

Child Protection Policy

Policy Statement

Following RYA recommendations, at Saundersfoot Sailing Club, the aim of all instructors and those involved with children taking part in club activities is to provide a safe environment for those children. These provisions should also be taken as relating to vulnerable adults.

- The child's welfare is paramount.
- All children whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of inappropriate behaviour will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- As defined in the Children Act 1989, anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child for the purposes of this document.

Recruitment of volunteers

All adult volunteers, whether instructors or helpers, who will be working unsupervised or where parents are not in attendance. Will be asked to provide references. In addition they will be asked to complete a Disclosure Certificate from the Criminal Records Bureau. Application forms can be requested from the CRB Application Line (0870 90 90 844). Website www.disclosure.gov.uk . All individuals should liaise with the Club's Child Protection Officer prior to making such an application.

We believe that when a good recruitment policy is adopted, and the issue of child protection is covered in the club's risk assessment, both children and the interests of instructors and helpers should be adequately protected.

Prevention of Abuse

Child abuse is a very difficult situation for club officers. The systems we have in place to assist in preventing abuse include the following:

- Work is planned so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children can occur.
- A club member has been allocated the role of Child Protection Officer.
- Instructors and helpers receive training in the recognition and prevention of child abuse.

- All instructors and volunteers are given clear roles.
- Guidelines have been issued on how to deal with the discovery of abuse.
- If children tell instructors or helpers about abuse, agreed procedures are to be followed.
- Systems are in place which allow children's complaints to be heard.

Good Practice Guide for Instructors/Volunteers/All Club Members

False allegations Instructors and helpers can be minimised if good practice is followed. The Club would wish all those taking part in Club activities to observe the following common sense guidelines:

- Do not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Do not take children alone in a car on journeys, however short.
- Do not take children to your home.
- Where any of these are unavoidable, ensure they only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge of the Club activity or the Child's parents.
- Design training programmes that are within the ability of the individual child.
- Do not photograph, or video children, or publish their pictures, without the knowledge and consent of their parents. Be sensitive to the risk, although it is probably slight in our sport, that images can be misused by a third party. Do not publish information, in print or on a website, that might enable someone to contact the child.

You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Let allegations a child makes go unchallenged or unrecorded; always act.
- Do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves.

It may be sometimes necessary to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with full understanding and consent of parents. Adults should, wherever possible carry out such tasks in pairs. In an emergency situation, which requires this type of help, parents should be fully informed. In such situations, it is important to ensure all instructors and helpers are sensitive to the child and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion. All such events must be reported to parents and to the Sail Training Principal as soon as possible.

In addition, medical consent should be obtained in the event that medication or treatment is required to be administered in the absence of the parent/guardian; this includes hospitalisation. Medical information forms must be completed by and signed by parents when a child signs up for Sail Training/Powerboat Training at Saundersfoot Sailing Club.

Any accidents must be reported to parents, the Sail Training Principal and recorded in the accident book.

Child Protection Officer

The Child Protection Officer must ensure that the Child Protection Policy is up to date with procedures to support it. He or she must also ensure that relevant instructors and helpers understand the procedures and put them into practice. He or she should receive reports of any concerns or allegations; in conjunction with the person in charge (Principal, Commodore etc), to decide on the appropriate action to be taken and keep the RYA informed as necessary.

What to do if abuse is suspected/alleged to have occurred

Procedures to follow if allegations of abuse are made against an instructor or helper

As has sadly been documented, child abuse can occur and does occur outside the family setting. Child abuse has occurred within institutions and may occur in other settings. If a child has been abused in a public setting, other children will be involved.

Where there is an allegation of abuse against an instructor or helper, there may be three types of investigation:

- **A criminal investigation**
- **A child protection investigation**
- **A disciplinary or misconduct investigation**

The results of the police and social services investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Saundersfoot Sailing Club would address disciplinary procedures to protect all involved. The instructor or helper involved in the allegation would be immediately suspended from involvement with children within the club, whilst the allegation was being investigated.

It is important to understand that an individual reporting a case of child abuse, particularly by a colleague, may undergo a very high degree of stress, including feelings of guilt for having reported the matter. It is therefore important to ensure that appropriate counselling and support is available for the individual in such a situation. This would be available from the contacts whose telephones are provided at the end of this document.

What should I do if a child tells me s/he is being abused?

Always:

- Stay calm-ensure the child is safe and feels safe.
- Show and tell the child that you are taking what s/he says seriously
- Reassure the child and stress that s/he is not to blame.
- Be honest, explain you will have to tell someone else to help stop the alleged abuse.
- Make a note of what the child has said as soon as possible after the event.
- Maintain confidentiality – only tell others if it will help protect the child.

Never:

- Rush into actions that may be inappropriate.
- Make Promises you cannot keep.
- Ask inappropriate questions, which may jeopardise any impending police investigation.
- Take sole responsibility – consult someone else (the person in charge or someone you can trust) so you can begin to protect the child and gain support yourself.

Taking appropriate action is never easy – it takes courage but it protects a young life.

Child abuse, no matter how disturbing, must never be ignored.

Recording information

If a situation arises where information has to be collected, it is important that you do not carry the process beyond gathering information about the allegation, into beginning an investigation. You should therefore consult immediately with the principal, Child Protection Officer or other appropriate club officer before attempting to interview the child. He or she will be versed in the method of conducting an interview. Unnecessary interview with child complainants could prejudice the integrity of evidence that may eventually have to be presented in court.

There are particular problems with regard to gaining information from children with limited communication skills.

Let the child initiate any actions and remain positive and supportive throughout.

Recognising abuse

What is child abuse?

Child abuse is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults and often people they know and trust. It refers to the damage done to a child's physical or mental health. Child abuse can take many forms:

Physical abuse: where adults or other children:

- Physically hurt or injure children (e.g. by hitting, shaking, squeezing, biting or burning).
- Give children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison.
- Attempt to suffocate or drown children.
- In sport situations, physical abuse might also happen when the nature and intensity of training exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.

Neglect includes situations in which adults:

- Fail to meet a child's basic physical needs (e.g. for food, warm clothing, essential medication).
- Consistently leave children alone and unsupervised.
- Fail or refuse to give children love, affection or attention.
- Neglect in a sport's situations might also occur if an instructor or helper fails to ensure children are safe or exposes them to undue cold or risk of injury.

Sexual abuse Boys and girls are sexually abused when adults (male or female) or other young people use them to meet their own sexual needs. This could include:

- Full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, fondling
- Showing children pornographic books, photographs or videos, or taking pictures for pornographic purposes.
- Sport situations which involve physical contact (e.g. supporting or guiding children) could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Abusive situations may also occur if adults misuse their power over young people.

Emotional abuse can occur in a number of ways. For example, where:

- There is a persistent lack of love or affection.
- There is constant overprotection which prevents children from socialising.
- Children are frequently being shouted at or being taunted.
- There is neglect, physical or sexual abuse.
- Emotional abuse in sport might also include situations where parents or coaches subject children to constant criticism, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations.

Bullying

Bullying may be seen as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. The bully may often be another young person.

Although anyone can be a target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons – being overweight, physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture.

How would I recognise if a child is being abused?

It is not always easy to spot when children have been abused. Some typical symptoms, which should trigger your suspicions would include:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- Sexually explicit language or actions.
- A sudden change in behaviour (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper)
- The child describes what appears to have been an abusive act involving him/her.
- A change observed over a long period of time (e.g. the child losing weight or becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt).
- A general distrust and avoidance of adults, especially with whom a close relationship would be expected.
- An unreasonable reaction to normal physical contact.
- Difficulty in making friends or abnormal restrictions on socialising with others.

A child could be displaying some of all of these signs, or behaving in a way which is worrying – this does not necessarily mean the child is being abused. Similarly, there may not be any signs, you may just feel something is wrong.

If you are worried, it is NOT your responsibility to decide if it is abuse BUT it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it.

What should I do if I have concerns?

If you have any concerns about a child's behaviour, first talk to the parents or carers and to the Sail Training Principal. There may be a simple explanation for this behaviour such as a bereavement. However, if your concerns are about sexual abuse or violence, talking to the parents or carers might put the child at greater risk.

If your concerns remain or you cannot talk to the parents/carers, consult the Clubs designated Child Protection Officer, it is her or his responsibility to make the decision to contact the police. If the allegations/suspicion concerns someone within the club the RYA Child Protection Co-ordinator should be contacted.

RYA Child Protection Co-ordinator

Jackie Reid, HR and Administration Manager

RYA House, Ensign Way, Hamble, Southampton. SO31 4YA

Tel: 023 8060 4104

Fax: 023 8060 4298

E-mail Jackie-reid@rya.org.uk

Where can I get further help?

WYA Tel: 01428 670738

Email: admin@welshsailing.org

Social Care Services: Pembrokeshire County Council.

Advice can be sought by phoning the following 24 hour free telephone numbers

NSPCC helpline:

0808 800 5000

www.nspcc.org.uk

Child Line:

0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk

If you are an instructor and have had an allegation made against you, advice and support can be gained from the following sources:

Local Citizen's Advice Bureau:

01646 683805

RYA Legal:

023 8062 7422