



Weybridge Sailing & Recreational Boating Club

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Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

March 2023, Written by Louise Harper, Honorary Secretary, using guidelines from the RYA

Updated January 2024, Louise Harper

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Introduction and Rationale

This Document

In the body text of this document, Weybridge Sailing and Recreational Boating will be known as the



Club.

Definition of a child

The Children Act 1989 defined any person under the age of 18 as a 'child'. In this document and in day to day communications the terms 'children' and 'young people' are both used, recognising that older teenagers may prefer not to be referred to as 'children' although they are still children in the eyes of the law.

Safeguarding adults

Many of the safeguarding principles in these guidelines also apply to 'vulnerable adults' or 'adults at risk', but the categories of abuse and the statutory procedures to be followed in the case of a concern are different.

Rationale for this document

Involvement of children in Weybridge Sailing and Recreational Boating Club

Children cannot join the Club as individuals, only as part of a family membership. This limits any safeguarding risk at the Club. The Club does not offer training or other courses for children, further limiting any safeguarding risk.

Furthermore, children are not allowed unaccompanied at the Club. If families come to the Club, they have to sign the 'safeguarding' column in the signing book when they register their visit. This means that they take responsibility for the safety of their children, and any of their young guests whilst at the Club.

Although the Club currently does not offer training or child membership, our membership does include children with their families, and therefore the Club is adopting this policy, along with some straightforward procedures to put the policy into practice.

There are several good reasons for doing this:

- to safeguard children from physical or emotional harm, both on and off the water
- to assure parents that their children are as safe at the Club as they are when taking part in any other sport or leisure activity
- to raise awareness amongst all of our members, volunteers or employees so that they know what to do if they are concerned about a child, whether the concern relates to:
 - the child's welfare at our site
- or
 - something happening outside the sport that a child discloses to someone they trust at our Club
- to protect officials or volunteer helpers by giving them some practical, common sense guidelines to avoid placing themselves in situations where they are open to allegations which could seriously damage their lives and careers
- to protect the organisation, by showing that we have taken 'all reasonable steps' to provide a safe environment
- adopt a policy statement that defines the Club's commitment to providing a safe environment for children



Policy Statement

Contained in this document is our code of practice and procedures containing guidance about:

- the safe recruitment of staff/volunteers who might be in contact with children
- good practice guidelines to ensure the safety and welfare of children at all times whilst at our site, both on and off the water
- handling concerns, reports or allegations

This policy refers to anyone under the age of 18, defined as a child by the Children Act 1989. The policy applies to all the Club members, contractors, volunteers and associates. This includes anyone that a Club member brings to the Club including family and friends. The Club is committed to safeguarding children taking part in activities at the Club from physical, sexual or emotional harm, neglect or bullying.

We recognise that the safety, welfare and needs of the child are paramount and that any child, irrespective of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual or gender identity or social status, has a right to protection from discrimination and abuse.

the Club takes all reasonable steps to ensure that, through safe monitoring of membership, supervision of contractors, appropriate operating procedures and training if needed, it offers a safe and fun environment to children taking part in the Club events and activities. The child's experience of sailing and recreational boating, as well as our social events, is our priority. We will create a safe and welcoming environment, both on and off the water, where children can have fun and develop a sense of belonging, and improve their boating skills where they want to.

We will treat all children with respect, celebrate their achievements and listen to their views and experiences.

Weybridge Sailing and Recreational Boating Club:

- recognises that safeguarding children is the responsibility of everyone, not just those working or taking part in activities directly with them
- carefully monitors the recruitment and selection of all the Club contractors and volunteers in roles that might involve close contact with children, and provides them with appropriate information or training if there is likelihood of contact with children
- responds swiftly and appropriately to all complaints and concerns about poor practice or suspected abuse, referring to external agencies as necessary
- regularly reviews safeguarding procedures and practices in the light of experience, or to take account of legislative, social or technological changes
- communicates changes and shares good practice with the Club membership and any Club associates

This policy will be reviewed by the the Club Flag Officers annually, re-published and passed at the AGM. The the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer should be notified of all relevant concerns, allegations or complaints.

The Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer

The Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer is: Louise Harper; weybridgesc@gmail.com; 07534434567.



Members, Volunteers, Contractors and Associates

All Club members and volunteers whose role brings them into regular contact with young people will be asked to provide references. The Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer and those regularly instructing, coaching or supervising young people will also be asked to apply for an Enhanced Criminal Records Disclosure, with Barred List check if appropriate. At time of writing this policy, the Club does not offer courses or training to children. The only time children take part in activities is if they are taking part in the calendared events, or if they are using the Club with their family or friends.

Good Practice Guidelines

All members of the Club should follow the following good practice guidelines and agree to abide by the Club Code of Conduct as detailed in the Regulations and Bye-Laws, Club handbook and policies. Those working or volunteering with young people should be aware of the guidance on recognising abuse in this document.

Toilets, Showers and Changing Facilities

Adults are requested not to enter the showers and changing rooms at times when children are changing before or after any events. If this is unavoidable it is advised that they are accompanied by another adult.

Photos and Videos

The Club will seek written consent from parents/carers before taking photos or video of a child at an event or training session or publishing such images. Parents and spectators should be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state their purpose for photography/filming. If the Club publishes images of children, no identifying information other than names will be included. Any concerns about inappropriate or intrusive photography or the inappropriate use of images should be reported to the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer. Further guidance is provided later in this document.

Concerns

Anyone who is concerned about a young member's or participant's welfare, either outside the Club or within the Club, should inform the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer immediately, in strict confidence. The Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer will follow procedures as recommended in this document.

Any member of the Club failing to comply with the Safeguarding policy or any relevant Codes of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary action under Club Rule 4.1.



PART 2 – Procedures

Designated Person

Although everyone has a role to play in ensuring that children are safe, it is recommended that a designated individual has specific responsibility for implementing our policy. Our Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer is Louise Harper. The RYA Safeguarding Manager has been informed of this appointment, to ensure that they receive relevant information and advice.

The designated person's role includes:

- Maintaining up-to-date policy and procedures, compatible with the current Club constitution and programme of events.
- Ensuring that relevant staff and/or volunteers are aware of and follow the procedures, including implementing safe recruitment procedures.
- Advising them on safeguarding and child protection issues.
- Maintaining contact details for local Children's Services and Police.

If there is a concern, the designated person will:

- Be the first point of contact for any concerns or allegations, from children or adults, ensuring that confidentiality is maintained in all cases.
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken, in line with the organisation's procedures and in conjunction with the Commodore of the Club.
- Keep the RYA informed as necessary.

Safeguarding Training

All staff or volunteers working directly with children should undertake training appropriate to their role. This may be through formal training, an online course, induction and mentoring and/or continuing professional development. They should contact the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer for information on this. At time of writing this policy, this is not necessary as there is no direct training or courses offered by the Club to children.

Culture

It is important to develop a culture within our organisation where both children and adults feel able to raise concerns, knowing that they will be taken seriously, treated confidentially and will not make the situation worse for themselves or others.

Minimising risk

The Club will plan the work and activities of the organisation, and promote good practice, to minimise situations where adults are working unobserved or could take advantage of their position of trust. Good practice protects everyone – children, members, volunteers, associates and contractors.



Guidelines for safeguarding children:

You should do the following:

- Avoid spending any significant time working with children in isolation.
- Do not take children alone in a car, however short the journey.
- Do not take children to your home as part of our organisation's activity.
- Where any of these are unavoidable, ensure that they only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge of the Club or the child's parents.
- Design any training programmes or fun activities that are within the ability of the individual child.
- If a child is having difficulty with a wetsuit, buoyancy aid, or other personal boating aids, ask them to ask a friend to help if at all possible.
- If you do have to help a child, make sure you are in full view of others, preferably another adult.
- Restrict communications with young people via mobile phone, e-mail or social media to group communications about organisational matters. If it's essential to send an individual message, copy it to the child's parent or carer.

You should never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged, or use such language yourself when with children
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- fail to respond to an allegation made by a child; always act
- do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves

It may sometimes be 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 both the child (where possible) and their parents/carers.

In an emergency situation which requires this type of help, parents/carers should be informed as soon as possible. In such situations it is important to ensure that any adult present is sensitive to the child and undertakes personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

Additional vulnerability

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse or find it more difficult to express their concerns. For example:

- a disabled child who relies on a carer to help them get changed may worry that they won't be able to take part in Club activities any more if they report the carer
- a deaf child may not be able to express themselves or speak confidentially if they need an interpreter
- a child who has experienced racism may find it difficult to trust an adult from a different ethnic background



- children with low self-esteem or mental health problems can be more vulnerable to bullying or abuse, as can gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender young people, or any child who has a characteristic that marks them out in others' eyes as 'different'

Specific Types of Abuse

The main areas of abuse are as follows. Key indicators of these types of abuse are added, but are examples rather than an exclusive check-list:

Neglect - Severe persistent infections e.g. lice; persistently smelly or dirty; underweight; tooth decay and lack of treatment; inappropriate clothing or footwear; poor personal hygiene; numerous accidents (poor supervision); untreated injuries. There is a difference between poverty and neglect. But both can be safeguarding issues.

Sexual - Withdrawn, urinary tract infections, persistent need to go to the toilet, refusal to change in front of others, difficulty sitting down, odd reaction to discussion about how they are, self harm, low mood, erratic behaviour, lack of trust for adults. Sexual abuse includes the exposure to pornographic material before the age of 18; being made to watch sexual activity; inappropriate touching, groping or kissing; rape or penetrative activity; grooming for sexual gratification.

Physical - Injuries in places that they wouldn't ordinarily happen; burns, scalds or bites, fractures, reactions to someone else's medication, drugs or alcohol, hiding parts of the body with extra clothing, different excuses for injuries.

Emotional - changes in behaviour; shut down – refuses to talk; self-harm; not allowed to engage with peer group; expected to conform to inappropriate expectations.

In addition, there are specific types of abuse that members should have a knowledge of:

Female Genital Mutilation

FGM comprises of all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genital organs or any other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM is most often carried out on young girls aged between infancy and 15 years old.

Radicalisation

Radicalisation means someone is being encouraged to develop extreme views or beliefs in support of terrorist groups and activities. There are different types of terrorism, and **Prevent** deals with all of them. Prevent is one of the four elements of CONTEST, the government's counter-terrorism strategy. It aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation involves situations, contexts or relationships in which a person under 18 is given something, such as food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts or money in return for performing sexual activities or having sexual activities performed on them.

Child Criminal Exploitation

Child Criminal Exploitation is common in **county lines** and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child. County Lines is a term used for organised illegal drug-dealing networks, usually controlled by a person using a single telephone number, or 'deal line'. It is where illegal drugs are transported from one area to



another, often across police and local authority boundaries; it is a form of criminal exploitation. It is when criminals befriend children, either online or offline, and then manipulate them into drug dealing.

The following are forms of abuse deemed likely/possible in a Club setting such as the Club, therefore members should be especially vigilant against:

Grooming

Grooming is when someone develops a relationship with a child over a period of time to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional.

For more information on possible signs of grooming, see <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/grooming/>.

Sometimes the perpetrator grooms the entire family, building a relationship with the child's parents/carers so that they are allowed more access to the child than would normally be the case. Similar behaviour could be used to radicalise young people and recruit them to a religious or political cause. This is unlikely to happen in a sailing Club setting, but under the government's Prevent strategy anyone working with young people should be able to recognise the warning signs.

Bullying

If a child alleges bullying or shows signs of being bullied, this must be investigated. Bullying is defined as targeted, repeated behaviour that is intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally; and / or makes someone feel intimidated or offended. Any Safeguarding and child protection procedure should include an Anti-Bullying policy. The Club has an Anti-bullying policy.

Resources and advice for children can be found on www.kidscape.org.uk and www.childline.org.uk. Children and young people joining the Club will be asked to abide by the Club Code of Conduct, as their parent(s) sign in agreement to it.

Technology

Children and young people use modern technology as a matter of course, but they don't always understand the risks involved and their parents are not always fully aware of their children's risky behaviour.

Online communication and texting can often be used as a means of bullying. 'Cyberbullying' should be treated in the same way as any other form of bullying. www.thinkuknow.co.uk and www.childline.org.uk provide guidance and support for children and young people in different age groups, as well as for parents and carers, on matters such as online bullying, sharing images and 'sexting'. Sexting is when people share a sexual message and/or a naked or semi-naked image, video or text message with another person. It's also known as nude image sharing.

Club websites and social media

When promoting our Club and encouraging our members to interact online, the following guidelines should be followed by all Club members in relation to children and young people:

- follow the guidance in this document on the use of images of children
- ensure that the content and language on our site or page, including contributions to blogs, forums etc, is not inappropriate for younger visitors and does not link directly to unsuitable material on other sites



- any inappropriate content or online bullying should be reported to the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer who will remove the content, or request that content is removed by its author
- ensure that social media does not contain any material inappropriate to children, including any prejudicial or discriminatory language or content, anything of this nature should be reported to the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer who will remove the content, or require that content is removed by its author

Photography, images and video

Publishing articles, photos and videos in Club newsletters, on websites, in local newspapers etc is an excellent way of recognising young people's achievements and of promoting our organisation and boating as a whole. However, it is important to minimise the risk of anyone using images of children in an inappropriate way. Digital technology makes it easy to take, store, send, manipulate and publish images. There are key principles to bear in mind:

- Before taking photos or video, check that written consent was given from the child's parents/carers for their images to be taken and used.
 - A consent form is available on the Club website at: sample consent form and parents will choose to sign this or not at time of the family joining the Club.
- Any photographer or member of the press or media attending an event should wear identification at all times and should be fully briefed in advance on our expectations regarding his/her behaviour and the issues covered by these guidelines.
- Do not allow a photographer to have unsupervised access to young people at the event or to arrange photo sessions outside the event.
- Care must be taken in the storage of and access to images. An image is personal data and should be treated in accordance with our organisation's Data Privacy Policy.
- When publishing images, make sure they are appropriate and that you do not include any information that might enable someone to contact the child.
- It is preferable to use a general shot showing participants on the water, or a group shot of the prize winners, without identifying them by name.
- If you are recognising the achievement of an individual and wish to publish their name with their photo, DO NOT publish any other information (eg. where they live, name of school, other hobbies and interests) that could enable someone to contact, befriend or start to 'groom' the child.
- Ensure that the young people pictured are suitably dressed, to reduce the risk of inappropriate use.

Most boating activity takes place in areas that are open to the public and it is therefore not possible to control all photography, but any concerns about inappropriate or intrusive photography, or about the inappropriate use of images, should be reported to the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer and treated in the same way as any other child protection concern.

Parents and spectators should be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state their purpose for photography/filming. The recording of images or video using any type of camera or photographic equipment, including cameras on smartphones and tablets and action cameras used on the water, should not be permitted in showers or changing areas under any circumstances.

Handling concerns, reports or allegations

This section is primarily for the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer, but everyone should be aware of the procedures to follow if there are concerns. A complaint, concern or allegation may come from a number of sources: the child, their parents or carers, someone else within our Club, a member of the



public, or the statutory authorities (Police or Children's Social Care). It may involve the behaviour of one of our volunteers, members, contractors or associates, or something that has happened to the child outside the Club, perhaps at home or at school. Children may confide in adults they trust, in a place where they feel at ease. An allegation may range from mild verbal bullying to physical or sexual abuse. If you are concerned that a child may be being abused, it is NOT our responsibility to investigate further BUT it is our responsibility to act on our concerns and report them to the appropriate statutory authorities. For guidance on recognising abuse, seek advice from the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer.

If handling an allegation or disclosure from a child always:

- stay calm – ensure that the child is safe and feels safe
- show and tell the child that you are taking what he/she says seriously
- reassure the child and stress that he/she is not to blame
- be careful about physical contact, it may not be what the child wants and may put you at risk
- be honest, explain that you will have to tell someone else to help stop the alleged abuse, never promise confidentiality where you feel a child is at risk
- make a record of what the child has said as soon as possible after the event, using the child's own words
- if possible, have the conversation with the child with the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer

Never:

- rush into actions that may be inappropriate
- make promises you cannot keep (eg. you won't tell anyone)
- ask leading questions (see Recording and Handling Information' below)
- paraphrase what has been said; use the child's exact words in recording as far as possible
- take sole responsibility – consult someone else (ideally the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer or the person in charge or someone you can trust) so that you can begin to protect the child and gain support for yourself
- discuss what has been said with anyone other than the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer (see Recording and Handling Information below)

You may be upset about what the child has said, or you may worry about the consequences of any 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.

Recording and handling information

If you suspect that a child may have been the subject of any form of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect, the allegation must be referred as soon as possible to Children's Social Care or the Police who have trained experts to handle such cases.

Do not start asking leading questions which may jeopardise any formal investigation. A leading question is where you suggest an answer or provide options that only need a 'yes' or 'no' answer, instead of allowing the child to explain things in their own words. An example would be asking 'did X hit you?' instead of 'how did you get that bruise?'. Use open questions such as 'what happened next?'. Only ask questions to confirm that you need to refer the matter to someone else. Listen to and keep a record of anything the child tells you or that you have observed and pass the information on to the statutory authorities.



All information must be treated as confidential and only shared with those who need to know. If the allegation or suspicion concerns someone within our Club, only the child's parents/carers, the Club Safeguarding and Equality Officer, the Commodore (unless any of them are the subject of the allegation), the relevant authorities and the RYA Safeguarding and Equality Manager should be informed. If the alleged abuse took place outside the Club, the Police or Children's Social Care will decide who else needs to be informed, including the child's parents/carers. It should not be discussed by anyone within the organisation other than the person who received or initiated the allegation and, if different, the person in charge.

Historical allegations

If someone raises a child protection concern relating to incidents that took place some time ago, follow the same procedure as you would for a new concern, even if the person about whom the allegation is being made is no longer active within the Club. If the concern appears to relate to a criminal offence, encourage the individual to contact the Police on 101.

Contact details – social care and the police

Elmbridge Children's services (North East Surrey)

0300 123 1610

Surrey Police

<https://www.surrey.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us/>