

MOUNTAIN SOJOURNS CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Child Safeguarding Policy

Mountain Sojourns Child Safeguarding Policy Statement

Mountain Sojourns has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in its activities from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account.

The organisation will ensure the safety and protection of all children, accept and recognise its responsibilities under the Children (N.I.) Order 1995 .

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

Policy aims

The aim of the Child Safeguarding Policy is to promote good practice by:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of the organisation
- Having an awareness of the issues which cause children harm.
- Adopting child protection guidelines for instructors, supervisors, volunteers/ helpers.
- Providing information about child protection and good practice to instructors, supervisors, volunteers/ helpers.
- Sharing information about concerns with children, parents and others on a need to know basis.
- Ensure staff/volunteers make informed and confident responses to specific child protection concerns including reporting.
- Keeping child protection policies under review.

Promoting good practice

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, 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 the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the activity environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

Good practice guidelines

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice means:

- Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first.

- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with participants (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers, to have an intimate relationship with a child).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children to share in decision making.
- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance.
- Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that on activities or residential events, adults should not enter children's accommodation or invite children into theirs without another adult member of the team present.
- Being an excellent role model (including not smoking or drinking alcohol in front of young people.)
- Display high standards of personal behaviour and appearance as well as appropriate dress, language and respect for equipment.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.

Otherwise, it makes good sense to avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.

Practices to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (e.g. the child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of an activity), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation or the child's parents.

- Taking or dropping off a child to an activity.
- Taking young persons to your home

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room / tent with a lone child.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- if you accidentally hurt a participant
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner
- if a participant appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a participant misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.
- If you believe another member of staff/volunteer is behaving in way that contravenes the good practice as outlined above.

Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers

Mountain Sojourns 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.

Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- All volunteers/staff should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity should be provided (e.g. passport or driving licence with photo).

Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process will include training after recruitment to help staff and volunteers to:

- Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person.
- Work safely and effectively with children.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in Mountain Sojourns, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

Mountain Sojourns will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

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.

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).

Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse:

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.

- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with Fiona Mullan or you can contact social services or the police direct, or the **NSPCC Child Protection** Helpline on **0808 800 5000**, or **Childline** on **0800 1111**.