Introduction

Ice skating offers significant opportunities for children and young people to develop social skills, self-esteem, confidence, teamwork and leadership qualities, that develop a well-rounded individual. However, NISA acknowledges that despite all the benefits of the sport, opportunities exist for an individual to harm children and/or vulnerable adults.

When establishing guidelines concerning the safeguarding of children and/or vulnerable adults, it is important to recognise that the organisation has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure that when it is given responsibility for children or vulnerable adults it provides them with the highest possible standard of care.

NISA recognises that any policy is only as effective as the ability and skill of those who operate it. NISA is committed therefore to sound recruitment, the provision of support, appropriate training and adequate supervision to all staff so that they can work together with parents/carers and other organisations to ensure that the needs and the welfare of children and/or vulnerable adults remain paramount.

NISA is a UK wide Governing Body of Sport with affiliated Home Country Bodies in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. This document describes the policy to be implemented and is mandatory for all NISA staff, officials and volunteers.

All sporting organisations which make provision for children, young people and/or vulnerable adults must ensure that:

- the welfare of the child/vulnerable adult is paramount
- all children and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to safeguarding from abuse
all suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice 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.

Staff/volunteers are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred. However, everyone should understand their responsibility to respond to concerns about the welfare of children or vulnerable adults by reporting these in line with NISA procedures.

NISA is fully committed to the principles of the equality of opportunity. The Association will ensure that there is open access for all those who wish to participate in the sport and that they are treated fairly. NISA promotes inclusion and will take steps to prevent discrimination or other unfair treatment.

Policy statement/aims

NISA has a duty of care to safeguard all children and vulnerable adults involved in NISA from harm. All children and vulnerable adults have a right to safeguarding, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. NISA will ensure the safety and protection of all children and vulnerable adults involved in NISA through adherence to the Safeguarding guidelines adopted by NISA.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

Policy aims

The aim of the NISA Safeguarding Policy is to promote good practice:

- providing children, young people and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of NISA
allow all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding issues.

Promoting good practice

Abuse of children or vulnerable adults, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgment about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with children and/or vulnerable adults and be an important link in identifying cases where they need safeguarding. All suspicious cases of poor practice or suspected abuse should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child or vulnerable adult enters the club activity having been subjected to child abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the child’s or vulnerable adult’s self-esteem. In such instances the club activity organiser must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child or vulnerable adult receives the required support.

Good practice guidelines

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children’s and vulnerable adults’ welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.
**Good practice means:**

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treating all young people/disabled adults fairly, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person and vulnerable adult first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with skaters (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or vulnerable adult or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children and vulnerable adults 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 to guidelines provided by the Coach Education Programme. Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child or vulnerable adult is constantly moving. Young people and vulnerable adults and their parents should always be consulted and their agreement gained.
- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure parents, teachers, coaches or 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. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- Ensuring that at tournaments or residential events, adults should not enter children’s rooms or invite children or vulnerable adults into their rooms.
- Being an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people or vulnerable adults.
• 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 administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
• 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.

Practices to be avoided

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the child’s/vulnerable adult’s parents. For example, a child or vulnerable adult sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session:

• avoid spending time alone with children or vulnerable adults away from others
• avoid taking or dropping off a child or vulnerable adult to an event or activity.

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

• engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
• share a room with a child or vulnerable adult
• allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
• allow children or vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged
• use inappropriate language yourself
• make sexually suggestive comments to a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun
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- reduce a child or vulnerable adult to tears as a form of control
- fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult
- do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves
- invite or allow children or vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

N.B. It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the skaters involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person’s reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the appropriate officer (see contact details of NISA Safeguarding Officer end of this document) and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- if you accidentally hurt a skater
- if he/she seems distressed in any manner
- if a skater appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- if a skater misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Use of photographic/filming equipment at sporting events

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. All clubs should be vigilant and any concerns should to be reported to the NISA Safeguarding Officer (see contact details end of this document).

**Videoing as a coaching aid:** there is no intention to prevent club coaches and teachers using video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid. However, performers and their parents/carers should be made aware that this is part of the coaching programme and their consent obtained, and such films should be stored safely. Ice rinks’ policies on photography must be adhered to.

**Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers**

NISA recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children or vulnerable adults in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults. Staff and volunteers should provide:

- Consent should be obtained from an applicant to undertake a Criminal Records Bureau check.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving license with photo).
- For Staff: Two references, including one from last employer, including comment on previous experience working with children or vulnerable adults.

**Interview and induction**

All employees (and volunteers) will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers should receive an induction, during which:

- Their qualifications should be substantiated.
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- Safeguarding procedures are explained and training needs are identified.
- They should sign up to NISA’s Safeguarding policy.
Training

In addition to preselection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help staff and volunteers to:

- Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is not likely to result in allegations being made.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or vulnerable adult.
- Work safely and effectively with children and vulnerable adults.

Responding to allegations or suspicions of poor practice

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in NISA, in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the NISA Safeguarding Officer (contact details end of this document) or the appropriate authorities. In a serious situation the Police or Children’s Social Care should be contacted first. In all cases the Club Safeguarding Officer (in NISA accredited clubs) and NISA Safeguarding Officer should be informed.

NISA will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child or vulnerable adult.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- a criminal investigation
- a child protection investigation
- a disciplinary or misconduct investigation.
The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

**Reporting concerns about poor practice**

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice the designated NISA Safeguarding Officer Alan Seabrook (contact details end of this document) will deal with it as a misconduct issue. The Safeguarding Officer will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

**Reporting concerns about suspected abuse**

Any suspicion that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the NISA Safeguarding Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child or vulnerable adult in question and any other child or vulnerable adult who may be at risk. The Safeguarding Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police. The parents or carers of the child or vulnerable adult will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.

**Confidentiality**

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- the NISA Safeguarding Officer
- the parents/carers of the person who is alleged to have been abused (on advice of the Safeguarding Officer)
- the person making the allegation
- social services/police
Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

**Enquiries and further action**

**Internal enquiries and possible suspension**

The NISA Safeguarding Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police, Children’s Social Care and internal inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the NISA Disciplinary Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer should be reinstated and how this can be safely and 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 NISA Disciplinary Committee must 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 the child or vulnerable adult should remain of paramount importance throughout.

**Bullying**

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.
Action to help the victim and prevent bullying in sport:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children and vulnerable adults to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the NISA Safeguarding Officer or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

Action towards the bully(ies):

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully’s parents.
- Insist on the return of ‘borrowed’ items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Provide support for the victim's coach.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all organisation members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.
Most 'low level' incidents will be dealt with at the time by coaches and volunteers. However, if the bullying is severe (e.g. a serious assault), or if it persists despite efforts to deal with it, incidents should be referred to the NISA Safeguarding Officer as in "responding to suspicions or allegations" above.

Reporting concerns outside the immediate sporting environment (e.g. at home or school)

Report your concerns to the NISA Safeguarding Officer, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.

If the NISA Safeguarding Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact social services or the police immediately.

Social Services and the NISA Safeguarding Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.

Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.

Providing information to police or social services

Information about suspected abuse must be accurate and a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. It should include the following:

- The name of the child or vulnerable adult, age, date of birth, any disability and ethnicity.
- The home address and telephone number of the child or vulnerable adult.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
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• Details of witnesses to the incidents.
• The child’s or vulnerable adult’s account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
• Have the parents been contacted?
• If so what has been said?
• Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
• If the child or vulnerable adult was not the person who reported the incident, has he/she been spoken to? If so what was said?
• Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
• Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

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