



Child and Vulnerable Groups Protection Policy

Introduction

This policy has been written in conjunction with the British Canoe Union (BCU) Child and Vulnerable Groups Protection Policy which should be referred to for further guidelines.

www.bcu.org.uk

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.

Stratford on Avon Kayaks (SOAK) is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of its members. All members should show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of others and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the Cub. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

Policy Aims

The aim of the SOAK Child and Vulnerable Groups Protection Policy is to promote good practice by:-

- Ensuring that all those taking part in canoeing/kayaking are able to do so protected and kept safe from harm while they are with coaches, volunteers and helpers. This is particularly true in respect of children and vulnerable groups.
- Allowing all coaches to make informed and confident responses to specific child and vulnerable groups protection issues.
- Supporting coaches and helpers to protect themselves from allegations of abuse.

Good Practice Guidelines

All coaches and other adults involved with checking in, boat handling etc. (helpers) must demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect children, vulnerable adults and themselves. Coaches should attend regular coaching meetings with the lead coach regarding group organisation, good practice and group management. All coaches and helpers must adhere to the Good Practice Guidelines within the BCU's Child and Vulnerable Groups Policy and the BCU's Code of Conduct/Ethics. <http://www.canoe-england.org.uk>

All coaches will attend regular training relating to child and vulnerable groups protection.

All coaches working in canoeing/kayaking have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

Medical Details

The club requires written details from its members of all medical conditions that are relevant to taking part in canoeing and water sports activities. This information will be made available to the lead coach who will decide how and when it is appropriate to disseminate this to coaches and others to ensure the safety of club members and their ability to participate. The information will be stored and maintained by the Club Child Protection Officer. Should changes occur, members should ensure that this information is updated within the membership cycle.



Recruitment and selecting staff volunteers

SOAK recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and will therefore undertake all reasonable steps to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults. Any new potential coach or helper will not be allowed to work unsupervised with children or vulnerable adults. Anyone wishing to coach at SOAK will need to be able to confirm their coaching qualifications and undertake the relevant checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service and must have the consent of the committee before any appointment is made.

Duty to respond to concerns that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in SOAK to take responsibility or to decide whether or not any abuse of a child or vulnerable adult has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities. SOAK assures all coaches that it will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concerns that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Responding to an allegation of abuse by a coach or club member

Where there is a complaint against a coach or club member there may be three types of investigation:-

- A criminal investigation
- A child/vulnerable adult protection investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation. The results of a police and child/vulnerable adult protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

The following actions should be taken if there are concerns:

(1) Poor Practice:-

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the Club Child Protection Officer (CCPO) will, with the support of relevant committee members, deal with the matter as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the CCPO or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the BCU Child Protection Officer who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

(2) Suspected abuse*:-

- If concerns have been raised that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused by either a club member or a member of the public, this must be reported to the CCPO.
- When appropriate, the CCPO will refer the allegation to Warwickshire Children's Social Care Team (01926 410410). The CCPO will be able to voice these concerns to a social worker from the children's team. They may in turn involve the police. Alternatively, the CCPO should contact the police directly if it is out-of-hours.



- The parents or carers of the child/vulnerable adult will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Children's Social Care Team.
- The CCPO should also notify the Club Chairman and the BCU Child Protection Officer, who will deal with any media enquiries.
- If the CCPO is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Club Chairman or in his/her absence the BCU Child Protection Officer who will refer the allegation to the Children's Social Care Team.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:-
 - The Club Child Protection Officer
 - The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
 - The person making the allegation
 - Children's Social Care team/police
 - BCU Home Nation Child Protection Lead Officer
- Seek advice from the Children's Social Care Team on who should approach the alleged abuser.
- Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure)

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

Following a raised concern about poor practice The SOAK Child Protection Officer will make an immediate decision about whether the individual should be temporarily suspended either from their duties or club coaching. Once an internal investigation has been carried out, a decision about re-instatement will need to be agreed by the Child Protection Officer and other relevant committee members.

If there have been allegations of abuse and a coach or volunteer has been suspended, irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries, the BCU Case Management Group will assess all individual cases to decide whether a coach or other volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the BCU Case Management Group will give full support to the Club. The welfare of children/vulnerable adults should always remain paramount.

Further information

In addition to documents already mentioned the BCU also have the following information on their website:-

- Harassment Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Child Protection Procedures, Articles of Association and Disciplinary Procedure



This document will be reviewed annually

*Abuse is generally acknowledged to come under four main types – Physical, Sexual, Emotional and Neglect (a full definition can be found in the BCU Child and Vulnerable Groups Protection Policy).

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