

# Safeguarding in British Snowsport (SIBS)

## Guidance on Physical Contact

**This guidance is to be read in conjunction with the appropriate governing body Safeguarding policy.**

### Introduction

Understanding these guidelines will help anyone working with children in Snowsport to act appropriately and feel more comfortable in emergency situations or day to day practice. Many sports by their nature require a degree of physical contact between adults and children. Physical contact can be used appropriately to instruct, encourage, protect or comfort. The aim of guidelines relating to physical contact is to provide adults and children with appropriate contexts for touching and an understanding of what types of physical contact should reasonably be expected within the sport, together with the purpose for this. **It is important to stress that the rationale for any physical contact between a coach and child should be fully explained and the permission of the child, (and if appropriate the child's parent/guardian/carer) obtained. In an emergency situation of course, this might not be possible.**

These guidelines will also help to protect coaches and other responsible adults from misunderstandings when working with children.

The following guidance is intended to safeguard children whilst they are under the care of a coach or snowsport professional in a snowsport environment. Regardless of how many children are present, where practicable it is best practice to have a **minimum** of two coaches or other appropriately vetted club personnel present. This ensures at least basic cover in the event of something impacting on the availability of one of the adults during the session e.g. in the event of an accident.

By its nature, the teaching and coaching of snowsport may require some physical contact between coach and pupil. There may be others who come into contact with children in a club or coaching environment. For the purposes of this guidance therefore the term **coach** is used to include instructors of all grades including trainees; coaches; tutors; club helpers and anyone else engaged in the assistance, guidance or supervision of children in a snowsport situation.

This guidance is accepted as good practice and will be reviewed on a regular basis by Safeguarding in British Snowsport (SIBS) which comprises representatives from the organisations listed at the end of this document.

## Guidance

At all times coaches should be aware not all children are used to or comfortable with any type of touching, be it friendly or otherwise. In many cultures girls in particular are uncomfortable about any kind of touching by a stranger. Equally there may be children with additional needs or who are on the Child Protection Register, (or have previously been so), or are even currently being abused. These may not be obvious to the coach and it is therefore necessary for the coach to treat all children with due consideration for their expectations, emotions and requirements. For example disabled children may need to be touched in order to help them understand, acquire or visualise a posture or position. **As with all children**, if a child has additional needs (physical, cognitive or a visual impairment) the coach should always explain what they are doing, why they are doing it and obtain the child's permission (and if appropriate also that of their parent/guardian or care worker) before coming into physical contact with them. Coaches should be aware that sport can occasionally be a refuge for some children and an unusual response to touching may be a sign of underlying abuse, which should trigger an appropriate response by the coach following the reporting guidelines included in the Safeguarding policy.

Physical contact between adults and children should only be used by appropriately qualified people when the aim is to:-

- Prevent an injury or accident occurring
- Treat an injury
- Meet the requirements of the particular sport, e.g. sports massage
- Give appropriate comfort to a child or appropriately celebrate a success with them
- Develop sports techniques and skills

Physical contact should:

- Meet the need of the child and not the need of the adult
- Be fully explained to the child
- With the exception of an emergency, permission should be obtained
- Not involve touching genital areas, buttocks or breasts
- Not take place in secret or out of sight of others
- Be carried out by those appropriately qualified to do so, (although in emergency situations "appropriately qualified" might mean nothing more than being available.

Two short examples might be useful in illustrating these points but of course these cannot cover every eventuality.

In the early stages of learning snowsport the child may require help that necessitates physical contact e.g. putting on boots; getting up after a fall, etc. The manner and context in which this is done will determine the child's understanding of what is happening. It is expected the child's permission will be obtained before the coach takes any action, e.g. "May I help you get up?" – then the offer of a hand, giving the child the option to take it, rather than grabbing hold of the child and picking him/her up.

If it is thought necessary to use physical contact to put the child into appropriate skiing positions, the coach should first review their coaching strategies to look for alternatives. It might be possible to move to more suitable terrain to remove the fear factor or use verbal images to which the child can respond, e.g. "like a goal keeper waiting for a penalty". It might be possible for another child to demonstrate what is required. Explanation and demonstration might make physical contact unnecessary but if there is no alternative the guidelines above should be followed.

**Repeated physical contact, in particular with the same child, is inappropriate and may be misconstrued by both the child and observers. Coaches should always consider appropriateness, potential carelessness, unnecessary repetition and context.**

### **First Aid**

A trained first aider's prime responsibility is to deliver effective first aid. They have a duty to act and this will be in relationship to the seriousness of the first aid situation they face. If the conditions below can't be met and they are the only person able to offer first aid, this should be done without delay.

In an ideal situation two first-aiders should be present at the treatment of a casualty. If this is not possible another adult of the same gender as the casualty should be sought.

Coaches should never take the casualty alone into a room and close the door. The door should be left open or the casualty should be attended to in an open environment. Consideration may need to be given to giving the casualty a little privacy, for example if they need to remove clothing. Unless it is an emergency there should always be two adults present, as above. Ideally, this should be done in the presence of a first aider or an adult of the same gender as the casualty, again unless failure to take immediate action may be detrimental to the health or well-being of the child.

### **Relationships with 16 - 17 year olds**

Coaches and others in positions of authority and trust should ensure they maintain healthy, positive and professional relationships with all athletes. Those in positions of authority and trust in relation to athletes aged 16 and 17 must not engage in sexual relationships with

them while that unequal power relationship exists. **Home Office Guidelines, the CPSU and NSPCC recommend the principle that "People in positions of trust and authority do not have sexual relationships with 16-17 year olds in their care"**. This applies to **all coaches and others in positions of authority and trust**, even if they, in turn, are also under the age of 18. This must be explained to young coaches through training courses and in club inductions for new coaches as they may not realise they are in what is deemed an unequal power relationship with those they coach. Sexual relationships with anyone under the age of 16 are illegal.

## **Safeguarding in British Snowsport - SIBS 2015**

SIBS comprises the Safeguarding Lead Officers of the following organisations:-

- British Alpine Racing Ski Clubs – [BARSC](#)
- British Association of Snowsport Instructors – [BASI](#)
- British Ski and Snowboard - [BSS](#)
- Disability Snowsport UK - [DSUK](#)
- Snowsport England - [SSE](#)
- Snowsport Scotland - [SSS](#)
- Snowsport Cymru/Wales - [SSC/W](#)

These organisations publish their own Child Safeguarding Policies on their website and the Safeguarding Lead Officer can be contacted via the email address shown on the web site or via the office of the relevant organisation.

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