Safeguarding Complaints & Concerns Procedure

Version 2.0 | October 2026

1. Purpose and scope

Ashridge Karate Academy (AKA) is committed to providing a safe, respectful environment for children, young people and adults at risk. This procedure explains how anyone can report a safeguarding concern or make a complaint about conduct, safety or welfare connected with AKA activities. It applies to instructors, assistants, volunteers, students, parents/carers and visitors.

2. Recognising the difference

A safeguarding concern includes suspected abuse, neglect, grooming, bullying, inappropriate contact, unsafe instructor conduct or an allegation about a person working with children or adults at risk. Such concerns must be acted on promptly and must not wait for the ordinary complaints process. Routine service complaints (for example, fees or scheduling) may be handled through the club's normal complaints route.

3. How to raise a concern

- Report to the AKA Club Welfare Officer / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Lloyd Smith, Tel: 07903081582, email: lloydsmith7@me.com
- If the concern involves that person, or the club owner/head instructor, report directly to the GKI safeguarding/welfare contact: Matt Taylor, Tel: 07766684254, email: matt.sensei@twyfordkarate.club or to the relevant statutory service.
- You may report verbally or in writing. Explain what happened, when, where, who was involved and any immediate safety issue. You do not need proof to raise a concern.
- In an emergency, or if someone is in immediate danger, call 999. For non-emergency police assistance call 101. Anyone may contact children's social care or adult safeguarding services directly.

4. What happens when a concern is received

The person receiving the report will listen without judgement, take the concern seriously, record the facts and the reporter's own words where possible, and assess immediate safety. They will not promise absolute confidentiality, investigate allegations themselves, confront the person concerned or ask leading questions. Information will be shared only with people who need it to protect someone or meet legal safeguarding duties.

Where a child may be at risk, the DSL will promptly seek advice or refer to local authority children's social care. Allegations that an adult working with children may have harmed a child, committed a relevant offence or pose a risk should be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) without delay, normally within one working day, in line with local procedures. Concerns about adults at risk should be referred to adult safeguarding services as appropriate. The police must be contacted when immediate protection or criminal investigation is required.

5. Interim protective action

AKA may take proportionate steps to keep people safe while statutory agencies or the relevant association advise on next steps. Such steps are precautionary, not findings of guilt. AKA will not undertake its own fact-finding where that could compromise a statutory investigation.

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6. Ordinary complaints and response times

Where a matter is not a safeguarding concern, AKA will aim to acknowledge a written complaint within 3 working days and provide a substantive response within 14 working days. If more time is needed, the complainant will be told why and given an updated timescale. These are AKA service targets, not timescales for urgent safeguarding referrals.

7. Escalation and impartiality

A complaint about the club owner, head instructor or safeguarding lead must not be investigated or decided solely by that individual. The complainant may contact the independent GKI safeguarding/welfare contact or the appropriate statutory authority directly. Where no suitable independent association contact is available, AKA will arrange an independent person with appropriate safeguarding competence to review a non-statutory complaint. No internal review can prevent a referral to police or safeguarding services.

8. Recording, confidentiality and data protection

AKA will maintain a dated, factual record of concerns, decisions, referrals, advice received and actions taken. Safeguarding records will be kept securely with restricted access, separate from routine student administration, and retained in line with applicable legal requirements and the club's retention policy. Information may be shared without consent where necessary and lawful to protect someone from harm. Reports will be handled sensitively and no person will be disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern in good faith.

9. Outcomes and review

Where appropriate and safe, AKA will inform the complainant that the matter has been considered and explain any outcome that can lawfully be shared. Confidential details about other people, disciplinary action or investigations may not be disclosed. AKA will review learning, update risk controls and refer to its safeguarding policy and governing association procedures as required. This procedure will be reviewed annually and after a significant safeguarding incident or relevant guidance change.

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10. Key contacts

AKA Club Welfare Officer / DSL	Lloyd Smith Tel: 07903081582 Email: lloydsmith7@me.com
GKI independent safeguarding contact	Matt Taylor Tel: 07766684254 Email: matt.sensei@twyfordkarate.club
Hertfordshire children's services	Telephone: 0300 123 4043 Email: contact@hertfordshire.gov.uk Website: Hertfordshire Children's Services – Contact Us
Hertfordshire adult safeguarding	Telephone: 0300 123 4042 Email: contact@hertfordshire.gov.uk Website: Hertfordshire Adult Safeguarding – Report a Concern
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Telephone: 01992 555420 Email: LADO.Referral@hertfordshire.gov.uk Website: Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership – Local Contacts
Emergency / police	999 (emergency) / 101 (non-emergency)

Approved by: John Foster

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Next review: October 2027