



ANTI-BULLYING

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INTRODUCTION

This guidance relates to aikido members under the age of 18. References to a participant or child mean anyone under 18, and references to a parent include a carer or person with parental responsibility.

The Aikido Alliance UK (the Alliance) is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment in which children can participate in aikido without bullying or harassment. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable within Alliance-affiliated clubs. Anyone who experiences, witnesses or becomes aware of bullying is encouraged and expected to tell the Club Welfare Officer (WO), an Instructor or another appropriate adult.

All committee members, Instructors, coaches, assistants, volunteers, children and parents should understand what bullying is and how concerns will be reported and addressed. Anyone reporting bullying will be listened to and supported, and concerns will be dealt with promptly, fairly and sensitively.

UK-WIDE APPLICATION

This guidance applies across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Alliance Associations and their Clubs must follow the safeguarding legislation, statutory guidance, procedures and reporting and referral arrangements applicable in the country in which they operate. References to particular safeguarding bodies include the equivalent body or designated officer in the relevant UK nation. This guidance sets minimum Alliance standards and does not replace any higher or additional legal or regulatory duty.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It may happen face to face or online and may be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual or discriminatory.

A single incident may not meet this definition of bullying, but it must still be taken seriously and may constitute poor practice, harassment, abuse or a criminal offence. Repeated behaviour includes behaviour that has happened more than once or forms part of an established pattern.

Bullying may include:

- emotional or relational behaviour, including deliberate exclusion, humiliation, intimidation, coercion, threatening gestures or spreading rumours
- physical behaviour, including pushing, kicking, hitting, inappropriate restraint, deliberately painful practice or misuse of aikido techniques
- verbal behaviour, including name-calling, sarcasm, threats, persistent teasing or comments intended to demean
- sexual bullying, including unwanted sexual comments, conduct, contact, image-sharing or pressure
- discriminatory bullying connected with actual or perceived race or ethnicity, nationality, disability or additional needs, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or identity, appearance or other personal circumstances
- online bullying through social media, messaging, gaming or other digital services, including abusive messages, impersonation, exclusion from online groups, sharing images or recordings without consent, or encouraging others to target someone
- bullying by an adult towards a child, by a child towards another child, or behaviour encouraged or enabled by another person.

Examples in aikido may include an adult exerting inappropriate pressure; misuse of authority, grading or selection; deliberately inflicting pain or humiliation; repeatedly criticising or isolating a child; an older or more experienced aikidoka intimidating another participant; or a parent placing unreasonable pressure on a child.

DEFINITION OF HARASSMENT

For this guidance, harassment means unwanted behaviour that violates a child's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It may be verbal, non-verbal, physical, sexual, discriminatory or online. Some conduct may also constitute unlawful harassment or a criminal offence; the applicable legal test will depend on the circumstances and the country in which the conduct occurs.

A child's perception and expressed boundaries must be taken seriously. The circumstances, the child's age and understanding, the impact of the behaviour and any imbalance of power must also be considered. Normal expectations within an aikido class, such as changing partners, must never be used to override a child's right to report unsafe, humiliating, discriminatory or unwanted behaviour.

Bullying, harassment, retaliation against someone who reports a concern, and attempts to silence or discourage reporting will not be tolerated in Alliance-affiliated clubs.

SIGNS AND INDICATORS

A child may say that they are being bullied, or their behaviour may change. Possible indicators include that the child:

- becomes unwilling or anxious about attending club sessions
- becomes withdrawn, distressed, unusually quiet, aggressive or disruptive
- shows a loss of confidence, changes in friendships or avoidance of particular people
- regularly feels unwell before training or has changes in eating or sleeping
- has possessions, money or equipment that go missing or are damaged
- has unexplained injuries or gives explanations that appear unlikely
- is frightened or reluctant to explain what is wrong
- begins bullying other children or siblings
- talks about running away, self-harm or suicide, or appears to be at immediate risk.

These indicators are not proof of bullying and may have other causes. They must nevertheless be taken seriously, explored sensitively and recorded. Where there is an immediate danger, serious injury or immediate risk of suicide or self-harm, call 999 or the relevant emergency service and follow the Alliance safeguarding procedures without delay.

REPORTING AND INITIAL RESPONSE

- Report concerns to the Club Welfare Officer, an Instructor or a Club committee member. A child or parent may also contact the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer directly.
- Listen calmly and take the report seriously. Do not promise confidentiality; explain that information will be shared only with people who need it to help keep the child safe.
- Record what was reported, using the child's own words where possible. Do not ask leading questions or conduct an investigative interview.
- Take immediate, proportionate steps to protect the child and prevent further incidents while preserving the rights and safety of everyone involved.

- Consider promptly whether the concern may involve abuse, significant harm, a criminal offence, sexual or discriminatory conduct, serious online harm, or an allegation about an adult working with children.

SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS AND EXTERNAL REFERRAL

Bullying can be a safeguarding concern. If a child may have suffered or may be at risk of significant harm, or a crime may have been committed, the Club Welfare Officer must contact the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer promptly and the applicable national safeguarding and referral procedures must be followed.

Referral may be required to the police, children's social care or social services, the designated officer or equivalent authority for allegations about people working with children, or another relevant statutory safeguarding agency. In an emergency, call 999. The Alliance Case Management Group may manage any internal safeguarding or disciplinary process in liaison with the relevant agencies and without prejudicing an external investigation.

The Club must not delay a necessary referral in order to investigate the allegation internally. It must follow any direction from the police or statutory safeguarding agency about interviewing those involved, preserving evidence, informing parents and taking internal action.

INFORMING AND INVOLVING PARENTS

Parents should ordinarily be informed and involved promptly. Before contacting them, however, the Club must consider whether doing so could place the child or another person at greater risk, compromise a statutory or police investigation, or be inappropriate because the concern involves the parent or carer. Where there is uncertainty, advice must be obtained from the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer or the relevant statutory safeguarding agency.

Children's views, wishes and feelings should be sought and taken seriously in a manner appropriate to their age and understanding. A child cannot be promised that their parents will not be informed, but the reasons for any necessary information-sharing should be explained sensitively.

CLUB RESPONSE TO CHILD-TO-CHILD BULLYING

Where the concern has been assessed as suitable for management by the Club, the Club Welfare Officer should coordinate a fair and proportionate response. The person managing the matter should not have a conflict of interest.

- Meet separately with the child who experienced the behaviour and their parent, and with the child alleged to have displayed the behaviour and their parent. Give each person a fair opportunity to explain what happened.
- Keep a clear, dated and confidential record of the report, discussions, evidence considered, decisions, reasons, actions and review arrangements. A person may comment on the record, but agreement by every participant is not required.
- Consider immediate safety arrangements, supervision, training-partner arrangements and any proportionate restrictions needed while the matter is considered.
- Reach a decision on the balance of probabilities for the internal process, unless a statutory agency has advised that the internal process should be delayed.
- Provide appropriate support to all affected children and take action designed to stop the behaviour, address its causes and prevent recurrence.
- Apply proportionate sanctions under the Club constitution or disciplinary procedure where appropriate, including temporary or permanent suspension in serious or repeated cases.

MEDIATION, RECONCILIATION AND APOLOGIES

Mediation or a reconciliation meeting is not an automatic or required response to bullying. It may be considered only after safeguarding issues have been assessed and when participation is voluntary, the child who experienced the behaviour feels safe and wishes to participate, and the process will not replace necessary protective or disciplinary action.

Mediation or a joint meeting must not be used where there is suspected abuse, coercion, sexual misconduct, serious discriminatory conduct, an adult-to-child allegation, a substantial imbalance of power that cannot be managed safely, or advice from a statutory agency that it would be inappropriate. No child should be pressured to meet, forgive or accept an apology from another person.

TIMESCALES AND MONITORING

Reports must be acted upon promptly. Safety and referral decisions must be made immediately or as soon as reasonably practicable. Where the Club is managing the matter internally, it should aim to:

1. acknowledge the concern and put necessary interim safety measures in place without delay;
2. begin separate discussions with the relevant children and parents as soon as practicable, normally before the next session or within five working days;
3. reach and communicate an initial outcome normally within 20 working days, unless the complexity of the matter or an external process requires longer; and
4. set a review date to check that the behaviour has stopped and that support and safety measures remain effective.

The people involved should be kept informed of material delays, subject to confidentiality and any restrictions imposed by a statutory agency. Records of follow-up and outcomes must be retained in accordance with the Alliance safeguarding and data-protection arrangements.

ALLEGATIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT AN ADULT

Any allegation that an Instructor, coach, assistant, volunteer, committee member, parent or other adult has harmed or may have harmed a child, may have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, may pose a risk of harm to children, or may be unsuitable to work with children must be treated as a safeguarding allegation.

- Inform the Club Welfare Officer and Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer immediately. If either is implicated or unavailable, report directly to the appropriate statutory safeguarding agency or police.
- Follow the applicable national procedure for allegations against people who work or volunteer with children, including referral to the designated officer or equivalent authority where required.
- Do not conduct an internal investigation, arrange mediation, confront the adult or notify parents in a way that could compromise external enquiries. Obtain and follow safeguarding advice.
- Consider proportionate interim risk-management measures. Suspension is a neutral protective measure and should not be automatic; the decision must reflect the risk and any advice received.
- Consider referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service or the relevant national barring body where the legal referral conditions are met.

Training, guidance or supervision may form part of an outcome where the matter is determined to be poor practice, but must not replace referral or disciplinary action where either is required.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN

- Make the role and contact arrangements for the Club Welfare Officer clear and accessible to children and parents.
- Provide safe and accessible ways for children to raise concerns, including reasonable adjustments for communication, disability, language, age or additional needs.
- Listen carefully, explain what will happen next and keep the child appropriately informed.
- Support the child who experienced the behaviour to continue participating safely where this is in their interests and wishes.
- Support the child displaying bullying behaviour to understand the impact, change the behaviour and participate safely, while maintaining appropriate boundaries and consequences.
- Avoid sanctions that humiliate, degrade or unnecessarily isolate a child.
- Protect reporters and witnesses from retaliation and respond promptly to any further concerns.

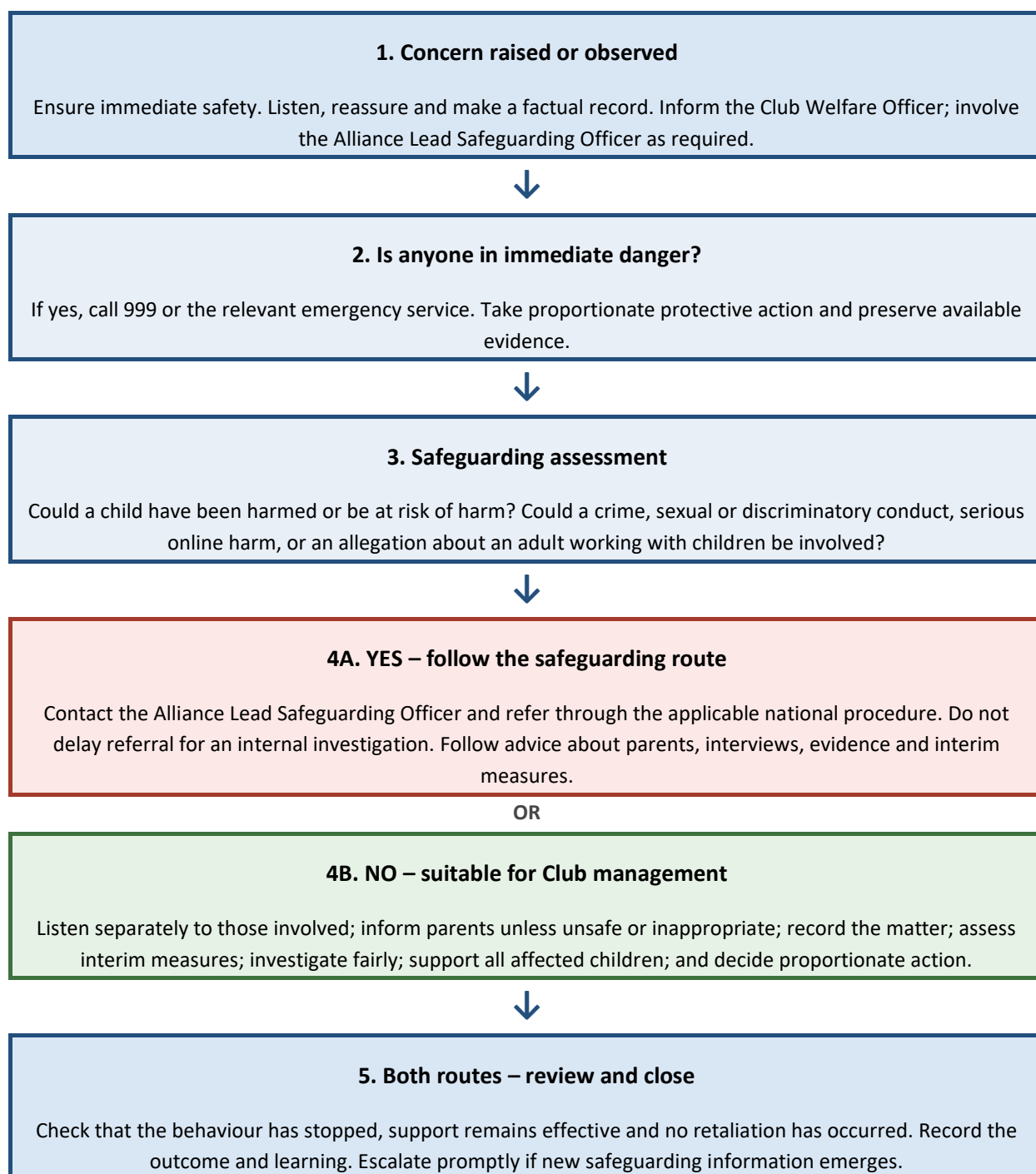
SUPPORTING AND INVOLVING PARENTS

- Make this guidance and the Club's reporting arrangements available to parents.
- Discuss concerns and proposed action with parents unless a safeguarding reason or statutory-agency direction prevents this.
- Explain the support, safety measures, review arrangements and any available complaint or disciplinary route.
- Share information only where necessary and proportionately, protecting the privacy of other children and families.

PREVENTION

- Promote clear standards of respectful behaviour through codes of conduct, induction, coaching practice and age-appropriate discussion.
- Ensure children know who they can speak to and that reporting will not adversely affect their training, grading or selection.
- Provide appropriate safeguarding and anti-bullying information or training for Welfare Officers, Instructors, coaches, assistants and volunteers.
- Consider the particular risks created by physical contact, differences in age or grade, adult authority, changing facilities, travel, events and online communication.
- Monitor incidents and patterns, including discriminatory and online bullying, and use learning to strengthen Club and Alliance practice.

APPENDIX ONE: RESPONDING TO A POSSIBLE BULLYING INCIDENT



Mediation or a joint meeting is optional, not automatic. Use it only when safeguarding concerns have been excluded. Note that participation is voluntary and only when the child who experienced the behaviour feels safe.

APPENDIX TWO: OTHER SOURCES OF HELP

Contact details and websites can change. Clubs should check that any details reproduced in local materials remain current.

- Childline – confidential support for children and young people: 0800 1111 | www.childline.org.uk
- NSPCC Helpline – advice for adults concerned about a child: 0808 800 5000 | www.nspcc.org.uk
- Family Lives – parenting and family support: 0808 800 2222 | www.familylives.org.uk
- Coram Kidscape – bullying information and parent advice: www.coramkidscape.org.uk
- Anti-Bullying Alliance – information and resources: www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

CHANGE LOG

Date	Details
July 2022	Review – no changes
May 2024	Added the Anti-Bullying Alliance as a resource
September 2026	Comprehensive review: safeguarding-first referral process; UK-wide application; updated definitions, language, online bullying, adult-allegation procedure, parental involvement, mediation safeguards, timescales, support contacts and replacement flowchart