

CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The RSGB Child Protection Policy Statement

Every child or young person, defined as any person under the age of 18, who undertakes amateur radio course training or who participates in amateur radio activities, should be able to take part in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from abuse. This is the responsibility of every adult involved in amateur radio.

The RSGB recognises its responsibilities to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from physical, sexual or emotional harm and from neglect or bullying. It is determined to meet its obligation to ensure that those radio clubs and organisations who are registered with the RSGB to provide amateur radio training for children and young people do so, to the highest possible standard of care.

These procedures apply to anyone involved in amateur radio whether in a paid or voluntary capacity. For example, volunteers in clubs, senior instructors, invigilators and club officials.

The RSGB will consider, having taken advice, whether anyone who has a previous criminal conviction or caution for offences related to the abuse of children or young people, violence or any sexual offences should be excluded from working with children and young people. This position is re-enforced by U.K. legislation and guidance.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse is a term used to describe ways in which children or young people are harmed, usually by adults and increasingly by peers. Often these are people they know and trust. It refers to damage done to a child's or young person's physical, mental or emotional health. Children or young people can be abused within or outside their family, at school, at play and within any environment such as extra curricular activities, participation with youth organisation and the like. Abusive situations arise when adults or peers misuse their power over children or young people.

Types of abuse:

Physical where children's bodies are hurt or injured

Emotional where children do not receive love and affection, may be frightened by threats or taunts or are given responsibilities beyond their capabilities.

Sexual where adults (and sometimes other children) use children to satisfy

sexual desires.

Neglect where adults fail to care for children and protect them from danger, seriously impairing health and development.

Signs of abuse:

The following *may* indicate abuse, but do not jump to conclusions. There could be other explanations:

Physical unexplained or hidden injuries; lack of medical attention.

Emotional reverting to younger behaviour, nervousness, sudden underachievement, attention-seeking, running away from home stealing, lying.

Sexual pre-occupation with sexual matters evident in words, play, drawings, being sexually provocative with adults, disturbed sleep, nightmares, bed wetting, secretive relationships with adults and children, stomach pains with no apparent cause.

Neglect looking ill-cared for and unhappy, being withdrawn or aggressive, lingering injuries or health problems.

Bullying is not always easy to define, it can take many forms and is usually repeated over a period of time. The three main types are: physical (e.g. hitting, kicking theft), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from activities). They will include:

- Deliberate hostility and aggression towards a victim
- A victim who is weaker and less powerful than the bully or bullies
- An outcome which is always painful and distressing for the victim

Bullying behaviour may also include:

- Other forms of violence
- Sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing
- Tormenting, ridiculing, humiliation
- Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Unwanted physical contact or abusive or offensive comments of a sexual nature

Emotional and verbal bullying is more common than physical violence; it can also be difficult to cope with or prove.

Within clubs and schools, the single most important factor in the prevention of bullying is to have a clear policy to which instructors, invigilators, helpers, teachers club members, children and young people and their parents are fully committed. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that clubs who provide amateur radio

training at whatever level develop their own Anti-Bullying Policy to which club members, the children and their parents all subscribe.

If bullying does occur every club or organisation must **take the problem seriously** and **investigate fully every incident**.

Every effort must be made by clubs and organisations to ensure bullying is eradicated. It is important as bullying can result in children or young people becoming vulnerable and isolated. These particular children or young people could then become an easy target for adult abusers.

GENERAL GUIDELINES IN THE CARE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

It is possible to reduce situations in which abuse can occur and help to protect volunteers, instructors, invigilators and club members by promoting good practice. The following are more specific examples of care, which should be taken when working within your club or organisation.

- Always be public and open when working with children and young people. Avoid situations where a teacher/instructor/club members, individual child or young person are completely unobserved.

Everyone should also be aware that as a general rule it **does not make sense** to:

- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with a child/young person
- Take children or young people alone on car journeys, however short
- Take children or young people to your home where they will be alone with you.

If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the organisation and/or the child's/young person's parents.

Adults should never:

- Allow or engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a bedroom with a child or young person
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Allow children or young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child or young person, even in fun
- Allow allegations made by a child or young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature for children or young people they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow children or young people to visit or stay at your home unsupervised.

It may sometimes be necessary for volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children or young people, particularly if they are very young or have a disability. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and prior consent of parents/carers and the children and young people involved. There is a need to be responsive to a child's or young person's reactions – if a child or young person is fully dependant upon you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact or lifting or assisting a child or young person to carry out particular activities.

If you accidentally hurt a child or young person, he/she seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incident as soon as possible to another colleague and make a brief written note of it. Parents or carers should be informed of the incident.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT/WITNESS ABUSE

The following action should be taken by anyone who has concerns about the welfare of a child or young person in:

1. The amateur radio environment/club/youth organisation.
2. The home or other settings.

Non - action is *not* an option in Child Protection

Concerns about poor practice and possible abuse.

Child abuse can and does occur outside the family setting. Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse has occurred within amateur radio and may occur within other settings (social activities). Recent inquiries indicate that abuse that takes place within a public setting is rarely a one-off event. It is crucial that those involved in amateur radio training are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are treated seriously and appropriate actions taken.

Allegations may also relate to poor practice where an adult's or peers behaviour is inappropriate and may be causing concern to a young person. Poor practice includes any behaviour, which infringes an, individuals' rights and/or is a failure to fulfil the highest standards of care. Poor practice is unacceptable and should be treated seriously and appropriate actions taken.

Actions to take in abuse cases:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child or young person.
- Tell the child or young person he/she is not to blame and that he/she was right to tell.
- Take what the child or young person says seriously
- Ensure the safety of the child or young person – if the child or young person needs immediate medical treatment, take the child or young person to

hospital or call an ambulance, inform doctors of concerns and ensure that they are aware that this is a Child Protection issue.

- Avoid leading the child or young person and keep any questions to the absolute minimum necessary to ensure a clear understanding of what has been said.
- Re-assure the child or young person but do not make promises of confidentiality or outcome which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments.
- Parents and carers should be contacted **ONLY** after advice from Social Services.
- Make a full record of what has been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible.
- Report concerns to the person in charge or designated person immediately, unless the concern is about the person in charge.
- The person in charge should be clearly identified at all times. If the person in charge is not available, or the concern is about the person in charge, then report your concerns directly to the Social Services or the Police. These agencies will advise you whether a formal referral to Social Services is necessary and what further action you might need to take. If you are advised to make a formal referral make it clear to Social Services or the Police that this is a Child Protection referral.
- Confidentiality should be maintained on a strictly 'need to know' basis and relevant documents stored in a secure location.
- Please remember that it can be more difficult for some children to disclose abuse than for others. Children from ethnic minorities may have regularly experienced racism, which may lead them to believe 'white people', including those in authority roles, do not really care about their well-being. They may feel they have good reason to question whether your response will be any different.
- Disabled children and vulnerable adults will have to overcome additional barriers before feeling they can disclose abuse. They may rely on the abuser for their daily care and not know of alternative sources of care or residence. The abuse may be the only attention/affection they have experienced. There may be communication difficulties and they will almost certainly have to overcome prejudices, which block our willingness to believe they may be abused or to use their medical condition to explain away indicators, which in an able bodied child would concern us.
- When working with these groups you need to be extra vigilant and give extra thought as to how to respond.

Recording of information, suspicions or concerns.

Information passed to the Social Services Department or the Police must be helpful as possible and it may be used in any subsequent legal action, hence the necessity for making a detailed record. The report should contain the following information:

- The child's or young person's name, address and date of birth
- The nature of the allegation

- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries
- The child's or young person's account, in their own words if possible, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred
- Any observations that have been made by you or to you
- Any times, locations, dates or other relevant information
- A clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay
- Your knowledge of and relationship to the child or young person

Whenever possible, referrals to Social Services Departments should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours.

Keep a record of the name and designation of the Social Services member of staff or Police Officer to whom, concerns were passed and record the time and date of the call, in case any follow up is needed.

If the allegation is made against a RSGB registered instructor or invigilator inform the Society as soon as convenient. Contact with the Society on child abuse allegations or issues should be through the General Manager or the Amateur Radio Secretary **ONLY**.

Further information can be obtained from the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline

0808 800 5000

For deaf users Textphone

0800 056 0566

These numbers are available 24 Hrs are free and completely CONFIDENTIAL

THESE GUIDELINES ARE DESIGNED TO HELP YOU IN WHAT IS A COMPLEX ISSUE. ALWAYS REMEMBER WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMONSENSE PREVAILS!