



CHILD PROTECTION & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

To be reviewed by 30th September 2026.

Introduction:

Elements Elite recognises the importance of its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people entrusted to its care. We understand that all adults, including temporary staff and volunteers, have a full and active part to play in protecting our children from harm, and that the child's welfare is our paramount concern.

As an organisation working with children and young people, Elements Elite has a responsibility to act if safeguarding concerns to light, to protect children from harm within the programme.

Aims:

- To support the child's development in ways that will foster security, confidence and independence.
- To provide an environment in which children and young people feel safe, secure, valued and respected. They should feel confident that they can approach adults if they're in difficulties believing they will be effectively listened to.
- To raise the awareness of all coaching and non-coaching staff of the need to safeguard children and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting any safeguarding concerns.
- To emphasise the need for good levels of communication between all members of coaching and non-coaching staff.
- To develop a structured procedure within the programme which will be followed by all members of the Elements Elite community.
- To check that all adults appointed/authorised by Elements Elite have completed DBS checks and are thoroughly vetted.

It is the responsibility of the Elements Elite Programme directors to appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to oversee the implementation of this policy. This position will be held for a one year term and then be reviewed by the directors when appropriate. If and when required, the named nominated person will work in conjunction with statutory agencies and other organisations to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the young person.

Designated Safeguard Leads (DSL):

Charlotte Thomas Contact no: 07761984231

Kimberley Wray-Leather Contact no: 07871 716311

The name of the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be clearly displayed in the gym, with a statement explaining the programme's role in referring and monitoring cases where safeguarding concerns are raised.



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Mission Statement:

As part of its mission, Elements Elite is committed to:

- Valuing, listening to, and respecting children and young people, as well as promoting their welfare and protection.
- Safe recruitment, supervision, and training for all staff, coaches, and volunteers.
- Adopting a procedure for dealing with any safeguarding / child protection concerns.
- Encouraging and supporting parents/carers.
- Supporting those affected.
- Making links with statutory childcare authorities and other organisations if and when required.

This policy covers all activities run by Elements Elite for children and young people under the age of 18 years. It sets out what action will be taken in various circumstances in order to reassure parents, carers, and associated parties that all possible steps will be taken to protect children involved in any aspect of the programme's activities.

The policy is governed by legislation and statutory guidance as below:

- The Children's Act 1989 and 2004
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- The Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire Child Protection Procedures 2016 updated 31st March 2020
- Working Together to Safeguard Children Procedures 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 1994 and 1998
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The policy is consistent with Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire Child Protection Procedures and guidance.

In line with these procedures and guidelines, this policy acknowledges that:

- Child abuse exists and can present itself in any of its forms – physical, emotional, neglect, sexual – alone or in combination.
- Children may be abused and/or neglected by parents, carers, guardians, or other trusted adults, as well as strangers.
- Abuse may be perpetrated by individuals, groups, or networks of individuals.
- Children may also be abused by other children.

Elements Elite is committed to ongoing child protection training for all staff, coaches, and volunteers to develop their understanding of the signs of abuse and how to respond to disclosures of abuse.

- All new staff will be given a copy of our Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.
- Anyone in leadership who has contact with children/young people will complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) application form.
- Anyone under the age of 18 years cannot be counted in the ratio as a helper and should never be left in charge of a group of children.



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Responsibilities:

In undertaking our responsibility of care, Elements Elite will:

- Refer a child if there are concerns about possible abuse, liaising with relevant agencies, and acting as a focal point for staff to discuss concerns.
- Keep written records of concerns about a child even if there is no need to make an immediate referral.
- Ensure all records are kept confidentially and securely. The DSL will maintain these records.

Supporting Children:

Elements Elite recognises that a child who has suffered harm or witnessed violence may feel helpless and humiliated, may blame themselves, and find it difficult to develop and maintain a sense of self-worth.

It is recognised that Elements Elite may provide important stability and consistency in the lives of children who have been abused or who are at risk of harm.

Elements Elite will support all children by:

- Providing support to children by encouraging self-esteem and confidence, while not condoning aggression or bullying.
- Promoting a positive and caring environment in Elements Elite premises of operation.
- Liaising and working together with all other support services and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children.

Confidentiality:

We recognise that all matters relating to child protection are confidential.

The DSL will disclose any information about a child to other members of staff only on a need-to-know basis.

All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children.

All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise a child's safety or wellbeing.

We will always undertake to share our intention to refer a child to Children's Services with their parents/carers, unless to do so could put the child at greater risk of harm or danger.

Supporting Staff:

We recognise that staff who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm, or appears to be suffering harm, may find the situation stressful and upsetting.

We will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the DSL and to seek further support as appropriate.



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Allegations Against Staff:

Staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child. They should always be in full view of the open door and so visible to others, i.e., not be in a room alone with a child with the door closed.

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately, 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 DSL will refer the allegation to the appropriate Local Authority children's services department and contact will be made with the relevant LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer), who will determine if and what further action should be taken.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from children's services.
- The DSL should also notify the relevant British Cheerleading Organisation officer, who, in turn, will inform the British Cheerleading Organisation Child Protection Officer, who will deal with any media enquiries.
- If the DSL is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate Manager or, in their absence, the British Cheerleading Organisation Child Protection Officer, who will refer the allegation to children's services.

Bullying:

Our policy on bullying is set out in the Anti-Bullying Policy. Elements Elite's policy on anti-bullying is set out in a separate document and acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. This includes all forms, e.g., cyber, racist, homophobic, and gender-related bullying. All staff are aware that children with SEND and/or differences/perceived differences are more susceptible to being bullied or victims of child abuse. We keep a record of bullying incidents.

Radicalisation and Extremism:

Since 2010, when the Government published the Prevent Strategy, there has been an awareness of the specific need to safeguard children, young people, and families from violent extremism. There have been several occasions both locally and nationally in which extremist groups have attempted to radicalise vulnerable children and young people to hold extreme views, including views justifying political, religious, sexist, or racist violence, or to steer them into a rigid and narrow ideology that is intolerant of diversity and leaves them vulnerable to future radicalisation.

When any member of staff has concerns that a young person may be at risk of radicalisation or involvement in terrorism, they should speak with the DSL. They should then follow normal safeguarding procedures. If the matter is urgent, The Police must be contacted by dialing 999. In non-urgent cases, where police advice is sought, dial 101.



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Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal in England and Wales under the FGM Act (2003). It is a form of child abuse and violence against women. From 31 October 2015, a mandatory reporting duty requires teachers to report 'known' cases of FGM in under-18s, which are identified in the course of their professional work, to the police.

If an adult is informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her, or another adult observes physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 and they have no reason to believe the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth, they should call 101 and make a report to the police force in which the girl resides.

The duty applies to the individual who becomes aware of the case to make a report. It should not be transferred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL); however, the DSL should be informed, and a report to the police should be made by the close of the next working day.

Where there is a risk to life or likelihood of serious immediate harm, the adult should report the case immediately to the police, including dialing 999 if appropriate.

There are no circumstances in which coaching or non-coaching staff should examine a young person.

Contextual Safeguarding:

Contextual safeguarding, developed by Dr. Carlene Firmin at the University of Bedfordshire's Contextual Safeguarding Network, recognises that as young people grow and develop, they are influenced by a whole range of environments and people outside of their family—for example, in school or college, in the local community, in their peer groups, social activities, or online. Children and young people may encounter risk in any of these environments. Sometimes the different contexts are inter-related and can mean that children and young people may encounter multiple risks. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

Contextual Safeguarding therefore expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse beyond their front doors.

When any member of staff has concerns in respect of contextual harm, they should speak with the DSL and/or follow normal safeguarding procedures. If the matter is urgent, Bedfordshire or Northamptonshire Police must be contacted by dialing 999. In non-urgent cases, where police advice is sought, dial 101.



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Prevention:

We recognise that the programme plays a significant part in the prevention of harm to our children by providing children with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends, and an ethos of protection.

The Elements Elite community will therefore:

- Work to establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are always listened to.
- Include regular consultation with children about their feelings towards the gym, training, and competitions.
- Ensure that all children know there is an adult in the gym whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.

Review of Policy:

The date of the next review will be September 2026.



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Child Protection Policy ANNEX 1

Objectives:

Elements Elite recognises the reality that children can suffer significant harm, which may occur both within and outside of the programme's community. The directors of Elements Elite wish to ensure that the programme is able to play its part, together with parents and other agencies, in preventing harm to children. This is in line with the programme's mission statement and aims.

Governing Principles:

- All children have the right to be protected.
- Child abuse occurs in all cultures, religions, and social classes.
- The prime concern must always be the interest and safety of the child.
- The responsibility to refer children thought to be at risk lies with the person who has the concern.
- Children who have suffered or are at risk of suffering from significant harm need the same care and sensitivity, regardless of whether they have been harmed by a parent, carer, or stranger.
- One aim should be to minimise damage and promote recovery.
- Procedures provide a framework to ensure that the programme takes appropriate action to help children. They are not, and cannot be, a substitute for professional judgement and sensitivity.

The Policy:

Recognising Signs of Child Abuse

Definition of Harm:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect

Signs of Abuse in Children:

The following non-specific signs may indicate something is wrong:

- Significant change in behaviour
- Extreme anger or sadness
- Aggressive or attention-seeking behaviour
- Suspicious bruises with unsatisfactory explanations
- Lack of self-esteem
- Self-injury
- Depression
- Age-inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Child Sexual Exploitation



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Risk Indicators:

The factors described in this section are frequently found in cases of child abuse. Their presence is not proof that abuse has occurred, but:

- Must be regarded as indicators of the possibility of significant harm
- Justifies the need for careful assessment and discussion with the designated/named/lead person, manager, or, in the absence of all those individuals, an experienced colleague
- May require consultation with and/or referral to Children's Services
- The absence of such indicators does not mean that abuse or neglect has not occurred.
- In an abusive relationship, the child may:
 - Appear frightened of the parent/s
 - Act in a way that is inappropriate to their age and development (though full account needs to be taken of different patterns of development and ethnic groups)

The parent or carer may:

- Persistently avoid child health promotion services and treatment of the child's episodic illnesses
- Have unrealistic expectations of the child
- Frequently complain about/to the child and may fail to provide attention or praise (high criticism/low warmth environment)
- Be absent or misusing substances
- Persistently refuse to allow access on home visits
- Be involved in domestic abuse

Staff should be aware of the potential risk to children when individuals, previously known or suspected to have abused children, move into the household.

Recognising Physical Harm

The following are often regarded as indicators of concern:

- An explanation which is inconsistent with an injury
- Several different explanations provided for an injury
- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment
- Parents/carers are uninterested or undisturbed by an accident or injury
- Parents are absent without good reason when their child is presented for treatment
- Repeated presentation of minor injuries (which may represent a "cry for help" and, if ignored, could lead to a more serious injury)
- Family use of different doctors and A&E departments
- Reluctance to give information or mention previous injuries



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Bruising:

Children can have accidental bruising, but the following must be considered non-accidental unless there is evidence or an adequate explanation:

- Any bruising to a pre-crawling or pre-walking baby
- Bruising in or around the mouth, particularly in small babies which may indicate force feeding
- Two simultaneous bruised eyes, without bruising to the forehead (rarely accidental)
- Repeated or multiple bruising on the head or on sites unlikely to be injured accidentally
- Variation in colour, possibly indicating injuries caused at different times
- The outline of an object used, e.g., belt marks, handprints, or a hairbrush
- Bruising or tears around, or behind, the earlobe/s indicating injury by pulling or twisting
- Bruising around the face
- Grasp marks on small children
- Bruising on the arms, buttocks, and thighs may indicate sexual abuse

Bite Marks:

Bite marks can leave clear impressions of the teeth. Human bite marks are oval or crescent-shaped. Those over 3 cm in diameter are more likely to have been caused by an adult or older child. A medical opinion should be sought where there is any doubt over the origin of the bite.

Burns and Scalds:

It can be difficult to distinguish between accidental and non-accidental burns and scalds; experienced medical opinion is always required. Any burn with a clear outline may be suspicious, e.g.:

- Circular burns from cigarettes (though may be friction burns if along the bony protuberance of the spine)
- Linear burns from hot metal rods or electrical fire elements
- Burns of uniform depth over a large area
- Scalds with a line indicating immersion or poured liquid
- Old scars from previous burns/scalds without appropriate treatment or explanation
- Scalds to the buttocks of a small child, particularly in the absence of burns to the feet

Fractures:

Fractures may cause pain, swelling, and discolouration over a bone or joint. Non-mobile children rarely sustain fractures. Concern arises if:

- The history provided is vague, non-existent, or inconsistent with the fracture type
- There are associated old fractures
- Medical attention is delayed after the fracture causes swelling, pain, or loss of movement
- There is an unexplained fracture in the first year of life

Scars:

A large number of scars, scars of different sizes, ages, or locations may suggest abuse.



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Recognising Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse may be difficult to recognise, as the signs are usually behavioural rather than physical. Emotional abuse may also indicate the presence of other kinds of abuse.

Indicators of emotional abuse often overlap with other forms of abuse, and may include:

- Developmental delay
- Abnormal attachment between a child and parent/carer, e.g., anxious, indiscriminate, or failure to attach
- Aggressive behaviour towards others
- Being scapegoated within the family
- Frozen watchfulness, particularly in pre-school children
- Low self-esteem and lack of confidence
- Withdrawn or seen as a "loner" – difficulty relating to others

Recognising Signs of Sexual Abuse

Boys and girls of all ages may be sexually abused and are frequently scared to say anything due to guilt and/or fear. This can be particularly difficult for a child to talk about, and full account should be taken of the cultural sensitivities of any individual child or family.

Recognition can be difficult unless the child discloses and is believed. There may be no physical signs, and indications are often emotional or behavioural.

Behavioural indicators may include:

- Inappropriate sexualised conduct
- Sexually explicit behaviour, play, or conversation, inappropriate to the child's age
- Continual and inappropriate or excessive masturbation
- Self-harm (including eating disorders), self-mutilation, and suicide attempts
- Involvement in prostitution or indiscriminate choice of sexual partners
- Anxious unwillingness to remove clothes, e.g., for sports events (though this may also relate to cultural norms or physical difficulties)

Physical indicators may include:

- Pain or itching of the genital area
- Blood on underclothes
- Pregnancy in a younger girl where the identity of the father is not disclosed
- Physical symptoms such as injuries to the genital or anal area, bruising to buttocks, abdomen, or thighs, sexually transmitted diseases, or presence of semen on vagina, anus, external genitalia, or clothing



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Recognising Neglect

Evidence of neglect is built up over a period of time and can cover different aspects of parenting.

Indicators may include:

- Failure by parents or carers to meet basic essential needs, e.g., adequate food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, and medical care
- A child seen to be listless, apathetic, or unresponsive with no apparent medical cause; failure of a child to grow within normal expected patterns, sometimes accompanied by weight loss
- Child thrives away from home environment
- Child frequently absent from school
- Child left with adults who are intoxicated or violent
- Child abandoned or left alone for excessive periods

Domestic Abuse

How does it affect children?

Children can be traumatised by witnessing violence and abuse. They may also be directly targeted by the abuser or take on a protective role and get caught in the middle. In the long term, this can lead to mental health issues such as depression, self-harm, and anxiety.

What are the signs to look out for?

Children affected by domestic abuse may reflect their distress in a variety of ways. They may change their usual behaviour and become withdrawn, tired, start to wet the bed, or develop behavioural difficulties. They may be reluctant to leave their house or hesitant to return. Some children may excel in certain areas, using their time in your care as a way to escape from their home life. None of these signs are exclusive to domestic abuse, so when considering changes in behaviour or concerns about a child, think about whether domestic abuse may be a factor.

What should I do if I suspect a family is affected by domestic abuse?

To talk through your concerns, you can call the Police on 999 or report online at <https://www.beds.police.uk/ro/report/domestic-abuse/a1/report-domestic-abuse/>
Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse Service: 0300 0120 154

Equality Statement

Elements Elite is committed to the welfare of all children and young people within its programme and will ensure that each young person is given the same level of protection regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity.



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Elements Elite - Child Protection Policy

ANNEX 2 - DISCLOSURE PROFORMA

If a child or adult wishes to make a disclosure, this form should be used to record the information. The child/adult must be made aware that the information will be recorded.

Guiding Principles for Recording a Disclosure:

- Listen carefully: Allow the child to speak freely without asking direct questions or suggesting words for them to use.
- Do not jump to conclusions: Remain neutral and objective.
- Do not interrupt: Never stop a child who is recalling significant events.
- Record details thoroughly: Include the timing, setting, personnel present, and exactly what was said.
- Track subsequent events: Note any developments or actions up to the time of any formal interview by the investigating team.

Important Note:

Records of any interviews or disclosures may need to be shared with Children's Services and potentially with the police if criminal proceedings are initiated.

Time & Date:	am/pm	dd/mm/yy
Person making disclosure:		
Adult being disclosed to:		
Other persons present:		
Statement (include quotes if possible of what was said, setting of incident etc)		
Signature of person writing this statement:		



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Action: Referred to (please circle):

DSL

SOCIAL SERVICES

PARENTS / CARER

Other action taken:

Follow up events:

Use reverse side if necessary. Supplementary sheets of paper also be dated and signed.