



## Safeguarding Children & Remote Weightlifting Coaching

**The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to present many challenges for us all. While some professional sport can now take place, many local sports activities have again had to be cancelled and sports organisations are looking at how they can stay in touch with their club members during this time.**



With every UK nation in lockdown or subject to high-level coronavirus restrictions, most children are learning remotely.

Just like with face-to-face coaching, safeguarding and child protection is vital when coaching remotely, especially as the usual child protection systems are under increased pressure during the pandemic. It's important that weightlifting clubs take steps to ensure that children are protected.



We've updated our information for clubs and coaches based on the latest NSPCC guidance to help weightlifting clubs carry out remote coaching safely. It includes:

- safeguarding considerations for remote coaching
- recognising and responding to child protection concerns
- providing extra support when needed

You should consider what safeguarding measures you need to put in place when coaching children remotely. These measures should be included in your safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures. Our [Child Protection](#) page has additional information and advice on this.

Below are some specific areas clubs need to take into account when setting up remote coaching for children.

### Recruiting suitable staff and volunteers

Anyone working or volunteering with children, whether face-to-face or online, needs to be recruited following safer recruitment principles to help ensure they are suitable to work with children. The British Weight Lifting website has detailed information on applying for [coach licenses](#) and also an in-depth guide on the [DBS](#) application process.

### Which platform will you use?

Always make sure the platform you are using is suitable for the children's age group, stage of development and ability. Set up club accounts for any online platforms you use (don't use personal accounts). Double check the privacy settings. For more information on different websites and platforms, see [Net Aware](#).

### Consent

You should make sure parents, carers and children understand the benefits and risks of online sessions and get written consent for children to be involved. Talk to your coaching team about how you plan to deliver remote sessions – are they comfortable with coaching online?

### Accessibility



When planning an online weightlifting session for a group of children, it is important ensure that everyone within the group has access where reasonably possible to avoid anyone feeling excluded. The sessions should ideally be scheduled at time where most of the group are available to participate.

It is also important to consider how communication between the coach and the children and their parents is managed and whether it is in line with your safeguarding procedures?

These sessions should take place in an open environment – for example, a back garden– and should be organised with the parent’s consent and supervision.

Be clear on what the sessions will be used for. This will ensure that participants have a complete understanding on what to expect and will help to reduce any anxieties on this new way of training.

You should also explore whether the session can be recorded for those that are unable to attend, providing this is done in accordance with consent and data protection guidance.

### Livestreaming and recording sessions

If you plan to record or livestream sessions, you need to assess any risks and take appropriate actions to minimise harm.

You need to think about how to carry out your sessions in a way that meets your needs and the needs of the children you’re working with.

Decide whether you’re going to do a livestream or record a session for children to watch later.

Recorded webinars might be more suitable if children and families need flexibility about when they learn at home. Livestreaming might help coaches engage with children to help them learn and monitor their progress.

If you’re livestreaming a session, think about whether you will ask children to turn their cameras on.

This is important because if there is an injury as a result of weight related activity during the session how will that be attended to or flagged otherwise?

Some children might not feel comfortable turning their webcams on. They may be shy, unsure of the technology or have had a bad experience using video calls in the past. Some children, parents and carers may be uncomfortable with



classmates being able to see into their home. And some might want to hide something going on at home, such as abuse and neglect.

Every child is different. Some children might be more confident about asking questions with their cameras off, and others might prefer it with the camera on.

If a child doesn't want to turn their camera on, try to find out why. Consider whether you need to check in with them and their family separately to make sure everything is okay.

Make sure your club has clear child protection procedures for coaches to follow if they are concerned about anything they have seen on a video call.

## Weightlifting Training Programmes & Schedules

Many weightlifting clubs are posting training schedules and programmes online that can be completed at home.

These should be carefully managed, with regular discussions between participants and coaches to ensure that skills and techniques are being performed correctly with the right equipment to avoid the risk of damage and injury.

## Maintaining professional boundaries

Coaching online is different to coaching face-to-face. But adults should always maintain professional relationships with children and young people.

Do all those using, or likely to use, online coaching know what the codes of conduct are for these environments? Here are the BWL codes of conduct for [parents](#), [coaches](#), and [participants](#)

If you're recording or live streaming sessions, make sure coaches are in a neutral area where nothing personal or inappropriate can be seen or heard in the background. You should also make sure that children are in a neutral area if they can be seen on camera.

## Adult to child ratios

It's best practice to have at least two adults present when working with children and young people. This applies both on- and offline.

The number of adults you need for online sessions will vary depending on the children's age and stage of development, and the activities being carried out.



For example, if you're using 'breakout rooms' on an online platform, you need to consider how will these be supervised.

### Contacting children at home

Sometimes coaches might need to contact children individually, for example to give feedback or discuss a safeguarding concern.

Any one-to-one sessions should be risk assessed. Make sure coaches know what safeguarding measures to take if they are having a one-to-one conversation with a child, and what to do if they have any concerns about a child's welfare.

You should also think about how coaches will check on children's wellbeing while they are spending more time at home. Consider how best to do this in a way that is suitable for each child and their family, and also helps you make sure the child is safe and supported.

Make sure coaches know how to respond if a child tells them that something isn't right at home.

Use parents' or carers' email addresses or phone numbers to communicate with children, unless this poses a safeguarding risk.

If coaches are accessing families' contact details at home, ensure they comply with the [Data Protection Act 2018](#).

### Child protection concerns

If children aren't seeing trusted adults at school every day, it's even more important that coaches are able to identify any child protection concerns and take appropriate action.

For example, concerns may arise when:

- a coach sees or hears something worrying during an online session.
- a child discloses abuse during a phone call or via email.

Remind all your coaches of your safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures. Make sure they know how to recognise and respond to the signs of abuse.

Remember that anyone can contact the NSPCC helpline for advice if they are worried about a child's wellbeing. Their trained professionals will talk through



your concerns with you and take action to protect the child if necessary. You can call them on 0808 800 5000 or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

### Online safety

Children and young people are likely to spend more time online during high-level restrictions. Talk to them regularly about the benefits and risks of the online world and give them space to ask questions and talk about anything that worries them.

It is also important to outline the process for addressing concerns raised, such as instances of misconduct online or cyber-bulling, and how those will be resolved during the current pandemic.

Additional social media guidance and good practice can be found on Page 5 of the [BWL Welfare Officer Pack](#).

### Children who need extra support

You should be aware of any children who need extra support while they are being coached at home. This might be because:

- they have additional needs or special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- their families need extra support
- they have mental health issues
- they are at risk of abuse and neglect.

Think about how you will keep in regular contact with these children, support their lifting and monitor their wellbeing.

### Further Information

If you have any safeguarding concerns or would like further advice, please contact our Safeguarding Lead - Sue Ward - via email: [sue.ward@britishweightlifting.org](mailto:sue.ward@britishweightlifting.org) or telephone: 01132 249 402.