



# **Mountaineering Scotland**

## **Child Wellbeing and Protection**

### **Policy & Procedure**

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# Section 1: Child Wellbeing and Protection in Sport Policy

## 1.1 Policy Statement

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.

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

Mountaineering Scotland value a rights-based approach within our sport. Our Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy takes into account the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014, the principles of "Getting it Right for Every Child" (GIRFEC) and we recognise the general principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Staff and volunteers will work together to embrace difference and diversity and respect the rights of children and young people. Mountaineering Scotland is committed to ensuring every child and young person who takes part in mountaineering activities can participate in an enjoyable and safe environment which promotes inclusion and protects them from harm, poor practice, exploitation, bullying and abuse.

## 1.2 Purpose

- To provide a policy framework which protects children on Mountaineering Scotland or club activities
- To provide a policy framework that involves a fair process to ensure concerns raised are appropriately investigated to keep everyone safe in our sport including those complaints are raised against
- 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

## 1.3 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 Children 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 facilitated or organised by Mountaineering Scotland.
- The policy statement and recommendations are provided for the guidance of clubs affiliated to Mountaineering Scotland.

## 1.4 Key Principles

Our commitment to protecting children is based on the following principles:

- The wellbeing of children and young people is the primary concern.
- All children and young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from all forms of harm and abuse.
- Child wellbeing and protection is everyone's responsibility.
- Children and young people have the right to express views on all matters which affect them
- Mountaineering Scotland will work in partnership together with children and young people and parents/carers to promote the wellbeing, health and development of children and young people participating in the sport.

## 1.5 Roles & Responsibilities

Mountaineering Scotland will:

- Promote the health and wellbeing of children by providing opportunities for them to take part in sport safely.
- Respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of children.
- Promote and implement appropriate procedures to safeguard the wellbeing of children and protect them from abuse.
- Recruit, train, support and supervise staff, members and volunteers to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children and young people from abuse and to reduce risk.
- Require staff, members and volunteers to adopt and abide by this Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy Statement and associated procedures.
- Respond to any allegations of misconduct or abuse of children and young people in line with the Child Wellbeing and Protection Responding to Concerns
- Procedure as well as implementing, where appropriate, the relevant disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of this policy and these procedures.

Mountaineering Scotland Affiliated Clubs with under 18s will:

- Have a suitable Club Wellbeing & Child Protection Policy in place, either by adopting this Mountaineering Scotland policy or a suitable alternative
- Adhere to the Mountaineering Scotland guidelines and procedures
- Appoint a Wellbeing & Protection Officer
- Accept that all office bearers and committee members have a responsibility for safeguarding, wellbeing and child protection and be prepared to respond to any indication of abuse or poor practice
- Safely appoint/recruit club volunteers/staff in accordance with the recruitment policy
- Have all volunteers, coaches, and parents agree to and sign a suitable code of conduct
- Be prepared to challenge and alter poor practice
- Implement any recommendations of Mountaineering Scotland relating to this area
- Promote an environment where all legitimate concerns can be raised without fear of victimisation or reprisal
- Require all those working with children to complete the minimum level of training

## 1.6 Jurisdiction

- The jurisdiction of the policy is limited to activities facilitated or delivered by Mountaineering Scotland or affiliated clubs
- This includes staff, freelancers/external contractors (working on behalf of Mountaineering Scotland), members and volunteers
- Any wellbeing/safeguarding concerns or complaints that the above does not apply to, should be raised directly with the organisation involved
- Guidance on reporting concerns can be found in appendices

## 1.7 Review of policy

We will regularly review this policy and associated procedures:

- In accordance with changes in legislation and guidance on the protection of children and young people.
- Following any issues or concerns raised about the wellbeing and protection of children and young people within Mountaineering Scotland.
- In all other circumstances, at least every three years.

## 1.8 Consultation

Mountaineering Scotland always welcomes feedback. Consultation has taken place with:

- Children First
- Mountaineering Scotland Safeguarding Leads / Child Wellbeing Protection Officers (CWPO's)

## 1.9 Note on policy statement

- Mountaineering Scotland has developed and introduced procedures, found in '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.
- Following these procedures helps ensure appropriate measures are in place to protect children in our sport 'In the case of claims raised against your club, following these procedures ensures civil liability cover- which covers (see Members insurance | Mountaineering Scotland Insurance Centre ([howdengroup.com](http://howdengroup.com)))

- Further guidance for clubs is provided on the Mountaineering Scotland website at [Children on Meets: Guidance for Clubs](#)

## Section 2: Procedure

### 2.1 Wellbeing Concerns

Definition: A wellbeing concern is if a child's wellbeing (measured using the eight SHANARRI indicators: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included), has been or is at risk of, being adversely affected in any manner.

A wellbeing concern may be identified by the child, or by anyone who knows or supports the child and can be identified for many reasons, such as (but not limited to) the following:

- a child may be worried, anxious or upset about an event/set of circumstances, including socio-economic circumstances
- a volunteer/coach/parent/carer or family member may have noticed a change in the child's behaviour, demeanour or developmental progress
- a volunteer/coach/parent/carer may have concerns about the impact on the child of an event or set of circumstances

Or can be identified using the SHANARRI indicators for example:

- healthy – the child has started to self-harm, is depressed or shows other signs of poor physical or mental health
- achieving - the child has struggled to master and develop skills at training that are normal for the age and stage of child
- included - a child who is being excluded or bullied

### 2.2 Poor practice

Definition: Is behaviour of an individual in a position of responsibility which falls below the required standard as set out in the code of practice, the child wellbeing & protection policy or accompanying guidelines. It is behaviour that does not respect children's rights or those of their parents/carers. Poor practice may not be immediately dangerous or intentionally harmful to a child but is likely to set a poor example. While poor practice falls short of abuse it has a negative and adverse effect on the wellbeing of children and is considered unacceptable.

The following definitions set out common areas within sport where poor practice can occur:

- breaches of Mountaineering Scotland's'/club's child wellbeing & protection policy and guidance
- breaches of recognised best practice in coaching or the Mountaineering Scotland's' code of practice - this can include actions that would be considered unacceptable as part of routine/regular practice e.g. being alone with a child or adult at risk but that may be appropriate in unforeseeable or emergency circumstances.
- practices that may be carried out with the best intentions but fall into a category of behaviours that are used by people who sexually abuse or 'groom' children/young people

It is essential that everyone challenges poor practice within Mountaineering/Climbing, even where there is a belief that the motives of an individual are well meaning. Failure to challenge poor practice can lead to an environment where abuse is more likely to remain unnoticed and accepted.

### Section 3: Abuse

*"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 2021').



### 3.1 Identifying 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.

### 3.2 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

### 3.3 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

### 3.4 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

### 3.5 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

## Section 4: Managing 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 via social media, 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.

## Section 5: Low level concerns

### Definition

A Low-level concern is any concern that an adult has behaved in a way towards a child that:

- Is inconsistent with Mountaineering Scotland / club code of conduct while a member of the club regardless of whether they were carrying out a specific role at the time
- Does not meet the threshold of harm or is not considered serious enough for Mountaineering Scotland / club to take escalated action

Low-level concerns include a spectrum of behaviours which may be intentionally designed to facilitate abuse or be unintentional, inadvertent or thoughtless.

Low-level concerns may take place face to face, in writing, or digitally such as in online meetings, or via social media, text messaging, messaging apps or by email. The important consideration is that the behaviour is inappropriate and not what Mountaineering Scotland would expect of a member as set out in the code of conducts and Safeguarding Policy.

Examples of Low-level concerns:

- Showing favouritism or being over-friendly
- Using inappropriate language that is intimidating, offensive or of a sexual nature
- Inappropriate touching or initiating hugging, intimidation, punishment or degrading treatment

The term 'low level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the adult's behaviour towards a child does not meet the harm threshold and is classed as potential poor practice or inappropriate behaviour.

A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct and does not meet the allegation threshold.

Members when raising a concern, do not need to be able to determine in each case whether their concern is a low-level concern, or more serious, the Clubs CWPO will be able to assess



the seriousness and take appropriate action. Advice is also available through Mountaineering Scotland CWPO.

### **An allegation of harm**

An allegation of harm is where it is alleged that a person who works with children and young people has or may have behaved in a way that meets the harm threshold as specified below:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children or adult/s at risk in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

These would be classed as; serious poor practice, misconduct, gross misconduct or criminal behaviour and should be reported to Mountaineering Scotland through the reporting a concern process. Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold are treated as low-level concerns.

## **Section 6: Reporting a concern**

Having to make a report about someone you know or about someone who is causing harm to or abusing a child can be very challenging on a personal level. Although it can be difficult to report such matters, you must remember that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount
- being vigilant helps to protect others
- everyone has a duty of care to report any concerns they have immediately
- a good reporting structure ensures that concerns are dealt with fairly

Mountaineering Scotland assures all members, staff and volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports a concern where someone within the sport is or may be harming or abusing a child.

### **Who to report to:**

The club safeguarding officer – Is your first point of contact when you have a concern about club activity

- If the club safeguarding officer is unavailable or is implicated, talk directly to a senior club officer or go directly to Mountaineering Scotland for advice

- When on an away trip, inform the person who has responsibility for safeguarding, Parents/Carers of the child, to clarify any initial concerns about how a child is presenting e.g. if a child seems withdrawn or had a difficult session that evening.

Partnership working with parents is an important part of safeguarding. In most situations, the club safeguarding officer or Mountaineering Scotland will involve parents/carers as part of incident management. There are some situations where they are not involved.

Do NOT speak to the parents or carers if:

A parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or may not be able to respond to the situation appropriately they should not be involved, as it may place the child at greater risk. Where it is unclear whether the parents/carer's involvement may place the child at risk further advice should be sought from Mountaineering Scotland or the child's school/social work before involving them.

Mountaineering Scotland must be informed of all allegations of abuse and persistent poor practice as soon as possible in order to decide the following:

- what further action should be taken by the club or if the issue should be referred to Mountaineering Scotland for consideration
- whether further action, advice or investigation is needed by/from the police or social work
- passing on this information is important because the matter may be just one of a series of other instances which together cause concern. It supports Mountaineering Scotland to act appropriately to support/deal with the concern and to analyse trends and improve existing policy and guidance.
- if Mountaineering Scotland is unavailable or an immediate response is required, the police and social 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.

**Statutory authorities** - In any case where there is suspected abuse or where a child's safety is at risk, you should contact one of the following statutory agencies immediately:

- your local police child protection team or in an emergency dial 999
- the police should be involved if the incident you are concerned about appears to be of a criminal nature, potentially abuse or if the incident involves a person outside the child's family. A record should be made of the crime reference number
- local authority social work

- in an emergency the Samaritans (08457 909 090) will hold the duty officer's contact number
- all telephone referrals to the above bodies should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours to Mountaineering Scotland. You should record the following:
  - name and job title of the member of staff to whom the concerns were passed
  - the time and date of the call and a summary of the information shared and the response received

## **Section 7: Responding to Concerns about child protection concern**

A complaint, concern, incident or allegation may come from a number of sources: the child, one of their friends, a volunteer, a parent or someone else within the organisation. It may involve the behaviour of a volunteer/employee, or something that has happened to the child outside the sport e.g. at home or at school. Children may confide in adults they trust, in a place where they feel safe.

A report/concern 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 your responsibility to investigate further BUT it is your responsibility to:

- Reassure the person making the report they have done the right thing in raising a concern
- Listen openly without judgment
- Record anything that is said
- Report it to the appropriate statutory authorities and Mountaineering Scotland

Following Mountaineering Scotland's published procedures when dealing with concerns and discourses helps:

- To avoid those receiving information from engaging in judgements
- Reassure those who report concerns that an appropriate course of action will ensue
- Support those responsible for managing concerns by providing them with a step-by-step process to follow
- Safeguard the rights of those against whom complaints or allegations have been made

### **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 CWPO can be consulted for advice on the appropriate course of action.

If the club's or Mountaineering Scotland's CWPO 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.

### **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.

### **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.

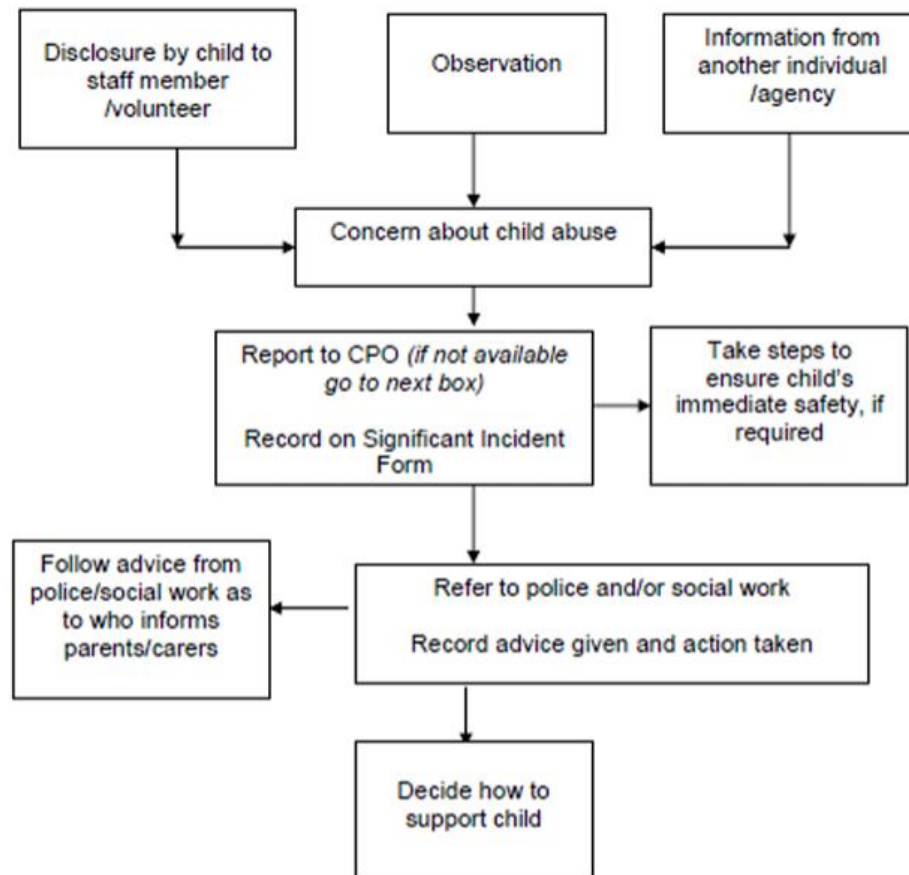
### **Circumstances where reporting to the club WPO is not possible**

- If the club CWPO is unavailable or is implicated, talk directly to a senior club officer or go directly to Mountaineering Scotland's Safeguarding Manager for advice.
- When on an away trip, inform the person who has responsibility for safeguarding. This may be the team manager or head coach.

### **Involving Parents or Carers**

- Mountaineering Scotland is committed to working in partnership with parents. In most situations, it is important that the club CWPO or Mountaineering Scotland CWPO involves parents to clarify any initial concerns e.g. if a child seems withdrawn, they may have experienced a recent bereavement.
- Where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or may not be able to respond to the situation appropriately, they should not be involved, as it may place the child at greater risk.

## RESPONDING TO CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD FLOWCHART



### 7.1 Responding to concern about the conduct of staff/ volunteers/ members of clubs

#### **Procedures – Responding to a Concern about an Adult’s Conduct**

This procedure aims to ensure that all concerns about the conduct of an adult in sport are dealt with in a timely, appropriate and proportionate manner.

**At any point in responding to concerns about the conduct of an adult, advice may be sought from the police or social work services if there is concern over a possible criminal offence.**

No board member, member of staff, coach, volunteer, official, athlete, or participant in receipt of information that causes concern about the conduct of an adult towards any other

individual shall keep that information to themselves; or attempt to deal with the matter on their own.

1. **Record** – A Written/electronic record of the concern will be recorded on the concern recording form. Reporting of concerns will not be delayed by gathering information to complete the form or to fully complete it.
2. **Report** – All concerns about the wellbeing of an adult arising from the conduct of another adult will be reported to the CWPO on the day the concern arises, as soon as practically possible. Where the concern is about the CWPO it must be reported to the CEO or other named individual.

### **Internal Enquiries and Precautionary Suspension**

- There may be circumstances that individuals will be subject to precautionary suspension without it being investigated by 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 for those involved**

- 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) may be used to provide support throughout this process.
- Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

### **Key steps if concern raised about your conduct**

- Take notes of all your actions/contacts with the child in question as soon as possible.
- If deemed necessary, seek access to professional and legal advice.
- Ensure you are no longer working with the child/children making the allegation.
- Consult with procedures

- Accept that colleagues may be expected not to contact you whilst an investigation is underway.

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.

## **Section 8: Safe recruitment**

### **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

### **Volunteers aged 17 or under**

While some children under the age of 17 may be in 'regulated roles' 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 roles' 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.

## **Section 9: Record keeping & Information sharing**

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 parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused, unless advised otherwise by the Police;
- The person making the allegation;
- The Club CWPO;
- Mountaineering Scotland – Internally;
  - CWPO
  - Mountaineering Scotland board Safeguarding lead
  - Mountaineering Scotland Comms team – (ie. For press inquiry purposes)
- Externally:
  - Children and Family Services within the Local Authority Social Work Department or Family Protection Units within the local police service.
  - Children 1<sup>st</sup> – Case Management Support Services
  - Independent Investigator and/or Independent Consultant

### **Information storage and handling**

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).



In relation to any information regarding a Child Protection concern, it is recommended that this information should be retained for 25 years (from the date of birth of the child) and 10 years for any adult behaviour (this starts once the adult has left the club/employment).

For low level concerns it is important to consider proportionality and only keep the information for as long as it is necessary. It is important to think about why the information is being retained, for what purpose it might be needed and what the risks are if the information is kept or destroyed.

### **Destroying information**

Hard copies should be destroyed using a Din level 5 micro cut shredder and for digital copies you would delete the data and empty the recycling bin. If you have a back-up solution for your electronic records, you should also delete any records from your backups as well.

Separate documents for:

- Concern recording form (linked within this document)
- Code of conduct (this should be referenced to throughout this document with separate codes of conduct dependant on each role)
- Photography (could be included at end if needed)
- First aid (could be included at end if needed)