



## Leeds Gymnastics Club Flexibility & Stretching Policy

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### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all flexibility and stretching practices delivered at Leeds Gymnastics Club are **safe, ethical, gymnast-centred and aligned with British Gymnastics (BG) safeguarding and best practice guidance.**

Flexibility training is a fundamental component of gymnastics, supporting skill development, performance quality and injury risk reduction. This policy provides a clear framework to support coaches, gymnasts and parents/carers, ensuring consistency of practice across all disciplines while recognising discipline-specific needs.

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### 2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- a. All disciplines delivered at Leeds Gymnastics Club, including (not limited to):
    - o Gymnastics for All (GfA)
    - o Men's Artistic Gymnastics (MAG)
    - o Women's Artistic Gymnastics (WAG)
  - b. All gymnasts, regardless of age or level
  - c. All coaches and volunteers involved in flexibility training
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### 3. Core Principles

All flexibility training at Leeds Gymnastics Club will be underpinned by the following principles:

- a. **Gymnast welfare is the priority** at all times
  - b. Flexibility training must be **clearly linked to skill development, performance needs and long-term physical development**
  - c. **Dignity, respect and choice** must be maintained throughout all stretching activities
  - d. **Gradual progression** is essential to reduce the risk of injury
  - e. All flexibility work must be **appropriately supervised** by qualified coaches
  - f. Gymnasts must be encouraged to develop **body awareness, control and personal responsibility** for their flexibility
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#### 4. Consent, Choice and Opt-Out

- a. Gymnasts will **always be given the opportunity to opt out** of any stretch, without pressure or consequence
- b. Parents/carers have the **right to opt out on behalf of their child**
- c. Gymnasts may **withdraw consent and stop a stretch at any point**
- d. Coaches must ensure gymnasts understand that the decision to opt out **will not cause de-selection or reduced opportunities**
- e. Coaches must ensure gymnasts understand that **opting out regularly may negatively affect progression over time**

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#### 5. Approved Stretching Methods

The following stretching methods may be used at Leeds Gymnastics Club, subject to age, level, discipline and coach judgement:

##### *5.1 Dynamic Stretching*

- a. Continuous, controlled movement through range of motion
- b. Typically embedded into warm-ups or directly linked to skill preparation
- c. Aimed at maintaining and improving functional flexibility
- d. Emphasis on control, alignment and precision
- e. Progressed gradually

##### *5.2 Static Stretching*

Static **Active** Stretching

- a. Holding a position using internal muscle control
- b. Typically used in warm-ups or conditioning
- c. Maintains flexibility and control
- d. Up to 60 seconds per stretch, with appropriate rest

Static **Passive** Stretching

- a. An external force is applied to intensify a stretch at end range
- b. Typically used towards the end of a session or during cool-down
- c. 15–60 seconds per stretch, repeated as appropriate
- d. Intensity must always be adjustable and controlled
- e. Careful consideration must be given to joint loading and individual capability

##### *5.3 Ballistic Stretching*

- a. Uses momentum to move beyond the gymnast's current end range
- b. Used selectively and only where clearly linked to skill development (e.g. leaps or split actions)
- c. Must be controlled, supervised and progressed gradually
- d. Only suitable for gymnasts who demonstrate sufficient maturity, body awareness and technical readiness

## 6. Application of Stretching

Stretching may be applied in the following ways:

- a. **Self-directed** stretching by the gymnast
- b. **Coach-facilitated** stretching
- c. **Equipment-facilitated** stretching (e.g. wall bars, blocks, weights)

The chosen method must always be appropriate to the gymnast's age, experience, discipline and physical development.

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## 7. Discipline-Specific Guidance

### *7.1 Gymnastics for All (GfA)*

- a. Dynamic and static stretching are appropriate across all levels
- b. Ballistic stretching is permitted for suitably mature gymnasts and must be fully supervised
- c. Peer-to-peer stretching is **not permitted**; alternative methods should be used to achieve the same outcomes
- d. Only body weight and gravity may be used to assist stretches
- e. Flexibility training must respect the inclusive and varied nature of GfA participation

### *7.2 Men's Artistic Gymnastics (MAG)*

- a. Dynamic, static and ballistic stretching may be used in line with skill development needs
- b. Stretching is typically completed within warm-ups and at the end of sessions
- c. Gymnasts are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for maintaining flexibility

### *7.3 Women's Artistic Gymnastics (WAG)*

- a. All stretching methods may be used where appropriate and skill-linked
  - b. Ballistic stretching must be directly related to skill progression and used selectively
  - c. Emphasis on alignment, control, artistry and technical execution
  - d. Flexibility supports performance across vault, bars, beam and floor
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## 8. Coaching Qualifications and Responsibilities

- a. All flexibility training must be delivered or supervised by **British Gymnastics qualified coaches** operating within their qualification level
  - b. Coaches must follow BG guidance regarding sets, repetitions and duration
  - c. Coaches are responsible for:
    - i. Ensuring safe technique and appropriate intensity
    - ii. Monitoring gymnast response and wellbeing
    - iii. Always maintaining professional boundaries
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## 9. Safeguarding and Professional Boundaries

- a. Stretching must take place in **appropriate, open and supervised environments**
  - b. **No gymnast should be stretched in isolation** without appropriate oversight
  - c. **Coaches must adhere to BG safeguarding policies and codes of conduct** at all times
  - d. Any concerns regarding flexibility practices **must be reported in line with club safeguarding procedures**
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## 10. Responsibility and Development

Leeds Gymnastics Club supports the evolving approach to flexibility training which encourages:

- a. Increased gymnast ownership of flexibility
- b. Improved body awareness and self-management
- c. Long-term physical development and injury prevention

This approach will always be guided, monitored and supported by the coaching team.

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## 11. Communication

This policy will be:

- a. Communicated to all coaching staff
  - b. Made available to parents/carers upon request
  - c. Supported through ongoing education and discussion within the club
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## 12. Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to:

- a. Ensure continued alignment with British Gymnastics policies and best practice
  - b. Reflect changes in discipline needs or guidance
  - c. Maintain the highest standards of safety and welfare
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