



Child and Vulnerable Groups Protection Policy

The policies and guidelines referenced within this document are those of the British Canoe Union and its affiliated member countries. 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 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

The BCU 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 sport with the highest possible standards of care. These standards apply also to vulnerable groups. All coaches and clubs 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.

As the organisers of activity, there is a possibility of someone being harmed. In a small percentage of cases action may be taken against you if the person decides to make a claim. This action may result in financial losses but can also harm your reputation or the reputation of your club and the BCU itself.

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. 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.

Further to this document you may wish to consult the following additional information.

- Duty of Care Policy
- Harassment Policy
- Anti Bullying Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Child Protection Procedures, Articles of Association and Disciplinary Procedure
- BCU Coaching Code of Ethics

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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”

PADDLESAFE

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. Everyone in Paddlesport can help - administrator, club official, coach, parent, friend and children themselves.

Abuse can occur wherever there are children/vulnerable groups - at home, at school, in the park, at the 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 in Paddlesport has a moral responsibility and therefore a part to play in looking after the children and vulnerable groups with whom we 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.
- 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.

The BCU 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, everyone involved in Paddlesport needs to see and discuss them. We are, therefore, asking club

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secretaries/officers to make sure that they are widely distributed, discussed at club executive and general meetings and adopted into their own policies and procedures.

Good Practice Guidelines

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

- Avoid situations where you are alone with one child/vulnerable person. The BCU 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. Further guidance on this is contained in the BCU 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/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 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 BCU or Home Nations Guidelines for Physical Contact). Touching can be OK and appropriate as long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing or for the wrong reason.

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

- Codes of Conduct and Ethics.
- BCU and Home Nation Child Protection Policies and Guidance sheets
- The requirements for coaches and helpers to have undergone disclosure and relevant training.
- Publicise the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline - 0808 800 5000 (Scotland 0800 022 3222)

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. For further guidance on Bullying refer to the relevant Anti Bullying Policy.

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

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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.

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 you should:

- Tell the person appointed for child protection, if your club has one, or alternatively the secretary, chairperson, coach or any committee member. At an event tell the person responsible for child protection or the event organiser - unless, of course you suspect them of being involved - or
- Contact the Home Nation Child Protection Lead Officer listed on page 8.
Or
- If you need urgent advice contact the NSPCC Child Protection 24 hours Help Line 0808 800 5000 (Scotland 0800 022 3222).

If you are the person responsible for child protection 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.

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- 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 chief coach.
- If you are working with a school - inform the head teacher.
- If you are involved in a paddle scheme such as local authority paddle lessons, refer to their 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 Child Protection 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/vulnerable person tell you that he or she is being abused

- Stay calm.
- Do not promise to keep it to yourself.
- Listen to what the child/vulnerable person say and, please, take it seriously.
- Only ask questions if you need to identify what the child/vulnerable person is telling you – do not ask the child/vulnerable adult about explicit details.
- Make a detailed note of what the child/vulnerable adult 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 Child Protection Officer who will advise you of what support may be available. See page 8 for Home Nation Child Protection contact details.

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 and vulnerable groups within their organisations. By taking these basics 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 and vulnerable groups' policy and procedures in place.

Adopt a Child Protection and Vulnerable Group 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/vulnerable groups 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.

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:

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- 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 child protection/vulnerable group issues
- nominate a person to take responsibility for child protection
- if you are running an event – nominate a person responsible for child protection

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

Dealing with Disclosures or Discovery of Abuse

Issue written procedures and have systems in place for dealing with incidents of abuse (see Home Nation Templates and reference sheets for guidance).

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 BCU/ Home Nation 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 Child Protection Officers Contact details:

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| England | 07734 453430 | email: childprotection@bcu.org.uk |
| N Ireland | 07793 204593 | email: childprotection@cani.org.uk |
| Scotland | 01324 832871 | email: child.protection@canoescotland.org |
| Wales | 079717 83080 | email: childprotection@canoewales.com |