



**Sailing for the Disabled**  
**Manx Registered Charity No. 325**

**Child and Vulnerable Adult  
Protection Policy & Good Practice  
Guidance.**

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## Introduction

These guidelines have been produced by the Sailing for the Disabled (Isle of Man), also known as SFTD(IOM) within this document, to help the organisation take appropriate action to enable children and vulnerable adults to enjoy sailing in a safe environment.

### 1. Policy Statement

**The Sailing for the Disabled (Isle of Man) Policy Statement on Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection is as follows:**

- The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount.
- All children and vulnerable adults, 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 and Young Persons Act 2001, **anyone under the age of 18 years** should be considered as a child for the purposes of this document.
- It must be remembered that not all adults who are disabled are necessarily vulnerable. A vulnerable adult is defined in the Isle of Man multi-agency Adult Protection Policy as "any person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of care services by reason of mental or other disability, of age or illness; **and** who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation".
- The skipper of the boat is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to whilst they are carrying out that function.
- All relevant allegations, complaints and their outcomes will be notified to the designated Child Protection Co-ordinator.

### 2. Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Co-ordinator

The executive committee of the SFTD(IOM) organisation shall appoint a person to the position of Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Co-ordinator. Before taking up the role the nominated person will have been checked, to the satisfaction of the committee to the level shown at 3.2 below.

It will be the responsibility of the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Co-ordinator to:

- ensure that the organisation has an up to date policy with procedures to support it;
- ensure that relevant members understand the procedures and put them into practice;
- to receive reports of any concerns or allegations; in conjunction with the person in charge (Chairman), to decide on the appropriate action to be taken; to keep the RYA informed as necessary

### **3. Members**

All persons who are members of the Sailing for the Disabled (Isle of Man) organisation will undergo personal vetting to the following extent:

#### **3.1 Existing skippers and adult able-bodied boat crew:**

- Must have cleared vetting by way of a Criminal Records Disclosure by 01/04/2006.

#### **3.2 Applicants for the position of skipper or able-bodied boat crew:**

- All sailing able-bodied adult members (18 years and over) must clear vetting by way of a Criminal Records Disclosure.

#### **3.3 Non-sailing**

- No personal vetting required

### **Confidentiality**

All personal information will be treated as confidential, stored securely and only shared with those who need to see it in the course of their duties to protect children or vulnerable adults.

## 4. Prevention of abuse – Good Practice Guides

### Good Practice Guide for Skippers

An allegation of abuse on a child or vulnerable adult is a very difficult situation to deal with. Abusers have great difficulty operating in a well-run organisation with good quality management and training. To minimise the risk of abuse or an allegation of abuse occurring the following guidance is recommended:

- Whilst a child (under the age of 18 years) is onboard the boat they must be accompanied by at least one parent, guardian or adult carer. That person will be responsible for the protection and welfare of the child at all times. The skipper can over-ride any decision the responsible adult may make on the grounds that he/she is responsible for the safety of all persons onboard the boat.
- Where any vulnerable adult is onboard the boat it will be at the discretion of the skipper as to whether he/she requires that person to be accompanied by an adult carer. Where an adult carer is required then that person will be responsible for the protection and welfare of the vulnerable person at all times. The skipper can over-ride any decision the responsible adult may make on the grounds that he/she is responsible for the safety of all persons onboard the boat.
- When an unaccompanied vulnerable adult, who requires assistance with functions of a personal nature, is onboard the boat there must always be at least one crew carer of the same gender as the vulnerable person.

It will be at the skipper's discretion to follow the above guidance. However, should the guidance not be followed then an entry should be made in the boat's log stating the reasons and a report sent to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Co-ordinator.

### Good Practice Guide for Crew Carers

There are some common sense guidelines that can be followed which will minimise the risk of abuse or an allegation of abuse occurring.

- Do not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children or vulnerable persons away from others
- Do not take a child or vulnerable person alone in a car on journeys, however short
- Do not take a child or vulnerable person to your home
- **Where any of these are unavoidable, ensure they only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation or their carer.**
- Do not photograph or video children, or publish their pictures, without the knowledge and consent of their parents, guardians or carers. Be sensitive to the risk, although it is probably slight in our organisation, that images could be misused by a third party. Do not publish information, in print or on a website, that might enable someone to contact the child.

### **You should never:**

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun
- let allegations a child or vulnerable adult makes go unchallenged or unrecorded; always act
- do things of a personal nature that a child or vulnerable adult can do for themselves.

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

Except in an emergency all medication or treatment required by a child or vulnerable adult will be administered by their carer.

## **5. What to do if abuse is suspected/alleged to have occurred**

*What should I do if there are allegations of abuse?*

**See Annex C for action guide**

Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, abuse can occur and does occur outside the family setting. Abuse has occurred within institutions and may occur in other settings.

Where there is an allegation of abuse there may be three types of investigation:

- a criminal investigation
- a child protection investigation
- a misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and social services investigation may well influence the misconduct investigation, but not necessarily.

It is important to understand that a member reporting a case of abuse, particularly by a colleague, may undergo a very high degree of stress, including feelings of guilt for having reported the matter. It is therefore important to ensure that appropriate counselling and support is available for that person in such a situation.

*If I do something, might it make things worse?*

Taking appropriate action if you are worried about abuse is never easy - it takes courage but it protects a vulnerable life.

You may be upset about what the person has said or you may worry about the consequences of your actions. Sometimes people worry about children being removed from their families as a result of abuse but in reality this rarely happens. However, one thing is certain - you cannot ignore it. The effects of abuse on a child or vulnerable person can be devastating, especially if they are left unprotected or do not receive help to cope with the abuse. The most serious effect is that children and vulnerable people can and do die as a result of abuse.

## **6. Recording information**

When recording information, it is important that you do not carry the process beyond gathering information about the allegation, into beginning an investigation. Unnecessary interviews with complainants could prejudice the integrity of evidence that may eventually have to be presented in court.

There are particular problems with regard to gaining information from children or adults with limited communication skills. Care should be taken that appropriate means are used to find out what the allegation is about without “leading” the person.

The environment for recording information needs to be considered carefully. Try and ensure that you are in sight of another adult, but that your conversation won't be overheard. You also need to be careful about physical contact during an interview because it may not be what the client wants. The rule is to let the client initiate any actions and to remain positive and supportive throughout.

***See Annex B for guidance on recording information***

## 7. Recognising abuse

This section explains what abuse is, how to recognise it and what to do if you have concerns.

### What is abuse?

Abuse is a term used to describe ways in which children and vulnerable adults are harmed, usually by adults and often by people they know and trust. It refers to the damage done to a person's physical or mental health. They can be abused within or outside their family, at school and in a sports or community environment. Abuse can take many forms:

- **Physical abuse**
- **Neglect**
- **Sexual abuse.**
- **Emotional abuse**
- **Bullying**

It is not always easy to spot when children or vulnerable adults have been abused even for the most experienced carers. 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 person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her
- a change observed over a long period of time (e.g. the child losing weight or becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt)
- a general distrust and avoidance of adults, especially with whom a close relationship would be expected
- an unreasonable reaction to normal physical contact
- difficulty in making friends or abnormal restrictions on socialising with others.

However, it is important to note that a child or vulnerable adult could be displaying some or all of these signs, or behaving in a way which is worrying - this does not necessarily mean the person is being abused. Similarly, there may not be any signs, you may just feel something is wrong.

*If you are worried, it is NOT your responsibility to decide if it is abuse BUT it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it.*

## 8. What should I do if I have concerns?

If you have noticed a change in the person's behaviour, first talk to the parents or carers. It may be that something has happened, like a bereavement, which has caused the client to be unhappy. However, if your concerns are about sexual abuse or violence, talking to the parents or carers might put the person at greater risk.

If your concerns remain or you cannot talk to the parents/carers, consult the designated Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Coordinator. It is the responsibility of this person to make the decision to contact the police and/or social services duty officer.

## 9. Where can I get further help?

If you want to talk things through to gain some advice you can speak in confidence to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Co-ordinator or you can phone the following 24 hour free telephone numbers. You do not have to give your name but it is helpful if you can.

**NSPCC helpline:**

0808 800 5000

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

**ChildLine:**

0800 1111

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

If you are an instructor and have had an allegation made against you, advice and support can be gained from the following sources:

**Local Citizens' Advice Bureau:**

*Refer to Yellow Pages for contact details*

**RYA Legal:** 023 8060 4220

Other useful telephone numbers:

Police: 631212 or in an emergency 999

Social Services Duty Officer: 686179 or out of hours via police.

**All members of crew should be aware of the full content of this policy. A copy of this policy will be available onboard the boat and on the SFTD website.**

## Good Practice Guide Handout For Crew

- Do not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children or vulnerable persons away from others
- Do not take a child or vulnerable person alone in a car on journeys, however short
- Do not take a child or vulnerable to your home
- Where any of these are unavoidable, ensure they only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation or their carer.
- Do not photograph or video children, or publish their pictures, without the knowledge and consent of their parents. Be sensitive to the risk, although it is probably slight in our organisation, that images could be misused by a third party. Do not publish information, in print or on a website, that might enable someone to contact the child.

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

## Recording information

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In cases of child or adult abuse the main aim is to keep calm and provide a positive, friendly attitude to encourage the person to talk.

- **DO** listen
- Do take notes
- Do tell the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer and make sure that, where necessary, all information is passed onto the police
- **DON'T** ask direct questions
- Don't try to stop the person telling you about their problem
- Don't make promises
- Don't allow anyone else outside the police or social services to interview or ask questions of the person.
- Don't assume!

The complexity of child and adult protection issues means that there can never be a set of prescriptive questions. Don't try to get too much information, rather, let the person give you as much as they feel prepared to give. The adult listening should try to act as natural as possible throughout. Makes notes during the interview, but only those necessary; it might be possible to gain certain contact information from existing administrative records.

### **COMMON QUESTIONS that could be used in some situations.**

- **THE DOs** - open questions/statements
- Would you like to tell me what happened?
- Can you tell me where/when this happened?
- Would you like to tell me who was involved?
- Can you tell me what happened next?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
- Thank you for telling me this but you do realise I will have to do something about it
- **THE DON'Ts** - leading/closed questions/comments
- Was it your father/coach/friend that did this to you?
- Are you sure that's what happened?
- Why did you let them do that to you?
- Why do you think this happened?
- I expect you must be very upset about this.
- This can be our little secret

# Incident report form

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Try and keep the process friendly rather than a formal; you want the person to feel as comfortable as possible during this stressful process.

## Interviewer's details

Name: ..... Position: .....

## Client's details

Name: ..... Date of birth: .....

Address: .....  
.....

Parents / Carers names: .....

Address: .....  
.....

## Record what was said and reported (use additional paper, as required)

## Action taken

POLICE: reported to which police station? .....

Officer reported to: .....

Date / time incident reported: .....

Details of advice received:

SFTD: reported to Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer? YES /NO

Date / time incident reported:

Details of advice received:

OTHER: contacted other organisations for advice? Date / time of call:.....

Which organisation(s): .....

Person advice received from: .....

Details of advice received:

Signed by interviewer, as above: ..... Date: .....

# Reporting procedure



