



Hythe & Saltwood Sailing Club
Safeguarding Children Policy & Procedures

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This policy and its associated guidelines has been introduced in response to guidance from the RYA.

1. Introduction

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2. Policy Statement

The child's welfare is paramount.

All children whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.

All suspicions and allegations of inappropriate behaviour will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately as defined in the Children Act 1989. Anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child for the purposes of this document.

3. A Code of Practice & Procedures

3.1 Recruitment (paid staff)

While HSSC is basically a self-help organisation, if the club should decide in the future to employ a person to train children, the following principles will apply:

- Such a person will be required to fill an application form, which will be scrutinised by the committee. The purpose of this reference is to investigate the candidate's past career or experience and to establish any criminal record. Where staff will be working unsupervised or parents are not in attendance, references should be taken up. Normally these should include at least one regarding previous work with children.
- Although positive vetting is not specifically required, applicants should signify their consent to checks being made with the Criminal Records Bureau, police or social services, if appropriate. This will be arranged through the RYA.

3.2 Recruitment (volunteers)

The role of volunteers in teaching and organising sailing at HSSC is central. The Health & Safety Policy defines roles, responsibilities, appropriate qualifications, suitable arrangements for sailing, risk assessments, etc.

HSSC has a strong policy on parental involvement. The following principles apply:

- The active involvement and co-operation of parents or their nominees is required when their children are sailing. A high degree of direct supervision is therefore ensured.
- Older children may attend and take part on club days under the supervision of the person in charge and at the discretion of parents.

Recruitment of Volunteers for specific activities shall be the responsibility of the committee. The following principles will apply:

- The committee will promote the recruitment of appropriate volunteers to assist in the running of that activity.
- Decisions regarding the deployment of volunteers will be taken in the context of this and other HSSC policies.
- Where there is any doubt as to the suitability of the recruit, a short probationary period should be linked to close monitoring.

3.3 Prevention of abuse

Good Practice Guide for Club Officers

Child abuse is a very difficult situation for centre principals and club officers. Having the right systems in place can help all concerned. Abusers have great difficulty operating in a well-run organisation with good quality management and training. The following are our operating principles:

- Plan the activities of the club so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children can occur.
- Training will be given to staff and volunteers in the prevention of child abuse.
- HSSC will give all staff and volunteers clear roles.
- HSSC will issue guidelines on how to deal with the discovery of abuse.
- If children tell staff about abuse, we will follow agreed procedures.

We can reduce situations for abuse of children and help to protect staff and volunteers from false allegations being made by promoting good practice. Some common sense guidelines for everyone within the organisation:

- Do not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Do not take children alone in a car on journeys, however short.
- Do not take children to your home.
- Where any of 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.
- Design training programmes that are within the ability of the individual child.
- Do not photograph or video children, or publish their pictures, without the knowledge and consent of their parents.

You should never:

- 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, sometimes it may be necessary for staff and volunteers 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 or carers. In an emergency situation, which requires this type of help, parents or carers should be fully informed. In such situations, it is important to ensure all are sensitive to the child and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

In addition, medical consent should be obtained in the event where medication or treatment is required to be administered in the absence of the parent/guardian; this includes hospitalisation. Such procedures would cover the organisation from accusations of neglect.

3.4 Child Welfare Co-ordinator

The role of the Child Welfare Co-ordinator will be appointed by the committee to ensure that HSSC has:

- An up to date policy with procedures to support it.
- That relevant staff and volunteers understand the procedures and put them into practice.
- To receive reports of any concerns or allegations.

The Commodore to decide on the appropriate action to be taken to keep the RYA informed as necessary.

3.5 What to do if abuse is suspected/alleged to have occurred

Principals/Managers

In the event of an accusation against a member of staff or a volunteer the Child Protection Coordinator should be informed as a matter of urgency.

Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse can occur and does occur outside the family setting. Child abuse has occurred within institutions and may occur in other settings. If a child has been abused in a public setting, other children may be involved.

Where there is an allegation of abuse against a member of staff, there may be three types of investigation:

- a criminal investigation.
- a child protection investigation.
- a disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and social services investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

It is important to understand that a member of the club reporting a case of child abuse, particularly by a fellow member, may undergo a very high degree of stress, including feelings of guilt for having reported the matter. It is therefore important to ensure that access to appropriate counselling and support is available in such a situation.

Instructors/Volunteers

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.

3.6 Recording information

When recording information, it is important that you do not carry the process beyond gathering information about the allegation, into beginning an investigation. Unnecessary interviews with child complainants could prejudice the integrity of evidence that may eventually have to be presented in court. There are particular problems with regard to gaining information from children with limited communication skills. Care should be taken that appropriate means are used to find out what the allegation is about without "leading" the child.

The environment for recording information needs to be considered carefully. Try and ensure that you are in sight of another adult, but that your conversation won't be overheard. You also need to be careful about

physical contact during an interview because it may not be what the child wants. The rule is to let the child initiate any actions and to remain positive and supportive throughout.

4. Recognising abuse

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:

4.1 Physical abuse

Is 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 Emotional abuse

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.

4.5 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 is 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 or 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. 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.

What should I do in general if I have concerns?

If you have noticed a change in the child's behaviour, first talk to the parents or carers. It may be that something has happened, like a bereavement, which has caused the child to be unhappy. However, if your concerns are about sexual abuse or violence, talking to the parents or carers might put the child at greater risk.

If your concerns remain or you cannot talk to the parents/carers, consult HSC's Child Protection Coordinator. It is the responsibility of this person to make the decision to contact the police.

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
Child Line: 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

If you are an instructor 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 4223
Sports coach UK (if a member): 0113 274 4802 www.sportscoachuk.org