

Reviewed by **Ian Sheldrake** January 2025

## Child Protection Policy

The policies and guidelines referenced within this document are those of **Venture Out**. The principles of both the policy and the Guidance documents are based on our moral and ethical duty to ensure children and vulnerable groups can enjoy canoeing in a safe environment and as such they reflect current best practice.

### DUTY OF CARE

**Venture Out** are committed to ensuring that all those taking part in canoeing are able to do so protected and kept safe from harm while they are with coaches, volunteers and /or staff. This is particularly true in respect of children and vulnerable groups.

We all have a duty with respect to Safeguarding and Protecting Children to ensure children can participate and enjoy our activities with the highest possible standards of care. These standards apply also to vulnerable groups. All coaches should have a clear understanding of operating within an appropriate code of ethics, aware of what their 'duty of care' is and how this relates to their position in providing activities and being responsible for others.

**Venture Out require all its instructors who work with either of these groups to hold current DBS checks. Venture Out has a system in place to monitor the renewal dates for these check.**

A good definition of 'duty of care' is:

*"The duty which rests upon an individual or organisation to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the safety of any person involved in any activity for which that individual or organisation is responsible"*

In adventurous activities, safety and keeping people safe is all about risk assessment and minimising the risks involved at all levels of participation. While all taking part in activity have a duty to their neighbours, in organised activity we all have a heightened duty of care and as such we should be aware that the principal risks extend to the quality of control exercised by those in charge. Trainers, coaches, referees, officials or administrators should all take 'reasonable' steps to safeguard those directly taking part in activities and at any time

they may be deemed responsible for those in their charge - in vehicles, during journey's to and from the activity, during events, team training events and camps etc.

The content of this document provides specific information in respect of child protection and the protection of vulnerable groups in order that everyone can appreciate their 'duty of care' with regard to these issues, risk assess their positions and support and advise those at risk.

### **Vulnerable Group Definition**

*"A person who is, or may be, in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation"*

We believe that the welfare of children/ vulnerable groups is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to protecting a child/vulnerable person from abuse.

Abuse can occur wherever there are children/vulnerable groups - at home, at school, in the park, at a club. Sadly, there are some people who will seek to be where children/vulnerable groups are simply in order to abuse them. We believe that everyone has a moral responsibility and therefore a part to play in looking after the children and vulnerable groups with whom they are working.

Whilst the welfare of young people is our first consideration in establishing child protection policies and procedures, we have also taken account of the needs of coaches, particularly where falsely accused.

A feature of our policy on Child Protection is to ensure that we provide individuals with access to a confidential advice, guidance and support path, provided separately to that provided for those with concerns that abuse may be taking place.

These child protection procedures stem from the following principles:

- the child's welfare is paramount
- anyone under the age of 18 is classed as a child
- All children, regardless of age, any disability they have, gender, racial origin, religious belief and sexual identity and/or social/economic status have a right to be protected from abuse.
- To respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of young people in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

All staff will have opportunity to be provided with advice to raise awareness of best practice and guidance and support should they become involved in an abuse situation.

**Venture Out** recognises that some children and young people have additional vulnerabilities or are disadvantaged by their experiences such as children with disabilities or who come from minority ethnic groups. Bearing in mind that children and young people can be and are disadvantaged by these and other experiences, it is important for all those that work with children to be extra vigilant in creating a safe culture. For vulnerable groups it is recommended that consultation is undertaken with the community care experts as appropriate.

We know that if procedures are to help to protect children then all working for **Venture Out** must have received a copy of these policies and procedures.

### **Good Practice Guidelines**

By following these guidelines you will help to protect both the children/vulnerable groups and employees from wrongful allegations.

- Avoid situations where you are alone with one child/vulnerable person. **Venture Out** acknowledges that occasionally there may be no alternative, for example, where a child/vulnerable person falls ill and has to be taken home. We would stress, however, **that one to one contact must never be allowed to occur on a regular basis.**
- If any form of physical support is required ask the participants permission, explain what you are doing and why to both the child/vulnerable person and their parents/carers.
- Where possible ask parents/carers to be responsible for children/vulnerable groups in changing rooms. Always ensure that whoever supervises young people work in pairs.
- Where there are mixed teams/groups away from home, they should always be accompanied by an adult male and female coach/helper.
- Do not allow physically rough or sexually provocative games, or inappropriate talking or touching.
- If it is necessary to do things of a personal nature for a child/vulnerable adult, make sure you have another adult accompanying you. Get the consent of the parent/carer and if possible the child/vulnerable person. Let them know what you are doing and why.
- Ensure that any claims of abuse by a child/vulnerable person are taken seriously and that it is dealt with by people who know what to do.

- Ensure that the nature and intensity of training does not exceed the capacity of a child's/vulnerable person's immature growing body and ability.
- Follow the recognised guidelines for photography and video.

## **WHAT IS ABUSE?**

It's generally acknowledged that there are four main types of abuse - Physical, Sexual, Emotional and Neglect.

### *Physical Abuse*

Physical abuse is just what the term implies - hurting or injuring a child/vulnerable person e.g. by hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning or biting them. In sport this might result if the nature or intensity of training is inappropriate for the capacity of the performer or where drugs are tolerated or advocated. Bullying is likely to come into this category - see below.

### *Sexual Abuse*

Where young people / vulnerable groups are used by adults to meet their own sexual needs. It could range from sexually suggestive comments to full intercourse and includes the use of pornographic material.

### *Emotional Abuse*

Emotional abuse occurs when a child/vulnerable person is not given love, help and encouragement and is constantly derided or ridiculed e.g. racial or sexual remarks.

It can also occur if a child/vulnerable person is over protected. Abuse can occur where a parent or coach has unrealistic expectations over what a child/vulnerable person can achieve.

### *Neglect*

Failing to meet children'/vulnerable groups' basic needs such as food, warmth, adequate clothing, and medical attention or constantly leaving them alone. It could also mean failing to ensure they are safe or exposing them to harm or injury.

### *Bullying*

The bully in Paddlesport can be an adult - the parent/carer who pushes too hard, the coach who adopts a win-at-all-costs philosophy or adult paddlers who attempt to assert unacceptable behaviour on younger paddlers to make them unwelcome or prevent them using club equipment. Bullying can also occur between young people.

What if you accidentally hurt a child? - You should report such an incident immediately to another Club Coach/official and make a written note of it. You should also inform the child's parents/carers, preferably in person.

Is touching OK? If a coaching technique would benefit from physical contact or support then first asks the participant's permission (e.g. would you mind if I held your shoulders to show you what I mean?) It is useful to take time to explain why and how this is used to the participant and their parent or carer. . Touching can be OK and appropriate as long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing or for the wrong reason.

Publicise the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline - 0808 800 5000 (Scotland 0800 022 3222)

### **Indications of Abuse**

There are physical and behavioural signs that might raise your concern about the welfare or safety of a child/vulnerable person. They are only indicators - not confirmation. Some examples are: Where the child(s) /vulnerable person(s)

- Say that she or he is being abused, or another person says they believe (or actually know) that abuse is occurring.
- Has an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- Behaviour changes, either over time or quite suddenly, becoming aggressive, withdrawn or unhappy.
- Appears not to trust adults, e.g. a parent or coach with whom she/ he would be expected to have, or once had, a close relationship.
- Shows inappropriate sexual awareness for his/ her age and sometimes behaves in a sexually explicit way.
- Becomes increasingly neglected-looking in appearance, or loses or puts on weight for no apparent reason.

Bear in mind that physically disabled children, children with learning difficulties and vulnerable groups are particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them.

### **If you have concerns about the welfare of a child/vulnerable adult**

Please remember the golden rule –

**It is not your responsibility to decide whether a child / vulnerable adult is being abused - but it is your responsibility to pass the information on to the appropriate person.**

The Nominated Safeguarding Person is **Ian Sheldrake**

# Guidelines for the Nominated Safeguarding Person

For the sake of simplicity, the term '**Nominated Safeguarding Person**' is used in this document.

## What does the Nominated Safeguarding Person (NSP) do?

The NSP's role includes:

- Overseeing the preparation and implementation of the child protection policy and ensuring that it is regularly reviewed, and that the policies and procedures are followed.
- Liaise with the Council and other child protection agencies (i.e. Police) and make referrals;
- Report any concerns to Children's Services or the police. (Urgent concerns must be reported immediately even if the NSP is not available);
- Act as the lead person in circumstances where an allegation has been made against a member of staff/volunteer within their agency;
- Act as a source of advice on all child protection matters within their organisation and seek further advice and guidance from other agencies as needed e.g. LA, NSPCC, ECVS;
- Ensure that a record is kept of any concerns about a child or young person and of any conversation or referrals to statutory agencies;
- Ensure that any such record is kept safely and securely.
- Making sure that staff/volunteers receive adequate child protection training.
- Promoting the needs of children and young people in the workplace and keeping the staff and volunteers informed on good practice.
- Attending meetings following disclosures or investigations, including case conferences, giving either support to a child or family members (not both at the same time).
- A child protection conference brings together family members, the child where appropriate, supporters / advocates and those professionally involved with the child and family to share information, make safeguarding judgements and decide what future action is needed to safeguard the child and promote their welfare).
- Appearing in court as a witness, should you have heard a disclosure of abuse.
- Supporting the child / family where there is a court case.
- **Being available!!**

## **What should a NSP do if they have/receive a child protection concern?**

It is likely that you could be contacted by a child/young person who may disclose abuse directly to you, a worker may approach you with a concern, or a parent may want help or advice.

Where there is a concern of physical, emotional abuse or neglect the following general guidelines should be followed:

- If deliberate injury is suspected, there is concern for a child's safety or they are afraid to return home, Children's Social Care should be contacted. Don't discuss with parents/carers
- Seek medical help if needed urgently, advising doctor of suspicions.
- If a child isn't in immediate risk (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carer to seek help themselves, but monitor the situation
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- Where sexual abuse is suspected or disclosed:
  - Always contact Children's Social Care or the police immediately
  - Never tell the parents.
  - Ealing Children's Social Care has a specific form that they will ask you to complete in making a referral. Follow up any telephone conversation with a written referral and ask for confirmation.

## **What should the NSP do if they receive an allegation against a member of staff or volunteer?**

The NSP must contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) immediately if an allegation or concern has been made about a staff member/volunteer who has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children

If the NSP feels that the allegation does not meet the above criteria, s/he should carefully record why this is so that, along with any decisions s/he has made regarding any further action needed. The person about whom the allegation has been made should be kept informed, as well as the child/young person's parents and the child/young person themselves.

If the NSP is unsure about this, s/he should discuss the case with the LADO to consider how to move forward.

There will be occasions when urgent action is needed to safeguard the child/children before the LADO can be contacted. It may be necessary to contact the police or to consider suspending or removing the alleged perpetrator from contact with children pending the decisions made with the LADO. In these

circumstances the NSP should consult with their senior management and personnel managers, where applicable.

Steps must be taken to fully support anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concerns about a colleague and every effort must be made to maintain confidentiality for all parties whilst the allegation is considered.

## **Managing the member of staff against whom the allegation has been made**

It may be necessary to suspend or remove from duties involving children/young people, the person about whom the allegations have been made. This decision should be made in liaison with the LADO and a senior manager (where available) and any decision should be carried out so that it is consistent with the organisations disciplinary and staff procedures. Remember that those being accused must be treated fairly and with an open-mind during any investigations. .

Where suspension is the next step, it will usually be necessary to tell the person why they are being suspended. Details of the allegation should not be shared until this is agreed by the LADO as part of the investigation process. It is enough to simply say that an allegation has been made.

Suspension protects the individual concerned as well as the child as it can prevent further allegations or any recriminatory behaviour.

If the person is a member of the union or professional association, s/he should be advised to seek support from that organisation. The NSP must also consider whether the person has children or has access to children in another setting and through consultation with the LADO, decide whether those organisations/agencies need to be informed.

All agencies should carry out their own internal disciplinary/investigative processes according to their own procedures, but these should be done in liaison with the child protection process, which has to take priority. Internal processes are usually carried out following the conclusion of the child protection investigation and are informed by the findings of that investigation.



**What should you do if you have allegations made against you?**

You should seek legal advice.