BRITISH TAEKWONDO COUNCIL

Safeguarding – Protecting Children Policies and Procedures

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Physical Contact and Young People in Taekwondo

Introduction and background

There is growing concern being expressed about what is and what is not permissible around physical contact with children and young people in Taekwondo. Some misleading and inaccurate information has been promoted within the sports sector and this can undermine the confidence of instructors, coaches, and others in applying safe and appropriate coaching methods. There have also been instances where some coaches and other adults who are motivated to harm and abuse children and young people have done so by falsely claiming that their behaviours were legitimate teaching, coaching or caring practices. The purpose of this policy is to clarify the position of the BTC in relation to this issue and provide guidance to all those involved in working with young people in Taekwondo.

Guidance

There are a number of principles that should be followed when the activity involves physical contact. Physical contact during Taekwondo should always be intended to meet the child's needs, **NOT** the instructors. **The instructor should only use physical contact if their aim is to:**

- Develop sports skills or techniques
- To treat an injury
- To prevent an injury or accident from occurring
- To meet the requirements of the sport

The instructor should seek to explain the nature and reason for the physical contact to the child reinforcing the teaching or coaching skill. Unless the situation is an emergency, the instructor should ask the child for permission.

It is good practice for taekwondo clubs, as part of an induction process or starter pack for new members, to explain to parents/carers and their child or give written guidance about any physical contact that may be required as part of that activity. Children should be encouraged to voice concerns they have if any physical contact makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened.

Contact should not involve touching genital areas, buttocks, breasts, or any other part of the body that might cause a child distress or embarrassment. Physical contact should always take place in an open or public environment and not take place in secret or out of sight of others.

The CPSU is not aware of any sports bodies that have stated that any physical contact is not permissible under any circumstances within the context of coaching or teaching.

In the case of a young person with a disability specific support or assistance may be required. When children with disabilities are manually supported, the individual child should be treated with dignity and respect. Relevant health and safety guidelines must be followed to ensure the safety of the child and those assisting. It is recommended that those assisting receive the appropriate training.

Specific situations

Contact as part of coaching

Some physical activities in taekwondo are more likely to require coaches or instructors to come into physical contact with children and young people from time to time in the course of their duties. Examples include showing student how perform a new technique or demonstrating a move or exercise during a coaching or teaching session to reduce the risk of injury due to falls or errors when performing. Instructors should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place, and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted.

A number of taekwondo activities may require physical contact between young athletes and those teaching them, for reasons of both teaching and the participant's safety.
Even in techniques where there is a need to support or touch a child, over – handling should be avoided.

It should be recognised that physical contact between an instructor and a child that may occur during legitimate teaching or coaching, may be misconstrued, or misunderstood by a student, parent, or observer. Touching young participants, including well intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, can, if repeated regularly, lead to the possibility of questions being raised. As a general principle, instructors in positions of responsibility should not make gratuitous or unnecessary physical contact with children and young people. It is particularly unwise to attribute frequent touching to their teaching or coaching style or as a way of relating to young participants.

Responding to distress and success

There may be occasions where a distressed young person needs comfort and reassurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Physical contact may also be required to prevent an accident or injury, and this would be appropriate. A young person or coach may also want to mark a success or achievement with a hug or other gesture. Instructors should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is (and what is seen by others present) normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same young person over a period. It should also be considered what, as an instructor may be felt appropriate, may not be shared by a young person. Instructors must think before they act train safe.

Physical punishment

Any form of physical punishment of children is unlawful, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour

Any form of physical punishment of children is unlawful, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour unless it is by way of physical intervention to prevent a young person from:

- Harming themselves
- Harming others
- Damaging property

Physical exercise such as press ups, sit ups, etc, cannot be used as a form of punishment on any young person.

It is particularly important that instructors understand this both to protect their own position and the overall reputation of their organisation in which they are involved.