

The Fitness Group Policy Document

Document Control

Version	Date	Author	Approved By	Review Date	Summary of Changes
1.0	January 2024	Steven Dick	CEO	January 2025	Original combined policies document.
2.0	February 27, 2026	Ross McLachlan (Head of Education)	Director (Steven Dick)	February 27, 2027	Updated policies to align with CIMSPA and Active IQ guidance, added Prevent duty and strengthened safeguarding, appeals, equality and complaints procedures.

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Next Review Date: February 27, 2027 (or sooner if legislation, awarding body requirements or organisational changes occur)

1 Safeguarding and Prevent Policy

The Fitness Group is committed to protecting children, young people and adults at risk from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Everyone has the right to feel safe when taking part in sport or learning activities. This policy sets out our commitment to a zero-tolerance culture and outlines the procedures we will follow to prevent, identify and respond to safeguarding concerns. It aligns with relevant legislation including the Children Act 2004, the Education Act 2002, the Care Act 2014, the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance (2018) and the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty). The policy applies to all

staff, tutors, assessors, contractors, partners and learners.

1.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): The Head of Education (Ross McLachlan) is the DSL. The DSL has overall responsibility for implementing this policy, managing concerns and liaising with external agencies.

Safeguarding Leads and Board Welfare Lead: A Safeguarding Lead will be appointed to oversee safeguarding governance and ensure that concerns are escalated appropriately.

All Staff: Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff must:

Create a safe and inclusive environment and promote British values (democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance).

Be alert to signs of abuse, neglect, bullying, extremism or radicalisation.

Complete safeguarding and Prevent training appropriate to their role.

Record and report concerns promptly using the reporting procedure.

Co-operate with local safeguarding boards, the police, the Channel Programme and other agencies as required.

Maintain confidentiality and share information on a "need to know" basis.

1.3 Safe Recruitment and Vetting

We will follow safe recruitment procedures to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work with learners. This includes verifying identity and qualifications, obtaining satisfactory references, carrying out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks where appropriate and ensuring that individuals barred from working with children or adults are not engaged. Job descriptions will include safeguarding responsibilities and new staff will sign a code of conduct. Staff recruitment, induction and appraisal processes will emphasise safeguarding expectations.

1.4 Training and Culture

All staff, tutors and assessors will receive safeguarding and Prevent training at induction and refresh it at least annually. Training will cover recognising abuse, neglect and radicalisation, responding to disclosures, record-keeping and information sharing, and understanding how to promote British values. We will foster an open, listening culture where learners feel able to discuss concerns without fear of reprisal and where staff feel

confident to raise concerns and challenge poor practice.

1.5 Safe Environment and Codes of Conduct

We will ensure our premises, equipment and learning platforms are safe and suitable for learners, including those with disabilities. Codes of conduct for staff, members and partners will emphasise zero-tolerance of abuse in any form and outline acceptable behaviours. Risk assessments for events and activities will explicitly consider safeguarding and Prevent issues and identify control measures. Partners and sub-contractors will be required to demonstrate that they have adequate safeguarding arrangements in place, including compliance with the Prevent duty.

1.6 Prevent Duty and Counter-Terrorism

In accordance with section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, we have due regard to preventing people from being drawn into terrorism. We will:

Promote fundamental British values and create opportunities for learners to discuss sensitive issues safely.

Identify and act on indicators of extremism or radicalisation such as sudden changes in behaviour, social isolation or the sharing of extremist material

Provide Prevent awareness training and guidance for staff.

Conduct risk assessments to understand local risks, including online risks, and take proportionate steps to mitigate them.

Ensure IT systems have appropriate filters and monitoring to protect learners from extremist content; where necessary, seek support from the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) for specialist advice.

Work in partnership with local safeguarding boards, the police and the Channel Programme and report concerns promptly.

Ensure sub-contractors understand and implement the Prevent duty and do not inadvertently fund extremist organisations.

1.7 Risk Assessment, Record-Keeping and Information Sharing

We will conduct and document risk assessments that specifically include safeguarding and Prevent issues for relevant activities and events. Safeguarding concerns must be recorded accurately and stored securely. Records should be factual, dated and signed. In line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, information will be shared only with those who need to know and for lawful purposes. Information may be shared without consent if there is a risk of serious harm or where it is necessary to prevent a crime. Decisions to share or

not share information externally will be documented together with reason.

1.8 Multi-Agency Working and Whistleblowing

We recognise that safeguarding and Prevent duties are shared across organisations. We will cooperate with local authorities, police, social services and other agencies to share information, provide safe venues and coordinate responses. We will maintain a case management log and risk register and will review trends to inform preventive measures. We provide a whistleblowing route for staff who feel unable to raise concerns through their line manager. Staff who raise concerns in good faith will be protected from victimisation or reprisal.

1.9 Definitions of Abuse and Signs of Risk

Abuse and neglect can take many forms including physical, emotional, sexual, financial, discriminatory, organisational and neglect. Staff should be alert to indicators such as unexplained injuries, changes in behaviour, withdrawal, fear of certain people, sudden drops in performance, inappropriate online activity or disclosure of extremist views. Detailed definitions, categories and indicators of abuse are provided in national guidance and must be consulted during training.

1.10 Reporting Procedure

If a safeguarding or Prevent concern arises:

If someone is in immediate danger or a serious crime is in progress, dial 999.

Report the concern immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). If the DSL is unavailable, contact the Director.

Record the concern in writing, including dates, times, what was observed or disclosed, and any relevant context.

Do not investigate or confront the alleged perpetrator; this is the role of statutory agencies.

The DSL will assess the concern, consult external agencies as necessary and provide support to those involved.

If the concern relates to extremism or radicalisation, the DSL will consider referral to the local Channel panel.

All staff should act in line with the whistleblowing policy if they feel their concerns are not being taken seriously.

1.11 External Contacts and Support

For concerns that do not involve The Fitness Group or to seek independent advice, contact the following organisations:

Childline: 0800 1111 or visit <https://www.childline.org.uk>.

NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Local authority safeguarding children or adult services (contact details available on council websites).

For radicalisation concerns, contact the local police Prevent team or call the anti-terrorism hotline 0800 789 321.

1.12 Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if changes in legislation, government guidance or organisational circumstances require it. The Head of Education will report safeguarding and Prevent data trends to the Senior Leadership Team. Updates will be communicated to staff and learners.

1.13 Policy Implementation

This policy applies to all staff, tutors, assessors, contractors, partners and learners. Compliance is mandatory and failure to adhere to the policy may result in disciplinary action.

2 Appeals Procedure

2.1 Purpose and Scope

The appeals procedure provides a formal route for learners to challenge assessment decisions or other judgements that affect their achievement. It ensures decisions are reviewed transparently and in a timely manner. Appeals may relate to assessment outcomes, the application of reasonable adjustments or special considerations, or the outcome of internal verification. This procedure aligns with the requirements of Active IQ and other awarding bodies and complements their external appeals policies.

2.2 Responsibilities

Staff involved in assessment and quality assurance and all learners must be aware of this procedure. The centre must keep a record of all appeals and their outcomes and monitor trends to inform improvements. Learners should be informed of their right to appeal and the time limits for doing so. Learners must exhaust the centre's internal appeals process before appealing to the awarding body.

2.3 Grounds for Appeal

Learners may appeal if they believe that assessment procedures were not applied consistently or correctly, that there were administrative errors, that assessment criteria were misapplied, or that mitigating circumstances were not considered. Appeals will not normally be accepted if they are based solely on disagreement with a professional judgement or dissatisfaction with an assessment grade.

2.4 Time Limits and Evidence

Appeals must be lodged in writing within 20 working days of the learner receiving the assessment decision or result. Evidence should accompany the appeal, such as assessment feedback, relevant communications and, where applicable, video or audio recordings of practical assessments. If a learner wishes to appeal to the awarding body after exhausting internal processes, they must provide evidence that the internal process has been completed. Learners should be aware that an appeal may result in their mark or grade being confirmed, raised or lowered.

2.5 Stages of Appeal

The appeals process consists of the following stages:

Stage 0 – Informal discussion: The learner discusses the decision with the assessor or tutor within five working days of receiving the result to seek clarification. Many issues can be resolved at this stage.

Stage 1 – Written appeal to learner support: If unresolved, the learner submits a written appeal to the learner support team (info@thefitnessgrp.co.uk) within 20 working days of the decision. The team acknowledges receipt within five working days and responds within 10 working days.

Stage 2 – Review by the Head of Education: If the learner is dissatisfied with Stage 1, the appeal is referred to the Head of Education. Acknowledgement is sent within five working days and a decision is normally provided within 10 working days. If the Head of Education was involved in the original decision or is unavailable, an alternative senior manager will review the appeal.

Stage 3 – Internal appeals panel: Where the learner remains dissatisfied, an appeals panel will convene within 20 working days. The panel will include a senior centre manager and at least one independent member not involved in the original decision. The learner will be invited to present evidence and may be accompanied by a representative.

Stage 4 – External appeal to the awarding body: After the internal process is exhausted, the learner may submit an appeal to Active IQ or the relevant awarding organisation within 20 working days of Stage 3. Stage 2 of the Active IQ appeal process involves an independent review panel and a nominal fee of £100, refundable if the appeal is upheld. The awarding

body will acknowledge the appeal within two working days and aim to respond within 20 working days; complex cases may take longer.

2.6 Independence and Fees

Appeals will be reviewed by individuals who were not involved in the original decision and who have no personal interest in the outcome. The internal appeals panel will always include at least one independent member. If a learner progresses to Stage 4, Active IQ may charge a nominal fee for the independent review panel; this fee will be refunded if the appeal is upheld.

2.7 Outcome and Record-Keeping

All appeal outcomes will be communicated in writing with clear reasons. Records of appeals and outcomes will be maintained for quality assurance and may be shared with awarding bodies and regulators. Appeals data will be reviewed annually to identify trends and improvements.

3 Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

3.1 Policy Statement

The Fitness Group values diversity and strives to create a working and learning environment that is welcoming, supportive and free from discrimination. We recognise that each individual is unique and will be treated with dignity and respect. Discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation are not tolerated and will be addressed promptly. This policy complies with the Equality Act 2010 and Northern Ireland Equality Law 1995 and supports the protected characteristics defined in these laws.

3.2 Protected Characteristics

We will ensure that no individual is disadvantaged because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (the “protected characteristics”).

3.3 Our Commitments

Provide equality and diversity training and guidance to staff during induction and on an ongoing basis.

Ensure that policies and practices, including recruitment, assessment and learner support, are fair and do not result in direct or indirect discrimination.

Create a positive, inclusive culture where diversity is valued and differences are celebrated.

Take positive action to address under-representation and encourage participation from diverse groups.

Provide reasonable adjustments and special considerations to learners in line with awarding body guidance and our reasonable adjustments policy.

Review employment and service practices regularly and monitor equality data to identify any barriers to participation or progression.

Offer training and development opportunities fairly and encourage staff to develop skills and progress.

Operate a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment and deal with complaints promptly and sensitively.

3.4 Responsibilities

Equality is everyone's responsibility. Staff, tutors, assessors and learners should refrain from discriminatory behaviour, treat others with respect, and challenge discriminatory language and actions. Senior leaders will ensure that equality objectives are incorporated into strategic and operational plans and that performance is monitored. Learners should report incidents of discrimination, harassment or bullying through the reporting procedure described below.

3.5 Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection processes will be fair, transparent and based on merit. Job adverts will be widely accessible and include statements encouraging applications from under-represented groups. Selection criteria will relate to the requirements of the role, and interviews will be conducted by at least two trained interviewers to reduce bias. All prospective staff who will work with learners will undergo DBS checks where appropriate and sign a code of conduct.

3.6 Training and Development

We will provide regular equality and diversity training to staff and volunteers. Training will cover legal obligations, recognising bias, inclusive teaching practices and reasonable adjustments. Managers will support staff to undertake continuing professional development and will review equality objectives at performance reviews.

3.7 Monitoring and Positive Action

We will collect and monitor diversity data, special considerations requests and feedback from learners, staff and other stakeholders. This information will be used to identify trends and actions to improve access and reduce barriers. Where analysis indicates

under-representation, we will consider appropriate positive actions consistent with the law.

3.8 Reporting and Investigation

Anyone who experiences or witnesses discrimination, harassment or bullying should:

Informally raise the issue with the person responsible where appropriate, explaining why the behaviour is unacceptable.

Seek support from a tutor, assessor or manager if informal resolution is inappropriate or unsuccessful.

Report the incident to the designated internal verifier or to the Safeguarding Lead; if that person is implicated, contact a senior manager or the Director.

Cooperate with any investigation, including providing evidence and attending meetings as needed.

If dissatisfied with the outcome, submit a complaint or appeal following the complaints or appeals procedure.

3.9 Implementation and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation or guidance changes. Equality objectives will be set and published, and progress will be monitored through regular reports. This policy applies to all staff, tutors, assessors, contractors, partners and learners. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.

4 Complaints Policy

4.1 Introduction and Scope

4.1.1 Concerns vs Complaints

A concern is an expression of worry or a request for information about a situation that can often be resolved quickly through dialogue. A complaint is a specific, formal expression of dissatisfaction that requires an investigation and written outcome. We encourage learners and the public to raise concerns promptly so they can be addressed informally; however, where the matter is more serious or cannot be resolved informally, the complaint procedure should be followed.

The Fitness Group is committed to providing a high-quality learning experience. When concerns arise about our programmes, staff or services, learners and members of the public have the right to complain. This policy explains how to make a complaint and how it will be handled. It does not cover appeals against assessment decisions (see Appeals Procedure) or

allegations of malpractice (see Malpractice and Maladministration Policy).

4.2 Responsibilities

Staff and learners must be familiar with this policy and the complaints procedure. The centre will maintain a central complaints log, review complaint trends quarterly and use outcomes to inform quality improvements. Serious complaints will be reported to the Senior Leadership Team and, where appropriate, to the awarding body or regulators.

4.3 Time Limits for Complaints

Complaints should normally be made as soon as possible and no later than three months after the issue arises. Complaints outside this timeframe will be considered at the discretion of the centre, taking account of the reasons for delay and whether a fair investigation is still possible.

4.4 Complaints Procedure

Our complaints procedure consists of the following stages:

Stage 1 – Informal resolution: Raise the issue with the person concerned or contact learner support (info@thefitnessgrp.co.uk). We will acknowledge informal complaints within two working days and aim to resolve them within 10 working days.

Stage 2 – Formal complaint to Head of Education: If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, submit a formal complaint in writing to the Head of Education within three months of the incident. We will acknowledge receipt within five working days and aim to investigate and respond within 20 working days. If the investigation is complex or further information is required, we will inform you of new deadlines.

Stage 3 – Review by Director: If you remain unsatisfied, submit a written request for review to the Director within 20 working days of the Stage 2 response. An independent review of the complaint will be undertaken by a senior manager not involved in the original decision, and a response will be provided within 20 working days.

Stage 4 – External referral: Once all stages of The Fitness Group's procedure have been exhausted, you may refer the complaint to Active IQ (csteam@activeiq.co.uk, tel: +44 (0)1480 467 950) or the appropriate regulator (e.g. Ofqual, CCEA Regulation or Qualifications Wales).

4.5 Independence and Fairness

At each formal stage, the person investigating the complaint will have had no prior involvement in the matter and will ensure that all parties have the opportunity to provide evidence. We will set realistic and flexible timescales and keep complainants informed if more time is needed. Complainants will not be prevented from escalating to the next stage

once they have completed the previous stage.

4.6 Recording, Accessibility and Confidentiality

We will keep records of complaints, meetings and outcomes in a secure complaints log. Complainants may make their complaint in writing, by email or orally, and we will provide assistance where required (e.g. for individuals with disabilities or language barriers). Anonymous complaints will be considered where sufficient information is provided. Personal information will be kept confidential in accordance with data-protection law and will only be shared with those who need to know.

4.7 Outcomes and Actions

When a complaint is upheld, we will take appropriate corrective actions. These may include identifying and supporting affected learners, correcting or mitigating errors, reviewing and improving procedures, providing staff training, and compensating learners where contractual terms have been breached. Where complaints involve serious concerns or potential criminal activity, we will report them to the relevant authorities.

4.8 Whistleblowing and Support

If you fear retribution or prefer to raise concerns anonymously, you may submit a whistleblowing report. We will take whistleblowing concerns seriously and protect individuals who raise them in good faith.

4.9 Policy Implementation and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, regulator guidance or organisational changes require it. It applies to all learners, staff and members of the public interacting with The Fitness Group, and failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.