

# SAFE PRACTICE POLICY

## AMATEUR MARTIAL ASSOCIATION LTD

Martial Arts are activities where safe practice is essential to help prevent injury for both Adults and children. Children\* are particularly vulnerable as they are still developing mentally and physically, so training methods need to be modified as described below.



### SECTION 1:

### SAFE TRAINING ENVIRONMENT

Instructors must ensure the Health and Safety of students by providing, as far as is reasonable, a safe practising environment. The following key areas should be checked.

#### **FLOOR SURFACE**

An ideal surface for all aspects of Martial arts would be sprung wooden or padded (Jigsaw mats) vinyl type floor. If premises have a more solid floor the instructor should explore ways of providing safe covering, for example Gee or jigsaw mats. All floor surfaces must be clean and devoid of all sharp objects, for example broken glass and splinters, and be free from hazards, such as loose boards or major holes cracks or missing jigsaw pieces (holes). The surface should have sufficient grip to maintain stability yet allow twisting, and this grip should not be allowed to deteriorate through condensation, which often results from hard training on cold floors. Adequate ventilation via windows, doors and fans will often alleviate this problem. Any blood spills should be wiped up using an appropriate cleanser - this is particularly important because of the danger of contamination through cuts and cracks in the feet.

#### **LIGHTING**

Lighting must be adequate for safe vision. Artificial lighting should be well positioned to avoid glare and direct shine. Curtains or blinds should be used to prevent glare from the sun.

#### **HEATING**

An instructor must use common sense regarding a suitable temperature in which to conduct a lesson. As a guide, this is comfortable room temperature (around 18c). It is important to have and to use an adequate heating system. If it particularly cold, the instructor may encourage students to wear an extra layer of clothing for the warm-up.

#### **VENTILATION**

Again the Instructor must use common sense. Fresh air is necessary for strenuous exercise, and there should be provision for opening windows, doors or operation of extractor fans.

#### **SURROUNDING AREA**

Pillars, low beams and radiators should be well padded to avoid impact injuries. Wall fixings such as fire extinguishers, pictures, clocks and notice boards should be properly securely mounted. Unsecured objects, such as stacked chairs or items on shelves must be checked for stability - a class landing in unison can have the effect of a minor earthquake! Instructors must be aware of possible dangers caused by glass, and keep a safe border away from any non-toughened or unprotected windows and mirrors. It is also important to have a safety area if there are spectators, or if some class members are sitting.

#### **SPATIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

There must be adequate amount of space for the numbers attending and the nature of the lesson. If the room is too full, collision injuries could occur, and it will also be more difficult for the Instructor to monitor the class and for students to clearly see the Instructor. Good discipline is important to maintain safe spacing of students.

#### **CHANGING FACILITIES**

Instructors who own or privately rent facilities are responsible for providing clean, tidy and well stocked changing rooms and toilets, washing facilities and drinking water. If a club trains in a sports centre and facilities are not adequate, the Instructor should lobby facility management for improvements.

#### **EMERGENCY EXITS**

Fire escapes should be clearly marked and known and kept free from obstruction. A central assembly point should be known and detailed.

## **EQUIPMENT**

Any equipment used should be in safe working order, and only used by appropriate groups. Members should be encouraged to use recommended protective equipment. For example, gum shields and groin guards. Students who need glasses should wear 'Sports-safe' type, and not be allowed to spar without these or suitable contact lenses. No jewellery should be worn, and nails should be short.

## **SECTION 2: A GUIDE TO WARM-UP, STRETCHING, MOBILITY AND CONDITIONING EXERCISES FOR MARTIAL ARTISTS**

### **Introduction**

This document has been produced as part of the AMA Instructor Guidelines, as a guide to exercises for warming up, stretching, mobility, conditioning and warming down for martial arts training. All activities should first include a thorough warm up which is appropriate for the activity taking place. This helps reduce the risk of injury, specific attention should be paid to those muscle groups that will be used during later activity.

The need for such a document has been apparent for a long time. Martial Arts is physically very demanding, and it is necessary to prepare the body to prevent injury and to maximise performance. Structured specific exercises routines have existed for many years, but some of the exercises have been labelled as potentially dangerous, and concern has been expressed about their long-term effect, especially since there are now so many children involved. However, the source of such information was often obscure or ill-informed. Those involved in the preparation of this document were unanimous in stating that the exercises shown are performed sensibly - in fact these exercises allow the much safer performance of the martial arts techniques.

The document was developed through consultation with a number of AMA qualified experts, some of whom practice or have practised Martial Arts. They used as a basis some traditional Martial Arts exercise routines, but viewed in terms of current medical and bio-mechanical knowledge. It is interesting to note that all of the experts involved agreed that the traditional routines were very good, a view supported by their experience in the treatment of sports injuries, which showed that most Martial Artists have a very good record. The only concerns were:

1] that some of the exercises were unnecessary and only served to make the performer 'feel good', which is no problem if you're prepared to spend the time],

and

2] that using a partner to assist in stretching could be dangerous and was best avoided.

It is accepted that the warm-up and preparation time can vary greatly from person to person, and from situation to situation. Experienced practitioners may develop their own routine with which they are comfortable and which is perfectly safe. They may pay more attention to a particular part of the warm-up or body area, and with experience and common sense this will be safe and acceptable. Many experienced Martial Artist combine the warm-up and stretch by doing the actual techniques in a light and careful way - for example by performing one or more Kata or forms/patterns with gentle and stretched out techniques. However, a structured exercise routine prior to the training prepares the students mentally for the class, and this is a valuable function which is sometimes underestimated.

It is important to warm-down at the end of strenuous exercise. It is much better for the cardiovascular system to ease off slowly and it helps to dissipate the lactic acid from joints which reduces stiffness and soreness. This in practice means a few minutes of light activity, using a selection of exercises from the warm-up and stretching sections.

The document is divided into three main sections. Each section is prepared with notes.

Appendix: A- a warm-up exercise.

Appendix: B- deals with stretching exercises

Appendix: C- Current Safety in Training Pamphlet

It will still be difficult to remove prejudices that have existed for quite some time. What should be considered very carefully by those who hold these prejudices, is the calibre of those who have been consulted in the process of generating this document.. Please note the willingness of the Medical Advisors to endorse these exercises knowing they will be taught to their own children.

## **Appendix: A**

### **Warm-up**

The term 'warm-up' is often used to describe all the activity which takes place prior to the actual Martial Arts training. Here, the term describes specifically the process of increasing the blood circulation prior to stretching. Sustained light exercise increases the blood flow to the working muscles and surrounding areas - an increased blood supply brings more heat which makes the muscles and soft tissues more elastic, and therefore less prone to injury. It also brings more oxygen and nutrients and switches the metabolism to a more efficient system of generating the amount of energy which is required for a period of intense and dynamic activity.

In anatomical terms, a warm-up is the use of major muscles to pump a faster supply of blood to all the skeletal muscles and surrounding soft tissues. At rest, the heart will supply all muscles and organs with sufficient blood to allow them to function. Too violent a change in the workload can catch the system unprepared, and there is then a much greater potential for injury and much greater potential for injury and much less a potential for efficiency.

In practice a warm-up should consist of gentle and sustained working of muscles. A gentle jog around the dojo for 3 to 4 minutes is fine, as is gently bouncing on the spot. Both use the calf muscles as the main 'pump', but the shoulders and arms and many other muscles will also come into play. Such exercises are referred to as aerobic, because they demand oxygen for the blood. A variety of aerobic exercises are given in the following illustrations - again it must be emphasised that at this stage movements should be gentle and controlled, not violent.

An alternative to aerobic exercises might be the simple act of moving the body into different positions, especially if this involves moving to and from the floor. This will eventually warm the body, but will take longer and may not be sufficient if the dojo is not warm enough.

If it is particularly cold, it might be necessary to 'top up' the warm-up, perhaps mid-way through and at the end of the stretching.

## **Appendix B**

### **Stretching and Mobility Exercises**

Stretched muscles and mobile joints not only prevent injury, but allow greater reach and speed. Safe exercises have been traditionally used by Martial artists, and most will be readily recognised. Many of them imitate actual techniques. As was stated in the introduction, these exercises serve the purpose for which they were designed and evolved admirably, as long as they are done without violent bouncing, with control and without forcing joints out of their natural line and range of movement. Light bouncing may be used, but this will warm-up rather than stretch the muscle area.

The best results are obtained when a muscle is stretched to a degree where it feels uncomfortable but not painful. This stretch should be held for about 10 seconds, and then the muscle should be relaxed. This process should be repeated 3-4 times.

If the stretch does become too painful, the muscle will tighten to resist over-stretching and damage, and the process becomes self-defeating.

An alternative process is to use a technique known as PNF. In this process, the same uncomfortable stretch position should be reached, but then the stretched muscle should be firmly tensed for about 8 seconds. Immediately the muscle is relaxed, it will be possible to move deeper into the stretch.

It is best to stretch at least a little every day, and comprehensively 2-3 times per week.

An Instructor should watch to see that students do not modify an exercise in such a way that it becomes less effective or unsafe. Particular attention should be paid to the effect of any modification to the joints.

## **Appendix: C - Safety In Training**

This section is where your sport specific work out will be used i.e. **safety in training** governing your work out for your style. This should incorporate your entire safe working routines and training methods for the personal betterment of your class or individual.

Each style/discipline will have its own Sports specific routine governing their structure, but all must take the view that they are safe and user friendly.

These practises again will vary depending on current rules and regulations that are on going, which are passed by the Governing bodies, Association or with strong medical issues which will undoubtedly arise from time to time changing the ever evolving Martial Arts Instructors training methods for safe practises.

Pamphlets are available from some sporting authorities. Martial Arts groups such as Jujitsu, Akido and Judo would **involve throwing, grappling and strangling** risks include but are not limited to: falling on unsuitable surfaces; landing on the head; damage to the joints from locks and strangulation. Safe practice should include, but is not limited to:

- (a) Checking the matted area for suitability, particularly where the mats have been joined.
- (b) Checking that there are no hard surfaces or sharp/hard objects around the matted area.
- (c) Having an experience instructor who will ensure that children are not taught to use locks, throws or strangles which will cause injury.

### SECTION 3 : TEACHING CHILDREN

The law defines a child as a person under the age of 16, or under 18 if in full-time education.

Instructors need to understand the added responsibilities of teaching children and also basic principles of growth and development through childhood to adolescence. Exercises should be appropriate to age and build. Instructors should not simply treat children as small adults, with small adult bodies.

There is a minimum age of 4yrs old for a child beginning martial arts under our insurance policy, the build and maturity of individuals varies so much. However the nature of the class can be tailored to consider these factors.

In general, the younger the child, the shorter the attention span. One hour is generally considered sufficient training time for the average 12 year old or below.

Pre-adolescent children have a metabolism that is not naturally suited to generating anaerobic power, and therefore they exercise better aerobically, that is, at a steadily maintained rate. However, they can soon become conditioned to tolerate exercise in the short explosive bursts that more suit martial arts training.

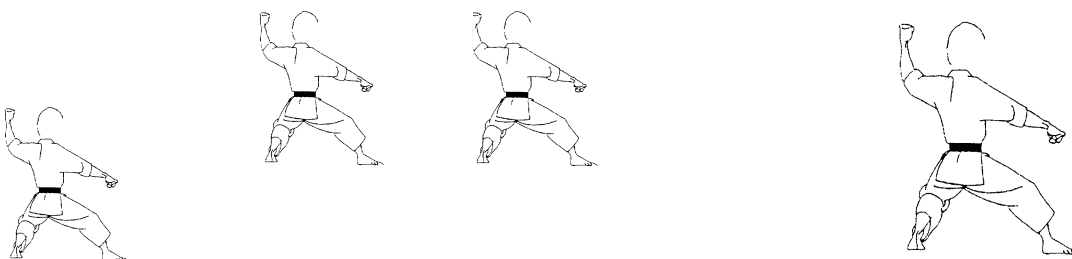
Children should not do assisted stretching - they generally don't need to, and there is a real risk of damage with an inconsiderate or over-enthusiastic partner.

Children should be carefully matched for size and weight for sparring practice.

Great care must be taken, especially where children train in the proximity of adults, to avoid collision injury.

children should not do certain conditioning exercises, especially those which are heavy load bearing, fro example weight training or knuckle push-ups.

We would recommend that children should not do any **heavy** impact work on pads but should concentrate on the development of speed, mobility, skill, touch and general fitness.



A duty of care towards children, equivalent to that which a reasonable prudent parent should expect from a teacher in a school environment, is expected from a sports coach, and therefore of a Martial Arts Instructor. Children need protecting from any form of physical or mental abuse from adults or other children.

Parents or guardians should be advised when to deliver and collect children, For example, if the lesson begins at 7.30pm, it could be known that the instructor would arrive and register students from 7.15pm onwards. No child should be left at the Dojo before the specified time, unless the Instructor or a responsible person is present. A child taking part in a class should not be allowed to leave the dojo unsupervised. Parents who are prepared to send their children to train, unaccompanied, must accept responsibility for any consequences. A child of 4yrs old must not be left by the parents or guardians. They must stay and be in clear sight of the activity being presented.

### **CONDUCT A SAFE TRAINING SESSION**

The transmission of knowledge and skill will greatly depend on the learning environment and the communication abilities of the Instructor. The learning environment, as well as being safe, should be free from distractions. Some distractions are unforeseen, but instilling good behaviour in the students will minimise distractions from within the class.

In order to communicate skills to the students, the Instructor must be able to provide a clear demonstration of what is required and ensure that all students can see and hear clearly. This requires sensible positioning of students to the Instructor, and the giving of precise and clearly articulated instructions.

Technical demonstrations may be given in the following ways:

- personally by the Instructor
- by an assistant Instructor
- by using a student

The use of a student to demonstrate a technique can be advantageous where the student has either:

- a) - a particularly good level of skill, or
- b) - a particular problem with a technique in common with other class members, which may be sympathetically corrected, thus providing inspiration and encouragement.

It is particularly important when teaching those with special needs, that the Instructor takes responsibility for good communication - for example students with hearing problems need to rely on seeing the Instructor.

Instructors who are liked and respected by the students will communicate better.

The ability to communicate and mediate with parents of young students and with members of the public and with any relevant authority and the media is also important.

A rigidly planned class may be more suitable when preparing a particular group for a grading or competition, or for fine-tuning elite performers, using kicks, punches and take downs etc for points scoring.

In some disciplines of Martial arts such as Aikido, Jujitsu and Judo safer practice may be that the matted area be of a thicker depth for greater safety.

### **SECTION: 4 INSTRUCTORS SHOULD HAVE A KNOWLEDGE OF SPECIALISED MARTIAL ARTS EQUIPMENT AND DEMONSTRATE ITS USE.**

Although generally there is little need for equipment in martial arts training, there are items of equipment to develop certain aspects within other martial arts, for example Makiwara, punch bags and focus pads, and it is helpful if the Instructor understand their correct use for safe and effective development. Also in competition, specialised equipment for the hand, foot and body are required, a full range of such equipment can be purchased from reputable martial arts stores in the UK. Advice on such equipment can also be sort from the AMA coaching department [office@amauk.co.uk](mailto:office@amauk.co.uk)

### **SECTION 5: ETHICS AND CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

The practice of martial arts, places a great emphasis on the development of the character of its students, and a code of behaviour is used, together with the physical training, so that technical skill, physical fitness and good behaviour become synonymous with its way. The code is based on a mutual respect of Teachers and Students, and acknowledges that respect must be shown for Seniority. Practitioners are expected to show the same respect for the society in which they live, and for those who live in and administer that society. It is a source of great satisfaction to the AMA that British Martial Arts has earned a reputation for producing World - class Teachers and Competitors. All AMA members have a duty to behave in a way which will maintain and enhance this reputation on behalf of their Club and the Association.

AMA instructors have a particular responsibility, as they will greatly influence the behaviour of their students both inside and outside the dojo/training hall. Bad behaviour on the part of the instructor will reflect badly on their Associations Chief Instructor. The ethos of martial arts, is the development of the character through the development of the body and an instructor has a great responsibility to uphold this tradition. Instructors must ensure that the following code of behaviour is adhered to by all students in their charge

**DOJO/TRAINING HALL/ETIQUETTE :** Always bow or show respect on entering or leaving the dojo/training hall, or your styles equivalent.  
- Junior grades must bow first to their seniors. Instructors should be referred to as Sensei in Karate or by their appropriate title of different styles, and not by name.

- Nails must be kept clean and short enough to avoid scratching and cutting
- Jewellery or watches should not be worn. If it is not possible to remove rings or earrings, they should be safely covered. It may be requested that shoes are removed on entering the dojo or training area.
- Late arrivals should enter the dojo quietly, change, and warm up. When they wish to join in the class, they must kneel to the front and side of the class, where they can be clearly seen by the Instructor, and watch carefully for the Instructors signal to join in. When this signal is given, they should remain kneeling, bow deeply, again depending on style and practice, then walk quickly and quietly around the back of the class until it is convenient and go to a position appropriate to their grade. This is general in Karate but varies in other martial arts.

Smoking is not allowed in the dojo or training hall, or in any adjacent areas.

Any behaviour that is likely to offend the etiquette of Martial Arts in their given style is not allowed.

## SECTION 6 : TEACHING THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



The term ‘special needs’ encompasses many conditions. A class may contain students with physical handicaps, minor or severe, or students who experience learning difficulties. A good instructor will be aware of these special needs and adjust their actions and instructions accordingly.

When teaching those with special needs, it must be accepted that the learning process may be slower, and smaller classes may be required with possibly one to one tuition.

Disabled persons should be treated the same as able-bodied persons, except where their condition demands special consideration.

The instructor needs to identify that someone has special needs. Some problems are visible and obvious, and others may be identified from the membership application, but the Instructor should be aware of the following conditions that make learning more difficult.

Poor hearing

Poor co-ordination and balance

Poor spatial concept or perception

Slow reaction times

Poor physical condition through being overweight, undernourished, or generally unfit.

It is important that visiting Instructors are made aware of any such conditions especially those that are not visible and obvious.

There may be a need to enhance particular communication skills, for example, when teaching those with hearing difficulties it will be particularly important to face the class, and rely more on gestures.

Some students may need special medication, for which they should be allowed easy access.

An instructor will need to consider that there is sufficient access for athletes with special needs.

Wheelchair athletes will need more space to manoeuvre.

## Section 7 – Best Practice Document:

**Includes: Awareness & guidance in Competition, Weapons, Travel, Transportation, Medical, Training and Exercising:**

## AMA Best Practice Guidelines

All those involved in all disciplines of Martial Arts in the AMA should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults and protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate within Martial Arts Disciplines.

### 1.1 - Best practice means:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication).
- Treating all children, young people and disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Placing the welfare and safety of the child or young person first above the development of performance or competition.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with players (e.g. it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust, which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Making Martial Arts fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play to all.
- Where any form of manual or physical support is required, providing it openly and in accordance with the AMA Club Guidelines (AMA Coaching Guidelines)
- Keeping up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance within Martial Arts.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible (e.g. for the responsibility of their children in the changing rooms). If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensuring parents/teachers/coaches/officials work in pairs.
- Ensuring when mixed teams are taken away, they are always accompanied by male and female member of staff (NB however, same gender abuse can also occur).
- Ensuring that at tournaments or residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people in their cars.

**1.2** Within the AMA Coaching Portfolios, particular reference is made to children and young people practising together and this guidance is now included here. All Martial Arts Instructors need to understand the added responsibilities of teaching children and also basic principles of growth and development through childhood to adolescence. Exercises should be appropriate to age and build. Instructors should not simply treat children as small adults, with small adult bodies.

- In general there is no minimum age for a child beginning Martial Arts as the build and maturity of individuals varies so much. However the nature of the class must be tailored to consider these factors. The AMA membership which includes Insurance does have a minimum age at **4yrs old** which our broker offers cover for – the condition is that the parent or guardian must be in view of the session, at 5yrs they can leave their child in the care of the instructor.
- In general, the younger the child, the shorter the attention span. One hour is generally considered sufficient training time for the average 12 year old or below. Pre-adolescent children have a metabolism that is not naturally suited to generating anaerobic power, and therefore they exercise better aerobically, that is, at a steadily maintained rate. However, they can soon become conditioned to tolerate exercise in the short explosive bursts that more suit Martial Arts training.
- Children should not do assisted stretching - they generally don't need to, and there is a real risk of damage with an inconsiderate or over-enthusiastic partner.
- Children should be carefully matched for size and weight for sparring practice. World body rules and regulations would have an age, gender, weight grade and height as a criteria for categories to compete in. We would recommend our AMA clubs to adopt their World body rules in their given style and discipline.
- Great care must be taken, especially where children train in the proximity of adults, to avoid collision injury.
- Children should not do certain conditioning exercises; especially those, which are heavy, load bearing, for example weight training or knuckle push-ups.
- Children should not do any heavy or impact work but should concentrate on the development of speed, mobility, skill and general fitness.
- No head contact is permitted for children participating in fighting/kumite or partner work due to significant, evidenced based health concerns surrounding the impacts of concussion.
- **In competition:** face masks or heads guards are recommended to prevent head injury.
- Mats are compulsory for all competitive events. Where takedowns and holds are part of criteria such as Jujitsu or Judo etc a correct density would be recommended which forms part of the World body that each discipline belongs to.
- Following advice from our AMA Medical officer, those who suffer an head injury and indeed have symptoms of concussion etc. Must



follow the 28 days notice of no training and must contact the medical authority. Before training can resume or indeed to compete in competitions, a doctors note would be required.

**Weapons:** Some AMA clubs use weapons for training - examples are:

### **Kendo, Kobudo, Laido and Freestyle Forms Karate**

Safe & best practice should include but is not limited to:

- (a) No live blades (sharp or otherwise) in the training hall when children are present ( as detailed in the AMA exception certificate of membership exclusions)
- (b) Safe protocols for the use of training weapons by children ( own clubs guidelines)
- (c) Good supervision at all times by Instructors qualified in this discipline.

Safe & Best practice means having a suitably qualified and experienced instructor who will ensure that children are not exposed to the above risks and who can make a training session enjoyable whilst maintaining the discipline essential to learning a Martial Arts including weapons.

### **Practices to be avoided**

- 1.3 The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (e.g. the child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the child's parents. Otherwise, avoid:
  - Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
  - Taking or dropping off a child to an event.
- 1.4 The AMA follows the specific guidance of the NSPCC Safe Sports Events document and Sports check document regarding our events and also events our members will be travelling to. AMA guidance covers – transport arrangements, travel checklists, supervision and staffing, emergency procedures, insurance and any special health requirements. Within the AMA this provision is for our young talented AMA athletes to follow, guidelines recommended by Sport England, UK Sport and BOA.
  - 1.4.1 Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
  - 1.4.2 Avoid taking children to your home where they will be alone with you.
- 1.5 Practices never to be sanctioned.
  - 1.5.1 The following should never be sanctioned. **You should never:**
  - 1.5.2 Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
  - 1.5.3 Share a room with a child

- 1.5.4 Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- 1.5.5 Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- 1.5.6 Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- 1.5.7 Reduce a child to tears with intent, as a form of control
- 1.5.8 Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- 1.5.9 Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves
- 1.5.10 Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised

NB. It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, e.g. if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the student. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting/assisting to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.