

**The policies and guidelines referenced within this document are those of British Canoeing and its home nation associations. All references to British Canoeing within this policy also refer to Scottish Canoe Association (SCA), Canoe Wales (CW) and The Canoe Association of Northern Ireland (CANI) unless otherwise stated.**

The principles of both the policy and the guidance documents are based on our moral and ethical duty to ensure children can enjoy canoeing in a safe environment and as such they reflect current best practice and the legislative framework of each home nation.

To take account of legal variation and social policy, national association bodies will, where necessary, establish guidelines to take account of home nation government, law and social work practices.

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## DUTY OF CARE

British Canoeing are committed to ensuring that all those taking part in canoeing are able to do so protected and kept safe from harm. This is particularly true in respect of children.

We **all** have a duty with respect to safeguarding and protecting children to ensure they can participate and enjoy our sport with the highest possible standards of care. All coaches, volunteers and providers 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.

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 an activity such as canoeing, 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. Coaches, volunteers, 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 journeys to and from the activity, during events, team training events and camps etc.

The content of this document provides specific information in respect of safeguarding and protecting children 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.

Further to this document you may wish to consult the following additional information (as appropriate in your home nation).

- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy (Children and Young people)
- Safeguarding Whistle Blowing Policy
- Safeguarding Procedures
- Dispute Resolution and Disciplinary Procedures
- Coaching Code of Ethics
- Safeguarding Adults Policy

## PADDLESAFE

The welfare of children is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to protecting a child from abuse. Everyone in Paddlesport can help - administrator, club official, coach, parent, friend and children themselves.

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

Whilst the welfare of children 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 safeguarding children is to ensure that we provide individuals with access to confidential advice, guidance and support, provided separately to that provided for those with concerns that abuse may be taking place.

These safeguarding and 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, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, marital status, pregnancy, maternity and sexual orientation 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.
- Coaches, clubs and centres need to be provided with advice to raise awareness of best practice and guidance and support should they become involved in an abuse situation.

British Canoeing recognises that some children may have additional vulnerabilities or are disadvantaged by their experiences. It is important that all those who work with children are vigilant in creating a safe culture and are aware of those who may have additional vulnerabilities.

We know that if procedures are to help protect children, everyone involved in Paddlesport needs to see and discuss them. We are therefore asking club secretaries and welfare officers to make sure that they are widely distributed, discussed at club executive and general meetings and adopted into their own policies and procedures.

## INDICATIONS OF ABUSE

There are physical and behavioural signs that might raise your concern about the welfare or safety of a child. They are only indicators - not confirmation.

Some examples are: Where the child,

- Says that she/ 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 some children can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN

If you have concerns about the welfare of a child please remember the golden rule –

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

Make a detailed note of what you have seen or heard but do not delay passing on the information.

If you are a member, or the parent/carer or friend of a member of a canoe club/ centre you should:

- Tell the person appointed for safeguarding; this is normally the Club Welfare Officer. At an event tell the person responsible for safeguarding (Event Welfare Officer) or the event organiser - unless, of course you suspect them of being involved OR
- Contact the home nation Safeguarding Lead Officer listed on page 6 OR
- If you need urgent advice contact the NSPCC Child Protection 24 hours Help Line 0808 800 5000

If you are the person responsible for safeguarding children at your organisation you can:

- Talk to the child's parents/carers about the concerns if you think there may be an obvious explanation such as a bereavement or pressure from their studies/exams.
- If you need urgent advice contact the NSPCC Child Protection 24 hours Help Line. Contact your local social services department or, in an emergency, the Police.

- If you are working with paddlers away from home, at a training camp, perhaps, or a national/ regional competition - tell the team manager or the designated welfare officer.
- If you are working with a school - inform the head teacher.
- If you are involved in a paddle scheme such as local authority canoeing lessons, refer to their safeguarding and child protection procedures.

Please note, that when you have reported your concerns to the NSPCC, police or social services you are also required to contact your home nation Safeguarding Officer to advise them of your concern and to whom you have reported it. A standard reporting form for this purpose is available from your home nation website.

If a child tells you that he or she is being abused

- Stay calm.
- Do not promise to keep it to yourself.
- Listen to what the child says and, please, take it seriously.
- Only ask questions if you need to identify what the child is telling you – do not ask about explicit details.
- Make a detailed note of what the child has told you but, as advised in the previous section, please do not delay passing on the information.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAVE ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST YOU?

If, as a coach or volunteer, you have had allegations made against you and you wish to discuss the matter with an impartial adviser you could contact your home nation Safeguarding Officer who will advise you of what support may be available. See page 6 for contact details.

## DEALING WITH DISCLOSURES OR DISCOVERY OF ABUSE

Ensure you have written procedures and systems in place for dealing with incidents of abuse (see home nation templates and guidance documents).

### *Codes of Conduct*

Ensure all members, helpers, paddlers and parents adhere to the Codes of Conduct (see home nation guidance and templates).

### *Create a Safe Environment*

Have you done a risk assessment?

Do you have a safety policy?

## *Screening Volunteers, Helpers and Staff*

All British Canoeing clubs and providers are responsible for ensuring their volunteers, helpers and staff have the appropriate disclosure in place, where eligible, prior to being deployed in their role.

Communicate all these actions to all your members.

## **HOME NATION SAFEGUARDING OFFICER CONTACT DETAILS:**

England	0115 8968842	email: <a href="mailto:safeguarding@britishcanoeing.org.uk">safeguarding@britishcanoeing.org.uk</a>
N Ireland	028 95438094	email: <a href="mailto:safeguarding@cani.org.uk">safeguarding@cani.org.uk</a>
Scotland	07900 887007	email: <a href="mailto:child.protection@canoescotland.org">child.protection@canoescotland.org</a>
Wales	07496 018281	email: <a href="mailto:childprotection@canoewales.com">childprotection@canoewales.com</a>

## APPENDICES

### 1. DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

It's generally acknowledged that there are five main types of abuse in relation to children - Physical, Sexual, Emotional, Neglect and Bullying.

#### *Physical Abuse*

Physical abuse is just what the term implies - hurting or injuring a child 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 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 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 is over protected. Abuse can occur where a parent or coach has unrealistic expectations over what a child can achieve.

#### *Neglect*

Failing to meet children's 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. For further guidance on bullying refer to the relevant Anti Bullying Policy.

## 2. GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

By following these guidelines you will help to protect both the children in our sport and our coaches/helpers from wrongful allegations.

- Avoid situations where you are alone with one child. British Canoeing acknowledges that occasionally there may be no alternative, for example, where a child 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. Further guidance on this is contained in British Canoeing Coaching Code of Ethics.
- If any form of physical support is required, ask the paddler's permission, explain what you are doing and why to both the child and their parents/carers.
- Where possible ask parents/carers to be responsible for children in changing rooms.
- Where possible, there should not be a time when one adult is alone in a changing room when U18's are present and vice versa.
- 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, make sure you have another adult accompanying you. Get the consent of the parent/carer and if possible the child. Let them know what you are doing and why.
- Ensure that any claims of abuse by a child 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 immature growing body and ability.
- Follow the recognised guidelines for photography and video.
- 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 paddler'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 paddler and their parent or carer. (See British Canoeing or home nation guidelines for physical contact). Touching can be OK and appropriate as long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing or for the wrong reason.



## 3. GUIDELINES FOR CLUBS AND ORGANISATIONS

If you have good standards of practice within your club or organisation people are more likely to participate and/or join! We recommend that clubs/organisations and event organisers review their existing policies and practices to help safeguard the welfare of children within their organisation. By taking these basic steps you will also help protect your helpers/ coaches and the club from wrongful allegations. In addition, many funding bodies now require you to have a child protection policy and procedures in place.

### Adopt a Safeguarding Policy

This should suit the type of organisation you are and what you provide. It can be brief or long - the important point is that everyone is made aware of it and you establish how it will be implemented - and then implement it. It should contain a statement of your commitment to providing a safe place for children to participate in Paddlesport and to preventing their abuse. You should also include a code of practice and procedures for how you aim to achieve this.

Ensure your club adheres to recognised best practice guidelines with particular reference to British Canoeing and home nation documents:

- Codes of Ethics.
- British Canoeing and home nation safeguarding policies, procedures and guidance.
- The requirements for coaches and helpers to have undergone appropriate disclosure checks and relevant safeguarding training.
- Publicise the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline - 0808 800 5000

### Recruiting and Managing Volunteers and Helpers

Having good standards of practice within your club or organisation is likely to encourage more people to join. This includes:

- screening of helpers (see below)
- induction procedures for all helpers
- establishing clear roles
- regular checks or supervision of helpers
- information about clubs rules /operating procedures
- system for feedback and support
- support training of helpers and coaches in safeguarding and child protection issues
- nominate a person to take responsibility for safeguarding
- if you are running an event – nominate a person responsible for safeguarding.

No system is foolproof – it is important that we do not rely on just one system to help create a safe environment for children.