

# HELFORD RIVER CHILDREN'S SAILING TRUST



## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

As defined in the Children's Act 1989, for the purposes of this policy and procedure, anyone under the age of 18 should be considered as a child. This policy also applies to vulnerable adults.

This policy and procedure applies to all HRCST staff and volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults in the course of their duties whilst at HRCST.

### POLICY

HRCST recognises that the safety and welfare of the child is paramount and that all children regardless of their age, race, gender, status, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, culture or family circumstance, have a right to protection from discrimination and abuse of any and every form.

- All complaints or concerns of behaviour that contradicts the above should be reported via the procedure below, and will be responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff and volunteers of HRCST should do their utmost to safeguard children involved with HRCST from physical, sexual or emotional harm.
- All staff and volunteers of HRCST should do their utmost to create a safe and welcoming environment both on and off the water, where children can have fun and develop their skills and confidence.
- All staff and volunteers of HRCST are advised to follow the good practice guidelines attached, and may be asked to apply for an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure.

### PROCEDURE

If you have any concerns related to the above please refer to the 'RYA Child Protection Guidelines' in the Boathouse. If you are still worried please contact Alison Collins (Principal) on 01326 231580 or 0775 319477. If you get the answering machine, please state your name, contact telephone number and that it is urgent.

## GOOD PRACTICE

In order to minimise risk do not:

- Spend any significant time working with children in isolation
- Take children alone in a car on journeys, however short or take children to your home. Where these are unavoidable, ensure they only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation or the child's parents
- 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 could be misused by a third party. Do not publish information, in print or on a website, that might enable someone to contact the child.
- 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. However, 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 the full understanding and consent of parents. In an emergency situation, which requires this type of help, parents should be fully informed. In such situations, it is important to ensure that all staff are sensitive to the child and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.
- Do not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others

## GUIDANCE NOTES

This section explains what child abuse is, how to recognise it, and what to do if you have concerns.

### WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults and often by people they know and trust. It refers to the damage done to a child's physical or mental health. Children can be abused within or outside their family, at school and in a sports or community environment. 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 occur 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 sports situation might also occur if a teacher or coach 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 persistent lack of love or affection
- There is constant overprotection which prevents children from socialising
- Children are frequently being shouted at or 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 WAS BEING ABUSED?

It is not always easy to spot when children have been abused even for the most experienced carers. However, some of the more 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 be 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.

However, it is important to note that 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.

## 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 for yourself.

## IF I DO SOMETHING, MIGHT IT MAKE THINGS WORSE?

Taking appropriate action if you are worried about abuse is never easy - it takes courage but it protects a young life.

You may be upset about what the child has said or you may worry about the consequences of your actions. Sometimes people worry about children being removed from their families as a result of abuse but in reality this rarely happens. However, one thing is certain - you cannot ignore it. The effects of abuse on children can be devastating, especially if children are left unprotected or do not receive help to cope with the abuse. The most serious effect is that children can and do die as a result of abuse. They can develop behavioural difficulties, problems at school, their development can be delayed and they can become depressed and withdrawn. Some of these problems, if left untreated, can persist into adulthood.

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.

## WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER HELP?

If you want to talk things through to gain some advice, you can phone the following 24 hour free telephone numbers. You do not have to give your name but it is helpful if you can.

### NSPCC helpline:

0808 800 5000

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

### ChildLine:

0800 1111

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

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

### Local Citizens' Advice Bureau:

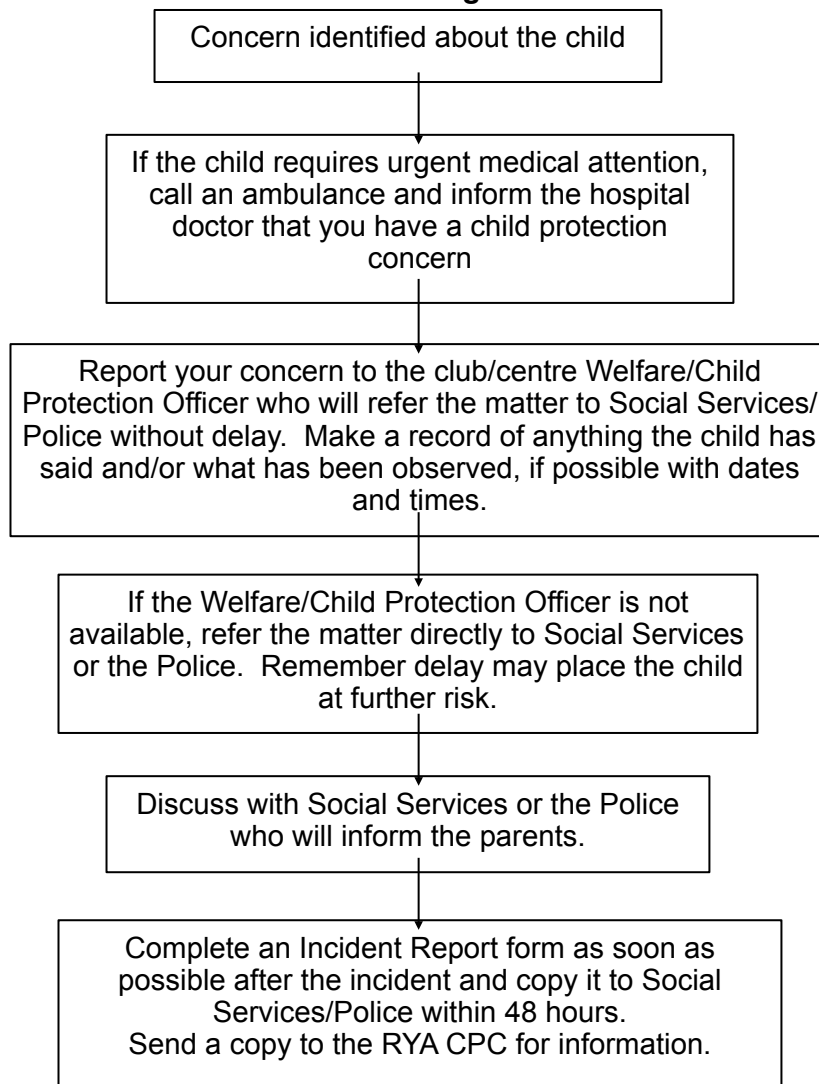
Refer to Yellow Pages for contact details

**RYA Legal:**  
023 8060 4220

**Sportscoach UK** (if a member):  
0113 274 4802  
[www.sportscoachuk.org](http://www.sportscoachuk.org)

General information is also available on the Child Protection in Sport Unit website:  
[www.sportprotects.org.uk](http://www.sportprotects.org.uk).

**Flowchart 1 – What to do if you are worried that a child is being abused outside the sport’s environment (but the concern is identified through the child’s involvement in the sport)**



If you are uncertain what to do at any stage, contact the RYA’s Child Protection Co-ordinator on 023 8060 4104 or the NSPCC free 24 hour helpline 0808 800 5000.

**Flowchart 2 – What to do if you are concerned about the behaviour of any member, volunteer, staff, coach or official working for the RYA or an RYA affiliated/recognised organisation**

