

Kenshinkai Recruits Instructors

Whilst reviewing the “Hiscox Abuse Proposal Form” which was sent out to all associations for completion back in June 2011, I pondered about the Employee Recruitment section. Some questions did not seem relevant e.g. “Are all employees required to complete a written application form” and “Are written references requested and verified for all relevant employees”. Our instructors were not recruited they were promoted, usually after having been with us an average of 5 years, so why would I need to recruit them? I had seen them on a weekly basis for many years and there were enough conditions they needed to meet without me adding more forms and red tape? So understandably I was more than a little sceptical about this requirement.

I then reviewed the “Recruitment Policy – Volunteers & Employees” (Appendix 23 of the British Aikido Board Child Safeguarding & Protection Policy). At first glance again I was unsure of the relevance but reading through I understood that there needed to be some level of recruitment in place for Aikido Instructors. I was aware that BAB Associations varied greatly in their appointment of Instructors, with some appointing Instructors in as short a time as a year, so perhaps recruitment was an important safeguarding step.

So I created a checklist from this Appendix 23 to see how we matched up. CRB Check, First Aid qualified, BAB Coach Course, Instructor training and mentoring, reference material such as our Constitution and Instructor Guidelines (in addition to BAB documents), and a form (Abide By Form) signed by each instructor to confirm they had read and accepted these documents. We didn’t seem to be doing too badly!

Advertise positions of responsibility of children in Aikido, well this didn’t seem relevant as we were not going to advertise the positions in the local paper! The bullet points said we needed to define the role, explain that it involved working with under 18s, the aims of the association and what experience and skills are required. Well this was all covered in our Instructor Guidelines so we already appeared to be doing this. It may have been more difficult if we were using helpers other than our own Instructors to help teach juniors but we weren’t and didn’t intend to, so for us this was a simpler area to cover.

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So now the difficult bit! Application Form, Interview, References, Induction, Monitoring, Support and Training! Where would I start? Certainly not with the existing instructors who had all been teaching for some time, that would be too much hard work! But we were due to appoint three new Instructors, perhaps I could use them as a test case? They were not too set in their ways and were keen to support the association and all fully aware of the importance of safeguarding and protecting children, this may be my opportunity to introduce a level of recruitment to Kenshinkai.

So I created an Application Form and forms for the collection of References using the Attachments in Appendix 23. The interview would actually consist of me just sitting with them and going over the forms and explaining the need for them, particularly with reference to child safeguarding, in addition to answering any questions they may have about taking on the role of Instructor.

Two of them were very happy with the process and went away to get their references (one having to be a work or professional reference the other a personal but not family or related reference). The third person was a little more reluctant, this was because they were married to an existing instructor who had not gone through the recruitment process and did not understand why they would have to when their partner had not. Again this I had expected, change is very difficult to put in place in any Association and is usually met with “we have done it this way for years”, “we have never needed it before”, “so and so didn’t have to do it” or “I train with another martial arts group as well and we don’t have to do that there”.

I had heard these all before and was prepared for them, but more importantly I had the backing of the Principal Coach, Chief Instructor and Club Welfare Officer, without this support it would have been much more of an uphill struggle. I reiterated that we were endorsing a recruitment policy and they were welcome not to be part of it, but that would also mean that they would not be granted Instructor status, a bit dictatorial I suppose, but sometimes needed!

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Induction was already in place (CRB check, Abide By form, Instructors Guidelines etc.) and all new instructors in Kenshinkai are only permitted an assist instructor role for the first couple of years where they are closely monitored by a club instructor and given mentoring and feedback. On-going training is achieved with the BAB Coach courses, Sports Coach UK courses and a Coaching section of our website which is regularly updated and has links to up-to-date coaching and safeguarding reference information.

So I finally felt we had gone some way to implementing a recruiting policy in Kenshinkai and it was not as hard as I had at first thought it would be! The next Instructor appointment was “plain sailing”, the individual had heard through the grapevine (the previous 3 instructors) that this was now standard procedure and had just accepted that it would happen and therefore made things very easy for myself.

I would like to highlight that the key to success of implementing any such major changes, within an Association that has been in existence for some time, is backing from the senior members of the association, support and guidance from the British Aikido Board and clear guidelines and communication explaining the reasons for the change. I hope this may help any BAB member associations that are in the process of considering or implementing a recruitment policy for their association.

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