

Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults

The Sharks are committed to ensuring that all those taking part in club activities are able to do so protected and kept safe from harm while they are with coaches, volunteers and or staff. This is particularly true in respect of children and vulnerable groups.

We all have a duty with respect to Safeguarding and Protecting Children to ensure children can participate and enjoy sport with the highest possible standards of care. These standards apply also to vulnerable groups. All coaches should have a clear understanding of operating within an appropriate code of ethics, aware of what their 'duty of care' is and how this relates to their position in providing activities and being responsible for others.

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

A good definition of 'duty of care' is:

"The duty which rests upon an individual or organisation to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the safety of any person involved in any activity for which that individual or organisation is responsible"

In an activity such as canoeing, safety and keeping people safe is all about risk assessment and minimising the risks involved at all levels of participation. While all taking part in activity have a duty to their neighbours, in organised activity we all have a heightened duty of care and as such we should be aware that the principal risks extend to the quality of control exercised by those in charge. Trainers, coaches, referees, officials or administrators should all take 'reasonable' steps to safeguard those directly taking part in activities and at any time they may be deemed responsible for those in their charge - in vehicles, during journey's to and from the activity, during events, team training events and camps etc.

The content of this document provides specific information in respect of child protection and the protection of vulnerable groups in order that everyone can appreciate their 'duty of care' with regard to these issues, risk assess their positions and support and advise those at risk.

Further to this document additional information is available in Paddle UK's Safeguarding Policies, which are adopted by The Sharks and can be found online at:
<https://paddleuk.org.uk/safeguarding-policies>.

www.thesharks.org.uk: Telephone 07951 770241: Email canoeing@thesharks.org.uk.

Vulnerable Group Definition

“A person who is, or may be, in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation”

PADDLESAFE

We believe that the welfare of children/vulnerable groups is everyone's responsibility, particularly when it comes to protecting a child/vulnerable person from abuse. Everyone in Paddlesport can help - administrator, club official, coach, parent, friend and children themselves.

Abuse can occur wherever there are children/vulnerable groups - at home, at school, in the park, at the club. Sadly, there are some people who will seek to be where children/vulnerable groups are simply in order to abuse them. We believe that everyone in Paddlesport has a moral responsibility and therefore a part to play in looking after the children and vulnerable groups with whom we are working.

Whilst the welfare of young people is our first consideration in establishing child protection policies and procedures, we have also taken account of the needs of coaches, particularly where falsely accused. A feature of our policy on Child Protection is to ensure that we provide individuals with access to a confidential advice, guidance and support path, provided separately to that provided for those with concerns that abuse may be taking place. This is done via the British Canoe Union.

These child protection procedures stem from the following principles:

The child's welfare is paramount

Anyone under the age of 18 is classed as a child

All children, regardless of age, any disability they have, gender, racial origin, religious belief and sexual identity and/or social/economic status have a right to be protected from abuse.

To respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of young people in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Coaches, clubs and centres need to be provided with advice to raise awareness of best practice and guidance, and support should they become involved in an abuse situation.

The Sharks recognises that some children and young people have additional vulnerabilities or are disadvantaged by their experiences such as children with disabilities or who come from minority ethnic groups. Bearing in mind that children and young people can be and are disadvantaged by these and other experiences, it is important for all those that work with children to be extra vigilant in creating a safe culture. For vulnerable groups it is recommended that consultation is undertaken with the community care experts as appropriate.

Good Practice Guidelines

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

Avoid situations where you are alone with one child/vulnerable person. The Sharks acknowledges that occasionally there may be no alternative, for example, where a child/vulnerable person falls ill and has to be taken home. We would stress, however, that one to one contact must never be allowed to occur on a regular basis. Further guidance on this is contained in the BCU Coaching Code of Ethics.

If any form of physical support is required ask the paddler's permission, explain what you are doing and why to both the child/vulnerable person and their parents/carers.

Where possible ask parents/carers to be responsible for children/vulnerable groups in changing rooms. Always ensure that whoever supervises young people work in pairs.

Where there are mixed teams/groups away from home, they should always be accompanied by an adult male and female coach/helper.

Do not allow physically rough or sexually provocative games, or inappropriate talking or touching.

If it is necessary to do things of a personal nature for a child/vulnerable adult, make sure you have another adult accompanying you. Get the consent of the parent/carer and if possible, the child/vulnerable person. Let them know what you are doing and why.

Ensure that any claims of abuse by a child/vulnerable person are taken seriously and that it is dealt with by people who know what to do.

Ensure that the nature and intensity of training does not exceed the capacity of a child's/vulnerable person's immature growing body and ability.

Follow the recognised guidelines for photography and video.

What if you accidentally hurt a child? - You should report such an incident immediately to another Club Coach/official and make a written note of it. You should also inform the child's parents/carers, preferably in person.

Is touching OK? If a coaching technique would benefit from physical contact or support then first asks the paddler's permission (e.g. would you mind if I held your shoulders to show you what I mean?) It is useful to take time to explain why and how this is used to the paddler and their parent or carer. (See Paddle UK or Home Nations Guidelines for Physical Contact). Touching can be OK and appropriate as long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing or for the wrong reason.

WHAT IS ABUSE?

It's generally acknowledged that there are four main types of abuse - Physical, Sexual, Emotional and Neglect.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is just what the term implies - hurting or injuring a child/vulnerable person e.g. by hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning or biting them. In sport this might result if the nature or intensity of training is inappropriate for the capacity of the performer or where drugs are tolerated or advocated. Bullying is likely to come into this category - see below.

Sexual Abuse

Where young people/ vulnerable groups are used by adults to meet their own sexual needs. It could range from sexually suggestive comments to full intercourse and includes the use of pornographic material.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when a child/vulnerable person is not given love, help and encouragement and is constantly derided or ridiculed e.g. racial or sexual remarks. It can also occur if a child/vulnerable person is over protected. Abuse can occur where a parent or coach has unrealistic expectations over what a child/vulnerable person can achieve.

Neglect

Failing to meet children'/vulnerable groups' basic needs such as food, warmth, adequate clothing, and medical attention or constantly leaving them alone. It could also mean failing to ensure they are safe or exposing them to harm or injury.

Bullying

The bully in Paddlesport can be an adult - the parent/carer who pushes too hard, the coach who adopts a win-at-all-costs philosophy or adult paddlers who attempt to assert unacceptable behaviour on younger paddlers to make them unwelcome or prevent them using club equipment. Bullying can also occur between young people. For further guidance on Bullying refer to the relevant Anti Bullying Policy.

Indications of Abuse

There are physical and behavioural signs that might raise your concern about the welfare or safety of a child/vulnerable person. They are only indicators - not confirmation. Some examples are: Where the child(s) /vulnerable person(s)

Says that she or he is being abused, or another person says they believe (or actually know) that abuse is occurring.

Has an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.

Behaviour changes, either over time or quite suddenly, becoming aggressive, withdrawn or unhappy.

Appears not to trust adults, e.g. a parent or coach with whom she/he would be expected to have, or once had, a close relationship.

Shows inappropriate sexual awareness for his/her age and sometimes behaves in a sexually explicit way.

Becomes increasingly neglected-looking in appearance or loses or puts on weight for no apparent reason.

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Bear in mind that physically disabled children, children with learning difficulties and vulnerable groups are particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them.

If you have concerns about the welfare of a child/vulnerable adult

Please remember the golden rule –

It is not your responsibility to decide whether a child / vulnerable adult is being abused - but it is your responsibility to pass the information on to the appropriate person.

Make a detailed note of what you have seen or heard but do not delay passing on the information.

If you are a member, or the parent/carer or friend of a member of a Canoe Club you should:

Tell the person appointed for child protection. At an event tell the person responsible for child protection or the event organiser - unless, of course you suspect them of being involved - or

Contact the Home Nation Child Protection Lead Officer listed on the Website: canoeengland.org.uk.

If you need urgent advice contact the NSPCC Child Protection 24 hours Help Line **0808 800 5000**

If you are working with paddlers away from home, at a training camp, perhaps, or a national/regional competition - tell the team manager or the chief coach.

If you are working with a school - inform the head teacher.

If you are involved in a paddle scheme such as local authority paddle lessons, refer to their Child Protection procedures.

Please note, that when you have reported your concerns, the Club's Child Protection Officer will contact the Canoe England Child Protection Officer to advise them of your concern and to whom you have reported it.

If a child/vulnerable person tell you that he or she is being abused

Stay calm.

Do not promise to keep it to yourself.

Listen to what the child/vulnerable person say and, please, take it seriously.

Only ask questions if you need to identify what the child/vulnerable person is telling you – do not ask the child/vulnerable adult about explicit details.

Make a detailed note of what the child/vulnerable adult has told you but, as advised in the previous section, please do not delay passing on the information to the Club's Child Protection Officer.

What should you do if you have allegations made against you?

If as a coach or volunteer you have had allegations made against you and you wish to discuss the matter with an impartial adviser you could contact your Home Nation Child Protection Officer who will advise you of what support may be available.

In order to further the protection of all venerable people, in the recruitment of any staff, either voluntary or paid The Sharks will:

Ensure that full disclosure CRB checking is carried out by the Sport's governing body.
Provide training course for staff to ensure they have been on a recognized Safeguarding and Protecting Children Course.

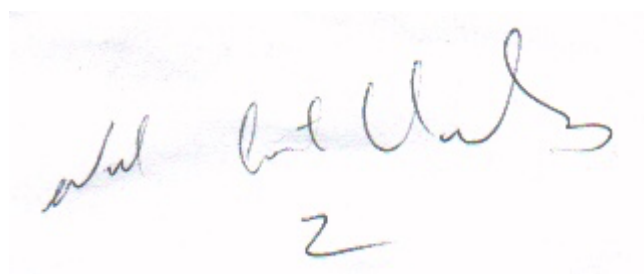
The Sharks will also:

Provide details of Child Protection Officers and phone numbers for reporting any concerns.

The Sharks Welfare Officer: will not be a coach but will be suitable qualified un line with Paddle UK policies and advice.

All Shark Coaches and people with contact with children or vulnerable people must attend regular Welfare Course in line with Paddle UK policies for coaches qualifications.

Signed by Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chair', with a stylized flourish underneath.

1st August 2026, Reviewed annually.