



Prowess Approach to Safeguarding

Let's start with a simple statement: **everyone has a right to be safe**. Safe from physical harm, safe from psychological harm, safe from abuse. Everyone should therefore **feel safe** as well. For children and those in care, this extends to those who care for them, where they feel that their charges are also safe too. And finally, it extends to those running the sessions, who should feel they are safe to conduct the session free from abuse or false accusations. We're all in this together.

There then comes a potential problem with the nature of climbing as an activity. With climbing naturally being viewed as a 'risky activity', we actively put ourselves under stress which has the potential to become psychologically damaging; something that is very difficult to safeguard and predict. Meanwhile, there are more obvious potential issues involving physical safety; for example, close contact such as when putting on a harness and tying in or spotting when bouldering.

This document lays out how Prowess will act to ensure all members of the session are kept safe and feel safe during a session. It applies to: all staff working for Prowess (both paid and voluntary, working and observing); anyone participating in a Prowess session or course; anyone associated with a participant on a Prowess session.

For clarity, a 'Prowess session' includes the following: private coaching sessions; freelance coaching and instructional work on behalf of other organisations; coach education courses both self-regulated and on behalf of larger organisations. Participants of these sessions range from: children under 18; adults; vulnerable adults.

The Prowess Approach to Safeguarding applies to all persons on all sessions.

Alignment with Existing Policies

Prowess is a provider of courses on behalf of organisations such as the BMC and Mountain Training and those delivering said courses are typically members of the BMC and Mountain Training Association (or similar organisation).

These organisations have existing safeguarding policies and Prowess will comply with the policies of both the BMC (available to view [here](#)¹) and Mountain Training (available [here](#)²).

[Please note: should a concern be raised for an incident occurring during either a BMC/Mountain Training course, the relevant organisation will need to be informed]

We will now go through some further details specific to Prowess Climbing Coaching.

Choice and Consent

This, at Prowess, is the most crucial part of safeguarding. **The climber maintains complete control of whether to continue with the activity at all times**. Quite simply, no matter who they are, if the climber does not wish to participate in **ANY** activity, they are free to stop at any time (providing it is safe to do so).

¹ <https://media-cdn.incrowdsports.com/a07b164d-7cd3-439e-8b8c-ca569d772251.pdf>

² <https://www.mountain-training.org/cymru/safeguarding>



Likewise, **the climber must consent to any activity before it commences**. If they are uncomfortable, they are free to say stop at any point and the activity – including things like putting on a harness – will cease (as soon as it is safe to do so).

This all comes back to choice, and perceived choice. No climber should feel under undue pressure to complete an activity or exercise if they do not feel happy to do so. Please note that this does not necessarily mean the activity will cease, more that more explanation will be offered first, or the activity may be adjusted to make it more acceptable. However if we are not able to reconcile, then yes, the activity will cease and we will move on to something different.

[Please note: physical safety MUST and WILL take precedent over all else. If someone is judged to be in imminent physical danger, they will be removed from the environment over and above safeguarding considerations, until such time they are seemed safe from said danger]

Physical Contact

At times, during climbing sessions, there may be a need for physical contact. Examples include, but are not limited to: spotting when bouldering outside; removal from dangerous situations such as on an indoor bouldering wall; or offering comfort in times of emotional distress (for example, a hand on the shoulder or a hug).

Participation in a Prowess session will inherently mean that there may be physical contact. However, as per the policy on Choice and Consent, any physical contact will be kept to a minimum and will only happen where to not do so, would lead to larger, more serious consequences. Wherever possible, transparency and consent should be obtained beforehand (except safety critical situations) and any contact should take place in full view either in a public setting or where covered by CCTV.

Records and Anonymity

It is a requirement of Prowess' public liability insurance policy that a consent form is completed by anyone on a session/course. These forms must be kept for a period of time. Therefore it is important that any personal details are safeguarded. Any documentation will be kept securely and will only be shared with relevant parties (said insurance companies for example) and only with your permission.

Meanwhile, clients on sessions often receive a Session Report and other courses – such as Action Plans – also contain personalised documents, potentially including sensitive information that you may not wish to share with anyone else. As with consent forms (the Form of Understanding) these are kept secure. They will be shared with you via email or your preferred channel.

While EVERY effort is made to ensure that the only person that gets your documents is you (and Prowess, obviously), any correspondence also contains an element of safeguarding by protecting your anonymity. In all Session Reports, Action Plans and any other personalised information, names are removed wherever possible and initials are used instead.

[Please note: information sharing may be necessary with the appropriate authorities. Safeguarding takes precedent over GDPR legislation]

'Near Miss' Records

For those incidents that could potentially constitute a concern – either immediately by those involved or by an observer, or in the future – but do not require further reporting, a record will be kept by Prowess on secure file. Anonymity will be maintained throughout. These records



are not intended to be shared with anyone unless a historical concern is raised at some unknown point in the future.

Communications

Communication can be a complex situation, especially with under 18s, creating separate safeguarding issues in of itself. As such, Prowess has a separate Communications Policy, available to view at <https://prowesscoaching.co.uk/operating-procedures/>

Safety Consideration

It is widely accepted that 'climbing is an activity with a risk or injury and death'. Therefore, **safety considerations must and will take precedent over everything else**. By this, I mean were someone to be at risk of immediate physical harm such as walking underneath a climber in the bouldering wall or taking an uncontrolled fall from the wall. In circumstances such as these, there is not time to explain or discuss and immediate action must be taken to avoid the risk of physical injury.

In these, thankfully rare, circumstances, safeguarding the person physically **MUST** come first. However, should something of this nature occur, an explanation will be provided afterwards and education on how to prevent recurrence of the incident will be discussed.

Code of Conduct

What represents a suitable code of conduct can be difficult to define. Some behaviour that is totally acceptable on one session may be completely unacceptable in another. Meanwhile, some sessions are run as 1:1 while others can be in groups as large as 12 or more. And of course, remembering that while the sessions may be private, the environment in which they're conducted is public.

Prowess takes the view that acceptable behaviour is primarily decided by the recipient i.e. whether something is classed as 'banter' is decided not by the person making the comment but the person receiving it. Therefore, if someone takes offence to any behaviour, said behaviour is deemed unacceptable. Mistakes happen and people occasionally misspeak or misjudge a situation but any occurrence of offensive behaviour should be met with an apology and, more importantly, a change to that behaviour.

By taking part in ANY Prowess activity, everyone is agreeing to conduct themselves in a fair and decent manner; clients, parents and staff alike. More information can be seen in the **Prowess Approach to inclusivity** document, available to view at <https://prowesscoaching.co.uk/operating-procedures/>

Should anyone fail to heed this conduct, Prowess reserves the right to ask them to leave the session or, should it be necessary, cease the session. Any financial implications incurred as a result of this may be invoiced to the culprit in question.

Procedures

Pete Edwards (PE) is responsible for ensuring Prowess' safeguarding policies are implemented and adhered to. They will record concerns, incidents and near-misses and ensure all concerns are thoroughly investigated without prejudice and shared with the appropriate authorities. It is not necessarily the role of PE to investigate a concern, only to gather information and share as appropriate. PE can be contacted at prowessclimbingcoaching@gmail.com



Should You Have a Concern

Prowess is the smallest of small organisations; there is one member of staff. As such, raising concerns could be difficult.

Nevertheless, if you have any concerns, your first port of call should be to contact prowessclimbingcoaching@gmail.com with an explanation of your issue. Any issue will be considered fully.

If you do not feel that this is appropriate, Prowess works in partnership with the BMC and you can direct your concerns there. Your contact is the BMC Safeguarding Manager, Helen Murphy whose email is helen.murphy@thebmc.co.uk and whose phone number is 0161 438 3305. More information can be found on the BMC website [here](#).

If you have a concern relating to an incident occurring on a Mountain Training course (training, assessment or workshop) please direct your concern to safeguarding@mountain-training.org or call 01690 720 272.