

# Herne Bay Sailing Club Ltd

## Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Revised April 2017, based on RYA guidance December 2016

### Part 1 Policy

#### 1.1 HBSC Safeguarding Children Policy

##### Policy Statement

Herne Bay Sailing Club Ltd is committed to safeguarding, from physical, sexual or emotional harm, neglect or bullying, children taking part in its activities. We recognise that the safety, welfare and needs of the child are paramount and that all children, irrespective of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual or gender identity or social status, have a right to protection from discrimination and abuse.

For the purposes of this policy anyone under the age of 18 should be considered as a child. All members of the Club should be aware of the policy.

##### Club Welfare Officer

The Club Welfare Officer is: Alison Ekins (01227 361264, [alison.ekins@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:alison.ekins@canterbury.ac.uk))

##### Volunteers

All Club volunteers whose role brings them into regular contact with young people will be required to sign a Self-Disclosure form (Appendix A) and sign a record maintained by the Principal to confirm they have read the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. The Club Welfare Officer and those regularly instructing, coaching or supervising young people will also be asked to apply for an Enhanced Criminal Records Disclosure, with Barred List check if appropriate.

The lead Cadet Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that all volunteers regularly assisting with events involving young people have read and understood the requirements of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and that Self Disclosure forms (where required) are filled in and returned to the Principal. The Principal will be responsible for ensuring Criminal Record forms are processed where necessary and will maintain the records for these, the self-disclosure forms and recording that the policy and procedures have been read.

##### Good Practice

All members of the Club should follow the good practice guidelines (Appendix B) and agree to abide by the Club Code of Conduct (Appendix C) and the RYA Racing Charter contained in the Racing Rules of Sailing. Those working or volunteering with young people should be aware of the guidance on recognising abuse (Appendix D).

Adults are requested not to enter the showers and changing rooms at times when children are changing before or after cadet/junior/youth training or racing. If this is unavoidable because adults are sailing at the same times it is better if one adult is not alone. If this is unavoidable it is advised that they are accompanied by another adult. If it is essential in an emergency situation for a male to enter a female changing area or vice versa, it is advised that they are accompanied by another adult of the opposite sex.

The Club will seek written consent from the child and their parents/carers before taking photos or video at an event or training session or publishing such images. Parents and spectators should be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state their purpose for photography/filming. If the Club publishes images of children, no identifying information other than names will be included. Any concerns about inappropriate or intrusive photography or the inappropriate use of images should be reported to the Club Welfare Officer.

### **Concerns**

Anyone who is concerned about a young member's or participant's welfare, either outside the sport or within the Club, should inform the Club Welfare Officer (or any Club Officer in their absence) immediately, in strict confidence. The Club Welfare Officer will follow the attached procedures (*see RYA Flowcharts 1 and 2*).

Any member of the Club failing to comply with the Safeguarding policy and any relevant Codes of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary action under Club Rule 15.

## 1.2 HBSC Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

### Policy Statement

It is the policy of Herne Bay Sailing Club to safeguard vulnerable adults taking part in boating from physical, sexual, psychological or financial harm or neglect. The Club will take all reasonable steps to ensure that, through appropriate procedures and training, vulnerable adults participating in Club activities do so in a safe environment. We recognise that all participants, irrespective of sex, age, disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment or social status, have a right to protection from discrimination and abuse.

All members and volunteers should be aware of the policy.

### Club Welfare Officer

The Club Welfare Officer is: Alison Ekins (01227 361264, [alison.ekins@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:alison.ekins@canterbury.ac.uk))

### Volunteers

All Club volunteers whose role brings them into regular contact with young people will be required to sign a Self-Disclosure form (Appendix A) and sign a record maintained by the Principal to confirm they have read the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. The Club Welfare Officer and those regularly instructing, coaching or supervising vulnerable adults will also be asked to apply for an Enhanced Criminal Records Disclosure. Those providing personal care will be asked to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure with Barred List check.

The Principal will be responsible for ensuring that all volunteers regularly assisting with events involving vulnerable adults have read and understood the requirements of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and that Self Disclosure forms (where required) are filled in and returned to the Principal. The Principal will be responsible for ensuring Criminal Record forms are processed where necessary and will maintain the records for these, the self-disclosure forms and recording that the policy and procedures have been read.

### Good Practice

All members of the Club should follow the good practice guidelines (appendix B). Those working with vulnerable adults should be aware of the guidance on recognising abuse (appendix D).

### Concerns

Anyone who is concerned about the welfare of a vulnerable adult, either outside the sport or within the Club, should inform the Club Welfare Officer (or any Club Officer in their absence) immediately, in strict confidence. The Club Welfare Officer will follow the attached procedures (*see RYA Flowcharts 1 and 2*).

Any member of the Club failing to comply with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policy and any relevant Codes of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary action under Club Rule 15.

## Part 2 Procedures

### 2.1 Designated Person

The club's Welfare Officer has specific responsibility for implementing the club's Safeguarding policy, and acts as the point of contact to receive information and advice from the RYA.

The designated person's role description is to:

- Maintain up-to-date policy and procedures, compatible with the RYA's.
- Ensure that members are aware of and follow the relevant procedures.
- Advise the General Committee on safeguarding and child protection issues.
- Maintaining contact details for local Children's Services and Police.

If there is a concern, the designated person will:

- Be the first point of contact for any concerns or allegations, from children or adults, ensuring that confidentiality is maintained in all cases.
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken, in line with the organisation's procedures and in conjunction with the Commodore.
- Keep the RYA informed as necessary.

The designated person should undertake training appropriate to their role through formal training, an online course, induction and mentoring and/or continuing professional development. The RYA has developed an online safeguarding awareness course 'Safe + Fun' and a further online module for Club Welfare Officers is also available.

#### **RYA designated person**

The RYA's Safeguarding and Equality Manager is Jackie Reid, tel. 023 8060 4104, e-mail [safeguarding@rya.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@rya.org.uk)

If Jackie Reid is unavailable and the matter is urgent, contact:

England - Jackie Bennetts, RYA Club Support Advisor, tel. 023 8060 4199, e-mail [jackie.bennetts@rya.org.uk](mailto:jackie.bennetts@rya.org.uk)

### 2.2 Useful contact details

Kent County Council Children's Services

03000 41 11 11 (out of hours 03000 41 91 91) [social.services@kent.gov.uk](mailto:social.services@kent.gov.uk).

NSPCC

Helpline 0808 800 5000 E-mail: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) Website: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

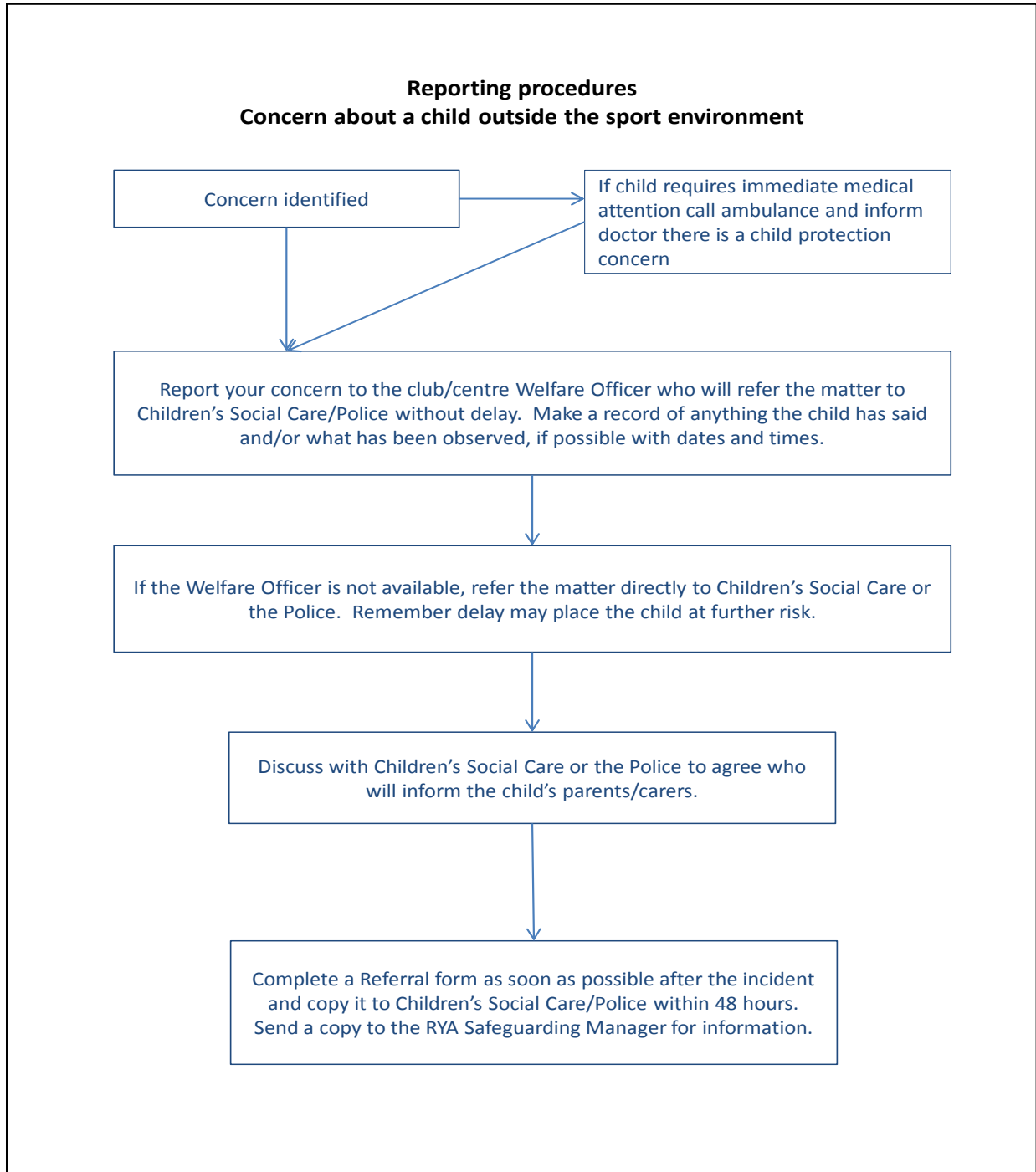
Childline

0800 1111 Website: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

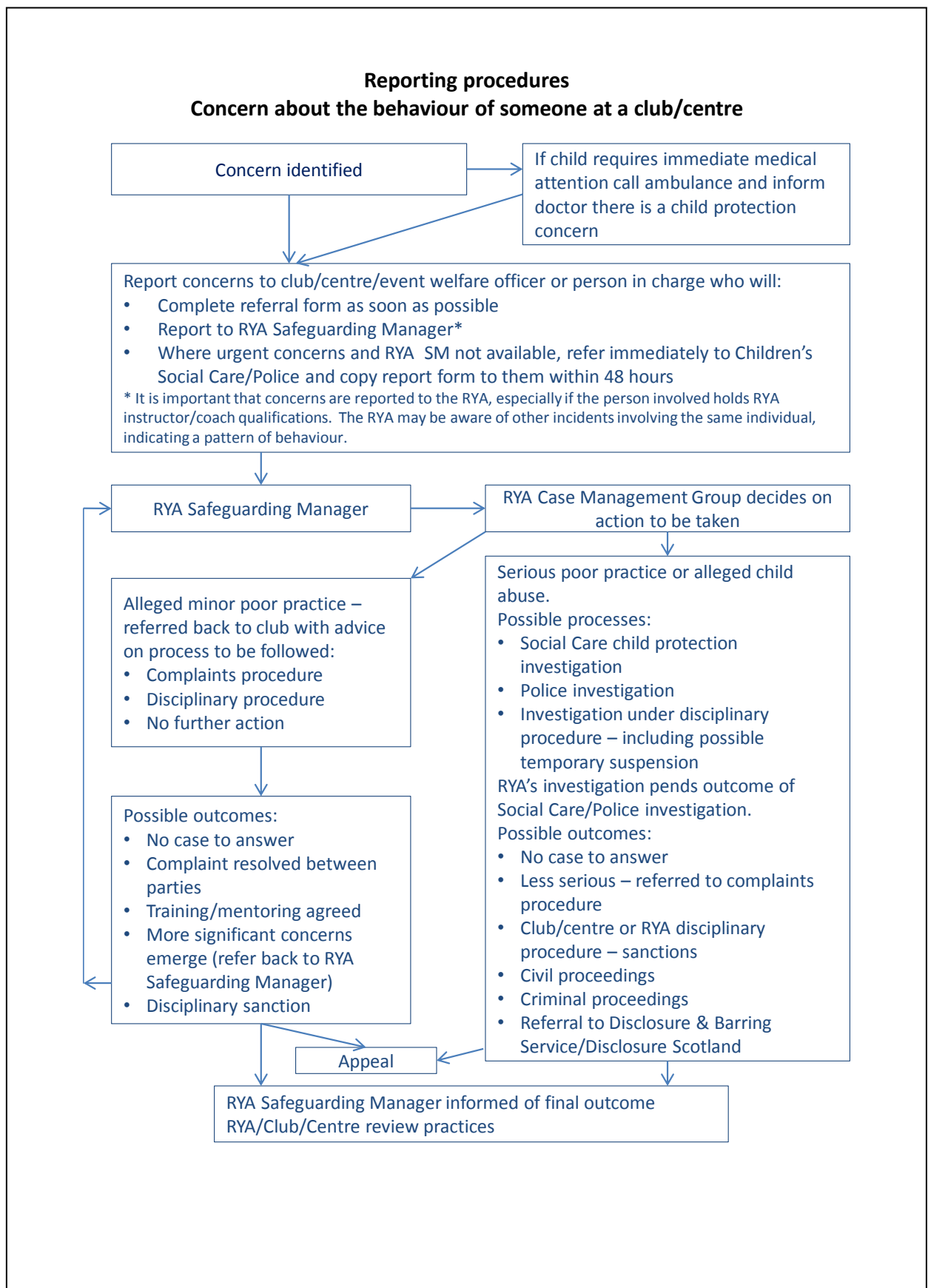
## 2.3 Reporting Procedures

If you are uncertain what to do at any stage, contact the RYA's Safeguarding and Equality Manager on 023 8060 4104 or the NSPCC free 24-hour helpline 0808 800 5000.

Flowchart 1



## Flowchart 2



## 2.4 Good practice guidelines

### Culture

It is important to develop a culture within the Club where 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.

### Minimising risk *(see also Good Practice Guide, Appendix B)*

The Club promotes good practice to minimise situations where adults are working unobserved or could take advantage of their position of trust. Good practice protects everyone – children and volunteers.

These common sense guidelines should be followed:

- Avoid spending any significant time working with children in isolation
- Do not take children alone in a car, however short the journey
- Do not take children 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's parents
- Design training programmes that are within the ability of the individual child.
- If a child 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, 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'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 to use inappropriate language unchallenged, or use such language yourself when with children
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- fail to respond to an allegation made by a child; always act
- do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves.

It may sometimes be necessary to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of both the child (where possible) and their parents/carers. In an emergency situation which requires this type of help, parents/carers should be informed as soon as possible. In such situations it is important to ensure that any adult present is sensitive to the child and undertakes personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

### Additional vulnerability

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse or find it more difficult to express their concerns. For example:

- a disabled child who relies on a carer to help them get changed may worry that they won't be able to sail any more if they report the carer
- a deaf child may not be able to express themselves or speak confidentially if they need an interpreter
- a child who has experienced racism may find it difficult to trust an adult from a different ethnic background
- children with low self-esteem or mental health problems can be more vulnerable to bullying or abuse, as can gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender young people, or any child who has a characteristic that marks them out in others' eyes as 'different'.

### **Grooming**

Grooming is when someone develops a relationship with a child over a period of time to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. For more information on possible signs of grooming, see <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/grooming/>. Sometimes the perpetrator grooms the entire family, building a relationship with the child's parents/carers so that they are allowed more access to the child than would normally be the case.

Similar behaviour could be used to radicalise young people and recruit them to a religious or political cause. This is unlikely to happen in a sailing club setting, but under the government's 'Prevent' strategy teachers and others working with young people are receiving training on recognising the warning signs.

### **Bullying**

If a child alleges bullying or shows signs of being bullied, this must be investigated. For a definition of bullying, see Appendix D.

### **Managing challenging behaviour**

Guidance for instructors and coaches on handling young people who display challenging behaviour is available as a download from the RYA website [www.rya.org.uk/go/safeguarding](http://www.rya.org.uk/go/safeguarding), under RYA Safeguarding and Child Protection Guidelines.

### **Responsibilities of staff and volunteers**

Trainers and volunteers should be aware of the Club's safeguarding policy and procedures and be issued with guidelines on:

- following good practice (*see these Good Practice Guidelines above and Appendix B*) and
- recognising signs of abuse (*see Appendix D*).

RYA Coaches and Instructors are expected to comply with the RYA Codes and Conduct.

### **Parental responsibility and club liability**

Although clubs have a duty of care to their members, and particularly to young people who cannot take full responsibility for their own safety, parents must be responsible for their children's welfare and behaviour, or designate another adult to take that responsibility, outside formal club-organised activities.



When children are attending an organised training or coaching session or activity, the organisers have a duty of care for their safety and welfare at all times. If the club requires a parent (or designated responsible adult) to be on site, it must be made clear at what point responsibility transfers from the instructor, coach or organiser to the parent.

### **First aid and medical treatment**

First aid, provided by an appropriately trained and qualified person, is part of an organisation's normal duty of care. Obtain consent if medication or medical treatment is required in the absence of the parent/carer.

### **Organising and hosting events**

When hosting an open junior or youth event, the lead organiser should liaise with the relevant class association to ensure that all involved in the organisation of the event are operating to similar policies. It should be made clear to all young competitors and their parents that there is someone responsible for their welfare who can be contacted if they have any concerns.

### **Away events**

It is essential that those accompanying young people to away events or training camps, and the competitors themselves, have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the conduct expected of them.

### **Communicating with young people**

The world of the internet, social media and apps is constantly and rapidly evolving and it is hard to keep up to date, but it is important for parents and for anyone working with young people to develop some understanding of how they use technology, the risks involved and how to keep them safe. Suggested sources of information, mainly intended for parents but useful for anyone, are: [www.nspcc.org.uk/shareaware](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/shareaware)

[www.net-aware.org.uk](http://www.net-aware.org.uk)

[www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)

[www.getsafeonline.org](http://www.getsafeonline.org)

### **Coaches and Instructors**

When working with children and young people coaches and instructors are advised to:

- where possible have a business phone and a personal phone
- only contact sailors on your business phone (or using your organisation's text system)
- avoid using over-familiar language and try to copy in the child's parent/carer
- only communicate regarding organisational matters, not for social or personal contact.

When using social media, it is recommended that coaches and instructors:

- have a personal and a professional page for your social media
- do not allow young sailors to follow or be friends with your personal account
- set your privacy settings as high as possible on your personal account

- challenge the way that young sailors post or comment to you or others on social media if it is inappropriate
- educate young sailors about the boundaries between them and their Coach or Instructor.

### **Club websites and social media**

When promoting the club and encouraging members to interact online, there are a few issues to bear in mind in relation to children and young people:

- follow the RYA guidance on the use of images of children (see Photography section below)
- ensure that the content and language on the site or page, including contributions to blogs, forums etc, is not inappropriate for younger visitors and does not link directly to unsuitable material on other sites
- parents and others should report inappropriate content or online bullying and/or to request that content is removed to the club Welfare Officer

### **Parents**

Organisations are responsible for the content published on their sites, but parents must accept responsibility for their children's access to and use of computers, tablets and smartphones.

### **Children and young people**

Unfortunately online communication and texting can often be used as a means of bullying. 'Cyberbullying' should be treated in the same way as any other form of bullying.

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) provides guidance for children and young people in different age groups.

### **Photography, images and video**

Publishing articles, photos and videos in club newsletters, on websites, in local newspapers etc is an excellent way of recognising young people's achievements and of promoting the Club and the sport as a whole. However it is important to minimise the risk of anyone using images of children in an inappropriate way. Digital technology makes it easy to take, store, send, manipulate and publish images.

There are two key principles to bear in mind:

#### **Before taking photos or video, obtain written consent from the child and their parents/carers for their images to be taken and used**

- A consent form could be included with the event entry form.
- Any photographer or member of the press or media attending an event should wear identification at all times and should be fully briefed in advance on your expectations regarding his/her behaviour and the issues covered by these guidelines.
- Do not allow a photographer to have unsupervised access to young people at the event or to arrange photo sessions outside the event.
- Consent should also be obtained for the use of video as a coaching aid. Any other use by a coach will be regarded as a breach of the RYA's Code of Conduct.
- Care must be taken in the storage of and access to images.

**When publishing images, make sure they are appropriate and that you do not include any information that might enable someone to contact the child**

- It is preferable to use a general shot showing participants on the water, or a group shot of the prizewinners, without identifying them by name.
- If you are recognising the achievement of an individual sailor and wish to publish their name with their photo, DO NOT publish any other information (eg. where they live, name of school, other hobbies and interests) that could enable someone to contact, befriend or start to 'groom' the child.
- Ensure that the young people pictured are suitably dressed, to reduce the risk of inappropriate use.

Most sailing activity takes place in areas that are open to the public and it is therefore not possible to control all photography, but any concerns about inappropriate or intrusive photography, or about the inappropriate use of images, should be reported to the organisation's child protection/welfare officer and treated in the same way as any other child protection concern. Parents and spectators should be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state their purpose for photography/filming.

The use of cameras or smart phones/tablets in changing areas should not be permitted in any circumstances. Such use by young people should be regarded as a form of bullying.

## Appendix A Self-disclosure form

Revised Jan 2015

### Self-disclosure form for volunteers with regular contact with children and/or vulnerable adults

Herne Bay Sailing Club is committed to safeguarding children from physical, sexual and emotional harm. As part of our Safeguarding policy, we require applicants for posts involving frequent or regular contact with children to complete this self-disclosure form. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with us. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of your offences.

All information will be treated as confidential and managed in accordance with data protection legislation and guidance. You have a right of access to information held about you under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name .....

- 1. Do you have any convictions, cautions, reprimands or final warnings that are not 'protected' as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended in 2013)? YES / NO**  
If yes, please supply details.
  
- 2. Have you ever been known to any Children Services Department or the Police as being an actual or potential risk to children? YES / NO**  
If yes, please supply details.
  
- 3. Have you ever been the subject of any disciplinary investigation and/or sanction by any organisation due to concerns about your behaviour towards children? YES / NO**  
If yes, please supply details.

#### Declaration

I declare that to the best of my knowledge the information given above is correct and understand that any misleading statements or deliberate omission may be sufficient grounds for disciplinary action and/or the withdrawal of my appointment.

I understand that I may be asked to provide a Criminal Records Disclosure and consent to do so if required. I agree to inform the organisation within 24 hours if I am subsequently investigated by any agency or organisation in relation to concerns about my behaviour towards children or young people.

I understand that the information contained in this form and in the Disclosure, or relating to subsequent concerns about my behaviour, may be shared with regulatory bodies and/or other persons or organisations, in circumstances where this is considered necessary to safeguard children.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Note: if the applicant is aged under 18, this form should be counter-signed by a parent or guardian

## **Appendix B**

### **Handout for Instructors, Coaches and Volunteers – Good Practice Guide**

This guide only covers the essential points of good practice when working with children and young people. You should also read the organisation's Child Protection Policy and Procedures which are available for reference at all times.

- Avoid spending any significant time working with children in isolation
- Do not take children alone in a car, however short the journey
- Do not take children 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's parents
- Design training programmes that are within the ability of the individual child
- If a child 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, 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'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 to use inappropriate language unchallenged, or use such language yourself when with children
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- fail to respond to an allegation made by a child; always act
- do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves.

It may sometimes be necessary to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the child (where possible) and their parents/carers. In an emergency situation which requires this type of help, parents should be fully informed. In such situations it is important to ensure that any adult present is sensitive to the child and undertakes personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

## **Appendix C**

### **Club Code of Conduct**

It is the policy of Herne Bay Sailing Club that all participants, coaches, instructors, officials, parents and volunteers show respect and understanding for each other, treat everyone equally within the context of the sport and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the club/class. The aim is for all participants to enjoy their sport and to improve performance.

**Abusive language, swearing, intimidation, aggressive behaviour or lack of respect for others and their property will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action.**

#### **Participants - young sailors, windsurfers and powerboaters**

- Listen to and accept what you are asked to do to improve your performance and keep you safe
- Respect other participants, coaches, instructors, officials and volunteers
- Abide by the rules and play fairly
- Do your best at all times
- Never bully others either in person, by phone, by text or online
- Take care of all property belonging to other participants, the club/class or its members

#### **Parents**

- Support your child's involvement and help them enjoy their sport
- Help your child to recognise good performance, not just results
- Never force your child to take part in sport
- Never punish or belittle a child for losing or making mistakes
- Encourage and guide your child to accept responsibility for their own conduct and performance
- Respect and support the coach
- Accept officials' judgements and recognise good performance by all participants
- Use established procedures where there is a genuine concern or dispute
- Inform the club or event organisers of relevant medical information
- Ensure that your child wears suitable clothing and has appropriate food and drink
- Provide contact details and be available when required
- Take responsibility for your child's safety and conduct in and around the clubhouse.

#### **Coaches, Instructors, Officials and Volunteers**

- Consider the welfare and safety of participants before the development of performance

- Encourage participants to value their performance and not just results
- Promote fair play and never condone cheating
- Ensure that all activities are appropriate to the age, ability and experience of those taking part
- Build relationships based on mutual trust and respect
- Work in an open environment
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people
- Be an excellent role model and display consistently high standards of behaviour and appearance
- Do not drink alcohol or smoke when working directly with young people
- Communicate clearly with parents and participants
- Be aware of any relevant medical information
- Follow RYA and club/class guidelines and policies
- Holders of RYA Instructor and Coach qualifications must also comply with the RYA Code of Conduct
- Holders of RYA Race Official appointments must also comply with the RYA Race Officials Code of Conduct.

If you are concerned that someone is not following the Code of Conduct, you should inform the Club Welfare Officer or the person in charge of the activity.

## Appendix D – What is child abuse?

(RYA document based on the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2015)

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 others (including via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

**Physical abuse** may involve adults or other children inflicting physical harm:

- by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating
- giving children alcohol or inappropriate drugs
- in sport situations, physical abuse might also occur when the nature and intensity of training exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.

**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 a child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate
- not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate
- imposing expectations which are beyond the child's age or developmental capability
- overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction
- allowing a child to see or hear the ill-treatment of another person
- serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger
- the exploitation or corruption of children
- emotional abuse in sport might also include situations where parents or coaches subject children to constant criticism, bullying or pressure to perform at a level that the child cannot realistically be expected to achieve.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child.

**Sexual abuse.** Sexual abuse involves an individual (male or female, or another child) forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening, to gratify their own sexual needs. The activities may involve:

- physical contact (eg. kissing, touching, masturbation, rape or oral sex)
- involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images
- encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or watch sexual activities
- grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet)
- sport situations which involve physical contact (eg. supporting or guiding children) could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Abusive situations may also occur if adults misuse their power over young people.

**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 involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- respond to a child's basic emotional needs
- neglect in a sailing situation might occur if an instructor or coach fails to ensure that children are safe, or exposes them to undue cold or risk of injury.



**Bullying** (including 'cyber bullying' by text, e-mail, social media etc) may be seen as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated or sustained over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. The bully may often be another young person. Although anyone can be the 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, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture.

The acronym STOP – Several Times On Purpose - can help you to identify bullying behaviour.

### **Recognising Abuse**

It is not always easy, even for the most experienced carers, to spot when a child 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 (eg. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper)
- the child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her
- a change observed over a long period of time (eg. the child 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 could be displaying some or all of these signs, or behaving in a way which is worrying, without this necessarily meaning that the child 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'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 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 at greater risk. If you cannot talk to the parents/carers, consult the Club Welfare Officer or the person in charge. It is this person's responsibility to make the decision to contact Children's 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.