

Child protection policy statement

(Approval TBC)

Mountaineering Scotland procedures and recommendations for good practice

(approval TBC)

1. Introduction

Children have a lot to gain from involvement in sport. Like other sports, mountaineering provides an opportunity to learn new skills, explore new environments, gain confidence and of course have fun. The full potential of these benefits can only be gained with a positive and progressive approach to the child's involvement. The focus should be on the needs of the child rather than on competition or success. A child-centred approach to mountaineering involving children will result in continued participation, a positive public image of our sport and contribute to long-term benefits in terms of the health and well-being of our future adult population.

Mountaineering Scotland recognises that child protection is every member's responsibility and that we should safeguard all children involved in youth mountaineering activities organised by staff or volunteers. All members have a right to protection, and the Mountaineering Scotland policy will be inclusive and take full account of the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable.

2. Scope

This document details the Child Protection Policy and related procedures adopted by Mountaineering Scotland.

The Child Protection Policy Statement is the principle which informs the Mountaineering Scotland approach to Child and Adults at Risk Protection.

The Child Protection Policy Statement and Recommendations for Good Practice define the child protection procedures which have been implemented by Mountaineering Scotland in respect of all activities promoted or organised by Mountaineering Scotland.

The policy statement and recommendations are provided for the guidance of clubs affiliated to Mountaineering Scotland.

3. Policy statement

Mountaineering Scotland is committed to safeguarding its members, and to ensuring that unaccompanied children on Mountaineering Scotland or club activities are protected from harm, abuse and exploitation.

3.1 Purpose

- To provide a policy framework which protects children on Mountaineering Scotland or club activities
- To provide a policy framework which protects club officials and members in the event of unwarranted allegations of abuse by children participating in club activities
- To ensure club officials and members are aware of the risks and implications for clubs relating to child protection issues through this Policy and the Mountaineering Scotland Recommendations for Good Practice

3.2 Definitions

- A person under the age of 18 is defined as a 'child' in the 'Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007
- A Person in Regulated Work with children is likely to be someone who acts in a supervisory or leadership role of a group, activity or event involving children

3.3 Notes to the Policy Statement

- Mountaineering Scotland has procedures, 'Recommendations for Good Practice', for its own events.
- Clubs organising activities with unaccompanied children are recommended to adopt these procedures or procedures of their own, to ensure Civil Liability Cover in case of alleged child abuse against a member.
- Further guidance for clubs is provided on the Mountaineering Scotland website at [Children & Vulnerable Adults on Meets: Guidance for Clubs](#)

4. What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing is broader than child protection and how people often think about welfare.

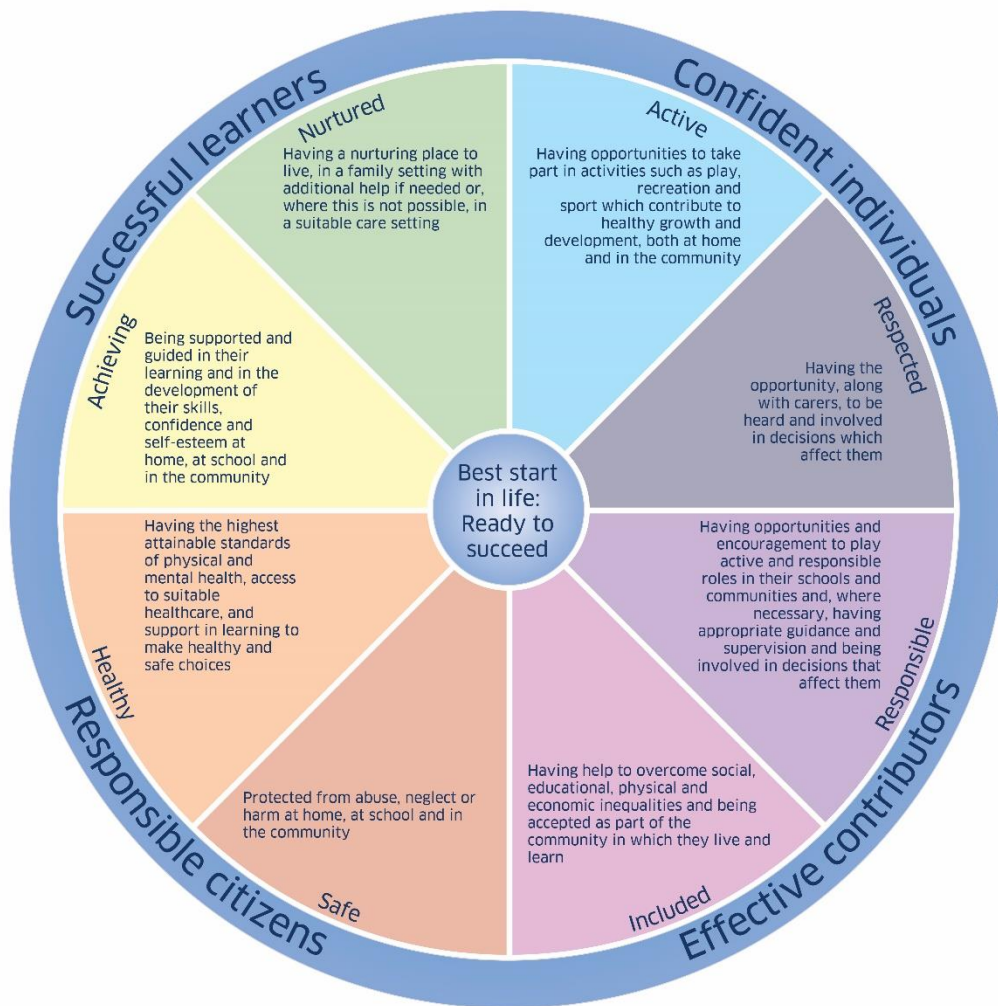
For example: climbing can promote children to be responsible by educating them about the safety aspects of the sport. However, a coach may note concerns about the health of a child if, for example, they notice possible signs of self-injury or changes in a child's behaviour.

Or, a Hillwalking Club might have new child member from a BME group attend club walks over the summer where it is observed that other children in the club are purposefully excluding them.

To help make sure everyone – children, young people, parents, and the services that support them – has a common understanding of what wellbeing means, we describe it in terms of eight indicators.

The eight wellbeing indicators are commonly referred to by their initial letters - SHANARRI (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included).

The SHANARRI wheel



Source: www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/wellbeing

Further information, templates and guidance on this can be found at:

<https://www.children1st.org.uk/what-we-do/how-we-help/safeguarding-in-sport/safeguarding-in-sport-resources/>

5. Recommendations for good practice (procedures) for Mountaineering Scotland volunteers and staff

By adhering to these Recommendations for Good Practice, Mountaineering Scotland volunteers and staff will ensure that our sport is safe and fun for children, while those undertaking roles within our sport will be protected.

5.1 The Meaning of Good Practice

In the context of climbing and mountaineering activities, good practice means:

- Putting the child's welfare, safety and enjoyment first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Treating all children / adults at risk equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Making sport and activities fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust, which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Planning and preparing appropriately so that each session suits the needs of the group (e.g. activities are age-appropriate and allow each child to participate in an enjoyable way).
- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment - i.e. no secrets).
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of children and adults at risk – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Ensuring that manual or physical support is only provided when necessary, and that this is in the interest of the child and takes place openly. Children should always be consulted, and their agreement gained. Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when a child is constantly moving. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- Keeping up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance for sport.
- Involving parents / carers wherever possible (e.g. for the responsibility of their children in changing rooms). If groups have to be supervised in a changing area, always ensure parents / teachers / coaches / officials work in pairs.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given.
- Ensuring that if mixed groups are taken away, they should always be accompanied by an adult male and an adult female.
- Ensuring that on residential activities, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- Requesting written parental consent if club officials are required to transport children in their cars.

It is important that all Mountaineering Scotland volunteers and staff follow these Recommendations for Good Practice. By keeping children at the forefront of our planning and practice we can be confident that participants will enjoy their mountaineering experiences and that our actions will be regarded as safe.

5.2 Activities to Avoid

In addition, volunteers and staff must never:

- Exert undue influence over a child in order to gain personal benefit or reward.
- Share a room or tent alone with a child on away trips.
- Being left alone with children whom are waiting to be to be collected or to leave them by themselves. Ensure another adult stays with you until they are collected by a parent/care.

- Engage in rough contact, sexually provocative games, inappropriate touching of any kind, and / or make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child.
- Engage in an intimate, emotional, physical or sexual relationship with a child. This is considered a breach of trust and a disciplinary matter.
- Use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a child.
- Take body measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult.
- Undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis, etc.) in the training of children.

Mountaineering Scotland volunteers and staff, particularly those involved in climbing activities, will be working in an environment where a 'hands on' approach may sometimes be necessary (e.g. demonstrating a technique during coaching or assisting with personal protective equipment such as a climbing harness). Ensure that such contact is kept to the safe minimum, done openly, is in response to the child's need, and is with the knowledge and consent of the child and their parent / guardian.

Minimum reasonable force or restraint may be used in exceptional circumstances; self-defence, preventing risk of injury, or damage to property. Record and report any such incidents to the Club or Mountaineering Scotland [Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer](#).

Challenge sensitively any inappropriate behaviour from a child, such as a crush on an instructor or attention seeking behaviour. If this is focused on you, seek support and inform the Club or Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer.

Following any incident where a volunteer or member of staff feels their actions could be misinterpreted, a written report should be submitted to the Club or Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer.

Finally, prepare yourself, and those who work with you, by taking preventative measures.

Think through:

- The reasons for doing what you are doing
- How you do it
- Any possible misinterpretations of your actions

5.3 Guidance for First Aid and treatment of injuries

Parents/carers must complete a Partnership with Parents/Carers Form before their child participates in sport. This ensures that sports volunteers running an event or activity are made aware of any pre-existing medical conditions, or medicines being taken by participants or existing injuries and treatment required.

- Have an accessible and well-resourced first aid kit and a working telephone at the venue.
- Where possible, access to medical advice and/or assistance should be made available.
- Only those with a current, recognised First Aid qualification should treat injuries.
- Inform parents/carers as soon as possible of any injury and action taken.
- A Concern Recording Form should be completed if a child sustains a significant injury and the details of any treatment given recorded. Good sense or sport specific guidance should be used to determine which injuries are significant.
- The circumstances of any accidents that occur should be recorded and reviewed to avoid it happening again.

We highly recommend that at least one adult member/volunteer in a group/session has attended a suitable First Aid training to support and delivery emergency first aid if required.

5.4 Use of Photographic & Filming Equipment at Events Involving Children

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children and / or disabled sports-people in vulnerable positions. Photographers should have the participants' and their parents' (if under 18) permission or accreditation where appropriate. It is advisable that all clubs be vigilant and that any concerns are reported to the Club or [Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer](#).

5.4.1. Use of Video as a Coaching Aid

There is no intention to prevent club coaches and teachers using video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid. However, permission should be sought, and performers (and parents / carers) should be aware that this is part of the coaching programme. Care should be taken in the storing of such films, and where possible deleting them at the end of each session.

5.4.2 Guidance on Use of Photography

- Ask for parental permission to use the child's image. This ensures that parents are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport.
- Ask for the athlete's permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport.
- If the athlete is named, avoid using their photograph.
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the athlete.
- To reduce the risk of inappropriate use, only use images of athletes in suitable dress. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child.
- We recommend that images of athletes should not be posted to publicly-accessible social media websites.
- The use of inappropriate images should be reported to the Club or [Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer](#).

Amateur photographers / film / video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the Club or Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer, or the leader of the session. The club / organisation should display the following information prior to the start of an event to inform spectators of the policy:

"In line with the recommendation in Mountaineering Scotland's Child Protection Policy – Guidelines for Good Practice, the promoters of this event request that any person wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close-range photography should register their details with the organisers. Those commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to an activity or event should ensure the media representatives are clear about expectations of them in relation to child protection. Professional photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the Club or Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer, or event organiser by producing their professional identification for the details to be recorded.

The Children's Officer / event organiser must then:

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour.
- Issue the photographer with identification which must be worn at all times.
- Keep a record of accreditations.
- Inform athletes and parents that a photographer will be in attendance at an event and ensure they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs.
- Not allow unsupervised access to athletes or one to one photo sessions at events.
- Not approve / allow photo sessions outside the event or at an athlete's home.

5.5 Recruitment and Selection of Staff and Volunteers

The vast majority of Mountaineering Scotland actions are undertaken by volunteers with the aid and guidance of a small number of paid staff. Mountaineering Scotland seeks to position itself to support its members by allowing the recruitment of volunteer workers to provide technical, physical and clerical assistance.

Mountaineering Scotland will endeavour to recruit and select volunteers and staff in a transparent and equitable fashion in line with current guidelines

Mountaineering Scotland recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. When undertaking selection checks the following should be included:

- All volunteers / staff working with children should complete an application form. The application form should elicit information about the applicant's past. Where this is a regulated work position this should include a self-declaration form.
- For those working or volunteering in regulated work, consent should be obtained from the applicant to seek information from a PVG Scheme Record / Update.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo).
- Agree and sign up to the organisations code of conduct

5.6 Volunteers aged 17 or under

While some children under the age of 17 may be in 'regulated work' with children they should not be placed in positions of sole responsibility for other children. They should be supervised by a more senior qualified coach or volunteer who has been appropriately vetted.

Volunteers aged 17 and under should be assessed for their suitability to work with children. There is no lower age limit for PVG membership. Where the post meets the 'regulated work' criteria, membership of the PVG Scheme should be considered.

Young volunteers may come under different pressures (e.g. lack of respect from peers) and closeness in age could lead to the development of friendships or romantic/sexual relationships. Regular supervision, training and extra support is recommended. Supervision ratios should also be reassessed, as a young volunteer may not be as capable of overseeing a group of children and young people as an adult in the same position.

5.7 Dealing with Bullying

Bullying can be a 'one-off' occurrence or repeated over a period of time, and can take many forms including children being bullied by adults, their peers and in some cases by members of their families. Bullying can be difficult to identify because it often happens away from others and those who are bullied often do not tell anyone. Bullying is not always deliberate.

Examples of bullying include:

- Physical e.g. theft, hitting, kicking (in some cases, this might constitute an assault).
- Verbal (including teasing) e.g. spreading rumours, threats or name-calling, ridicule or humiliation.
- Emotional e.g. isolating a child from the activities or social acceptance of the peer group.
- Cyberbullying e.g. sending insulting messages via text or emails; posting images or upsetting information on social networking sites or forums etc.
- Using abusive or insulting behaviour in a manner which causes alarm or distress.
- Prejudiced based – singling out children who are perceived as different due to, e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, children who are asylum seekers, looked after children, young carers and so on.
- Having belongings stolen or damaged.
- Being targeted because of who the child is or with who/where/what they are affiliated.

Signs which **may** raise concerns about bullying include:

- hesitation or reluctance to attend training or activity
- reluctance to go to certain places or work with a certain individual
- bruising or other injuries
- becoming nervous and withdrawn
- often last one picked for a team or group activity for no apparent reason, or being picked on when they think your back is turned
- clothing or personal possessions go missing or get damaged
- 'losing' pocket money repeatedly
- suddenly prone to lashing out at people, either physically or verbally, when normally quiet

When talking about bullying, it's never helpful to label children as 'bullies' or 'victims'. Labels can stick for life and can isolate a child, rather than helping them to recover or change their behaviour. It is preferable to talk about someone displaying bullying behaviour rather than label them a 'bully' – behaviour can be changed with help and support.

Action to help children on the receiving end of bullying behaviour:

- Cultivate an ethos where there's an anti-bullying culture – it is especially important that adults are good role models for children.
- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns. Help those being bullied to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment.
- Take all allegations seriously and take action to ensure the child is safe. Speak with those being bullied and those displaying bullying behaviour separately.
- Reassure the child that you can be trusted and will help them, although you can't promise to tell no-one else.
- Keep records of what is said i.e. what happened, by whom and when.
- In cases of cyberbullying, to advise children who are being bullied by text, email etc. to retain the communication or to print it out.
- Report any concerns to the person in charge at the organisation where the bullying is occurring.

Support for children involved in bullying behaviour:

- Talk with the child, explain the situation and try to get them to understand the consequences of their behaviour.
- In some cases, it might be worth considering seeking an apology from those involved in bullying behaviour (for example where those on the receiving end wish reconciliation). Apologies are only of real value however, when they are genuine.
- Be sensitive and use good judgement when it comes to informing parents/carers of those whose negative behaviour is impacting on others. Put the child at the centre – will telling the parents/carers result in more problems for the child?
- If appropriate, insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and compensation for the person/people being bullied.
- Impose consequences as necessary, e.g. exclusion from the team until behaviour standards are improved. Sport offers good opportunities for this.
- Encourage and support those displaying bullying behaviour to change this behaviour. Ask them to consider the impact their actions are having.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

What can Mountaineering Scotland or your club do?

Creating an anti-bullying ethos is the best prevention. We should not underestimate the importance of the behaviour of adults as they are role models for children.

Strategies and solutions do not come in 'one size fits all'. Each case is unique and requires an individual response to the individual situation. What might work in one situation might not work in another. You might have to adopt different strategies before finding one that is effective.

It is also important to ask for help and support if you need it to deal with a bullying incident. **Section 6** has useful contact details for help and advice and **RespectMe, Child Line** and [Parent Line Scotland](#) are also useful contacts to know.

5.8 How to Respond to Concerns about a Child

Child abuse, in any form, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take. Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with children in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer may have regular contact with children and be an important link in identifying cases where a child needs protection.

All cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document. When a child within the club has been abused outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. In such instances the club must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

All those working with children within a sporting organisation, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, have a responsibility to ensure that children are protected from harm, but do not hold responsibility for deciding whether or not abuse has taken place. It is the role of statutory agencies to make enquiries to assess whether a child is at risk of abuse and to take any necessary action to protect that child.

If there is a concern about a child's welfare, or the behaviour of an adult:

The one thing not to do, is to do nothing!

5.8.1. When a Child Tells You about Abuse

- A good solution to the discretion and caution required is '*observed confidentiality*' where you are witnessed speaking with the child, but not overheard.
- If a child talks to you about a concern, or if the child tells you about their abuse listen carefully and compassionately to what they tell you.
- It is important to stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying.
- The child is taking a risk by telling you this; you should ensure that the child's experience of telling is a positive one.
- Encourage the child to talk, using open-ended questions such as "What do you want to tell me?" or "How can I help you?"
- Remember the setting - the child is likely to be frightened or anxious.
- Tell the child that they were right to tell and are not to blame.
- Take what the child says seriously.
- Recognise the inherent difficulties interpreting what is said by young children or children with communication difficulties.
- However, don't prevent a child from recalling events.
- No judgmental statement should be made about the person against whom the allegation is made.
- Be honest with the child about what you can and cannot do. Tell them you are not able to keep what they have told you secret and that you will try to find them the help they need. Tell them what is likely to happen next (e.g. informing parents / guardians, Children and Family Services within the Local Authority Social Work Department or Family Protection Units within the local police service).
- When they have finished make a detailed note of what they have said and pass that information onto someone in a position of authority as soon as possible.
 - If you have serious concerns about the immediate safety of that child, contact the statutory authorities. Record who you spoke to and inform the Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer of what you have done.
- Find someone you trust to talk to and support you, but remember not to name or identify those involved in the allegations.

5.8.2. Observation / Information from an individual or agency

A concern or possible abuse of a child may be observed by another child or adult and information can come from an individual or another agency/organisation.

Where there is uncertainty about what to do with the information, directly from a child's disclosure or from someone else, the club's / Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer can be consulted for advice on the appropriate course of action.

If the club's or Mountaineering Scotland's Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer is unavailable or an immediate response is required, the police and social work services must be consulted for advice. They have a statutory responsibility for the protection of children, and they may already hold other concerning information about the child. Record any advice given.

5.8.3. Defamation

Concerned adults are sometimes reluctant to report concerns about abuse for fear that the person suspected will sue them for defamation if the allegation turns out to be unfounded.

To be defamatory a statement must first of all be untrue. Even if subsequently shown to be untrue, the statement will be protected by 'qualified privilege' if it is made to the appropriate authority "in response to a duty, whether legal, moral or social or in the protection of an interest" (Norrie K, Defamation and Related Actions in Scots Law, 1995). Unjustified repetition of the allegations to other persons will not be protected by privilege.

The qualification on privilege refers to statements made by malice. If a statement, even to the appropriate authority, can be shown to be motivated by malice, then an action of defamation could be successful.

(Taken from Guidelines for Child Protection Prepared for the Independent Schools in Scotland, Kathleen Marshall, Second Edition, January 1997)

5.8.4. Actions to Avoid – and Types of Questions to Ask

The person receiving a disclosure of child abuse should not:

- panic
- allow their shock or distaste to show
- ask leading questions, instead ask open questions such as "Who, What Where or When" – you need to establish facts
- speculate or make assumptions
- make negative comments about the alleged abuser
- approach the alleged abuser
- make promises or agree to keep secrets.
- contact or confront the individual who is alleged to be responsible.

5.8.5. Responding to Non-Verbal Concerns

Changes in a child's behaviour can be the result of a wide range of factors and this makes it difficult to identify if the changes are linked to abuse. Even signs such as bruising or other injuries cannot be taken as "proof" of abuse (see appendices). However, if you have concerns, you have a responsibility to act on those concerns.

5.8.6. Allegations of Previous Abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by an adult who was abused as a child by a member, or ex-member, of staff. Where such an allegation is made, the club should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside sport, may be at risk from this person.

5.8.7. Flowchart - Responding to Concerns about a Child

Download this section in pdf format

5.8.8. How to Respond to Concerns about the Conduct of Staff / Volunteers / Members of a Club

Mountaineering Scotland assures staff / volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports their concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

These procedures aim to ensure that all concerns about the conduct of a member of staff / volunteer are dealt with in a timely, appropriate and proportionate manner. No member of staff / volunteer in receipt of information that causes concern about the conduct of a member of a staff / volunteer towards children shall keep that information to themselves, nor attempt to deal with the matter on their own.

In the event of an investigation into the conduct of a member of staff / volunteer all actions will be informed by the principles of natural justice:

- Members of staff and volunteers will be made aware of the nature of concern or complaint.
- Where the concern is about possible child abuse, advice will firstly be taken from the police as to what can be said to the members of staff or volunteer.
- A member of staff or volunteer will be given an opportunity to put forward their case.

- Mountaineering Scotland will act in good faith, ensure the matter is dealt with impartially and as quickly as possible in the circumstances.

In all cases where there are concerns about the conduct of a member of staff / volunteer towards children, the welfare of the child will be the paramount consideration.

Where there is a complaint against a staff member or volunteer there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation,
- A child protection investigation,
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the criminal and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Poor Practice

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the Club or Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer or Disciplinary Committee will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

Suspected Abuse

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused, by either a member of staff or a volunteer, should be reported to the Club or Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer on the day the information is received.
- The Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk
- The Club or Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer will report the allegation to the Social Work Department or Police. The parents or carers of the child should be contacted as soon as possible, unless by doing so the child may be exposed to further risk. If in doubt, follow advice from Children and Family Services within the Local Authority Social Work Department or Family Protection Units within the local police service.
- If the Club or Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report should be made to the Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer. If the Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report should be made to the Mountaineering Scotland Chairperson who will refer the allegation to the statutory authorities.
- All members have the option of making a report direct to the statutory authorities if they so wish, or if they are unhappy with how the allegation is being dealt with by the club / Mountaineering Scotland.

Confidentiality

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. This may include the following people:

- The Club Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer;
- The Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer;
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused, unless advised otherwise by the Police;
- The person making the allegation;

- Children and Family Services within the Local Authority Social Work Department or Family Protection Units within the local police service.

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

- The Mountaineering Scotland member accused of abuse will be subject to a precautionary suspension pending the outcome of any investigation by the statutory authorities. It should be made clear that this is only a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later disciplinary procedure.
- Irrespective of the findings of the criminal and child protection inquiries, the Mountaineering Scotland Board will appoint a Disciplinary Committee which will assess all individual cases. The Mountaineering Scotland Disciplinary Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information. **The welfare of children should always remain paramount.**

Support to Deal with the Aftermath

- Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to children, parents and members of staff. Use of helplines, support groups (see page 21 for contact numbers) and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process.
- Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

If You (an Adult) are Accused of an Abusive Action

- Make notes of all your actions/contacts with the child in question as soon as possible.
- Seek access to professional and legal advice.
- Ensure you are no longer working with the child/children making the allegation.
- Consult Mountaineering Scotland procedures and make sure these are followed correctly
- Accept that colleagues may be expected not to contact you whilst an investigation is underway.
- Don't believe it couldn't happen to you.

Think about your relationship with a colleague who is under investigation. Ask management to confirm the contact arrangements and what support is available to your colleague and all other staff they work with.

5.8.9. Responding To Concerns about the Conduct of a Member of Staff / Volunteer

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5.9. What Is Child Abuse? Signs and Indicators

The following examples are ways in which children may be abused or harmed, either within or out with sport.

What is child abuse and child neglect?

"Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting, or by failing to act to prevent, significant harm to the child. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger."

While it is not necessary to identify a specific category of abuse when adding a child's name to the Child Protection Register, it is still helpful to consider and understand the different ways in which children can be abused:

1. Emotional abuse
2. Physical abuse
3. Neglect
4. Sexual abuse

These categories are not mutually exclusive, for example, a child experiencing physical abuse is undoubtedly experiencing emotional abuse as well. The following definitions show the different ways in which abuse may be experienced by a child but are not exhaustive, as the individual circumstances of abuse will vary from child to child. (All definitions taken from 'National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2010').

5.9.1 Identifying Child Abuse

Although the physical and behavioural signs listed may be symptomatic of abuse, they may not always be an indicator and, conversely, children experiencing abuse may not demonstrate any of these signs.

Child abuse is often difficult to recognise. It is not the responsibility of anyone involved in sport to decide whether or not a child has been abused. This is the role of trained professionals. We all, however, have a duty to act on any concerns about abuse.

5.9.2. Emotional Abuse

"...is the persistent emotional neglect or ill treatment that has severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person."

It may involve the imposition of age or developmentally inappropriate expectations of a child. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or exploiting or corrupting children. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all types of ill treatment of a child; it can also occur independently of other forms of abuse.

Examples of Emotional Abuse in Sport

- Persistent failure to show any respect to a child e.g. continually ignoring a child.
- Constantly humiliating a child by telling them they are useless.
- Continually being aggressive towards a child making them feel frightened.
- Acting in a way which is detrimental to the child's self-esteem.

Signs which **may** raise concerns about emotional abuse include:

- low self-esteem
- running away
- extremes - passivity / aggression
- significant decline in concentration
- indiscriminate friendliness and neediness
- self-harm or mutilation

5.9.3 Physical Abuse

"...is the causing of physical harm to a child. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. Physical harm may also be

caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child they are looking after”.

Most children sustain accidental cuts and bruises throughout childhood. These are likely to occur in parts of the body like elbows, shins and knees. An important indicator of physical abuse is where the bruises or injuries are unexplained, or the explanation does not fit the injury, or the injury appears on parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely e.g. on the cheeks or thighs. The age of the child must also be considered. It is possible that some injuries may have occurred for other reasons e.g. skin disorders, rare bone diseases.

Examples of Physical Abuse in Sport

Bodily harm that may be caused by:

- Over training or dangerous training of athletes.
- Over playing an athlete.
- Failure to do a risk assessment of physical limits or pre-existing medical conditions.
- Administering, condoning or failure to intervene in drug use.

Signs which **may** raise concerns about physical abuse include:

- refusal to discuss injuries
- improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- running away
- excessive physical punishment
- avoiding activities due to injuries or possibility of injuries being discovered
- aggression towards others
- fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- untreated injuries
- unexplained injuries, particularly if recurrent
- wearing long or extra clothing to hide injuries

5.9.4. Neglect

“...is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or failure to respond to, a child’s basic emotional needs”.

Neglect may also result in the child being diagnosed as suffering from ‘*non-organic failure to thrive*’, where they have significantly failed to reach normal weight and growth of development milestones and where physical and genetic reasons have been medically eliminated. In its extreme form children can be at serious risk from the effects of malnutrition, lack of nurturing and stimulation. This can lead to serious long-term effects such as greater susceptibility to serious childhood illnesses and reduction in potential stature. With young children in particular, the consequences may be life-threatening within a relatively short period of time.

Examples of Physical Neglect in Sport

- Exposing a child to extreme weather conditions e.g. heat and cold.
- Failing to seek medical attention for injuries.
- Exposing a child to risk of injury through the use of unsafe equipment.
- Exposing a child to a hazardous environment without a proper risk assessment of the activity.
- Failing to provide adequate nutrition and water.

Signs which **may** raise concerns about neglect include:

- constant hunger
- constant tiredness
- untreated medical problems
- poor peer relationships
- poor personal hygiene and/or poor state of clothing
- frequent lateness or unexplained non-attendance (particularly at school)
- low self-esteem
- stealing

5.9.5. Sexual Abuse

"...is any act that involves the child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person, whether or not it is claimed that the child either consented or assented. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or in watching sexual activities, using sexual language towards a child or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways".

Some of the aforementioned activities can occur through the internet. Boys and girls are sexually abused by males and females, including persons to whom they are, and are not, related, and by other children. This includes people from all walks of life.

Some children may never be able to tell someone they have been sexually abused. Changes in a child's behaviour *may* be a sign something has happened. In some cases, there may be no physical or behavioural signs to suggest that a child has been sexually abused.

Examples of Sexual Abuse in Sport

- Exposure to sexually explicit inappropriate language or jokes.
- Showing a child pornographic material or using a child to produce such material.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Sexual intercourse and/or sexual activity with a child under 16.

The following signs **may** raise concerns about sexual abuse:

- lack of trust in adults or over familiarity with adults, fear of a particular adult
- social isolation
- being withdrawn or introverted, poor peer relationship
- sleep disturbance (nightmares, bed-wetting, fear of sleeping alone)
- running away from home
- girls taking over the mothering role
- school problems e.g. falling standards, truancy
- reluctance or refusal to participate in physical activity or to change clothes for games
- low self-esteem
- drug, alcohol or solvent abuse
- display of sexual knowledge beyond the child's age
- sexual promiscuity, over-sexualised behaviour, compulsive masturbation
- eating disorders
- unusual interest in the genitals of adults, children or animals
- anxiety, depression, self-harm/mutilation, suicide attempts
- bruises, scratches, bite marks to the thighs or genital areas
- pregnancy
- discomfort/difficulty in walking or sitting

- fear of medical examinations
- urinary tract problems, vaginal infections or genital damage
- genital odour, venereal /sexually transmitted diseases
- stained underwear, soiling or wetting-itchiness, soreness, discharge, unexplained bleeding from the rectum, vagina or penis
- fear of bathrooms, showers, closed doors
- abnormal sexual drawings
- having irrational fears
- developmental regression/acting younger than their age
- psychosomatic factors e.g. recurrent abdominal or headache pain
- "Grooming" including over the internet
- wearing extra clothing / clothing tied tight (e.g. tracksuit trousers); reluctance to wear sports kit

5.9.6. Children with a Learning or Physical Disability

Research, including "It doesn't happen to disabled children" Child Protection and Disabled Children, NSPCC (2003), tells us that children who have a learning or physical disability are more vulnerable to abuse. This is because:

- They are often dependent on a number of people for care and handling, some of which can be of an intimate nature.
- They may be unable to understand the inappropriateness of the actions or communicate to others that something is wrong.
- Signs of abuse can be misinterpreted as a symptom of the disability.
- Like other children, they are fearful of the consequences of disclosing abuse.
- Attitudes and assumptions that children with disabilities are not abused.
- They may be unable to resist abuse due to physical impairment.
- Of negative attitudes towards children with disabilities.
- Possible failures to recognise the impact of abuse on children with disabilities.

Particular care should be taken by all staff and volunteers when working with children affected by disability.

6. Forms for use with these guidelines

6.1. Significant Incident Form - Template

This form must be completed as soon as possible after receiving information that causes concern about the welfare or protection of a child. The form must be passed to the Mountaineering Scotland Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer as soon as possible after completion; do not delay by attempting to obtain information to complete all sections.

Complete Part A of this form if the concerns relate to the general welfare of a child.

Complete Parts A and B if the concerns relate to possible child abuse.

6.2. Mountaineering Scotland Volunteer Information Form & Declaration

6.3 Mountaineering Scotland Volunteer Reference Reply Form

7. Online sources of information and contact numbers

Further information concerning child protection and a range of helpful resources may be found on the [Children First](#) website.

We highly recommend the following organisations who have fantastic information and resources in relation child protection.

Children First: <https://www.children1st.org.uk/what-we-do/how-we-help/safeguarding-in-sport/>

Respectme: <http://respectme.org.uk/>