

SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB

Safeguarding Children and Young People - Policy and Procedures

1. Policy

The policy regarding the safeguarding of children and young people is set out in the Club's policy document and is repeated here for ease of reference:-

It is the policy of SWCC to:

- a. *Recognise its duty of care to children and young persons (under 18), as laid out in the relevant legislation.*
- b. *Recognise that the relevant legislation includes sexual, emotional and physical abuse as well as neglect.*
- c. *Take all allegations of child abuse seriously and to respond to such allegations promptly.*

Explanatory notes:-

- Caving is a 'risk activity' so 'neglect' in terms of caving must be taken to include 'failure to minimise risk' by ensuring adequate or sensible precautions are undertaken for physical safety, adequate/appropriate nutrition and protection against hypothermia, drowning, rock-fall, injury through falling, etc.
- In drawing up these procedures SWCC agrees to abide with the spirit of the BCA's Child Protection Policy which is available on the BCA website (<http://britishcaving.org.uk>).
- The Club Rules require any person under the age of 18 (including junior members) to be accompanied by a parent or adult *in loco parentis* when staying at the cottages or attending club activities.

2. Procedures

2.1. These Procedures will be published on the Club's website.

2.2. The 'Basic Principles of Safeguarding Children and Young People' shall be made available and promoted to all members. (see below)

Any member leading a trip which includes under-18s should have at least a fundamental knowledge of the 'Basic Principles of Safeguarding Children' (see below), and conduct themselves appropriately.

2.3. The Committee will appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Club members shall be informed of their name and contact details. The appointment will continue until terminated by the post holder or the Committee.

2.4. The duties of the DSL are:-

- To be familiar with the BCA Child Protection Guidance Notes and have sufficient training to understand safeguarding matters.
- To be a contact for any person with concerns over matters of inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people.
- To be a contact for any person who believes that the Club is in breach of its Safeguarding Children and Young People policy and procedures.
- To notify the Safeguarding Referral Panel (SRP – see below) of reported concerns.

NOTE:

- The DSL does not authorise Club members to take care of children or young people.
- The DSL does not make judgements in cases of reported inappropriate behaviour towards children or young people.

2.5. The Committee will appoint a Safeguarding Referral Panel (SRP) to consider any matters referred by the DSL. The SRP will consist of 3 Club members including the DSL. The appointments will continue until terminated by the post holder or the Committee.

2.6. The duties of the SRP include (but are not limited to) the following:-

- Gaining further information.
- Considering the content of the disclosure and any further information to reach a conclusion about the next steps.
- If appropriate, informing the police and/or social services.
- Informing the Committee. This will normally be an anonymised report if the SRP has determined that no action is required.
- If it is a matter that can be dealt with internally, determining the action to be taken.
- Implementing that action and ensuring that any control measures remain in place and are effective.

NOTE: It is also expected that the SRP shall:-

- Account for actions if necessary.
- Keep Confidential records.
- Ensure that it has sufficient training to undertake its role.

2.7. 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.

2.8. This document will be reviewed at intervals of not more than two years.

3. Basic Principles of Safeguarding Children and Young People

All SWCC members should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate. The terms 'child' and 'children' include young people (under 18).

3.1 Good practice means:

All children whilst on trips, taking part in social activities or staying overnight in the club headquarters (which includes camping) must be in the care of their parent or person *in loco parentis*.

Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.

Treating all children equally with respect and dignity, ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required it is provided openly. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.

3.2 Practices to be avoided:

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable, it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the child's parents.

- Spending time alone with children away from others.
- Transporting a child to a Club meet on a one to one basis.

3.3 Practices never to be sanctioned:

The following practices should never occur:

- Engaging in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Sharing a bedroom with a child unless the child is accompanied by a parent/guardian.
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allowing allegations made by a child to go unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Doing things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

3.4 Incidents that must be reported/recorded:

If any of the following occur you should record the incident and report this to the DSL as soon as possible. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a child.
- If a child seems distressed in any manner.
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Appendix 1 - Extract from the British Mountaineering Council Hut Guidelines

Children in huts – Points for consideration

General points

Adults can easily note the differences between hut and home and can react accordingly. It is much more difficult for children, especially young ones, for whom this may well be a new environment, and who are unlikely to be able to adapt their behaviour to the different environment easily, if at all. It is not reasonably practicable for clubs to operate their huts like domestic houses and therefore the accommodation and facilities available are likely to differ from those found in homes. It is not reasonable to expect members and their guests to modify their normal behaviour in the hut as soon as they are made aware that a child is present. Parents or guardians should be aware of these differences and their potential implications for children. They must be responsible for the care and control of their charges and it is in this context that parents should take note of the following:

1. General safety considerations

The standards of hygiene and cleanliness may be less than at home.

Stairwells may be dark, uneven under foot and even slippery when wet. There may not be guardrails on the stairs.

There may not be any covers on electrical sockets.

There may be open fires; fire guards are to prevent hot fuel falling out, not children falling in!

Members may walk about with hot kettles and they may not expect to encounter small children.

Members are likely to leave hot drinks in mugs and cold drinks in glasses on floors or low tables.

Members are likely to come in late, after some children have gone to bed, and they cannot reasonably be expected to modify their level of speech (or content!).

Members manoeuvring in congested car parks may drive on the assumption that adults will keep out of their way and they will not expect the presence of small children.

2. Accommodation

The sleeping accommodation in huts is provided by individual bunks and alpine-style sleeping platforms (wide bunks sleeping several people). Bunks may be two or even three tier. Dormitories or rooms vary in size considerably. They may sleep between 4 to 20 people. Some huts have family rooms.

3. Club Meets

In order to safeguard all members the Meet Leader / Meet Co-ordinator, should discuss with all those present on the meet how the sleeping accommodation should be arranged. It may be arranged in family groups or on a single sex basis, according to the ages of the children and the needs of the group.

On any occasion when a parent or adult is accompanied by children they should be mindful of the need to safeguard children by ensuring that the sleeping arrangements are appropriate for the

children and for the needs of the other members and their guests in the huts. Where a hut has family rooms then children can share a room with their parents.

Ultimately, if a parent is with their child or an adult who is *in loco parentis* is with a child, they can decide whether they are satisfied and happy with the sleeping arrangements available for the children for whom they are responsible.

Parents need to bear in mind that there may well be insufficient appropriate accommodation in huts and that they may need to review their plans.

Disclaimer: These guidelines were revised on the date shown below and the information herein is believed to be accurate at the time of writing. No responsibility can be accepted for any loss of benefit or entitlement arising through use of these guidelines – they are not intended to be definitive.

The above text was extracted in January 2023 from ‘Safeguarding Children in Mountain Huts’ (February 2015) published by the BMC and available on the BMC website.