

Welsh Gymnastics Safeguarding and Wellbeing Plan 2025

Our pledge to deliver a safe and enjoyable sport for everyone.

Keeping gymnasts at the heart of everything we do.

January 2023 - December 2025



What we are striving for:

Creating a culture where every gymnast can thrive.

We must collectively ensure everyone feels valued and understands the values and behaviours required – to ensure that all gymnasts are treated equally, with respect and free from all forms of harm.

To do this, it is imperative that we develop, enhance and maintain healthy and supportive environments – where individuals hold each other to account, challenge and report unacceptable behaviours, without fear of retribution.

Our commitment to delivering Safeguarding and Wellbeing in Wales

Safeguarding and Wellbeing is not a new concept. It is our duty to ensure that every person involved in gymnastics has a safe, positive experience.

However, The Whyte Review was a watershed moment for our sport. It has shone a spotlight on the issues that exist in our sport, and we are fully committed to ensuring that we accept its recommendations. Our commitment also led us to the commissioning of a review of our internal operational practices and procedures. The recommendations from this review have also been accepted in full and form a part of our Safeguarding and Wellbeing Plan going forward.

The Whyte Review made a number of key recommendations, which we are fully committed to complying with, but also going even further. Even before the review was published, a change management programme had already begun, which aims to embed the positive behaviours required for culture change.

This document is intended to set our Safeguarding and Wellbeing Plan for the next three years, up to the end of 2025, for which we will be held accountable. Some progress has already been made, but it's only the start.

There is lots to be done. We will provide periodic updates on our progress to all our stakeholders.

The Board:

 Bev Smith (Chair)	 Dr Lisa Gannon	 Sonia Mason	 Mark Petherick
 Melissa Anderson	 Tomos Lewis	 Chris McLarnon	 Dean Williams

I am fully committed to working with the whole of the Welsh gymnastics community to ensure that the kind of culture and behaviours, identified in the review, are eradicated from our sport.

Without exception, nothing is more important than safeguarding our gymnasts, a view I am confident is shared across the gymnastics community. Abuse of any kind within the sport is completely unacceptable and will be met with zero tolerance.

Safeguarding and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility and collectively we must ensure that our sport puts the gymnast's welfare and wellbeing at the heart of everything we do; it will be the spine that runs through the whole of Welsh Gymnastics.

This Safeguarding and Wellbeing Plan will form the foundation of our new strategy, to be published in 2023.

Of course we cannot do this alone. We will also work with our partners at British Gymnastics and Scottish Gymnastics – and the gymnastics community as a whole – to develop and put in place a clear vision for our sport.



Victoria Ward
Chief Executive Officer

Why do we need a Safeguarding and Wellbeing Plan?

July 2020

A number of disturbing allegations from several elite, high-profile British gymnasts appear in the media, disclosing the 'endemic' and 'systematic' abuse they experienced as gymnasts. It rightly caused widespread shock and consternation across the sport and the public.

August 2020

An independent review, co-commissioned by UK Sport and Sport England, led by Anne Whyte QC, is launched.

'The Whyte Review' formally begins, taking evidence from a cross section of those involved in gymnastics at all levels, across the United Kingdom.

June 2022

After almost two years, The Whyte Review is published. Its findings have been welcomed and it is now recognised that there are systemic problems in identifying and responding to abuse across all areas and levels of gymnastics. As a result, Welsh Gymnastics commissioned its own independent Safeguarding and Wellbeing Review.

October 2022

Independent review to closely examine its internal processes and practices, aligned to the recommendations of The Whyte Review. Findings presented to the Welsh Gymnastics Board, all recommendations were fully supported.

December 2022

The new Safeguarding and Wellbeing action plan, based on the recommendations, is drafted and presented to the Board. Welsh Gymnastics also advertises for a Safeguarding and Wellbeing Director, to join its senior leadership team.

Key Findings of The Whyte Review

- British Gymnastics was ill-equipped both to spot and respond to signs and allegations of abuse at every level.
- System of reviewing and recording of abuse or allegations of abuse was poor.
- Victims of abuse often reluctant to come forward.
- Poor training for welfare officers, who also struggle to escalate concerns – leading to serious underreporting of cases of abuse within BG over many years.
- Little involvement of statutory agencies in advising in or managing any concerns identified.
- It was felt that there was a vagueness about where poor practice ends and abuse began (for example a coach shouting at a gymnast).
- The Review made 17 recommendations for change.

What sort of abuse?

- Concerns about emotional, physical and, on rare occasions, sexual abuse within the training environments.
- It highlighted concerns about emotional abuse, in which children were made to feel bad about themselves, that in some cases led to gymnasts harming themselves because of the demands put on them.
- A culture which encouraged gymnasts and coaches to 'push themselves' in order to achieve, sometimes causing harm in doing so.
- The Review gives examples of coaches shouting at gymnasts, telling them they were 'too fat' and physical punishments such as being made to train on injuries.

What were some of the barriers in speaking up?

- Coach seen as a high status and high authority figure compared to the gymnast – often a young child and their parents, and others within the club.
- Parents also spoke about finding it difficult to complain about behaviours they did not like, due to fear it would affect their child's progress and peer pressure from other parents who did accept that behaviour.
- Welfare officer and the safeguarding role in general had a low profile compared to the coach, making investigation or challenge difficult. This was seen as even more the case in small clubs.

What are we going to do, to address the challenges?

Delivering a Safeguarding and Wellbeing Plan for gymnastics in Wales

Welsh Gymnastics are committed to developing the people, places and practices in Wales that support the delivery of gymnastics – to ensure that everyone within our community receives a positive, safe and fair experience within the sport. Putting the best interests of the gymnast at the heart of everything we do, is our top priority. Our Safeguarding and Wellbeing Plan has been created by amalgamating the recommendations of our own independent review, those of The Whyte Review and, continual improvement plan, from our annual review by the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU). Welsh Gymnastics continues to work hard to maintain its CPSU Level 3 Safeguarding Standards.

Our plan focuses on developing positive outcomes across three interconnected areas; **Culture and Strategy, Safeguarding, Complaints and Wellbeing and Education and Development**. This plan will only be achieved by everyone within Welsh Gymnastics working closely with the gymnastics community in Wales, to support the implementation and embed the actions.

The community will play a vital role in holding us, and each other, to account. The actions underpinning each of these areas will be periodically reviewed and reported on to all of our stakeholders.



Actions & Targets (2023 – 2025)

Each of the delivery areas within the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Plan will have specific targets and success indicators, which will be independently evaluated, annually. The evaluation will be published and shared with stakeholders. The key priorities are outlined below, and the full action plan is available [here](#).

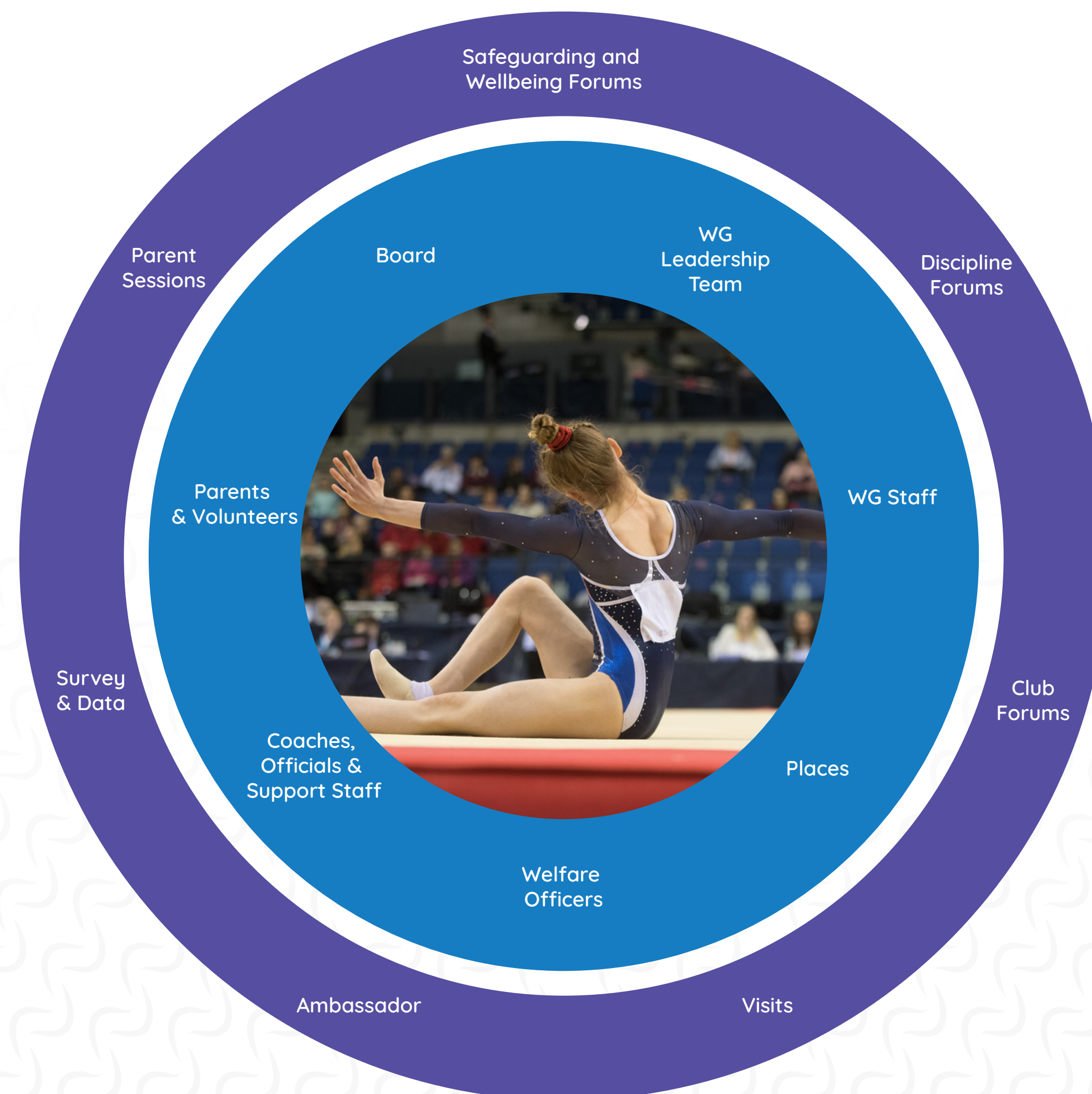
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Culture & Strategy</p>	<p>Delivering a clear vision for gymnastics, where the expected behaviours and values are embedded and upheld to deliver a safe, positive and fair experience for all.</p> <p>Focus: To work with the whole gymnastics community, to develop and embed a positive, safe environment where gymnasts’ wellbeing is at the heart of every decision we make.</p> <p>Expected Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new strategy for Welsh Gymnastics that places people at the heart of our actions. • Safeguarding and wellbeing evident across the whole of the organisation and gymnastics community. • Closer working with the Gymnastics Home Nations and stakeholders to model and embed good practice. • Clear Opportunities for parents, gymnasts and coaches to have a voice.
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Education</p>	<p>Delivering comprehensive education and continued development, across every aspect of the gymnastics environment. Programme for all within our community that provides the knowledge, skills and confidence to use their voice and feel valued within gymnastics.</p> <p>Focus: Creating opportunities for continuous improvement and development for all coaches, judges and parents, to ensure the right systems are in place to support concerns raised in a consistent and supportive manner.</p> <p>Expected Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out of mandatory training for all club/ activity operators and Welfare Officers. • All Welfare Officers and activity/club operators to be engaged with a programme of mandatory continued development, to ensure that welfare and wellbeing have priority within the gymnastics environment, which includes clubs, leisure centres and schools. • A clearly communicated provision of mandatory continual professional development for all roles to ensure clear education pathways.
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Safeguarding Complaints and Wellbeing</p>	<p>Deliver a fit for purpose structure that is proactive and responsive to delivering a safe environment across every gymnastics setting, where there is a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.</p> <p>Focus: To review and develop the resources and tools required to ensure that complaints and concerns can be managed in a timely and consistent manner. Delivering fit for purpose systems for Wales, that meet the requirements of Welsh legislation. Delivering systems that ensure everyone is aware, and able, to raise concerns.</p> <p>Expected Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full review of all the current policies and procedures that underpin the safeguarding process to ensure they are fit for purpose for Wales. • Digital programmes to enable an enhanced level of reporting incidents, which are dealt with quickly and efficiently by well trained staff and volunteers. • A culture where individuals are able to speak up without fear. • The delivery of a child-centred approach to coaching. • Every adult involved with gymnastics to use the Welsh Government’s Wales Safeguarding Procedures App to support them in identifying and dealing with concerns.

How are we to going enhance Safeguarding and Wellbeing in gymnastics?

It is important for Welsh Gymnastics to not only be committed to delivering our Safeguarding and Wellbeing Plan, but also to be held to account for doing so. However, this is not something we can do in isolation, it will involve collaboration with the entire gymnastics community in Wales. Only by working together, can we achieve our collective goal.

The gymnastics community is made up of different representatives who all provide valuable insight and accountability into supporting Welsh Gymnastics in delivering the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Plan. A number of different forums and methods of gaining insight and feedback have been initiated to further enhance our two-way communicating and monitoring progress.

We understand that there is already some great work taking place in Wales, to ensure children receive a positive experience of gymnastics. We also understand that changing culture and attitudes can take time and, whilst this plan is for an initial three-year period, the focus will be on ensuring the foundations are firmly in place to continue creating the positive environments for all and that the delivery will also be a cornerstone of future strategies.



Put simply, the gymnast must always be at the heart of everything we do.



To learn more about Safeguarding and Wellbeing and how it is delivered in Wales, please visit the [Safeguarding and Wellbeing section](#) of the Welsh Gymnastics website. Here there is a range of information and resources for gymnasts, parents, clubs and Welfare Officers.

If you need support or further guidance, we have also compiled a list of [useful links](#) available on our website.

You can also get in touch with the Welsh Gymnastics Safeguarding and Wellbeing team directly to report a concern on **02920 334978** or via safeguarding@welshgymnastics.org