



TRAUMA-INFORMED COACHING POLICY

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Policy owner: Designated Safeguarding Lead

Approved by: Andrew Banks, CEO and Chief Instructor

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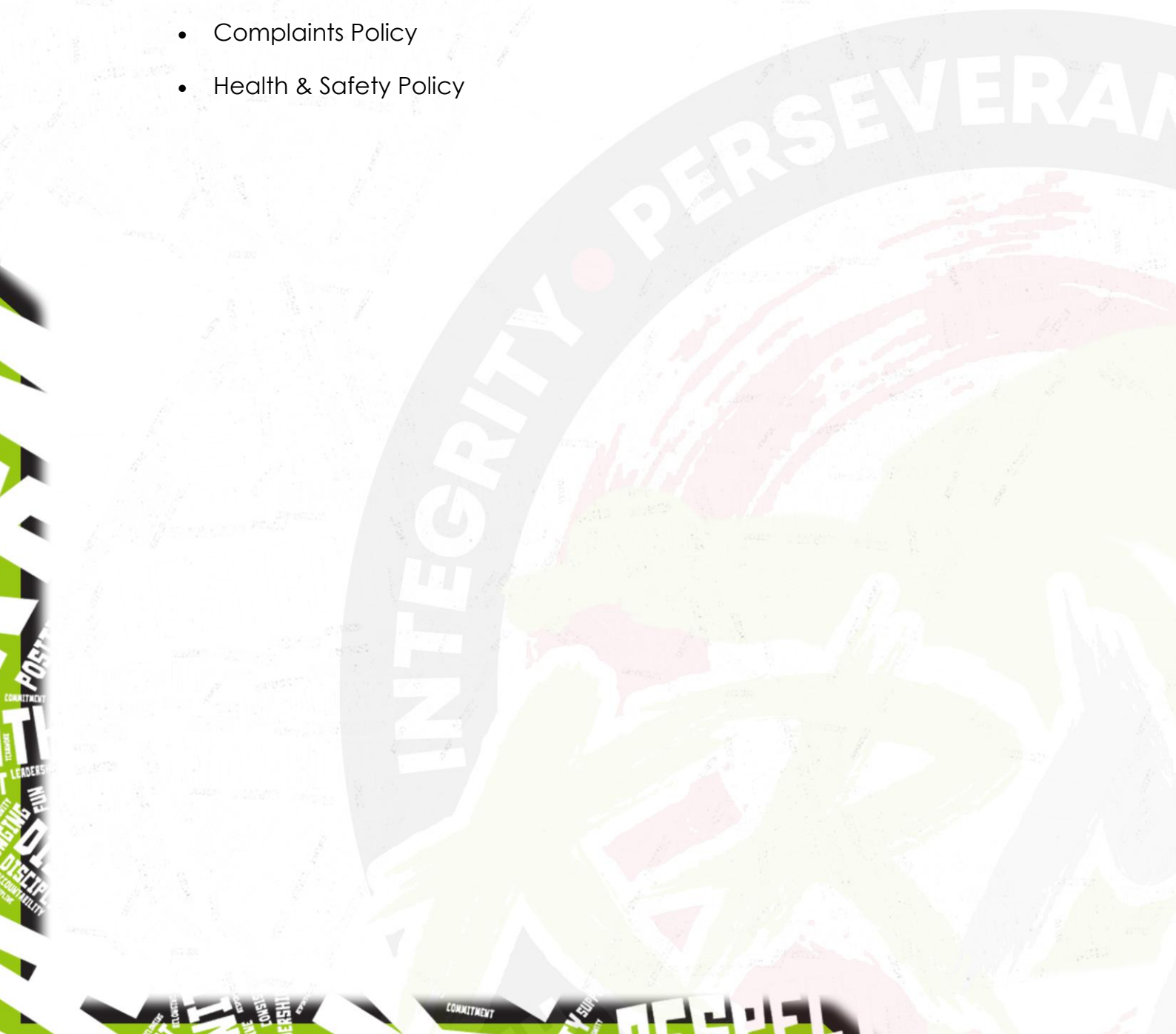
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Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy
- Safe Practice & Training Standards Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- SEN & Inclusion Procedures
- Complaints Policy
- Health & Safety Policy



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1. Purpose

Koku-Ryu Martial Arts (KRMA) recognises that many children, young people and adults may have experienced trauma, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), significant life events or ongoing adversity that can affect how they engage with learning, relationships and physical activity.

Martial arts can provide structure, routine, positive relationships, confidence and resilience. When delivered appropriately, martial arts may contribute positively to a person's wellbeing and personal development.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all KRMA instructors deliver coaching in a manner that:

- promotes emotional and physical safety;
- recognises the possible impact of trauma;
- avoids unnecessary re-traumatisation;
- supports inclusion;
- encourages resilience and confidence;
- complements safeguarding responsibilities; and
- maintains appropriate professional boundaries.

Trauma-informed coaching is **not therapy**.

KRMA instructors are martial arts professionals, not counsellors or psychologists.

Their role is to provide safe, supportive coaching and to respond appropriately where concerns arise.

Where safeguarding concerns are identified, KRMA's Safeguarding Policies must always be followed.

2. Scope

This policy applies to every activity organised or delivered by KRMA.

This includes:

- Dragon Tots
- Junior Dragons
- Senior Dragons
- Traditional Karate
- Freestyle Martial Arts
- Kickboxing
- KRMA Kombat MMA
- Hyper Training
- Weapons Classes
- Jiu-Jitsu
- Private Lessons
- Competitions
- Demonstrations
- Gradings
- Instructor Training
- Community Programmes
- School Programmes
- Holiday Activities
- Online Learning

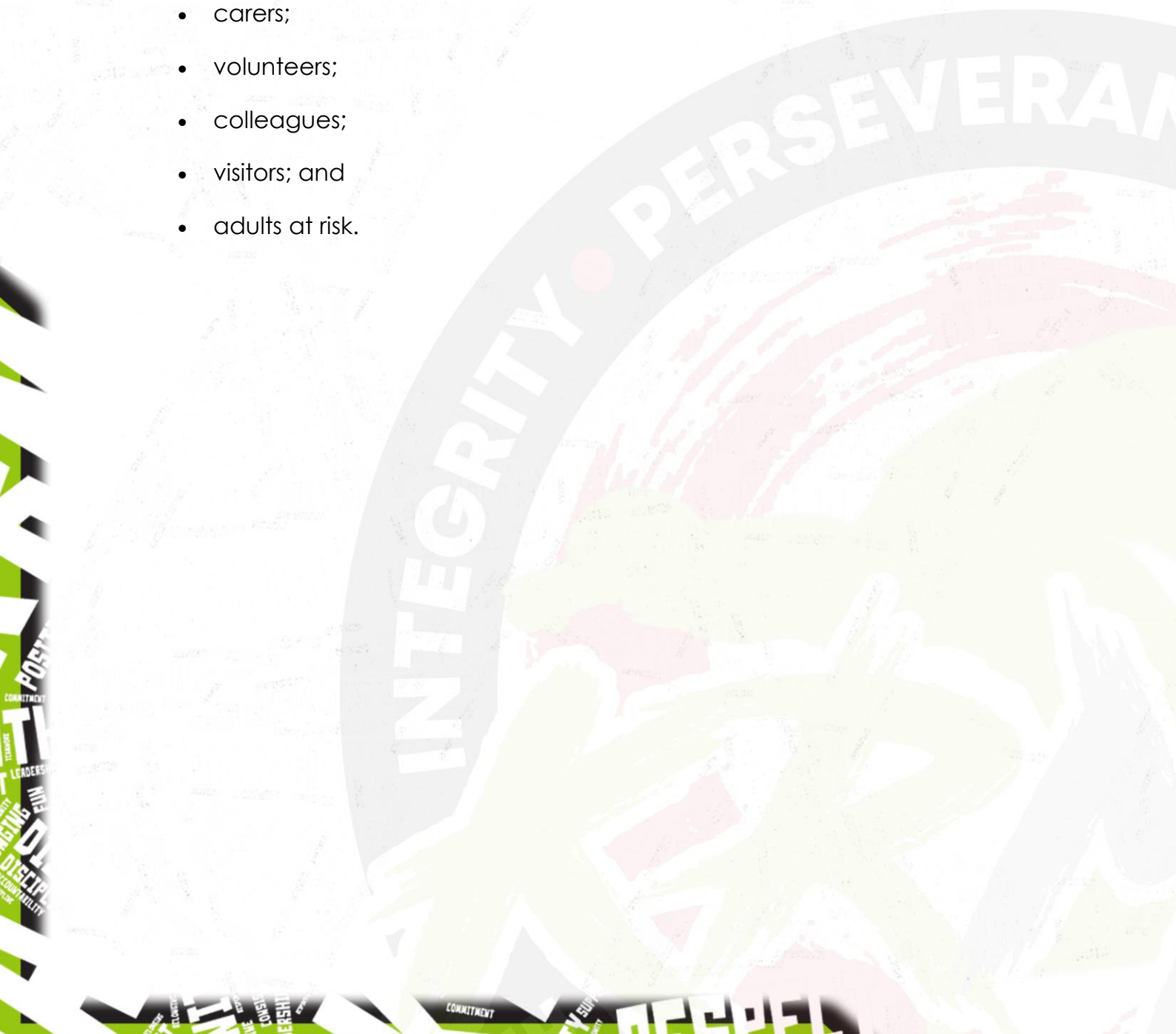
This policy applies to:

- instructors;
- assistant instructors;

- junior instructors;
- volunteers;
- employees;
- contractors;
- safeguarding leads; and
- any person acting on behalf of KRMA.

Although this policy focuses primarily on students, the principles of trauma-informed practice should also influence interactions with:

- parents;
- carers;
- volunteers;
- colleagues;
- visitors; and
- adults at risk.



3. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to current legislation and recognised good practice, including:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
- Care Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK GDPR
- BMABA Trauma-Informed Coaching Guidance
- Relevant safeguarding guidance issued by local safeguarding partnerships

Trauma-informed practice supports safeguarding but does not replace statutory safeguarding duties.

Where concerns indicate that a child or adult may be at risk of harm, KRMA's safeguarding procedures must be followed immediately.

4. Definitions

Trauma

Trauma is an emotional, psychological or physical response to an event or series of events that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope.

Trauma affects people differently.

Events that may be traumatic for one person may not be traumatic for another.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse Childhood Experiences are stressful or traumatic experiences occurring during childhood.

Examples include:

- abuse;
- neglect;
- domestic abuse;
- parental separation;
- substance misuse within the household;
- mental illness within the family;
- imprisonment of a family member;
- serious illness;
- bereavement; or
- exposure to violence.

Not everyone who experiences ACEs will experience long-term difficulties.

Trauma Trigger

A trauma trigger is something that reminds an individual of a previous traumatic experience and may cause an emotional or physiological response.

Triggers differ between individuals.

Examples may include:

- loud shouting;
- unexpected physical contact;
- conflict;
- raised voices;
- particular smells;
- certain environments;
- physical restraint;
- sudden changes to routine; or
- feelings of failure or embarrassment.

Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation refers to a person's ability to recognise, manage and respond appropriately to emotions.

Trauma may affect an individual's ability to regulate emotions, particularly during periods of stress.

Window of Tolerance

The "window of tolerance" describes the zone in which an individual is able to think clearly, learn effectively and regulate emotions.

Outside this window, a person may become overwhelmed (hyper-arousal) or emotionally withdrawn (hypo-arousal).

Understanding this concept helps instructors respond calmly and appropriately.

5. KRMA's Commitment

KRMA is committed to embedding trauma-informed principles throughout its coaching, safeguarding and student support systems.

We aim to create an environment in which every student feels:

- safe;
- respected;
- valued;
- included;
- listened to; and
- supported to achieve their potential.

To achieve this, KRMA will:

- provide trauma-informed coaching training for Lead Instructors and Designated Safeguarding Leads;
- encourage continuing professional development for all instructors;
- promote respectful communication;
- maintain consistent routines;
- avoid unnecessary humiliation or shame;
- adapt teaching methods where appropriate;
- encourage student voice and choice;
- support emotional wellbeing;
- work collaboratively with parents, carers and professionals where appropriate; and
- continually review our practice.

6. Principles of Trauma-Informed Coaching

KRMA adopts the following principles.

Safety

Students should feel physically and emotionally safe.

Lessons should be structured, predictable and appropriately supervised.

Trust and Transparency

Expectations should be communicated clearly.

Rules should be consistent.

Students should understand why activities are being undertaken.

Empowerment

Students should be encouraged to make appropriate choices.

Where possible, they should be given options rather than ultimatums.

Participation should be encouraged rather than forced.

Collaboration

Learning should be based upon mutual respect and partnership.

Students should be encouraged to support one another.

Cultural Sensitivity

Every student should be treated with dignity and respect.

Individual backgrounds, beliefs and lived experiences should be recognised and valued.

Resilience

Martial arts should help students develop:

- confidence;
- perseverance;
- self-control;
- emotional regulation;
- independence; and
- resilience.

Progress should be celebrated through effort, learning and personal improvement rather than comparison with others.



7. Understanding Trauma in Martial Arts

Martial arts can be highly beneficial for people who have experienced trauma.

The structured environment, positive role models and opportunities for achievement may contribute significantly to confidence and wellbeing.

However, instructors should recognise that certain aspects of martial arts may also be challenging for some individuals.

Examples include:

- close physical proximity;
- partner work;
- physical contact;
- shouting or kiai;
- loud noises;
- competitive situations;
- unexpected touch;
- demonstrations in front of others;
- being corrected publicly;
- unfamiliar environments;
- changes to routine; or
- high-pressure grading situations.

Trauma-informed coaching does **not** mean removing challenge.

Rather, it means introducing challenge in a safe, supportive and predictable manner.

8. Recognising Trauma Responses

Trauma responses vary considerably between individuals.

Possible indicators may include:

- anxiety;
- withdrawal;
- emotional shutdown;
- tearfulness;
- anger;
- irritability;
- aggression;
- perfectionism;
- difficulty concentrating;
- reluctance to participate;
- avoidance of partner work;
- hypervigilance;
- exaggerated startle responses;
- unusually quiet behaviour;
- refusal to make eye contact;
- panic responses;
- frequent requests for reassurance; or
- sudden changes in behaviour.

These behaviours should not automatically be viewed as deliberate defiance.

Instead, instructors should remain curious, calm and supportive whilst maintaining appropriate expectations and boundaries.

No instructor should attempt to diagnose trauma.

Where concerns exist regarding a student's welfare, the matter should be referred through KRMA's safeguarding procedures.



9. Instructor Responsibilities

Every KRMA instructor plays an important role in creating an environment where students feel physically safe, emotionally secure and able to learn.

Trauma-informed coaching is not the responsibility of safeguarding leads alone. Every instructor, assistant instructor, volunteer and member of staff is expected to demonstrate trauma-informed principles in their day-to-day coaching.

All instructors must:

- maintain professional boundaries at all times;
- communicate respectfully and calmly;
- provide consistent expectations and routines;
- recognise that behaviour may communicate an unmet need;
- remain alert to signs of distress or emotional dysregulation;
- avoid practices that may unnecessarily shame or humiliate students;
- adapt coaching methods where appropriate without compromising safety;
- encourage student choice where possible;
- promote confidence through positive reinforcement;
- maintain confidentiality appropriately;
- complete required safeguarding and trauma-informed training; and
- follow KRMA's safeguarding procedures where concerns arise.

Instructors must never attempt to provide counselling, psychotherapy or clinical trauma treatment.

Where concerns extend beyond normal coaching support, appropriate referrals should be made through KRMA's safeguarding procedures.

10. Practical Trauma-Informed Coaching

Trauma-informed coaching should be integrated into everyday teaching rather than treated as a separate activity.

Creating Predictable Lessons

Where possible, instructors should:

- begin lessons consistently;
- explain the structure of the session;
- prepare students for changes;
- give clear instructions;
- provide demonstrations before activities;
- finish lessons positively; and
- maintain consistent expectations.

Predictability helps many students feel secure and ready to learn.

Offering Appropriate Choice

Where appropriate, students should be offered reasonable choices.

Examples include:

- selecting a training partner;
- choosing between equivalent drills;
- requesting a short break;
- observing before participating;
- demonstrating knowledge in different ways where appropriate; or
- using suitable adaptations agreed with the instructor.

Choice should never compromise safety or undermine lesson objectives.

Positive Communication

Instructors should:

- use encouraging language;
- recognise effort as well as achievement;
- provide constructive feedback;
- correct mistakes respectfully;
- avoid sarcasm;
- avoid ridicule;
- avoid shouting as punishment; and
- avoid comparing students negatively.

Feedback should be specific, supportive and aimed at improvement.

Building Positive Relationships

Healthy instructor-student relationships are based upon:

- trust;
- consistency;
- fairness;
- respect;
- encouragement; and
- appropriate professional boundaries.

Students should know that instructors are approachable and willing to listen while maintaining their professional role.

11. Responding to Emotional Dysregulation

Trauma may affect an individual's ability to regulate emotions.

If a student becomes emotionally overwhelmed, instructors should remain calm and focus on reducing distress rather than escalating the situation.

Where appropriate, instructors should:

- reduce unnecessary stimulation;
- speak calmly;
- allow processing time;
- offer simple choices;
- provide reassurance where appropriate;
- encourage controlled breathing;
- allow a short break if suitable;
- move to a quieter area where safe;
- maintain appropriate supervision; and
- return to learning only when the student is ready.

Students should never be ridiculed for becoming upset or overwhelmed.

Co-Regulation

Children and some adults regulate emotions more effectively when supported by calm, consistent adults.

Instructors should therefore aim to model:

- calm behaviour;
- measured speech;
- patient listening;
- confident body language;
- emotional self-control; and

- respectful communication.

Remaining calm often helps students regain emotional control more effectively than raising voices or increasing pressure.



12. Behaviour Management

KRMA believes that trauma-informed coaching and high behavioural expectations work together.

Trauma-informed practice does **not** mean removing boundaries or accepting unsafe behaviour.

Students remain responsible for their behaviour.

However, instructors should consider whether behaviour may be communicating:

- anxiety;
- fear;
- frustration;
- confusion;
- sensory overload;
- embarrassment;
- previous traumatic experiences; or
- another unmet need.

Where behaviour becomes unsafe, instructors should:

- intervene calmly;
- prioritise safety;
- explain expectations clearly;
- provide opportunities to reset;
- apply appropriate consequences where necessary; and
- record or report concerns where appropriate.

Consequences should be:

- proportionate;
- respectful;
- consistent;

- educational; and
- never humiliating.



13. Physical Contact

Physical contact is often necessary within martial arts instruction.

Examples include:

- correcting posture;
- demonstrating techniques;
- preventing injury;
- assisting balance;
- supporting mobility; and
- administering first aid.

Trauma-informed practice requires instructors to recognise that some individuals may find physical contact difficult.

Where reasonably practicable, instructors should:

- explain why contact is required;
- seek permission before touching;
- respect an individual's wishes where safe alternatives exist;
- use demonstrations where possible;
- minimise unnecessary contact; and
- maintain professional boundaries.

No student should be criticised for expressing discomfort regarding physical contact.

Where contact cannot reasonably be avoided for safety reasons, instructors should explain this clearly and respectfully.

All physical contact must comply with KRMA's Safe Practice Policy and Safeguarding Policies.

14. Working with Parents, Carers and Professionals

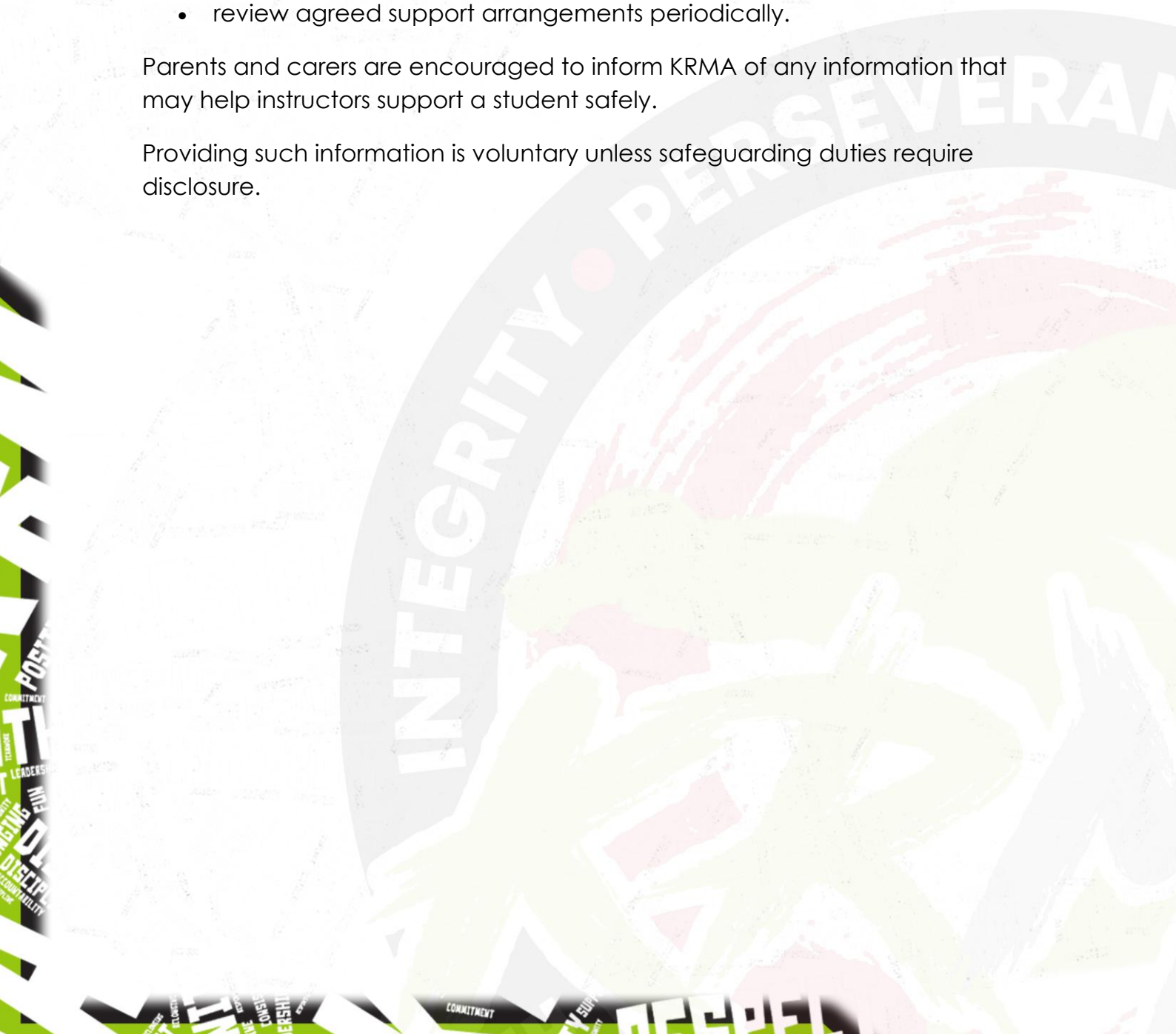
Positive communication with parents, carers and professionals helps create a consistent support network.

Where appropriate, KRMA will:

- listen to parental concerns;
- consider reasonable adjustments;
- maintain confidentiality;
- work collaboratively with schools and professionals where appropriate;
- share safeguarding information lawfully where required; and
- review agreed support arrangements periodically.

Parents and carers are encouraged to inform KRMA of any information that may help instructors support a student safely.

Providing such information is voluntary unless safeguarding duties require disclosure.



15. Disclosures and Safeguarding

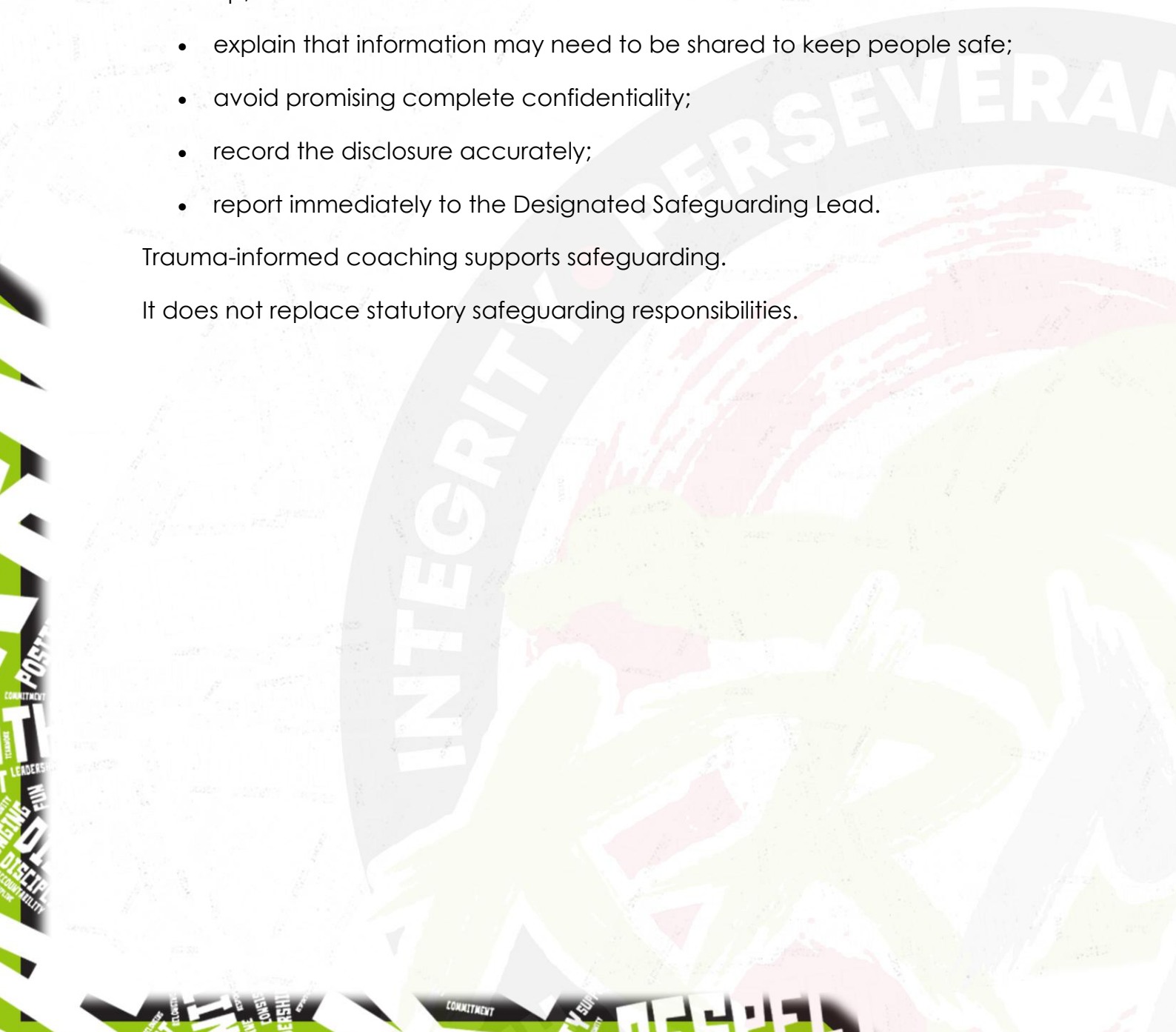
Trauma-informed coaching may increase the likelihood that a student feels able to disclose abuse, neglect or other significant concerns.

If a disclosure occurs, instructors should:

- remain calm;
- listen carefully;
- avoid interrupting;
- avoid asking leading questions;
- reassure the student that they have done the right thing by speaking up;
- explain that information may need to be shared to keep people safe;
- avoid promising complete confidentiality;
- record the disclosure accurately;
- report immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Trauma-informed coaching supports safeguarding.

It does not replace statutory safeguarding responsibilities.



16. Confidentiality

Information relating to trauma should always be treated sensitively.

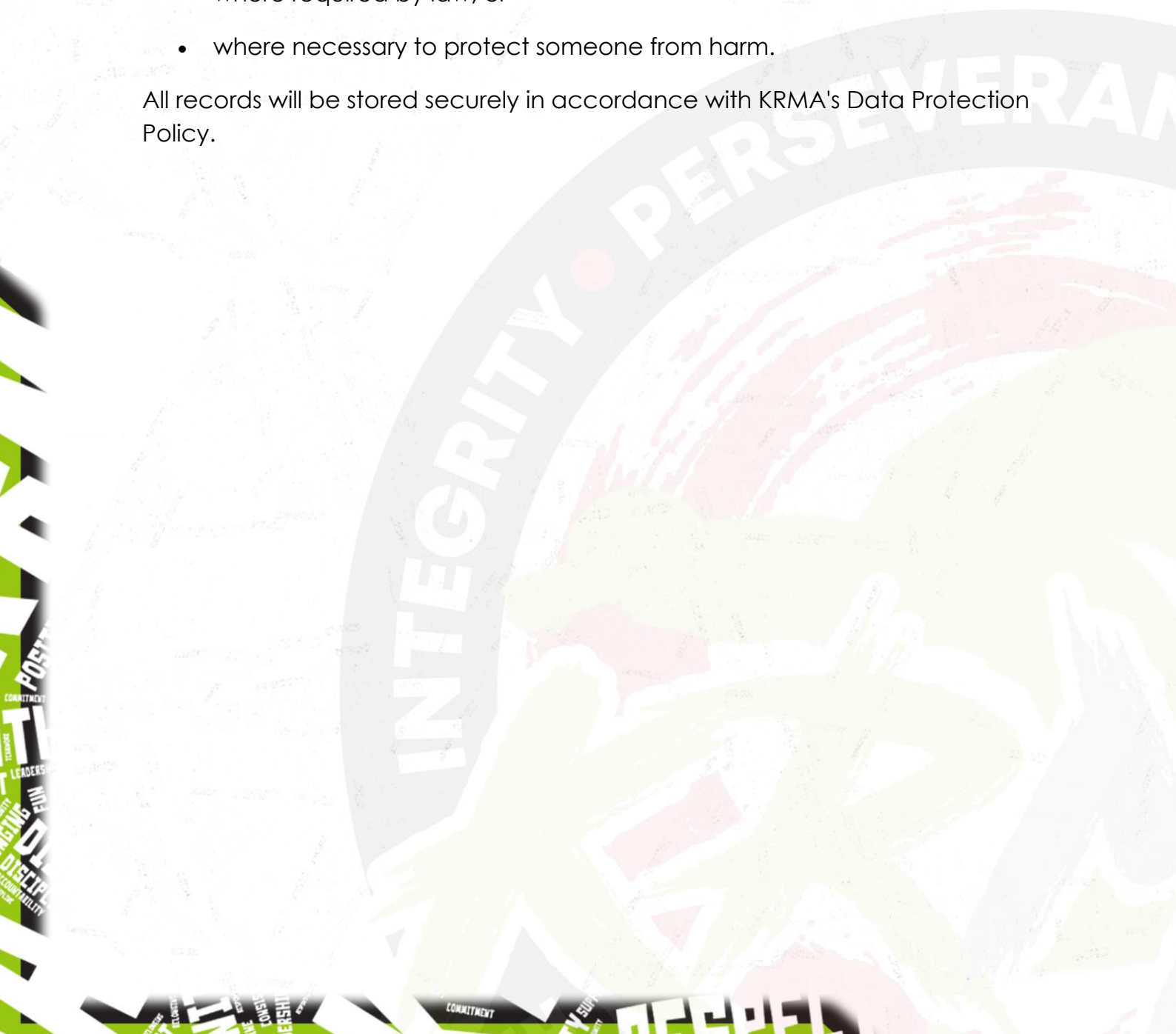
Only those who have a legitimate safeguarding or operational need should have access to confidential information.

Students should never be asked to discuss traumatic experiences in front of others.

Information will only be shared:

- with consent where appropriate;
- where safeguarding duties require disclosure;
- where required by law; or
- where necessary to protect someone from harm.

All records will be stored securely in accordance with KRMA's Data Protection Policy.



17. Training Requirements

To maintain high standards of trauma-informed practice:

- Lead Instructors and Designated Safeguarding Leads must hold the current BMABA Trauma-Informed Coaching qualification or an equivalent recognised qualification approved by KRMA.
- Assistant Instructors, Junior Instructors and volunteers will receive an induction into KRMA's trauma-informed coaching approach appropriate to their role.
- Trauma-informed practice will be reinforced through ongoing mentoring, instructor meetings and continuing professional development.
- Instructors should also maintain current safeguarding training in line with KRMA's safeguarding policies.

Training should be reviewed whenever there are significant changes to legislation, recognised guidance or organisational practice.



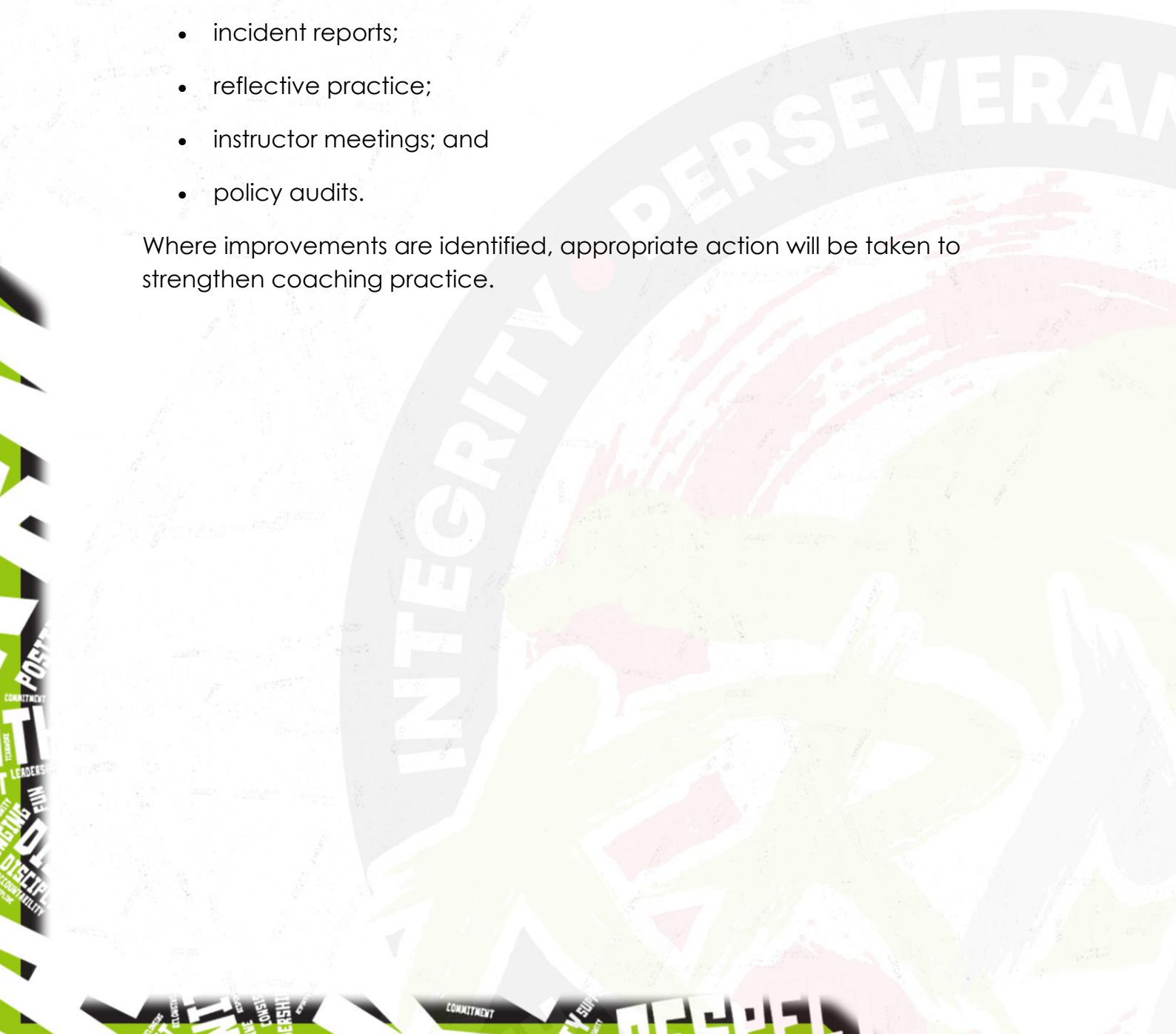
18. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

KRMA is committed to continually improving trauma-informed coaching.

The effectiveness of this policy may be monitored through:

- lesson observations;
- instructor supervision;
- student feedback;
- parent and carer feedback;
- safeguarding reviews;
- complaints;
- incident reports;
- reflective practice;
- instructor meetings; and
- policy audits.

Where improvements are identified, appropriate action will be taken to strengthen coaching practice.

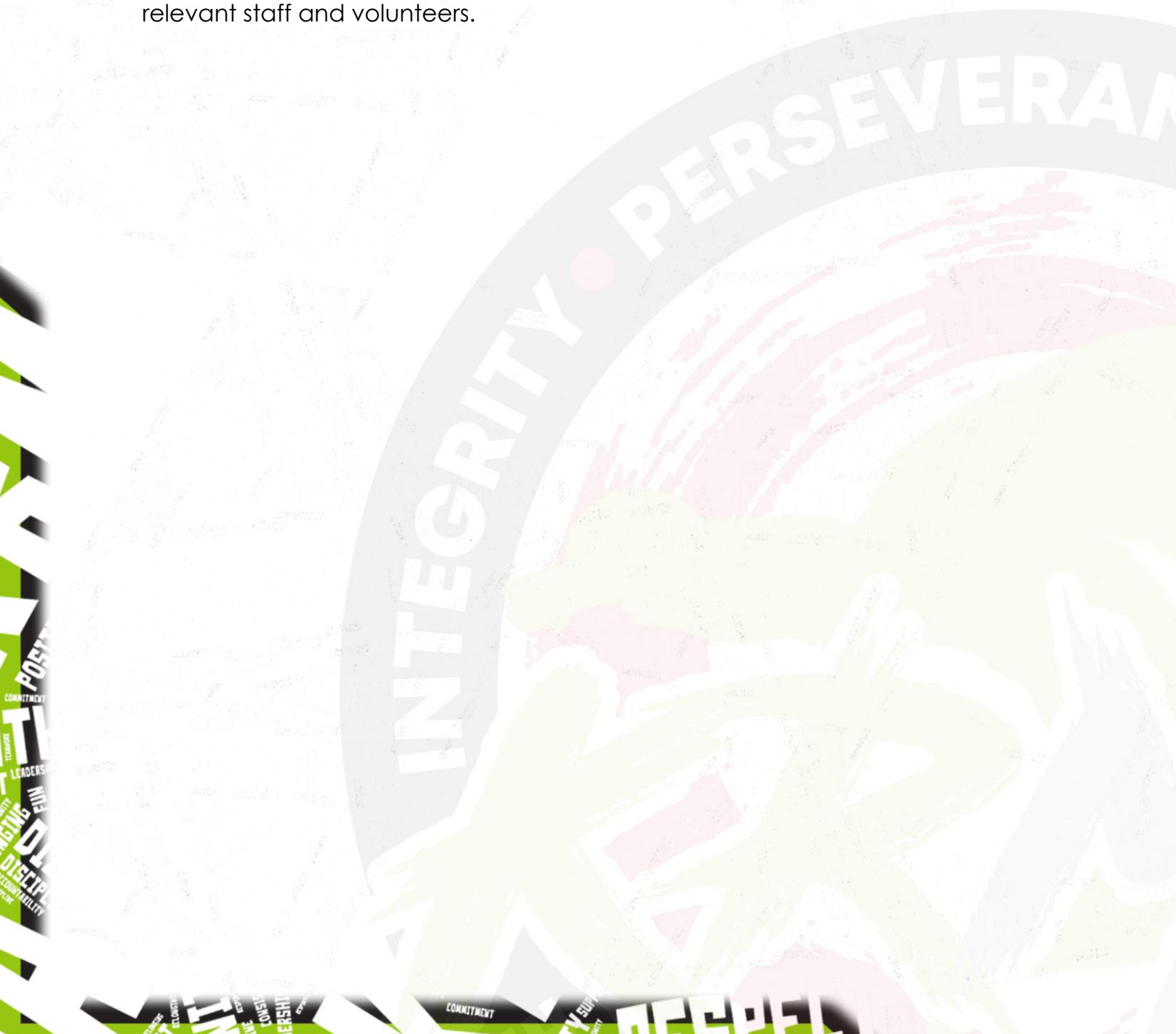


19. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- annually;
- following changes in legislation or statutory guidance;
- following significant safeguarding incidents;
- following changes to BMABA guidance;
- following recommendations arising from safeguarding reviews; or
- whenever considered necessary by KRMA leadership.

All revisions will be approved by senior management and communicated to relevant staff and volunteers.



20. Policy Approval

Policy Title: Trauma-Informed Coaching Policy

Organisation: Koku-Ryu Martial Arts (KRMA)

Version: 2.0

Policy Owner: Designated Safeguarding Lead

Approved By: Andrew Banks – CEO & Chief Instructor

Effective Date: 13 July 2026

Next Review Date: 13 July 2027

Declaration

Koku-Ryu Martial Arts recognises that trauma-informed coaching is an important part of creating an environment where every individual can learn, grow and thrive.

By combining high expectations with empathy, consistency and appropriate support, KRMA aims to provide coaching that promotes confidence, resilience and wellbeing while maintaining the highest standards of safeguarding, professionalism and martial arts instruction.

Trauma-informed coaching does not reduce expectations or compromise standards. Instead, it recognises that people learn and respond differently, and seeks to remove unnecessary barriers to participation while maintaining safety, accountability and respect.