Policy recognises and builds on the legal and statutory definition of a child
- The distinction between ages of consent, civil and criminal liability are recognised but in the pursuit of good practice in the delivery and management of Karate, a young person is recognised as being under the age of 18 years [Children's Act, 1989].
- The NFKA recognised that young people above the age of 18 are vulnerable to undue influence by adults in positions of responsibility.

2. Recruitment and selecting instructors and volunteers

The NFKA recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

It is essential that the same procedures are used consistently for all posts whether instructors are paid or voluntary, full time or part time that all individuals working on behalf of, or otherwise representing, an organisation are treated as employees whether working in a paid or voluntary capacity.

2.1 New instructors and volunteers

When undertaking recruitment, the NFKA will undertake the following:

Ensure there is a clear specification for all roles

All volunteers / instructors involved in Karate will complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.

Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Disclosure and Barring Service DBS and the appropriate enhanced disclosure will be carried out. [The AMA is the registered body for disclosure through the DBS]. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

Following application to the committee and agreement the successful applicant will only be allowed to take up their post and duties once their DBS check has been cleared by the NFKA and AMA. This will follow the mandatory training courses are completed alongside national governing body assessment as a karate instructor by an independent instructor. This is a mandatory programme for all instructors and assistant instructors; it includes DBS checks, having the appropriate insurance, and training in First Aid, Child Protection and as an association agreement to follow the NFKA and AMA code of conduct.

2.2 On going support.

There will be a period of induction, on going training and support and monitoring and appraisal by the applicants lead instructor.

3. Guidelines for Use of Photographic Filming Equipment at NFKA and Karate Events

There is no intention to stop people photographing their children, club mates, or photography and video been used as an educational tool but this is in the context of appropriate safeguards being in place.

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled sportspeople in vulnerable positions. It is advisable that all clubs be vigilant with any concerns to be reported to the Club instructor. Any parent who wishes to photograph their child must seek permission from the instructor or competition organiser. Official photographers must be registered with an event organiser and wear identification. If this privilege is abused and contradicts the well being, ethics and integrity of which it was intended. The person will be held responsible and asked to leave the Sports Hall and also reported to the NFKA committee.

Videoing is a coaching aid: there is no intention to prevent club instructors and teachers using video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid. However, performers and their parents/carers should be aware that this is part of the coaching programme and care should be taken in the storing of such films. The NFKA also follows closely the guidance issued by the Child Protection in Sport Unit advising that:

- Models or illustrations are used in promotional material
- Avoid using the first name and surname of individuals in a photograph
- If the player is named, we do not use their photograph,
- If the photograph is used, we do not name the individual,
- Seek parental permission to use an image of a young participant.
- Student permission has been sought.

4 Safe instruction guidelines.

Practice never to be sanctioned

You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay;
- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others;
- Take children to your home where they will be alone with you.
- Share a room with a child.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching;
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun;
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control;
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves;
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

- Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

4.1 Informing parents

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are told:

- If you accidentally hurt a student.
- If a student is hurt in any manner, e.g., accident.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a student appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a student misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

4.2 Promoting Good Practice with Young People

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment.

It is a fact of life that some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. An, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer may have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where a young person needs protection.

All cases of poor practice and suspected case of abuse should be reported to the association lead instructor and or relevant authorities.

When a child enters the club having experienced abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the child's self esteem. In such instances the club must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

4.3 Good Practice Guidelines.

All those involved in Karate should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to safeguard children and young people and protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate within Karate.

4.4 Good practice means:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g., avoiding private or unobserved situations, involving parents or carers no secrets).

- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Placing the welfare and safety of the child or young person above the development of performance or competition
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with students (e.g., it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust, which empowers children to share in the decision-making process;
- Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according methods agreed with the parents of any child.
- Keeping up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance in Karate.
- Ensuring your teaching practice reflects the high standards expected of Karate
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible (e.g., for the responsibility of their children in the changing rooms). If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure parents/instructors/coaches/officials work in pairs.
- Ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. (NB however, same gender abuse can also occur)
- Ensuring that at tournaments or residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing parental consent in writing to *act in loco parentis*, if the need arises to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Having up to date records of pupils, including contact numbers and information about medical conditions and lesson plans
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people in their cars.
- Karate Instructors need to understand the added responsibilities of teaching children and also basic principles of growth and development through childhood to adolescence. Exercises should be appropriate to age

and build. Instructors should not simply treat children as small adults, with small adult bodies.

- There is a minimum age of four for a child beginning Karate, as the build and maturity of individuals varies so much. However, the nature of the class must be tailored to consider these factors.
- In general, the younger the child, the shorter the attention span. One hour is generally considered sufficient training time for the average 12-year-old or below. Pre-adolescent children have a metabolism that is not naturally suited to generating anaerobic power, and therefore they exercise better aerobically, that is, at a steadily maintained rate. However, they can soon become conditioned to tolerate exercise in the short explosive bursts that more suit Karate training.
- Children should not do assisted stretching - they generally don't need to, and there is a real risk of damage with an inconsiderate or over-enthusiastic partner.
- Children should be carefully matched for size and weight for sparring practice.
- Great care must be taken, especially where children train in the proximity of adults, to avoid collision injury.
- Children should not do certain conditioning exercises; especially those which are heavy load bearing, for example weight training or knuckle push-ups. Children should not do any heavy or impact work but should concentrate on the development of speed, mobility, skill and general fitness.

5 Responding to suspicions or allegations

5.1 Listening to Children

As Karate instructors you are in a position of trust and influence with children and young people. You are ideally placed to recognise if a child is being abused, whether during karate, at home, or in the community.

But remember it is not your responsibility to decide if a child is being abused. Your role is to act on any concerns you may have.

We have clear guidelines about how child protection concerns should be dealt with. You should make yourself aware of these and must follow them. Failing to respond to concerns or responding in contravention to these guidelines could have serious implications for the future handling of any case.

If a child tries to talk to you about something that is worrying them, it is important to listen carefully and respond sensitively:

- If the child tells you about abuse, they are experiencing, listen carefully to what they tell you.

- Don't ask direct questions. Avoid 'Who?', 'What?', 'When?', 'Where?'
- Encourage them to talk - 'Do you want to tell me about this?' - But do not pressurise them.
- Keep calm and even if you find what they are saying difficult or painful keep listening.
- Be honest with them about what you can and cannot do. Tell them you are not able to keep what they have told you secret and that you will try to find them the help they need.
- Tell them that you take their allegation seriously.
- Do not contact or confront the alleged abuser.
- Find someone you trust to talk to about the situation or to support you but remember not to name or identify those involved in the allegations. You can call the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000.
- When they have finished make a detailed note of what they have said.
- As soon as possible, pass the information to lead instructor for child protection Robin Harper-Coulson **07595449395** or **01670 714420**
- If they are unavailable speak to your areas Lead Instructor and be aware that if you cannot contact these support lines you have a responsibility to ensure the appropriate service are aware of your concerns.
- In an emergency telephone 999 and say you want to make a child protection report then set out the situation.
- In a non-emergency situation use these following area-based telephone numbers:
 - **Northumberland** One Call 01670 536400 24/7 Response
 - **Newcastle** Children's Social Care Initial Response Service (IRS) on Tel. 0191 2772500 in office hours or their Emergency Duty Team out of hours on Tel. 0191 2328520
 - **South Tyneside** 0191 424 5010 (Monday to Thursday - 8.30am to 5pm, Friday - 8.30am to 4.30pm) 0191 456 2093 (outside of the above office hours)
 - **Sunderland** Contact Children's Safeguarding on 0191 5205560
 - **North Tyneside** Front Door Service 0345 2000 109 24/7 response.
 - **Gateshead** 0191 433 2653 (office hours: Monday - Friday, 8.30am to 5pm) 0191 477 0844 (out of hours, at night, at weekends and bank holidays
- If you have **serious concerns about the immediate safety** of the child, always contact the Police or Social Services. Record the name of the person you spoke to and tell your lead instructor what you have done.

5.2 Remember: In all Child Protection issues.

Maintain confidentiality on a **need-to-know** basis only. Ensure the lead instructor follows up with social services. The lead instructor should also report the incident to the AMA Child Protection Officer who will advise, support and report as necessary.

If the lead instructor is unavailable telephone social services directly yourself, never delay referring to social services.

5.3 Poor Practice

If, following consideration and consultation with NFKA committee, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the lead instructor in consultation with the NFKA committee will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

Allegations should be reported to the lead instructor in the first instance for the lead instructor to guide action by the club and to enable the committee to maintain central records and for monitoring purposes. If the allegation is about poor practice by the Association lead instructor, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, the AMA Child Protection Officer will be consulted and decide how to deal with the allegation and handle the situation. The allegation must be forwarded to the Local Authority Designated Officer for the Local Area where the club is situated.

5.4 Suspected Abuse

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either an instructor or a volunteer should be reported to the lead instructor, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.

The lead instructor will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police, or go directly to the police or social services *out-of-hours duty service*.

The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department. [In cases of suspected abuse within the family social services department/police must give advice on who should contact and when].

The AMA Child Protection Officer should also be contacted through AMA headquarters who will advise or and deal with any procedural issues and media

enquiries. If the lead instructor is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made direct to the NFKA committee who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

5.5 Internal Enquiries and Suspension

The lead instructor will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries and contact the appropriate Local Authority Designated Officer.

(This should be following advice from the Committee) Irrespective of the findings of the social services, LADO or police inquiries the NFKA Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether an instructor or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled.

This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the NFKA Committee will reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability; it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of children should always remain paramount.

5.6 Action if Bullying is Suspected

The same procedure should be followed as set out in the Section relating to responding to suspicions or allegations, if bullying is suspected. All settings in which children are provided with services or are living away from home should have rigorously enforced anti-bullying strategies in place.

- **Northumberland** One Call 01670 536400 24/7 Response
- **Newcastle** Children's Social Care Initial Response Service (IRS) on Tel. 0191 2772500 in office hours or their Emergency Duty Team out of hours on Tel. 0191 2328520
- **South Tyneside** 0191 424 5010 (Monday to Thursday - 8.30am to 5pm, Friday - 8.30am to 4.30pm) 0191 456 2093 (outside of the above office hours)
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Northern Freestyle Karate Association
Concern/Allegation Form

Date

Your name.
Your position.

Please complete the following if you have received a concern or have received an allegation that relates to behaviour or actions towards a young person.

Name of Child or Young Person
Address
Date of Birth

Actions taken on receipt of allegation or concern.

Date of receipt of allegation or concern
Action/response

External agencies contacted.

Social services YES/NO	If yes- where Date: time: Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
LADO YES/NO	If yes- where Date: time: Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
Police YES/NO	If yes- where Date: time: Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
Lead Instructor YES/NO	If yes- where Date: time: Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
AMA YES/NO	If yes- where Date: time: Name and contact number: Details of advice received:

