

English Karate Council – Seminar on Governance and Safeguarding

Loughborough 29th September 2012

A seminar organised by the English Karate Council was held on 29th September. The purpose of the seminar was to generate interest and debate on the important topics of the governance of English Karate and Safeguarding. Open to all karate associations, the seminar was attended by EKC members: AMA, FEKO, Karate England and guests from the Central England Shotokan Association.

John Bell, Chairman of the EKC opened the seminar and welcomed all present. John presented a short history of formation of the EKC in the context of karate's relevance to the health of the nation and Sport England's Youth Sport Strategy.

He made the following points:

- Karate is an activity for life, giving benefits to health, self-confidence and has a strong code of behaviour.
- Inactivity is a huge problem and karate meets all the chief medical officer's recommendations on physical activity.
- Sport England want to see more people taking on and keeping a sporting habit for life, especially in young people.
- National Governing Bodies of sport will continue to play a pivotal role, and lottery investment will continue in Governing Bodies.
- Karate is the most popular martial art with an estimated 150,000 participants but has no recognised Governing Body and no investment by Sport England since 2005.
- Attempts have been made to unify Karate but the World Karate Federation rules have prevented progress.
- The Sport and Recreation Alliance(S&RA) held unification meetings in October and December 2011 with S+RA Karate members: AMA, EKF, FEKO and Karate England.
- An umbrella body for Karate governance was formed as a result in March 2012 (the English Karate Council-EKC). The EKF felt that their WKF mandate meant that they could not participate.
- The English Karate Council, open to all major groups, aims to be a leader, not a dictator for English karate, promoting best practice and to be recognised by Sport England.
- Good progress has been made with protocols for instruction and grading standards and access to the support of expert advisors.

John's presentation was followed by that of Jules Goulding, who addressed the question:

Why does Karate need governing?

From the public point of view:

- Timeliness – we can build on the Olympics.
- Growing interest in sport for life, and for health.
- Track cycling has shown how a minority sport has reformed itself to lead the world following clear governance and strategic direction followed by investment.

Also the public:

- Deserve to have confidence in the integrity of Karate.
- Need to know karate meets all the modern requirements for a sport; clear policies and procedures for safety, insurance, safeguarding of children.
- Need to be confident in the quality of instruction and be protected from 'rogue traders'.

It is essential to have a Sport England recognised National Body for Karate to achieve all this and to:

- Raise the profile of Karate
- Provide guidance on technical standards.
- Obtain funding and achieve recognition of the benefits of karate.
- Enable inclusive participation on merit in competition at all levels.

Jules then illustrated how the EKC is progressing on the path to excellence in governance.

Voluntary Code of Good Governance:

The Sport and Recreation Alliance have published a voluntary Code of Good Governance, endorsed by the Minister for Sport, and all National Governing Bodies have been invited to 'sign up' to the code. The EKC members have done this:

Good Governance in action – some examples:

Principle 1 – Integrity:

Acting as guardians of the sport.

Action to date: Guidance for students and parents issued by the EKC:

Explains what Karate involves (the 3 K's).

The grading system, grading intervals.

Average training costs.

Principle 4 – Objectivity:

Balanced, inclusive and skilled Board.

Action to date: EKC has accessed skilled advisors in sports administration, finance, law, medicine and physiology etc. who are also Karateka. EKC Board members have many years' experience in Karate governance.

Principle 5 – Standards, systems and controls.

Action to date: Protocols for:

- * Guidance of the public.
- * Instruction.
- * Gratings and technical standards
- * Child Protection

What are the next steps?

- Continue with the action plan.
- Achieve Sport England recognition.
- Deliver on both Sport England objectives and produce a Karate Whole Sport Plan.
- Obtain Sport England funding.

The Rewards?

- A light touch, effective governing body for Karate.
- Karate is seen as a modern inclusive sport which is fit for the future.
- Recognition of the Governing Body bringing influence and respect, and in the future, funding.

The seminar participants, after a short question and answer session, considered some discussion questions in three groups and then fed back the views from their tables.

Seminar discussion feedback included:

Question: 'Why do you support the principle of a Sport England recognised Governing Body for English Karate?'

Feedback – the only way forward; future direction; improved communication; professionalism; there is grass roots support; clear governance and recognised minimum standards.

Question: 'What are the top 5 actions you would expect in the first year from the EKC, once it is recognised by Sport England?'

Feedback – Vision, a strong accountable Board, stability, openness and transparency, support to Associations, good communication, funding a mechanism for young people's representation.

Safeguarding was the next and final topic for the day.

Dr Hamish Telfer gave a presentation based on his experience over 30 years in sports coaching and child protection. He made the following points:

Key principles are to:

- Create a training environment which enables children to feel safe, valued and able to develop as confident people through Karate.
- Enable instructors to teach karate in a supportive environment with a clear view of what the principles of good practice are.
- Provide all those involved with children and young people within the sport with clear direction as to how they deal with concerns within a clear and unambiguous set of policies and procedures.

Karate instructors need to demonstrate:

- Karate knowledge and experience, reflected in instruction.
- Instructor training and qualification.
- References and history.

Safeguarding requires:

- An all-embracing policy.
- All that needs to be known in one place.
- Clear rules to refer any concerns and appropriate sanctions if those rules are broken.
- CRB checks for relevant people.

Practice and Code of Conduct:

Hamish highlighted the special relationship between instructor and student and the need for a code of conduct which reflected the legal structure and best practice when working with minors.

Karate Associations need to: have adopted a known and understood code of conduct of the Governing Body; to have a disciplining procedure and a safeguarding/welfare policy that dovetails with these procedures; to have a designated individual to whom concerns can be referred.

This lead person has to decide whether the issue lies outside normal protocols and procedures for karate instruction.

Reporting should be to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the Police or Social Services.

Hamish referred to the education and training in child welfare to help Karate Associations and their instructors make sense of the rules, also to raise awareness and reassure people.

In the question and answer session which followed, Hamish referred to the recent changes brought about by the Protection of Freedoms Act, which creates new categories of individuals who need to have a CRB check.

All those present expressed their appreciation to Hamish of his lively and informative presentation and offer to work with EKC in this important area

Presenter biographies:

John Bell is a Director of the Sport and Recreation Alliance (formerly CCPR). He is Chair of Merseyside Sports Partnership and was Director of Leisure and Community Services for Knowsley Council. He is Chair of the EKC and Karate England and a practicing 3rd Dan Karateka.

Jules Goulding is a practicing judge sitting in Liverpool. She is a Legal Commissioner (Criminal Cases Review Commission) and member of the Board of the Forensic Science Advisory Council. Jules is also a former Director of Social Services and NHS Chief Executive. She is a practicing 1st Kyu Karateka

Hamish Telfer is an academic who works and publishes in the area of practice ethics in sport. A co-author of UK Sport's 'Code of Practice for Sports Coaches', he is also a former GB team coach in Track and Field athletics. He is a keen cyclist and about to endeavour to ride the full length of Norway.

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English Karate Council – October 2012