



Wu Shi Taiji Quan & Qi Gong Association

Safeguarding at Wu Shi Taiji Quan & Qi Gong Association

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Wu Shi Taiji Quan & Qi Gong Association Safeguarding Policy

Wu Shi Taiji Quan & Qi Gong Association (WSTQA) acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of its members and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance, and complies with best practice and Islington Council Safeguarding requirements.

The policy recognises that the welfare and interests of its members are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation or gender preference, ability, race, belief, or socio-economic background, all members:

- have a positive and enjoyable experience of sport at WSTQA in a safe environment
- are protected from abuse whilst participating in Taiji Quan and Qi Gong or outside of the activity.

WSTQA acknowledges that some people, including those with disabilities, young people or those from ethnic minority communities, can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

WSTQA will:

- promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all its members, instructors, and staff
- ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to members
- ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern
- ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored
- prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals
- ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation.

The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved in WSTQA. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.

APPENDIX A - Definitions

What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the duty of care that the Association has to its members. All WSTQA members have a right to dignity and freedom from harm when engaged in any and all Association activities.

As a Martial Arts Association freedom from harm means that teachers of any activity that carry a risk of injury must receive consent from students prior to the activity. Activities carrying risk must be consciously entered into by participants after Association teachers and/or policy have clearly communicated those risks.

Safeguarding Members

The Care Act 2014 identifies three areas (relevant to WSTQA) that instructors are responsible for safeguarding of its members:

- i/ personal dignity (including treatment of the individual with respect)
- ii/ physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- iii/ protection from abuse and neglect

The relevant aspects of the Wu Shi Taiji Quan & Qi Gong Association Constitution [Rules of welfare and conduct - members] states that individuals shall:

- a) Treat others with the same respect and fairness that you would wish to receive.
- b) Ensure that your behaviour is appropriate and considerate at all times.
- c) Take great care to ensure you inform your instructor of any injuries, illness or disability that you have which may require special attention or adjusted methods of instruction.
- d) Uphold proper sporting values of fairness and safety in the practice, training and competition of Taiji Quan in all its aspects.
- e) Act with dignity at all times.
- f) Take great care of handling and using weapons to ensure the safety of those around you and yourself.
- g) Not be intimidatory, aggressive or lose control either verbally or physically.
- i) Be appreciative, patient and respectful of all other participation.
- j) Aim to be cooperative and helpful.
- k) Not respond if someone seeks private information unrelated to the training and practice.
- m) Ensure that your dress is appropriate and suitable for the practice and training of Taiji Quan.

- n) Speak out immediately if anything makes you uncomfortable or concerned about your or anyone else's wellbeing or safety.

The relevant aspects of the Wu Shi Taiji Quan & Qi Gong Association Constitution [Rules of welfare and conduct - instructors] states that individuals shall:

- a) Respect the rights and dignity and worth of every participant and treat everyone equally regardless of background or ability.
- b) Place the welfare of the members above the development of performance skills.
- c) Develop appropriate working relationships with the members based upon mutual trust and respect.
- d) Not exert undue influence to obtain personal benefit or reward.
- e) Encourage members to take full responsibility for their behaviour and performance.
- f) Avoid critical language or actions such as sarcasm, that may undermine a member's self-esteem.
- i) Never engage in sexually provocative banter or games, or sexually suggestive language.
- j) Always seek consent before touching any member during instruction or establish a teaching practice that allows members to express an 'opt out' to any contact during such instruction.
- k) Always ensure that parents or guardians are present when instructing young members.
- l) Adopt safe training regimes appropriate to age and ability.
- m) Always cooperate with other colleagues and professionals in the area of members health and wellbeing.
- n) Actively promote positive aspects of the sport with respect to personal health and fitness.
- o) Strictly maintain an appropriate boundary between friendship and intimacy with members.
- p) Challenge inappropriate behaviour or language amongst members.
- q) Report any accident, injury, distress or misunderstanding or possible misinterpretation in writing to the Committee and notify a parent or guardian if a young member is involved.

APPENDIX B –Safeguarding responsibilities

Safeguarding Minors

Teachers of students under 16 years of age are responsible for those young people *in loco parentis*. This means that from the time they enter the teacher's care to the time they are returned to their parent the teacher is responsible for them *as though they were their parent*. This means that the teacher must act in every reasonable way to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the young person.

Further relevant code of conduct of the Wu Shi Taiji Quan & Qi Gong Association Constitution [Rules of welfare and conduct - instructors] states that instructors:

- g) Do not spend time alone with a young member unless clearly in view of others.
- h) Do not offer lifts or home visits to young members unless in the presence of an acknowledged carer or parents.

In terms of how to act around a disclosure, spotting signs of neglect and abuse, and how to refer, further training is available and encouraged from your WSTQA Welfare Officer. In all cases of suspicion of neglect or abuse, do not engage the young person unless you have received training. Take clear, concise notes detailing only what you saw and/or heard, the name of the young person, your name and the location where it occurred. A basic outline is provided in [Appendix D](#).

Safeguarding and Instructors

WSTQA is responsible for the lineage transmission of the Wu family Taiji Quan. Passed down from its founders to Master Ma Yeuh Liang, Master Li Li Qun and then to Michael Acton, instructors are responsible for the preservation of this lineage. Transmission is the chosen method of passing on Taiji Quan teachings because the instructor must demonstrate and embody teachings rather than simply have intellectual knowledge of the exercises and forms. As such, the Association expects instructors to model safeguarding principles 'on' or 'off' duty.

WSTQA is committed to taking instructors further in their Taiji Quan learning and pedagogy. It is the responsibility of the Association to:

- Create a learning space where instructors can make mistakes and 'fail'.
- Generate robust feedback and teaching mechanisms.
- Deliver regular training around safeguarding.
- Create space for instructors to vent, explore difficulties and process their own experiences free from judgement.

As part of our duty of care and ensuring our approach to safeguarding reflects best practice, all our instructors will be expected to have completed an enhanced DBS check and safeguarding and first aid training.

APPENDIX C - Complaints

Any member of the Club can bring a complaint against an instructor or another member of the Club if the complainant thinks there are grounds for a grievance.

All complaints must be submitted in writing.

No third-party complaints. This means no Club member, or any other party can bring a complaint on behalf of someone else.

Route One: Mediation

The complainant informs the Committee he/she wishes to complain.

The complainant is assigned a mentor.

Role of the mentor:

- To meet with the complainant within a period of fourteen days
- To help the complainant to formulate his/her grievance in writing
- To explain how the complaints procedure works including time frames
- To explain and advocate for the benefits of mediation
- To refrain from forming an opinion about the content of the complaint
- To maintain confidentiality:
- No discussion of the complainant or the complaint with any member of the organisation
- No communications to the Committee on behalf of the complainant

The complainee is entitled to a mentor who observes the same rules. If the complainant agrees to mediation a meeting will be scheduled to take place within 28 days. This meeting will include:

1. The complainant
2. The complainee
3. Each person's mentor
4. A mediator

In this case the sole role of the mentor is to remind the person they are mentoring of points they have said they wish to raise rather than joining in the discussion.

The role of the mediator is to engage complainant and complainee in dialogue and seek a solution to the situation which is satisfactory to both parties.

The meeting will be recorded.

If successful, the results of the mediation are final. Within one week the mediator writes up a report to be signed by both parties and presented to the Committee. At this point the matter is concluded. The recording and written documents are destroyed.

Route Two: Formal Complaint

If, during the two-week mentoring period, the complainant refuses mediation, a formal written complaint must be lodged with the Committee within the following two-week period.

The complainee is notified and in the same two-week period, may lodge a written statement in their defence with the Committee. Two members of the Committee will be designated to read all documentation within 28 days of the documents being lodged. Once the Committee representatives have come to a decision, a letter from the Club's secretary will be sent within one week informing both parties and the Committee of the outcome. All written records will be filed in a locked filing cabinet for a period of up to seven years.

The complainant must be informed of the date on which the two Committee members will convene and can opt for mediation at any time before this meeting takes place by informing his/her mentor. In this case the process reverts to mediation as set out above.

Appeals

Both complainant and complainee have the right to appeal a decision by the Committee within a 28-day period. In this case the appellant must present additional detail in writing, further supporting their case. The other person involved may also extend the detail of their position in writing if they wish.

An Appeals Hearing will be convened within 28 days of receiving written documentation.

If the appeal is lodged by the complainant, the appeal hearing will include:

- The complainant
- The complainee
- Each person's mentor
- A mediator
- Two members of the Committee
- One Club member

The complainant presents his or her appeals material, followed by the other person. The role of each mentor is to support each person in presenting their material, not to speak to the Hearing. After the Hearing, Committee members and the Club member withdraw, on the same day, to consider the material and come to a conclusion including appropriate sanctions if the complaint is upheld.

They produce a written report which is sent by the Club secretary to both parties within one week of the Appeals Hearing and lodged in a locked filing cabinet for a period of up

to seven years. If the complainant is making the appeal, he/she can opt for mediation at any point up to as well as during the Appeal Hearing, in which case the Committee members and the Club member withdraw and a mediation is conducted. The results of the mediation are final.

The mediator writes a report and the same protocols are followed as above for mediation.

APPENDIX D

Disclosure

A disclosure is when any member chooses to offer information about a situation in which there is a vulnerability and power imbalance. It could be feeling that an instructor has humiliated them, it could be about inappropriate speech or touch at home or in classes. It could be about self-harming behaviour or abuse.

Any instructor working directly with young people or vulnerable groups should approach the Welfare Officer to arrange training.

Taking a disclosure is a specialised skill. Only individuals with training should take a disclosure. However, all instructors of WSTQA may at one time or another receive a disclosure as people in vulnerable positions may share with anyone they trust. At this point the following guidelines should be adhered to:

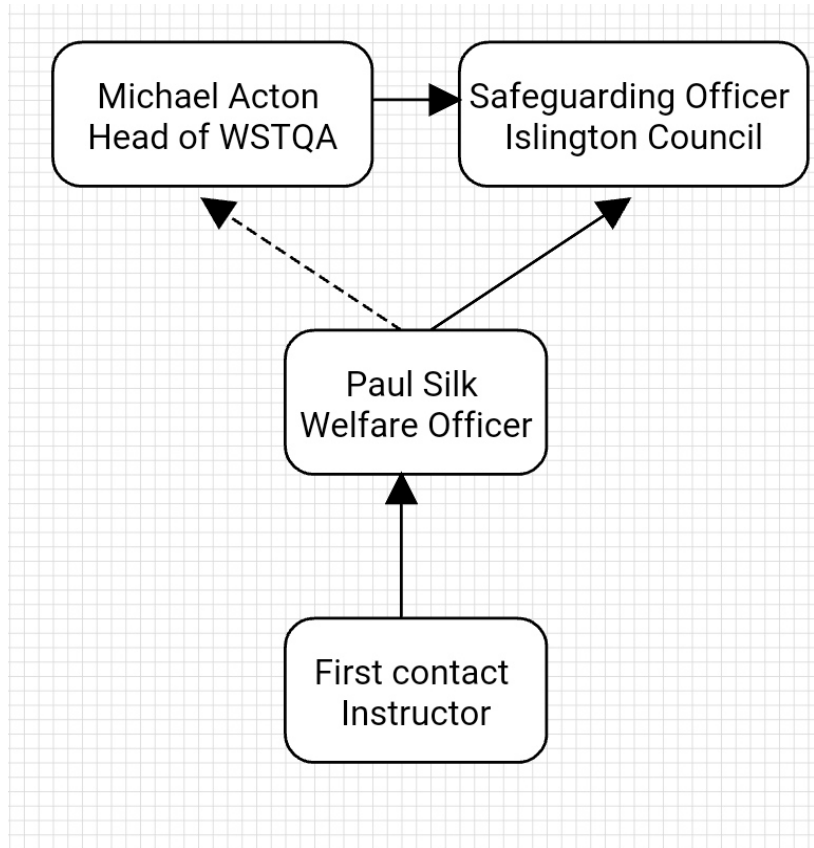
Confidentiality – it must be made clear that you cannot offer to keep the member's information confidential if it places them or anyone else at risk. You have a legal and moral obligation to pass this information on. If the member no longer wishes to continue with their disclosure you have acted professionally and not placed the young person in further risk. Continue to Reporting.

Neutrality – if the member wishes to continue with their disclosure it is important to keep our face and body language neutral as well as being careful with our language. Emotions such as anger and disgust are natural when hearing of abuse of a vulnerable person. However, if the information is upsetting and that is reflected in the listener's face then the person offering the disclosure may feel judged.

Active listening – when taking a disclosure, it is important not to use vocal encouragement or ask any leading questions. Without training the only response appropriate is to nod or grunt affirmation. Phrases such as "right" are to be avoided as they carry an implicit judgement even when not meant in that way. When the member has finished talking the only phrase appropriate is "is there anything else you would like to share at this point?"

Reporting – After the member has finished sharing it is essential to write down the circumstances of the sharing: time, date, location, staff and members present and as close to word for word reporting of the information as the instructor can remember.

Refer – After this reporting, the instructor must refer up the chain according to the diagram below (if the Welfare Officer is the subject of the disclosure then disclose directly to the Head of WSTQA):



APPENDIX E

COVID 19

Wu Shi Taiji Quan & Qi Gong Association will adhere to all government advice during the Covid pandemic. Suggested protocols for teaching as a Covid-secure location in line with current HSA advice as of June 2022 as detailed at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reducing-the-spread-of-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19-in-the-workplace> are:

- Risk assessment – the welfare officer will carry out a written risk assessment of the Studio.
- PPE – all instructors will be required to wear filtration masks, and all members will be obliged to wear some form of mouth and nose covering with a minimum being a homemade cloth cover when numbers exceed 6 in the Studio or 8 at Hornsey Vale. WSTQA will investigate the cost/benefit of providing disposable masks during sessions.
- Hand washing – all staff and members will be encouraged to wash hands on entry to the studio and before leaving.
- Cleaning – all floors and handles will be cleaned before and after each teaching session with hypochlorous acid.
- Session timetable – sessions will occur with adequate time between to ensure cleaning has taken place.
- Session size – number of members allowed in the Studio will ensure there is reasonable space (minimum of 1m) between each participating member.
- Self-reporting – any instructor who has been in contact with anyone with Covid-19 or anyone has any symptoms must alert the Welfare Officer and/or Awais Mian (Blackstock Road) or Lynn Haller (HVCC) and refrain from coming to the Studio.
- Vulnerable groups – anyone who is in contact with any vulnerable group should consider entry to the Studio as putting them at higher risk. Those within a vulnerable group will be allowed into the Studio in line with our member guidelines (see below).
- Push Hands – all members engaging in Push Hands or any physical contact are required to be masked and disinfect with hypochlorous acid between each partner change.
- Full guidelines for members and instructors can be found at <https://wustyle.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Covid-19-member-guidelines-v3.pdf>

Monitoring of COVID response

This policy will be reviewed a year after development and then every three years, or in the following circumstances:

- changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- as required by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, UK Sport and/or Home Country Sports Councils and Islington Council
- as a result of any other significant change or event.

Entire Safeguarding Policy last reviewed March 2023 – Paul Silk, Welfare Officer