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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Why do we need a policy on keeping children safe?

As a professional Watersports Training and Holiday Company, we are committed to the highest of standards in everything that we do. We recognise that watersports activities contribute positively to the development of children and young people, not just physically but also personally, socially and emotionally. In particular, the residential element of a course or holiday with Rockley Watersports builds self-confidence and independence.

Most children and youngsters come from caring homes and meet no harm at home or in any other setting. However, there are some who are being abused or neglected at home or elsewhere. As professionals working with young people Rockley Watersports and its staff need to be ready to respond to the needs of the children and youngsters in their care. We also need to safeguard children and young people from harm within our centres both by preventing abuse by adults and minimising other risks within activities.

This policy is to help promote good practice and to build on the awareness training that takes place for members of staff. It is the commitment of the Directors and senior staff of Rockley Watersports that we provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all children and young people. This will enable them to develop physically and socially when attending our watersports centres and minimise risk of abuse.

A shortened version of this policy, our procedures and code of practice, in leaflet form, is provided to all members of staff and to all Group Leaders of school parties.

It is the responsibility of Rockley Watersports staff to be aware of the policy and to work within the guidelines of the procedures and code of practice. The policy applies to all adults who have direct contact with children and young people while attending or running Rockley Watersports related activities. This will include any activities that run under the auspices of Rockley Watersports wherever they take place. Those that work for other organisations associated with Rockley Watersports (for example teaching staff accompanying school parties, Sailability) should adhere to those organisational child protection policies, which should be no less stringent than Rockley Watersports' own policy.

This policy will be reviewed annually and it is the responsibility of the Directors to ensure such review takes place.

## 2 POLICY

### Preventing abuse within Rockley Watersports

Within Rockley Watersports we often know each other well and there are excellent relationships across generations that benefit everyone. While keeping children and young people safe from risk of harm, we must continue to build these relationships. For many of us, a relationship with adults when we were young increased our skills and knowledge of watersports and has played a part in who we are now.

It is, however, important to have in place a policy that helps to ensure the safety of both children and adults. We need to create an “awareness” culture within Rockley Watersports where there is an understanding of the risks to children and a clear view of what is and is not acceptable behaviour towards children and young people. This will also reduce the risk of unfounded allegations against adults.

This policy statement defines Rockley Watersports’ stance on child protection issues.

### **Rockley Watersports Policy Statement on Child Protection is as follows:**

- ◆ The child’s welfare is paramount
- ◆ All children whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse
- ◆ All suspicions and allegations of inappropriate behaviour will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- ◆ As defined in the Children Act 1989, anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child for the purposes of this document

Lis Gordon assumes the role of Child Protection Co-ordinator for Rockley Watersports to whom all allegations or incidents should be reported.

## 3 RECOGNISING ABUSE

### 3.1 What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

Child abuse has always happened, but the definition and recognition of it varies over generations and in different cultures. The definitions used in this policy reflect the definitions in “Working Together to Safeguard Children”, DOH 2006. This states: “Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.”

#### 3.1.1 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

For most injuries to young children there will be suitable explanations as children do have accidents. However, it is important to record **all** injuries very carefully. (See Appendix VII) Recording can do no harm and could be vital information for the future protection of a child.

*Some signs of physical injury might include:*

- ◆ *Unexplained or recurring injuries*
- ◆ *Refusal to discuss injuries or improbable explanations*
- ◆ *Admission of excessive punishment*
- ◆ *Child unnaturally compliant to parents/carers*
- ◆ *Child flinching when touched*
- ◆ *Fear of returning home*
- ◆ *Self-destructive tendencies or aggression to others*
- ◆ *Certain type of injuries, eg object or finger shaped bruises, bite marks, burns or scalds, injuries to the face, head or genital area.*

#### 3.1.2 Neglect

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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

It is very difficult to know if a child is being neglected although it can be just as damaging as the other forms of abuse. The neglected child is important. There might be no one but you to notice him or her.

*Some signs of neglect might include:*

- ◆ *Leaving a child alone without proper supervision*
- ◆ *Exposure to dangers the child is not able to deal with*
- ◆ *Inadequate clothing, lighting, food or heating*
- ◆ *Being unkempt or dirty*
- ◆ *Failure to seek or follow medical advice*

### **3.1.3 Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Most sexual abuse is not known until a child chooses to tell a trusted adult – it could be you. Any statement of abuse must be taken very seriously. Sexual abuse often starts very subtly and builds up so slowly that the child begins to accept the abuse as something he or she has to tolerate. By the time the child wants to tell “the secret”, he or she feels guilty and confused and fears no one will believe the truth. The child may have become very good at covering up the abuse and may feel the he or she is betraying someone close to them and loved by them.

*Some signs of sexual abuse:*

- ◆ *Unprompted allegation by the child or hinting at a secret*
- ◆ *Behavioural changes in the child – withdrawn, self-harm, eating problems, nightmares or sexual acting out*
- ◆ *Fear of someone*
- ◆ *Possession of unexplained amounts of money or gifts*

### **3.1.4 Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment

of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

*Signs of emotional abuse might include:*

- ◆ *Behavioural signs eg overactive, aggressive, withdrawn, compulsive stealing or scavenging*
- ◆ *Language or developmental delay*
- ◆ *Inability to play*
- ◆ *Excessive lack of confidence or need for affection and attention*
- ◆ *Use of excessive punishment by parents or carers or over reaction to mistakes by the child*

### **3.1.5 Bullying**

Bullying may be seen as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. The bully may often be another young person.

Although anyone can be a target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons – being overweight, physically small or large, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture.

### **3.2 Myths**



## 4 PROCEDURES

### 4.1 How do I know if a child is being abused?

Sometimes, a specific incident or injury will alert you but more often an accumulation of concerns will build up over time. Few signs of abuse are significant alone, but a cluster of signs must be taken seriously.

The child might show by their **own behaviour** that abuse is taking place, behaving in a way that is inappropriate for their age and stage of development. Major changes in a child's behaviour would make you alert to the possibility of abuse as one explanation.

There may be signs that you can **observe** when the child is with you, for example, inadequate clothing, poor hygiene, hunger or tiredness. Developmental delay or poor growth can be significant when there are other signs to arouse concern. The child might tell you or hint at telling you about abuse.

You might be concerned about the **behaviour of the adults** with the child, for example, reports that the child is left alone or not well supervised. A parent may tell you that they are not coping or are punishing the child excessively. You may observe that a parent is criticising, humiliating or scape goating a child.

- ◆ **Record all signs carefully and refer to your Principal &/or our Child Protection Co-ordinator and/or the local Social Services Department**  
You never know what might be significant later on. An allegation of abuse or an injury is urgent and the evidence may be gone if you delay.
- ◆ **A child's safety could depend on your recording**  
Never wait until you are sure before you start to record.
- ◆ **Don't jump to conclusions or make assumptions**  
There are lots of reasons why a child might be unhappy.
- ◆ **Don't agree to keep something secret**  
This will not help the child who is ready for the abuse to stop.

If you have any concerns, seek advice as soon as possible from our Child Protection Co-ordinator and the local Social Services Child Care Team. See Appendix VIII.

**Don't delay if you are concerned.**

## 4.2 What would your concerns be about reporting child abuse?

- ◆ **I don't believe the child's allegation is true**

*Leave that to those responsible to decide and don't pre-judge because of any assumptions you have. Children rarely lie about abuse and their great fear is that they will not be believed. Abusers often tell their victims no one will believe them if they report what has happened.*

- ◆ **The child or parent has told me something in confidence**

*Confidentiality is a good principle, but the need to protect the child must come first and has to over ride confidentiality.*

- ◆ **The parent would be upset or angry with me and tell other parents**

*The child's need to live safely must come first.*

- ◆ **This is only a small sign and I may be over reacting**

*Let others decide if you are doing so. No one will mind discussing your concerns with you. Information is gathered from everyone who knows the child to decide the best course of action.*

- ◆ **Social Services or the Police may break up the family and cause a lot of hurt**

*Children are best brought up within their own families and are normally given support to achieve this, even where there are some risks to the children. Very few children are removed from home and the majority are helped within their own families. The Children Act 1989 enables the Court to remove children if there is evidence that the child is suffering from significant harm. The child's welfare is always paramount.*

## 4.3 What about confidentiality?

No individual should promise confidentiality to someone who is a potential or actual abuser or to someone who makes an allegation against a particular individual. If a child makes an allegation, it is unacceptable not to pass this on, as this will cause the abuse to continue. The child should not be given responsibility for this decision, but advised of the need to refer this on.

If an adult discusses past abuse, the adult needs to be advised of the very strong reasons for this information being given to the Police in terms of protecting children now. If they do not wish to do so, the Rockley Watersports listener does not have to immediately go against these wishes, but does need to discuss the matter with their Principal or the Child Protection Co-ordinator for advice. Sexual abuse is often addictive and perpetrated over many years.

If someone admits to abusing children, they need to be advised that such information has to be passed on to the Police out of our duty to care for children. This is rare, as most abusers are very practised at not telling anyone about their behaviour.

#### **4.4 What do you do if a child talks to you about abuse?**

- ◆ Take the child seriously, however young or confused they are
- ◆ Keep calm and don't show distress
- ◆ Do not promise confidentiality
- ◆ Do not try to obtain more information than is necessary to establish concern. Don't ask questions. Never stop a child who is freely recalling what has happened. Listen carefully without interruption.
- ◆ Explain to the child what you will do with the information next and in a way the child can understand.
- ◆ Make a note of the timing, setting and people present
- ◆ Write down exactly what was said, using the child's own words

Refer to your Principal and/or Child Protection Co-ordinator or the Social Services before further action, if any.

#### **4.5 Responding to abuse concerns**

**You must do something if you have concerns.** It is not your job to investigate abuse – that is the role of the statutory agencies, Police and Social Services.

Time can be crucial particularly in relation to physical or sexual abuse, so do not delay taking action.

It is very important if you suspect abuse is occurring that you don't ask questions. Instead, record all concerns and pass to your Principal and/or Child Protection Co-ordinator. Use the form in Appendix IX for all such suspicions.

**It is important to understand that even the most respected and trusted person could be an abuser**

The fact that you know someone well does not preclude him or her from being an abuser.

If a parent talks about concerns that their child is being abused, this must be passed on to the Principal and/or Child Protection Co-ordinator and Social Services even if the parents cannot be persuaded of the need to do this themselves. This is essential in order to safeguard the child and other children.

All serious allegations against a member of Rockley Watersports staff will be reported to the RYA as well as to Social Services.

**Concerns about abuse by another child or young person also need to be discussed with the Principal and/or Child Protection Co-ordinator.**

Although, many young people will experiment sexually, if there is an imbalance of power or age, adults should respond this to in a similar way to sexual abuse. The welfare of both young people will be paramount.

**Remember;**

- ◆ The child's safety is the most important consideration
- ◆ Abuse is never the child's fault
- ◆ Keep telling someone until the child is helped

## **5 CODE OF PRACTICE**

The following is a list of practical guidelines for keeping children safe at Rockley Watersports and make up our Code of Practice.

### **5.1 All staff will ensure that the venue/activity is suitable and safe.**

*If there are any concerns about this, they should be reported to the Centre Manager, Chief Instructor or Principal and/or Child Protection Co-ordinator. All staff should know the whereabouts of the first aid kit, the nearest telephone, fire extinguishers and exits. Hygiene standards should be maintained where food and drinks are served.*

### **5.2 All adults working with children will attempt not to be alone with a child unobserved.**

*This means there should always be two adults present during activities.*

*For all watersports activities ratios are determined by the guidelines set by the National Governing Body, the RYA. Other activities eg mountain biking, evening activities, excursions should utilise the minimum of 2 adults for up to 20 children over the age of 8, with one additional adult per 10 additional children. A balance of gender should be maintained where possible.*

*There may be specific situations when one to one contact with a child is unavoidable, ensure this is with the full knowledge and consent of the Centre Manager or Chief Instructor or Principal and/or the child's parents/guardians.*

### **5.3 All adults working with children need to try to behave in a way, which could not be misconstrued.**

*The use of touch must be to meet the child's needs, not the adult's. Any touching should take place in a public setting, observed by another adult. Care should be taken when playing physical games that there is no inappropriate touching and that children are happy with the activity. Staff should monitor each other in the area of touch and should help each other maintain safe standards. Any concerns about the behaviour of another member of staff should be referred immediately to the Principal and/or Child Protection Co-ordinator.*

*It may sometimes be necessary for staff to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or disabled. These tasks should be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents/guardians. In an emergency situation, which requires this type of help, parents should be fully informed. In such situations, it is important to ensure all staff are sensitive to the child and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.*

*In addition, medical consent should be obtained in the event where medication or treatment is required to be administered in the absence of the parents/guardians; this includes hospitalisation.*

#### **5.4 Consent and information forms should be completed on behalf of the child.**

*Our booking form (or Names List if the child is a member of a school party) requests relevant information from the parent/guardian, particularly medical information that is held by Rockley Watersports and disseminated to staff in charge of the child (Fleet Leaders, Care Assistants etc).*

#### **5.5 Registers**

*A number of forms are used to act as registers for the children – fleet leader forms for activities and offsite forms for excursions; these forms should record everyone present including supervising staff and accompanying adults. All our centres have a centre log, accident book and Major Accident/Incident forms any or all of which should be used in the event of an accident or incident and the centre log in particular should be used to record any difficulties, unusual events, or concerns about individual children.*

## Appendix I – Useful Telephone Numbers and Contact Details

Rockley Watersports – Child Protection Co-ordinator Lis Gordon	01202 767533 01202 677272 07967 563239 <a href="mailto:lisgordon@rockley.org">lisgordon@rockley.org</a>
Rockley Watersports – Rockley Point Principal Peter Gordon	01202 677272 07967 563234 <a href="mailto:petergordon@rockley.org">petergordon@rockley.org</a>
Rockley Watersports – Le Lac Mimizan, La Rive & AzuRivage Principal Rob Clark	01202 677272 07967 563237 <a href="mailto:robclark@rockley.org">robclark@rockley.org</a>
RYA Legal ◆ <i>Advice and support for instructors who have had an allegation made against them.</i>	023 8062 7422
ChildLine ◆ <i>Confidential telephone advice for children who are being abused or are at risk.</i>	0800 1111
NSPCC Helpline ◆ <i>Telephone Help Line for adults who are concerned that a child has been abused and counselling for adults and children who have been abused.</i>	0808 8005000 & 0800 056 0566
Poole Social Services Social Work team Out of Hours Service	01202 735046 01202 668123
Poole Police Child Protection Unit	01202 552099