



Health & Safety Update – March 2020

Over the past few months, the Health and Safety Team have had the most queries about trampolining, in particular qualifications and the assembly of trampolines.

The new Chapter 1 in 'Safe Practice in Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity 2020 publication' will have more information on qualifications and teaching competency and the new Chapter 2 has been updated.

We have extracted a few sections here for members, in advance.

Tramplining - Qualifications and Refresher Training:

Professional Learning (PL) is important in all aspects of physical education, school sport and physical activity (PESSPA), and as professionals, staff need to ensure that their knowledge is up to date and they feel confident and competent to undertake the activity in question. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has outlined four means of demonstrating competence: **hold a relevant qualification; hold an equivalent qualification; have received appropriate in-house training; be competent through experience.**

Teaching high risk activities, such as trampolining, requires an activity appropriate national governing body of sport Level 2 qualification even for those with QTS. The specialist nature of the activity requires that staff feel confident and up to date in their knowledge. afPE advocates that staff attend British Gymnastics (BG) organised or approved courses and that these qualifications are 'refreshed' every three to five years.

Staff should check with their employer to clarify whether specific trampolining policy and procedures exist, and if so what the requirements are. Even those employers who follow afPE health and safety guidance in the main, may still have a separate policy for trampolining, so it is necessary to check this out, and to ensure that the requirements are adhered to.

At times, individuals question the need for refresher training, on the basis that they have taught trampolining continually since completing their qualification and do not feel that they have 'lost touch' with the knowledge and practice required. If this is the case, the risk assessment would need to present this justification. In the event of an incident the school would need to be able to verify that lack of staff training was not a contributory factor.

Effective practice would see PE departments keeping a record of who was appropriately trained in the department, when they gained their qualification, and when they would be due to refresh. In this way schools can be sure that they are meeting best practice requirements, and confident that they are keeping up to date with developments.

Positioning and assembling trampolines:

It is important that trampolines are assembled, positioned and folded under the supervision of a person who has received training from a qualified tutor.

In schools, this could mean that older students, sufficiently mature and strong enough, may fold and unfold trampolines, with training, under the **close supervision of qualified staff** that are ready to give immediate hands-on assistance if needed.

There have been several accidents where younger students, lacking the necessary strength and physique, have been left to fold or unfold trampolines without direct staff involvement. It is important that, in circumstances with such students, qualified staff are directly physically involved as part of the process.

Clear communication, awareness and a responsible attitude are essential, particularly in the phase where the end of the trampoline has been opened, to ensure it is held with sufficient force to counter the tension of the springs. Injury most commonly occurs when elbows and forearms become trapped in the trampoline, and for this reason, they should be kept clear of the gap between the folding ends and frame while lowering under control.

When **unfolding** a trampoline, staff should ensure that:

- Training shoes are worn, and feet kept well away from the wheels.
- The trampoline is angled and lowered carefully, and that the lower leg section is held firmly so it does not crash to the floor.
- The frame sections are opened with a firm, continuous movement, and with steady force applied and maintained to prevent them from springing back
- Fingers, forearms and wrists are kept clear of all hinges.
- The space under and around trampolines should be clear and free from obstructions.

Trampolines need to be **positioned** well away from any overhead obstruction such as hanging beams or lights. Governing body of sport recommendations state that an overhead clearance of at least **five metres** from the floor to the lowest hanging object is required for non-somersault trampolining, i.e. low-level shaped jumps and body landings, and **eight metres** where somersaults or other rotational skills are being taught.

Hydraulically assisted trampoline wheeling devices are available to assist with setting up and putting away trampolines. Where these and fixed-height roller stands are used, they should be safely stored away from the working area when not in use. Care must be taken when operating the hydraulic system depending on the mechanism it uses. Contact the manufacturer for any additional guidance or instruction.

Before allowing a trampoline or trampette to be used, staff should check that:

- All leg braces have been properly fitted, and hinge units securely housed.
- All adjustments are tight.
- The hooks of the springs/rubber cables are properly attached, with the hooks pointing down.
- The springs/cables are all in good condition.
- The safety pads are fitted and entirely cover the springs/cables.
- Allen screws are tight (if present).
- The bed is clean and free from damage of any kind.
- All coverall pads are in good condition and in place to cover the frame surround.

For trampolines, also check that:

- The wheeling devices are operating smoothly, and the pivotal housing on the frame holds the hub of the wheeling mechanism at right angles without any movement of the hub and the housing.
- The floor surround has 25mm non-slip **matting two metres wide along the sides of the trampoline.**
- Each end of the trampoline has safety mats, supported where possible at trampoline level, of a sufficient size and weight absorbency to meet the requirements of body impact in the event of unwanted travel forwards or backwards; to achieve this, “spotting deck platforms”

or “**end deck platforms**” may be purchased, either with or separately from the mattress.

- Safety matting is placed on the floor behind the end mats.
- Where trampolines are positioned in a line, weight-absorbing mattresses are placed on the frame and springs between each trampoline; specific “middle mats” can be purchased for this purpose or standard large safety mats used.

One of the questions asked of the Health and Safety Team was from a PE subject leader who said he had left a student teacher in the sports hall managing the group whilst somewhere else in the department, close by, but not supervising. The student teacher, who is a level 2 Trampoline coach injured himself whilst putting a trampoline away.

Our answer was as follows:

The school is potentially liable here, as the supervising QTS member of staff should not have left the student teacher unsupervised. It doesn't matter that the student teacher has a trampoline coaching qualification, the injury occurred in a curriculum session during a higher risk activity. The injured person is training to be a teacher and should have been supervised.

The school has the duty of care to staff to ensure they have adequate training in relation to their own equipment. The fact he is a coach would not in itself guarantee knowledge of all equipment and the fact he was left alone is the issue.

afPE Health & Safety Team