



## **POLICY STATEMENT ON PREVENTING ABUSE IN POSITIONS OF TRUST**

As parents, coaches, officials, and volunteers working with young people, we must all help to promote responsible relationships within sport and prevent the manipulation and exploitation of young people.

Although young people aged 16 and 17 have reached the age of consent for sexual activity according to UK law, they could be vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation in certain situations. This includes sexual activity and manipulation by adults who hold a position of trust, responsibility, or authority in relation to them, and, as a result, have a considerable amount of power and influence on their lives.

**As of 28 June 2022 the law states that those in a position of trust in sports organisations, such as a coach, cannot legally have a sexual relationship with young people they look after who are under 18 years of age.**

**The practice of aikido meets the definition of a “sport” for the purposes of this new law**

**The Aikido Alliance’s policies and procedures relating to safeguarding now reflect these changes in the law**

Those in positions of authority in sport can have a positive influence on the welfare of a young person, by providing role models or someone to turn to if they have a concern. But it is important to have clear boundaries in place for the safety of both the young people and the staff, to ensure exploitation cannot take place. This document seeks to clarify the Aikido Alliance’s position on this important change in the law.

### **What is a position of trust?**

Someone in a position of trust is a person in a position of authority or responsibility over another person. Those in positions of trust have a considerable amount of power and influence on a young person’s life. For example, a young person may be dependent on their coach, mentor or other adult for their aikido development, success, or position in a club.

### **What does the law say?**

Sexual offences legislation in the UK underlines that any sexual activity between adults and with children under 16 is illegal and constitutes abuse. Furthermore, in defined circumstances, young people aged 16 and 17, despite reaching the age of consent for sexual activity, are vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation.

Following an NSPCC campaign in partnership with sport’s governing bodies, the law, which previously only applied to roles like teachers and social workers, has now been extended to include a wider range of roles where adults hold a position of influence or power.

In England and Wales, the law now states that those in positions of trust within sports organisations cannot legally have a sexual relationship with young people aged 16-17 years old. The law is soon to receive Royal Assent in Northern Ireland.

A position of trust offence is committed when an adult in a position of trust engages in sexual activity with a child in their care, even if the child is over the age of consent (aged over 16 in the UK).

The updated law now defines a wider range of roles and settings where sexual activity between 16- and 17-year-olds and those in positions of trust, responsibility, or authority, constitutes a criminal offence. Examples of specific roles include:

- teacher
- coach
- trainer
- supervisor or instructor in sport

According to CIMPSA, the following occupational roles may also be classified as a position of trust depending upon their workplace related roles and responsibilities:

- Manager
- Tutor
- Assessor

The Aikido Alliance's safeguarding policies and procedures have previously included a governance clause forbidding any coach to engage in sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18 (irrespective of the legal age of consent). The Aikido Alliance requires all its member organisations to uphold the principles enshrined in this new law:

- Abuse of positions of trust is unacceptable behaviour, which could result in prosecution. Breaches of these codes should be robustly addressed in line with the law.
- Club codes of conduct and linked disciplinary processes should be reviewed and amended to include wording that supports the maintenance of healthy and positive relationships between sports coaches and young people.
- The code of conduct should reference the organisation's definition of roles that constitute positions of trust and reference the law stating that any sexual relationships/activity between adults in those roles and 16–17-year-olds for whom they are in a position of authority constitutes an offence.
- The abuse of position of trust provision should be defined by the nature of the position in relation to the young person and not be dependent on the regularity of contact with the young person in question.

**The Aikido Alliance policy now reflects these changes in the law**

**Safeguarding and disciplinary policies and procedures should include a requirement for referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) when an individual, who is working in regulated activity, is deemed to be unsuitable to work with young people. This should be carried out even when a short-term cover/temporary member of staff is engaged.**

**What can aikido coaches and others in positions of trust do?**

As a person in a position of trust, aikido coaches have a responsibility to maintain a positive, healthy relationship with the young people under their authority. Coaches should:

- Ensure that they read, understand, sign up to and comply with the code of conduct/behaviour issued by their club or Association.

- Maintain a relationship with all participants that is appropriate to their role and reflects positively on their club. Relationships between those in positions of trust and young people in sport should be supportive, positive and aimed at improving the young person's skills, and progress.
- not seek to or engage in sexual activity or sexualised communication or image sharing (including via social media) with 16- or 17-year-olds for whom they are responsible.

If a coach thinks that a young person's behaviour indicates that they are seeking to develop or engage in an inappropriate relationship, immediately bring this to the attention of your club Welfare Officer or Association Safeguarding Officer. Coaches should not respond to the participant in any way that could be interpreted as encouraging the young person concerned. Written records should be kept of any concerns.

### **Dealing with a concern about a possible abuse of trust**

If you suspect that an abuse of a position of trust has occurred, is occurring or may occur, you should:

- immediately report to your club Welfare Officer or Association Safeguarding Officer
- make a written record of your concerns and relevant details

if you are unable to contact the Welfare Officer or Association Safeguarding Officer, or if you think someone is at risk of immediate harm, you must report it to the police or children's social care.

If you think your concern has not been dealt with appropriately you can contact the following services whose duties include responding to concerns about potential breaches of positions of trust:

- England and Wales - consult with the Designated Officer whose details should be available through your local authority's Children's Social Care Department.
- Scotland - contact your local children's social work team. Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- Northern Ireland - contact the relevant Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Gateway Services team. In circumstances that are not an emergency, the HSCT gateway services team is the first point of contact for all new referrals to children's social services.

You can find additional information on who to contact when dealing with a concern on the CPSU Website.  
<https://thecpsu.org.uk>

Alternatively, you can seek advice from the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000.