



RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

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PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Aikido Alliance UK (the Alliance) is committed to responding promptly, fairly and appropriately to every concern about the safety or welfare of a child. This procedure applies to all affiliated clubs, events and activities and to every Alliance member, instructor, coach, assistant, helper, official, employee and volunteer.

The procedure applies whether a concern arises within or outside aikido; concerns current or non-recent behaviour; relates to an adult or another child; or results from a disclosure, observation, allegation, complaint, online communication, third-party report or change in a child's presentation or behaviour.

The Alliance does not expect members to decide whether abuse has occurred. Their responsibility is to protect the child from any immediate danger, listen and respond appropriately, report the concern without delay and make an accurate factual record.

The same safeguarding principles apply throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Clubs must follow the law, statutory procedures and referral arrangements applicable in the country where the concern arises. In this document, "relevant statutory service" means the police, the relevant local children's social care or social work service, and any designated officer or service responsible for allegations about adults working with children, as applicable locally.

CORE SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES

- The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
- A concern does not need to be proved before it is reported. Reasonable concern is sufficient.
- There must be no avoidable delay. Internal reporting arrangements must never prevent or delay emergency or statutory action.
- The person receiving a concern must listen, record and report; they must not investigate, test the account or confront the person concerned.
- Information must be shared only with those who need it for safeguarding, case management or legal purposes, but confidentiality must never be used as a reason not to protect a child.
- The child's views, wishes, age and understanding should be considered, while recognising that adults remain responsible for taking necessary safeguarding action.
- People who raise concerns in good faith will be supported and must not be subjected to retaliation under Alliance policy.

IMMEDIATE ACTION AND REPORTING ROUTE

If a child may be in immediate danger, a serious crime may be in progress, or urgent medical help is required, call 999 immediately. Do not wait to contact a Club Welfare Officer or the Alliance first.

1. Make the situation safe. Take immediate, proportionate steps to protect the child and any other children. Obtain emergency medical assistance where required.
2. Listen and respond. Stay calm, take the concern seriously and allow the child or person to explain in their own words. Ask only what is necessary to clarify what is being said.
3. Report without delay. Contact the Club Welfare Officer. The Welfare Officer must inform the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer and consult or refer to the relevant statutory service where required.
4. Use the bypass route where necessary. Contact the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer or a relevant statutory service directly if the Club Welfare Officer is implicated, has a conflict of interest, is unavailable, fails to act, or using the normal route would cause delay.
5. Record promptly. Make a factual, signed and dated record as soon as possible. Use the form in Appendix 2 where available, but never delay a report because the form is unavailable.
6. Preserve confidentiality and evidence. Share only with those who need to know. Do not question witnesses, search devices, take photographs of injuries, or alert the person who is the subject of the concern unless advised to do so.

IF YOU ARE UNCERTAIN

Do not wait until you are certain. Seek advice promptly from the Club Welfare Officer, the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer, the relevant statutory service or the NSPCC Helpline. If the concern becomes urgent or the child may be in immediate danger, contact the police or relevant children's service directly.

NSPCC Helpline for adults concerned about a child: 0808 800 5000, 10am–4pm Monday to Friday. Email: help@nspcc.org.uk, 11am–4pm seven days a week. Emails sent when the service is closed are not received. Contact details and opening hours should be checked on the NSPCC website before use. Childline for children and young people: 0800 1111.

LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO A CHILD

DO

- make sure the child and any other children for whom you are responsible are safe and appropriately supervised;
- stay calm and listen carefully without expressing shock, disbelief or judgement;
- take what the child says seriously and reassure them that they were right to tell you and are not to blame;
- allow the child to speak at their own pace and use their own words;
- ask only open, minimal questions needed to clarify what has been said, for example "Tell me what happened";
- explain honestly that you cannot promise secrecy and that you must share the concern with people who can help;
- tell the child, in language they can understand, what you will do next;
- seek urgent medical or police assistance where necessary; and
- record the child's words, the questions asked and the answers given as soon as possible.

DO NOT

- investigate, press for detail, repeatedly question the child or ask leading questions;
- confront, contact or alert the person who is the subject of the concern;
- promise to keep the matter secret;
- make assumptions or offer an opinion about what happened or anyone's intentions;
- ask the child to repeat their account to several people;
- ask the child to remove clothing, examine or touch an injury or mark;
- take photographs or recordings of injuries or marks; or
- delay reporting while trying to obtain further information.

INJURIES, MARKS AND MEDICAL ATTENTION

Record factually any injuries or marks that are naturally visible, without examining the child, asking them to remove clothing or touching the affected area. Do not take photographs of injuries or marks. Any photographs required as evidence should be taken by, or only on the specific instruction of, the police, children's social care/social work or an appropriate healthcare professional.

INFORMING PARENTS OR CARERS

Parents or carers will normally be informed unless doing so might place the child or another person at increased risk, lead to intimidation or loss of evidence, or prejudice a police or child-protection enquiry. Where any such possibility exists, seek advice from the relevant statutory service before informing them. Record whether the parent or carer was informed and, if not, the reason or advice received.

REPORTING, ESCALATION AND ALLEGATIONS

THE REPORTING STRUCTURE

- The Club Welfare Officer is normally the first internal point of contact and must receive, record and pass on concerns appropriately.
- The Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer provides advice, receives escalated reports, coordinates the Alliance response and ensures appropriate consultation or referral.
- The Alliance Case Management Group considers organisational risk, interim safeguards and any later safeguarding or disciplinary process. Decisions should not rest with one person.
- Relevant statutory services assess and investigate possible child protection or criminal matters. Alliance personnel must cooperate with them and follow their advice.

DIRECT REPORTING AND ESCALATION

Anyone may contact the police or relevant children's social care/social work service directly. Internal procedures must not be used to discourage direct reporting or to delay protection. After making a direct report, inform the Club Welfare Officer and Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so.

If a concern is not acknowledged or acted upon, or the response appears insufficient to protect a child, escalate it to the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer and, where necessary, directly to the relevant statutory service or the NSPCC. Record the steps taken.

CONCERNS ABOUT AN ADULT WORKING WITH CHILDREN

A concern about an instructor, coach, assistant, helper, official, employee, volunteer or other adult may relate to possible abuse, a breach of professional boundaries, conduct that may indicate unsuitability to work with children, or a failure to follow safeguarding requirements. Such concerns must be reported promptly even if the behaviour occurred outside aikido or did not involve an Alliance child.

The Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer must consider consultation or referral to the police, children's social care/social work and the applicable designated officer or service for allegations against adults working with children. No substantive internal fact-finding or disciplinary interview should take place until any relevant statutory service has been consulted and has advised that this will not prejudice its work.

CONCERNS ABOUT ANOTHER CHILD

Behaviour by one child towards another must be taken seriously and considered in relation to the needs and safety of every child involved. Do not label a child as an "abuser". Consider immediate separation or supervision, the possibility that either child may need protection or support, and whether statutory advice or referral is required. Bullying should be managed under the Anti-Bullying Policy, but behaviour that may constitute abuse or present a risk of significant harm must follow this procedure.

CONCERNS ARISING OUTSIDE AIKIDO

A concern disclosed or observed in an aikido setting must be reported even when the alleged behaviour occurred at home, school, online, in another organisation or elsewhere. The same immediate-action, listening, recording and referral principles apply. The Alliance should take additional organisational action only where necessary to protect children or manage a risk connected with its activities or members.

NON-RECENT ABUSE

A disclosure by a child or an adult about abuse that occurred in the past must be listened to, recorded and reported using this procedure. A referral may still be necessary because the person concerned may currently have access to children or other people may be at risk. Do not assume that no action is required because the alleged behaviour is old or because the person making the disclosure is now an adult.

SELF-HARM, SUICIDAL THOUGHTS AND WELLBEING CONCERNS

Take any statement or indication of self-harm or suicidal thoughts seriously. If there is immediate danger or urgent medical need, call 999. Ensure the child is not left unsupported, report the concern promptly and seek advice from the parent or carer and appropriate health or children's services, unless involving the parent or carer could increase risk.

RECORDING CONCERNS

The person who receives or observes the concern should make the initial record. It should be completed as soon as possible while events are fresh, but immediate safety and reporting take priority. If the Alliance form is unavailable, record the information securely on paper and transfer it without unnecessary copying.

RECORD

- the child's name, date of birth or approximate age, address and parent or carer details, where known and relevant;
- the date, time and location of the incident, observation or disclosure;
- exactly what was seen, heard or reported, distinguishing fact, the child's words, third-party information and opinion;
- the questions asked and the answers given;
- the child's presentation, wishes and views where expressed;
- any injuries or marks naturally visible, without examination or photographs;
- the names and contact details of witnesses or other people present, where known;
- the immediate safety or medical action taken;
- who was informed, the date and time, advice received and any agency reference number;
- whether a parent or carer was informed and, if not, why not;
- any decision to share or not share information and the reason; and
- the recorder's name, role, contact details, signature, date and time.

Do not omit relevant information merely because you are uncertain. State clearly what you remember, what you are unsure about and the source of any second-hand information. Do not speculate. Keep original notes intact; do not erase, rewrite or destroy them.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING

Safeguarding information is confidential but not secret. It must be shared when necessary to protect a child, assess risk, comply with legal duties or support an appropriate safeguarding process. Data protection law does not prevent necessary and proportionate safeguarding information sharing.

- Be open with the child and family about information sharing where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- Seek consent where appropriate, but do not treat consent as a requirement where there is a safeguarding reason and lawful basis for sharing without it.
- Do not inform the child, family or person concerned where this could increase risk, lead to intimidation or loss of evidence, or prejudice an enquiry.
- Share information that is necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure, and only with people who need it.
- Seek safeguarding or data-protection advice if uncertain, without disclosing identifying information unnecessarily.
- Record what was shared, with whom, when and why, or record the reasons for deciding not to share.

Clubs must follow the applicable national information-sharing guidance and local safeguarding arrangements in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. The Alliance and its clubs must process safeguarding information in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and other applicable law.

CASE MANAGEMENT AND INTERIM SAFEGUARDS

The Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer will assess the information received, consult appropriate statutory or specialist services and determine whether the matter should be considered by the Alliance Case Management Group. The role of the Alliance is to manage safeguarding and organisational risk, not to determine whether a criminal offence or child abuse has occurred.

COORDINATION WITH STATUTORY ENQUIRIES

Where a police, child-protection or other statutory enquiry may be required, the Alliance must agree with the relevant service what internal action can safely be taken. Internal interviews, evidence gathering or contact with the person concerned must not prejudice an external enquiry. The Alliance should preserve records and follow any advice about confidentiality, notification and contact with members.

INTERIM SAFEGUARDING MEASURES

The Case Management Group may impose proportionate interim safeguards while enquiries are continuing. These may include increased supervision, changed duties, restrictions on contact with children, temporary removal from a designated role or temporary suspension from some or all Alliance activity. Such measures are neutral, risk-based and without prejudice; they do not constitute a finding or disciplinary sanction.

Decisions and reasons must be recorded, kept under review and communicated only to those who need to know. Where statutory services advise that immediate notification or suspension could increase risk or compromise an enquiry, the Alliance should follow that advice while maintaining safe arrangements for children.

ALLIANCE SAFEGUARDING OR DISCIPLINARY OUTCOME

Once any necessary statutory enquiry permits, the Alliance may consider whether its policies, codes or membership standards have been breached. The applicable standard of proof, decision-making arrangements, notification and appeal rights must follow the Alliance disciplinary procedure. A statutory decision not to prosecute or take child-protection action does not automatically prevent a proportionate Alliance safeguarding or disciplinary process.

REFERRALS TO BARRING AUTHORITIES

Where a person is removed from regulated work or activity, or would have been removed had they not resigned or ceased the activity, the Alliance or club must consider whether a legal referral duty applies. Follow the Alliance Recruitment and DBS Guidance and obtain advice where necessary regarding the Disclosure and Barring Service or Disclosure Scotland, as applicable.

SUPPORT, RAISING CONCERNS AND STORAGE

SUPPORT

Consider appropriate support for the child, their parent or carer, the person who raised the concern, witnesses and the person who is the subject of the concern. Support must not involve coaching accounts, discussing evidence or compromising confidentiality. The child's welfare remains the primary consideration.

RAISING CONCERNS ABOUT SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE

Every member has a responsibility to report unsafe practice, failure to follow safeguarding procedures, concealment of a concern or retaliation against someone who has raised a concern. Report through the Club Welfare Officer or Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer, using the bypass and escalation routes in this procedure where necessary. Alliance policy prohibits retaliation against a person who raises a concern honestly and in good faith. This policy commitment does not imply that every volunteer has statutory whistleblowing protection.

SECURE STORAGE AND RETENTION

Safeguarding records must be stored separately from ordinary club records, with access restricted to authorised people. Records must be transferred to the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer using an agreed secure method. Clubs should retain only the limited local record necessary to demonstrate what was reported, when, to whom and what immediate action was taken, unless advised otherwise.

The Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer must maintain a secure case record, including the original referral, decisions, reasons, contacts, agency advice, outcomes and review dates. Retention, access, disclosure and secure disposal must follow the Alliance retention schedule, data-protection requirements and any applicable insurer or statutory guidance.

APPENDIX 1: IMMEDIATE-ACTION GUIDE

IF YOU SUSPECT: Immediate danger, serious crime in progress or urgent medical need: call 999 now. Protect the child and other children. Do not wait for an internal contact.

LISTEN	Stay calm. Take the concern seriously. Let the child or person use their own words. Ask only minimal, open questions needed to clarify.
REASSURE	Say they were right to tell you and are not to blame. Do not promise secrecy. Explain that you must tell people who can help.
DO NOT INVESTIGATE	Do not confront anyone, question witnesses, search devices, examine injuries, take photographs, make assumptions or alert the person concerned.
REPORT WITHOUT DELAY	Normally contact the Club Welfare Officer, who must inform the Alliance Lead Safeguarding Officer. Contact the LSO or statutory services directly if the Welfare Officer is implicated, unavailable, conflicted, fails to act or delay may result.
RECORD	Write a factual account promptly. Use exact words. Record questions, observations, actions, contacts, advice, decisions, dates and times. Sign and date it. Keep original notes.
SHARE SAFELY	Information is confidential, not secret. Share only what is necessary with those who need it to protect the child and manage the concern.

Advice: NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000 (10am–4pm Monday to Friday) or help@nspcc.org.uk (11am–4pm seven days a week). Check current opening hours online. If risk increases or urgent action is required, contact the police or relevant children's service directly.

APPENDIX 2: CONCERNS AND REFERRALS REPORT FORM — PAGE 1 OF 2

Complete as soon as possible after taking any necessary emergency action and making the required report. Record facts and exact words. Do not delay reporting because information is unavailable.

Child's full name:

Date of birth or approximate age:

Address and parent/carer contact details (where known):

Club, activity or event:

Date, time and location of incident, observation or disclosure:

Name, role and contact details of person completing this form:

How did the concern arise? ☐ Disclosure ☐ Observation ☐ Third-party report ☐ Other

Person about whom the concern was raised, relationship to the child and Alliance/club role (if known):

Other children or witnesses involved (if known):

Factual account of what was seen, heard or reported. Use the child's exact words where possible and distinguish fact, third-party information and opinion:

Questions asked and answers given:

Child's presentation, wishes or views:

Naturally visible injuries or marks (do not examine or photograph):

Immediate safety or medical action taken:

Parent/carer informed? ☐ Yes ☐ No If no, record the reason or advice received:

Reported to (name, role/agency, date, time, advice and reference number):

Other information shared or decisions made, including reasons:

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

EXTERNAL GUIDANCE

NSPCC Sport: Deal with a concern — <https://sport.nspcc.org.uk/help-advice/deal-with-a-concern/>

NSPCC Sport: Case management tool — <https://sport.nspcc.org.uk/case-management-tool/>

NSPCC Sport: Information sharing — <https://sport.nspcc.org.uk/help-advice/topics/information-sharing/>

NSPCC Helpline — <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/our-services/nspcc-helpline/>

Current national and local statutory safeguarding guidance for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

External contact details and guidance may change. The online source should be checked when advice or referral is required.

CHANGE LOG

Date	Version	Change
Aug 2022	V1	Renaming of incident report form and minor wording changes.
Sep 2026	V2	Full review: updated NSPCC contacts; unified reporting and escalation procedure; four-nation scope; revised disclosure, recording, information-sharing and case-management guidance; new immediate-action guide and report form.