

Northern Pennine Club

Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy

1. Introduction

The Northern Pennine Club (NPC) recognises:

- the importance of the welfare of young persons and vulnerable adults and their right to protection from abuse.
- its duty of care to young persons and vulnerable adults, for the actions of its trustees, officers, members, associates, and agents.

The NPC will take all allegations of the abuse of children and vulnerable adults seriously and will respond to such allegations quickly.

Caving Trips

Caving is a serious and potentially dangerous activity and members should not be afraid to say 'No' and refuse to take a young person on a caving trip if they consider them to be unsuitable for any reason. Some children may give all outward appearances of being fully competent and comfortable in the caving environment but inwardly may be quite the opposite. If a serious request is made for a return to the surface, it should be dealt with in all reasonable haste. Young people are considerably more susceptible to hypothermia than similarly experienced adults. These considerations should always be born in mind when planning caving trips with young people and continuously monitored.

Adult members have the right of veto/refusal to take a junior member on a designated club caving trip for any reason and will not to be excluded from the trip in preference for the junior member. The junior member or their parents/guardian/nominated carers may appeal the decision at the next meeting of the Committee.

Staying at Green Close

Green Close is for the use of members and their guests and should not be confused with a Youth Hostel environment; it may not always be suitable for children. The club does not usually consider anyone under the age of fifteen should stay at Green Close and anyone contemplating staying with children should bear this in mind. The club arranges special family weekends when Green Close is exclusively for the use of families and their guests.

2. General Principles

The NPC wishes to encourage the widest possible participation in caving and underground exploration. However, we recognise the nature of the sport requires careful consideration of a range of factors when assessing the suitability of involving young people for, what can be, serious caving activities. In particular:

- a) caving can often be a strenuous activity requiring a mature physical and mental approach
- b) a working knowledge of weather patterns & limestone hydrology can be vital for safe caving
- c) caves are a limited physical resource that deserve a mature appreciation of their conservation requirements.

The NPC is in the fortunate position of having access to a wealth of experience in its current and past membership and associates who can enable it to develop caving and potholing amongst young people.

The NPC believes that child welfare is the responsibility of everyone. The purpose of this policy is both to protect young people, vulnerable adults, and support those who look after them. This document gives clear guidance on the identification and procedures for dealing with both potential and actual child abuse. It also acts as a guide to help NPC members and their associates create a safe environment for young people and protect themselves against allegations of improper behaviour. It is a condition of membership for all NPC members to comply with this policy and related guidelines.

Children undertaking NPC activities or staying at Greenclose must be supervised, at all times, by their parents/guardian/nominated carers. Members are not expected to assume responsibility for any children unless they have agreed to undertake the role with the parents/guardian/nominated carers.

If in doubt seek advice from the NPC designated safeguarding lead, see Appendix 1 for useful contacts.

3. Policy Statement

The NPC recognises that all children have the right to be protected from harm and live in a safe environment. The NPC has a duty of care to safeguard all children and vulnerable adults involved in NPC activities. All children and vulnerable adults have the right to protection and the needs of children and vulnerable adults from all backgrounds and abilities must be considered. The NPC will ensure the safety and protection of all children and vulnerable adults involved in its activities through adherence to this policy. The NPC will support anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concerns that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of, or is being, abused. A child is defined as an individual under the age of 18 (The Children Act 2004).

4. Principles

The following principles underpin the Policy:

- To provide children, young people and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care and responsibility of the NPC.
- To allow all members to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.
- To take seriously and respond swiftly and appropriately to any suspicions of child abuse.

- To help and support all individuals involved in providing club activities for young people on behalf of the NPC.
- To give guidance and support, when required, to all organisations and individuals involved in providing caving and potholing activities for young people.
- To recognise that all children, regardless of ethnic origin or disability, have the right to live in a safe environment and that the welfare of the child is paramount.

5. Recognising how children can be Harmed

Child abuse is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed. Abuse may result from action or inaction by a volunteer or paid helper, family member or another young person. The Children Act (2004) explores four main types of abuse: Physical, Emotional, Sexual and Neglect:

Physical Abuse

- Where adults physically hurt or injure children. In a caving situation this might occur if the child is forced to train or cave beyond their capabilities. It may also occur if the training disregards the capacities of the child's immature and growing body. In more extreme cases this can take the form of physical attack, such as hitting, shaking, burning, or biting.

Emotional Abuse

- Occurs when a child is not given love, help and encouragement or is constantly derided or ridiculed. It can occur, conversely, if a child is over protected preventing them from socialising. In a sporting/caving context this may be present in the unrealistic expectations of what a child can achieve by parents or fellow cavers. This can also occur in the undermining of a young person through ridicule. This abuse often manifests itself in the form of bullying (See section "Bullying").

Sexual Abuse

- Occurs when a child knowingly or unknowingly takes part in an activity, which meets the sexual needs of the adult person or persons involved. It could range from sexually suggestive comments to physical sexual activities. Exposing young people to pornography is a form of sexual abuse. In a sporting context this may take the form of photography or videoing for the sexual gratification of the viewer. Members are often placed in a position of great trust, and it is when this trust is abused that sexual abuse can occur. (See section "Guidelines for the Use of Photography").

Neglect

- This includes situations in which adults fail to meet a child's basic physical needs such as, food or warm clothing. This may involve the lack of medical attention or consistently leaving children alone and unsupervised or monitored. Neglect can also occur if the responsible adult fails to ensure children are safe or exposes them to undue cold or risk of injury. This has obvious implications for those taking young people into potentially hostile underground environments.

The NPC will support anyone who in good faith reports his or her concerns that a child is at risk.

6. Possible Signs of Abuse

Even for those experienced at working with child abuse it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already occurred. The NPC acknowledges that its members and associates are not necessarily experts at such recognition. The NPC therefore expects them to discuss any concern they may have with regards to the welfare of a child immediately with a competent person (see section "What You Should Do Next"). If this is not practical and the situation is deemed to be too serious to delay, then advice can be sought from Social Services or the police.

The following are some of the characteristics which may be evidence of abuse. These are by no means exhaustive and are only indicators of potential abuse, not confirmation.

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to injury.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them.
- Unexplained behaviour changes, such as becoming noticeably quiet, withdrawn, or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Distrustful of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Difficulty making friends.
- A child being prevented from socialising with other children.
- Displaying variation in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Becoming increasingly unkempt or dirty.

It must be recognised that the presence of one or more of these indicators is not proof that actual abuse is taking place. It is not the responsibility of those involved in NPC activities to decide whether child abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to act upon any concerns.

7. Raising Awareness

It is understandable that people who are well motivated, caring individuals with a commitment to caring, are reluctant to believe that children may be suffering harm in a caring environment or at home. It may be difficult to accept that children could be at risk because of the way an organisation or its events are run. Levels of awareness need to be raised without creating an atmosphere of anxiety or suspicion.

This means being aware of attitudes of members and associates and of the interactions between them. Certain modes of behaviour may be excused by comments such as:

"They are always like that"

Or

"We have just come to expect that from them but what can you do?"

Where behaviour gives rise to concern or is directly contrary to accepted good practice, then action must be taken. If a young person behaves in a way that gives rise to concern, then

this may be an indicator of a problem. There may well be a perfectly acceptable explanation for this behaviour. It is however important to act on a concern and ascertain that this is the case and seek further help if the explanation is unsatisfactory.

If you become aware of anything that causes you to feel uncomfortable, you should speak to the President, Vice President, Chairman or Club Secretary.

8. Bullying

Bullying is one of the most common forms of abuse. It needs to be taken very seriously and should not be dismissed as a simple part of growing up.

There are three main types of bullying:

- Physical: hitting, kicking or theft
- Verbal: racist or homophobic remarks
- Emotional: persistent negative feedback

All these will include:

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

Bullying behaviour may include:

- Sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing
- Torment, ridicule, humiliation, racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Unwanted physical contact or abusive, offensive comments of a sexual nature

Within caving there are potential situations where bullying can take place:

- A parent who pushes too hard
- A member who adopts a "win at all costs" philosophy
- A caver who intimidates others
- Unwanted peer pressure from other cavers to do caves that are too hard or dangerous for the level of experience or maturity

In a caving context emotional bullying is more likely than physical violence. This is often difficult to define or prove and it is important that all those involved in NPC activities:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns by creating an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and act to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, but do not promise that you will not tell anyone else.
- Keep records of what is said, what happened, by whom, when.

Report any concerns to the President, Vice President, Chairman or Club Secretary

9. Responding to a Disclosure, Suspicion or Allegation

A child in your care may indicate to you that they are being abused in some way or information may come to you of possible abuse. On receiving this information, you should:

- React calmly; do not rush into inappropriate action. What you are told may be very shocking, but it is important you give the child some stability.
- Reassure the child that they are not to blame and that they did the right thing to tell someone about the incident.
- Take the child seriously and listen carefully to them. Recognise how difficult it was for them to tell you
- Only ask questions which help to clarify the situation.
- Do not question more than is strictly necessary, avoid leading or suggesting ideas.
- If possible, allow only one adult to talk to the child to begin with.
- Try not to make the child repeat their account unnecessarily
- Do not make promises you cannot keep. Explain that you may have to tell other people in order to stop what is happening but that you will endeavour to keep the incident as confidential as possible

Do Not:

- Take sole responsibility (see section "What You Should Do Next")
- Approach or try to contact the alleged abuser
- Ignore what has happened
- Make promises you cannot keep

Always make a full record of what has been said, heard or seen as soon as possible.

10. Recording Information

Information may be required to support a future investigation into the issues and needs to be as helpful as possible. Hence there is a necessity for making as detailed record as possible, including:

- The nature of the incident
- A description of any visible injuries
- The child's account
- Times, dates, or other relevant information
- A clear distinction between what is fact, hearsay, and opinion

See the NPC's Child Protection Incident form (Appendix II).

After attaining this information do not hesitate to pass it on to the relevant organisation, see "What You Should Do Next."

11. What You Should Do Next

Concerns about Poor Caving Practice and Possible Abuse

Concerns about Abuse Inside an NPC Setting

Concerns and allegations about child abuse require careful handling and should be treated with the strictest confidence. Any form of abuse could ultimately result in a criminal conviction. It is important to keep an open mind and that all allegations are kept in the strictest practical confidence. It is important you act on your concerns.

If the concern is clearly about poor caving practice rather than abuse as defined in this policy, then refer to the "Poor Caving Practice" section.

If the concern or allegation is suspected abuse and relates to an NPC member it should be reported to the NPC President, Vice President, Chairman or Club Secretary who may in turn refer it to Social Services or the Police. Concerns over members of the public may be referred directly to Social Services.

If the allegation is against the NPC President, Vice President, Chairman or Club Secretary then the report should be given to the officers not involved or through one of the other Vice Presidents.

Following advice from Social Services the parents or carers of the child will be informed by the NPC President, Vice President, Chairman or Club Secretary.

The member will be notified that an allegation has been made and where appropriate suspended from membership.

If you are in any doubt or do not feel confident in sharing your concerns with another member you should seek advice from Police and Social Services.

Alternatively, you can contact the NSPCC help line on 0800 800 500 or website:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/> .

Concerns about Abuse Outside an NPC Setting

If the incident relates to a concern arising outside an NPC setting you should ensure the safety of the young person. If they require immediate attention call an ambulance, inform a doctor of your concerns, and ensure that they are aware that this is a child protection issue.

All police forces have a specialised Child Protection Unit, which deals with allegations of abuse within the family and by people in positions of trust. In an emergency, or if you are completely unsure as to what to do, telephone 999.

12. Internal Enquiries and Suspension

In the event of the NPC being informed of an allegation of poor practice, bullying or abuse against a member or a person involved in NPC activities the Chairman will raise the issue at a special Committee meeting. The Committee will decide which what action is to be taken.

The person accused may have their membership suspended pending the outcome of any investigation.

The responsibility of the Committee is to agree the best way forward and to carry out whatever measures they consider to be appropriate. In this they will have regard for the welfare of the young person, the support required for any member subject to false allegations, and the reputation of the club.

13. What Happens if you are Accused of Abuse?

In the event of an accusation:

- Make notes of all your actions/contacts with the child in question as soon as possible.
- Seek access to professional and legal advice.
- Ensure that you are no longer working with the child/children making the allegation.
- Follow the procedures laid out in this and supporting documents.
- Accept that other members may not be able to discuss the matter with you while the investigation is underway.
- Accept that you may be suspended from membership.

Such events are difficult for all concerned. The NPC will do its utmost to remain impartial in all matters relating to an accusation. The main concern with any incident is the child's welfare. For an individual, against whom an allegation has been made, this will be a challenging time. There are no easy ways to deal with such a situation, it is important that you seek help and support.

14. Poor Caving Practice

Poor Caving Practice may put children in danger where someone does not follow accepted caving techniques or fails to recognise the inherent dangers in a specific underground situation. A combination of minor incidents could also be regarded as poor practice.

If, following consideration, any allegation is clearly about poor caving practice this will be dealt with by the Committee, as they consider appropriate.

15. Good Practice when involving Children in Caving

NPC members, particularly those involved in caving activities, will be working in an environment where a "hands on approach" may sometimes be necessary. Ensure that physical contact is kept to the safe minimum, done openly, in response to the child's needs, and is within the knowledge and consent of the child and their parent/ or carer. There may, in extreme circumstances, be situations where reasonable force may be used as restraint such as, self-defence, preventing risk or injury or damage to property. Please record any such incident and report it to the NPC President, Vice President, Chairman or Club Secretary.

Individuals and clubs associated with the NPC who are involved with young people are required to work within this guidance. They are also encouraged to produce their own guidance and ensure that all their members are aware of procedures and guidelines for good practice.

Visiting Clubs are advised to follow NPC procedures in the event of an incident.

Good practice for adults working with young cavers:

- Members must respect the rights, dignity and worth of all. They must also treat everyone with equality.
- Members should ensure that the welfare of any young caver is paramount, and that the activity should be fun.
- Think about:
 - Not over-caving, or over-training young cavers.
 - Ensuring young people cave because they enjoy it.
 - Motivate young people through positive feedback and constructive criticism.
 - Ensure young cavers cave in an environment where inherent risk is kept to a minimum.
 - Ensure all equipment is appropriate and in good condition.
- When supervising young people try to avoid situations where an adult and an individual child are completely unobserved although in a caving environment this cannot always be done.
- If physical support is required, ensure the individual is aware of what is happening and has consented to this physical help.
- When supervising young people in a changing area adults should ideally work in pairs. Parents or carers must take responsibility for their own child in these situations.

The following should only occur in an emergency:

- Taking young people alone on car journeys.
- Spending time alone with a young person who is not a direct relation or guardian.

The following should never be sanctioned:

- Taking young people alone to your home.
- Sharing a room unchaperoned with a young person or young people.
- Allowing young people to engage in the use of inappropriate language.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a young person even in fun.
- Doing things of a personal nature for a young person they can do themselves.
- Allowing allegations made by a child to go unchallenged not acted upon or not recorded.
- Allowing young people to consume alcohol or take recreational drugs.
- Allowing any physically rough or sexually provocative, contact or games.

16.Guidelines for the Use of Photography

It is not the intention of this policy to prevent the use of video or photography equipment. Video used in an appropriate way is a valuable training aid and family photographs of young people are part of many family lives. Caving photography has done much to promote the sport amongst young people.

However, people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people. If you have any concerns report them to the NPC Committee.

17. Coaching and Training

The NPC does not coach young people or adults and has no formal coaching qualification or training structure.

The NPC recognises the need for proof of technical competence with respect to coaching. Within the NPC some members hold Caving Instructor Certificates and Local Cave & Mine Leadership Assessments - they are a reliable source of advice and guidance.

The NPC does not consider young people should be involved in cave diving activities and does not encourage its members to coach or train young people in this area of caving.

Useful Contacts

NPC Child Protection Officer

Iain Crossley

Tel: 07887 804553

British Caving Association (Sport's Governing Body)

Contact:

BCA National Safeguarding Officer

Email: safeguarding@british-caving.org.uk

Phone: 07721 387 621

NSPCC

The NSPCC help line Tel 0808 800 5000

Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

If you are in doubt or unsure in any way about your responsibilities for Child Protection, or about how your club should act, then contact the Child Protection in Sport Unit.

Website: <https://thecpsu.org.uk/>

NPC CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT FORM

NORTHERN PENNINE CLUB**NPC CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT FORM**

For detailed questions, use a separate sheet if necessary

EVENT DETAILS

Name of event _____

Date of event _____

Co-ordinator _____

YOUR DETAIL:

Name _____

Your position _____

Contact tel: _____

CHILD'S DETAILS

Name _____

Address (inc. post code) _____

Tel: _____

Date of Birth _____

PARENTAL/GUARDIAN DETAILS

Name(s) _____

Address (inc. post code) _____

Tel: (if different to above) _____

WITNESS DETAILS

Name (1) _____

Address (inc. post code) _____

Tel: _____

Name (2) _____

Address (inc. post code) _____

Tel: _____

INCIDENT DETAILS

Date and time of incident

Your observations (i.e. what is the nature of the allegation (including dates, times and any special factors or other relevant information (make clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay). Describe any visible bruising or other injuries, behavioural signs or indirect signs. Use additional sheets.

The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred (remember, do not lead the child - record actual details.) use additional sheets.

Actions taken so far (including whether anyone else has been contacted and if so who?)

Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? If

Yes / No

yes give name:

OTHER PROFESSIONALS CONTACTED

Have any external agencies been contacted (i.e. police. Social Services. NSPCC, NPC). If yes, please provide details below.

Yes / No

If yes, which?

Name and contact number
Details of advice received

Social Services?

Yes / No

If yes, which?

Name and contact number
Details of advice received

**NPC President/Vice President/
Chairman/Secretary?**

Yes / No

Name
Details of advice received

Other (e.g. NSPCC)?

Yes/No If yes, which?

Name and contact number
Details of advice received

Further information:

YOUR SIGNATURE _____
Signed _____

Print name _____
Date _____

REMEMBER to maintain confidentiality on a *need to know* basis - only if it will protect the child. Do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know.

A copy of this form should be sent to the NPC Secretary

SUMMARY CHILD & VULNERABLE ADULTS PROTECTION GUIDELINES

Introduction

The Northern Pennine Club (NPC) recognises:

- the importance of the welfare of young people
- their right to protection from abuse.
- its duty of care to them for the actions of its members and associates.

We will take all allegations seriously and will respond quickly.

The NPC wishes to encourage the participation of young people in caving and underground exploration. We recognise the nature of the sport requires careful consideration of a range of factors when assessing the suitability of involving young people in caving activities. In particular:

- caving can often be strenuous requiring a mature physical and mental approach
- a working knowledge of weather patterns & limestone hydrology can be vital for safe caving
- caves are a limited physical resource that deserve a mature appreciation of their conservation requirements.

These guidelines are to assist in understanding our Child & Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy and are designed to promote a safe and comfortable environment for young people involved in caving. These guidelines are also to help members and those associated with the club to protect themselves against allegations of improper behaviour.

General guidance

The NPC requires the parent or guardian of any young person caving with the club should be always responsible for their safety, however, we recognise there will be instances; particularly underground, when this may not always be possible. Good practice is common sense, but it is important that all adults involved in caving with young people remember that they must act as a reasonable parent or guardian would under the circumstances:

- Always work in an open and honest environment, ensure all those involved in a session are aware of what is going on and the reasons for it.
- Avoid situations where adults are in a 1:1 situation with young people.
- Treat all young people with respect.
- Always put the welfare of young people first, for example, choose a route that suits them not yourself.
- Avoid physical contact between an adult and a young person. If this does occur, it is important the child consents and it is done in an open way. It must be obvious that contact is for the safety of the child, such as a helping hand to ensure safety.
- Create an environment that promotes empowerment and mutual respect between participants within an activity.
- Ensure that there is parental consent for the participation in an activity.

Some situations should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of the child's parents/carers; in particular:

- Avoid spending time alone with a young person away from others.
- Avoid taking young people alone on car journeys, however short.
- Avoid taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you.

If you do things of a personal nature for young people, these tasks should only be carried out with the full consent of the parents and the young people involved; be responsive to the child's reactions.

If a child is fully dependant on you, talk with them about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly necessary when putting on a harness, dressing or undressing an outer layer of clothing, or when physical support is required in lifting or assisting a child when carrying out particular activities.

If you accidentally hurt a child and they appear to be distressed, sexually aroused or if they misinterpret something you do or say, you should report such an incident to another NPC member and make a brief written note. The child's parents or carers should also be informed of the incident.

Caving Trips

Caving is a serious and potentially dangerous activity and members should not be afraid to say 'No' and refuse to take a young person on a caving trip if they consider them to be unsuitable for any reason. Some children may give all outward appearances of being fully competent and comfortable in the caving environment but inwardly may be quite the opposite. If a serious request is made for a return to the surface, it should be dealt with in all reasonable haste. Young people are considerably more susceptible to hypothermia than similarly experienced adults. These considerations should always be born in mind when planning caving trips with young people and continuously monitored. Adult members have the right of veto/refusal to take a junior member on a designated club caving trip for any reason and not to be excluded from the trip in preference for the junior member. The junior member or their parents/guardian/nominated carers may appeal the decision at the next meeting of the Committee.

Staying at Green Close

Green Close is for the use of members and their guests and should not be confused with a Youth Hostel environment; it may not always be suitable for children. The club does not usually consider anyone under the age of fifteen should stay at Green Close and anyone contemplating staying with children should bear this in mind. The club arranges special family weekends when Green Close is exclusively for the use of families and their guests.

Formal Procedure

The NPC has a formal policy for reporting and recording potential incidents of abuse; please refer to the Child Protection Policy or contact an officer of the club.

NSPCC Child Protection helpline 0808 800 500

**Iain Crossley, Child Protection Officer
Vice President, Northern Pennine Club 07887 804553**