

Good Practice Guide for Volunteers

It is important within Weston Sailing Club that 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.

This guide only covers the essential points of good practice when working with children, vulnerable adults and young people. You should also read Weston Sailing Club's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures which are available for reference at all times.

- Avoid spending any significant time working with children/ vulnerable adults in isolation
- Do not take children/ vulnerable adults alone in a car, however short the journey
- Do not take children/ vulnerable adults to your home as part of your 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 organisation or the child/ vulnerable adult's parents or carer
- Design training programmes that are within the ability of the individual child/ vulnerable adult
- If a child/ vulnerable adult is having difficulty with a wetsuit or buoyancy aid, ask them to ask a friend to help if at all possible
- If you do have to help a child/ vulnerable adult, 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/ vulnerable adult'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/ vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged, or use such language yourself when with children/ vulnerable adults
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child/ vulnerable adult, even in fun
- fail to respond to an allegation made by a child/ vulnerable adult; always act
- do things of a personal nature that children/ vulnerable adults can do for themselves

It may sometimes be necessary to do things of a personal nature for children/ vulnerable adults, particularly if they are very young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the child/ vulnerable adult (where possible) and their parents or carers.

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

Recognising Abuse

It is not always easy, even for the most experienced carers, to spot when a child/ vulnerable adult has been abused. However, some of the more typical symptoms which should trigger your suspicions would include:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- sexually explicit language or actions
- a sudden change in behaviour (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper)
- the child/ vulnerable adult describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her
- a change observed over a long period of time (e.g. the child/ vulnerable adult losing weight or becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt)
- a general distrust and avoidance of adults, especially those with whom a close relationship would be expected
- an unexpected reaction to normal physical contact
- difficulty in making friends or abnormal restrictions on socialising with others.

It is important to note that a child/ vulnerable adult could be displaying some or all of these signs, or behaving in a way which is worrying, without this necessarily meaning that the child/ vulnerable adult is being abused.

Similarly, there may not be any signs, but you may just feel that something is wrong. If you have noticed a change in the child/ vulnerable adult's behaviour, **first talk to the parents or carers**. It may be that something has happened, such as a bereavement, which has caused the child/ vulnerable adult to be unhappy.

If you are concerned

If there are concerns about sexual abuse or violence in the home, talking to the parents or carers might put the child/ vulnerable adult at greater risk.

If you cannot talk to the parents/carers, consult the club's Welfare Officer or the person in charge.

It is this person's responsibility to make the decision to contact Children's Social Care Services/ Adult Social Care Services or the Police. It is NOT their responsibility to decide if abuse is taking place, BUT it is their responsibility to act on your concerns.