

# **Eastcote Sub Aqua Club Child Protection Policy**

## **Introduction**

It is widely accepted throughout society that it is the responsibility of every adult to protect children from abuse. Organisations whose members include children and juveniles have an obligation to formulate and adopt a policy that assists in such protection. As a result BSAC has adopted the following policy:-

*As the Governing Body for the sports of snorkeling and SCUBA diving, the British Sub Aqua Club (BSAC) wishes to assure parents and guardians that all reasonable precautions will be taken to ensure the safety and well being of young children and juveniles who participate in the activities of the BSAC. Accordingly, it is a policy of the BSAC that people convicted of criminal acts of a sexual or violent nature against, or otherwise involving, children, may not be Members of the organisation and that, in particular, such persons will not have contact with young BSAC students in any form whatsoever. Additionally, and as a condition of Membership, the BSAC has instituted basic screening for criminal activity of this nature, for all who wish to join the BSAC or renew their Membership. The BSAC reserves the right to follow up on such declarations with criminal record checks.*

As a Branch of the BSAC, Eastcote Sub Aqua Club fully endorses this policy.

This document consolidates many aspects of Child Protection into a single reference source. We require that any ESAC member involved in the supervision or instruction of children or juveniles should be aware of its content.

We recognise that by making provision for children and young people, we not only provide the opportunity to learn a sport, but also improve self-esteem and self confidence, as well as generating pleasure through participation. It is therefore vital that we provide an environment that is safe and both recognise and meet our duty of care and child protection responsibilities.

Every member of ESAC is responsible for the maintenance and implementation of this policy and good standards of practice in the training of children. The Secretary and the Welfare Officer (a person not on the Executive Committee, but nominated by the Chairman) will act as the first point of reference should any allegations or suspicion of child abuse be raised. They will provide confidential advice on the course of action to be taken.

## **Parental Supervision**

We encourage parents or guardians to be present at all times when their children or juveniles are undergoing training by ESAC members. In fact, ESAC Club Rules 5.4 states that :

*Parents, or their nominated representatives, are responsible for the safety of their children at all times during club activities, including all pool and classroom sessions and at dive sites.*

In the event that a nominated representative of the parent is responsible for the child, parents should give their consent for this appointed person to approve such essential medical treatment for the child as is deemed necessary in an emergency on the advice of a qualified medical practitioner.

## **Risk Management**

Scuba diving, by its very nature, involves some element of risk. Every step should be taken by all divers to ensure that the risks are assessed and managed correctly. This can only take place after the correct training. ESAC requires that all members who have responsibility for supervision or training of children or juveniles are correctly qualified to do so.

## **Aims of this document**

The sports of snorkeling and scuba diving attract children and adults from all walks of life and, by the nature of their teaching, offer many opportunities for student contact and control by the instructors. Care must be taken to ensure that the trust placed in a BSAC instructor by students and their families is not abused. This document has been produced for ESAC as a result of increased awareness of a general social problem rather than an increase in malpractice within our sport.

The aims of this document are fourfold:

- to minimise the risk of any form of abuse to students
- to offer advice for the protection of instructors
- to help instructors to recognise abuse when it occurs
- to give practical procedures in the event of real or suspected abuse occurring

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## **SECTION 1**

## **PRINCIPLES**

It is widely accepted that it is the responsibility of every adult to protect children from abuse. In the sports of snorkelling and scuba diving we can add, that it is the responsibility of every Instructor to protect their students from abuse.

- The students welfare is paramount
- All students, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin or religious beliefs have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

Working in partnership with children and their parents / carers is essential for the protection of those children. Social Services Departments have a statutory responsibility for the welfare of children and it is recommended that working with the local relevant Area Child Protection Committee will help in the compliance of statutory procedures.

## **SECTION 2**

## **MAIN FORMS OF ABUSE**

There are five main forms of student abuse:

### ***NEGLECT***

Neglect in the sport situation could include an instructor or coach not ensuring the student's safety, exposing them to undue cold or unnecessary risk of injury. There is considerable heat loss associated with both snorkelling and diving in both pool and open water. Instructors should ensure that protection is adequate and exposure minimal.

The BSAC recommends maximum instructor / student ratios to allow effective monitoring and instruction in all conditions.

### ***PHYSICAL ABUSE***

In the sports environment physical abuse might occur when the nature and intensity of training exceeds the capacity of the student. This applies especially to children where the body is immature and still growing.

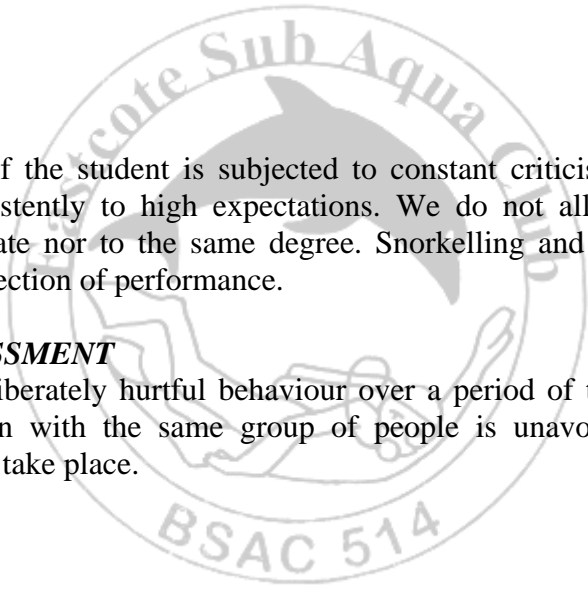
The sports of both snorkelling and diving are physically demanding and gradual training is needed to develop the necessary fitness. However, these are recreational sports and Olympic fitness standards are not required. Care must be exercised in the application of swimming tests and requirements to man-handle heavy equipment.

### ***SEXUAL ABUSE***

Sports which involve physical contact with students could potentially create situations where sexual abuse could occur or be deemed to occur. The power of the instructor over young students, if misused, may also lead to abusive situations developing.

**Snorkelling** - close physical contact with students in water should be avoided.

**Scuba diving** - the teaching of certain diving skills necessitates physical contact with the student e.g. Kitting up, Controlled Buoyant Lift or Air sharing. Such situations should be managed sensitively.



### ***EMOTIONAL ABUSE***

This may occur in sport if the student is subjected to constant criticism, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform consistently to high expectations. We do not all acquire skills or achieve consistency at the same rate nor to the same degree. Snorkelling and diving are undertaken for enjoyment not to seek perfection of performance.

### ***BULLYING AND HARASSMENT***

Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour over a period of time. Within a small club such as ESAC, interaction with the same group of people is unavoidable and may offer the opportunity for bullying to take place.

## **SECTION 3**

## **RECOGNITION OF ABUSE**

Even for those experienced in the field it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. It is acknowledged that BSAC Instructors are not experts at such recognition and they are therefore encouraged to discuss any concern about a student's welfare immediately with the person in charge – either the Branch secretary and/or the designated Welfare Officer (WO).

### **If children are involved:**

It is the responsibility of the instructor to ensure that appropriate advice is obtained from the local Social Services Department or the NSPCC. If the Secretary or WO are not available, or the concern is about either of them, the person in receipt of the information should contact the Social Services Department direct.

Indications that a child may be abused include:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries;
- an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent;
- the child describes a seemingly abusive act;
- a third party expresses concern about a child's welfare;
- there are unexplained changes in the child's behaviour;
- inappropriate sexual awareness is demonstrated by the child;
- the child engages in sexually explicit behaviour;
- the child is distrustful of adults;
- the child has difficulty in making friends;
- the child is prevented from socialising with other children;
- the child displays variations in eating patterns;
- the child loses weight for no apparent reason;
- the child becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It should be recognised that this is not an exhaustive list and that the presence of one or more indicators is not proof that abuse is taking place.

***IT IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE WORKING IN THE SPORT TO DECIDE IF ABUSE IS OCCURRING BUT IT IS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT ON ANY CONCERNS.***

#### **SECTION 4**

#### **RESPONDING TO THE STUDENT**

If a student discloses that they are being abused whether in the home or the sport setting, then the person receiving the information should react calmly.

##### **If the student is a child then:**

- reassure the child that they were right to tell them and that they are not to blame;
- take what the child says seriously;
- keep questions to an absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said;
- reassure but do not promise confidentiality which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments;
- **MAKE A FULL WRITTEN RECORD OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID / HEARD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**
- Incident report forms are available from the Secretary or the Welfare Officer.

#### **SECTION 5**

#### **RESPONDING TO SUSPICIONS OR ALLEGATIONS**

It is not the responsibility of the BSAC Instructor to decide whether abuse has taken place or not. However it is their responsibility to pass on the information to the Secretary or WO, or to the relevant Social Services agency in respect of children.

The Social Services Department has a statutory duty under The Children Act 1989 to ensure the welfare of a child. When a child protection referral is made, its staff have a legal responsibility to investigate. This may involve talking to the child and the family, and gathering information from other people who know the child. Enquiries may be carried out jointly with the police. Clearly then concerns about children must not be taken lightly.

##### **What should you do if you have concerns?**

- Talk to parents / carers to clarify any concerns.
- If the concerns involve the parents / carers then talk to the Secretary or Welfare Officer. Notify BSAC HQ or Regional Coach as appropriate.

**If you are not sure what to do, you can obtain advice by telephoning the NSPCC 24 hour freephone Helpline - 0800 800 500**

## **RECORDS AND INFORMATION**

Information passed to the Social Services Department or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record. Information should include:

- the nature of the allegation;
- a description of any injuries or bruising;
- the child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how injuries may have occurred; any times, dates or other relevant information;
- a clear distinction of what is fact, opinion or hearsay.

Reporting the matter to the police or Social Services Department should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the Social Services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. A record should also be made of the name and designation of the Social Services member of staff or police officer to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed.

**All such information should be registered with BSAC HQ.**

Contact: David Roberts (Business Director on 0151 350 6266 (direct line)  
or  
Charlotte Hope (Technical Support Administrator) 0151 350 6261 (direct line)

## **SECTION 6**

## **ALLEGATIONS AGAINST INSTRUCTORS**

This section includes all instructors or assistant instructors engaged in teaching BSAC snorkelling or diver training programmes. It is crucial that those involved in sport are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are taken seriously and appropriate action taken.

There may be circumstances where allegations arise from poor practice rather than abuse, but those responsible should always record the allegation and consult with senior colleagues such as Regional coaches or BSAC HQ and gain advice from Social Services or the NSPCC if there is any doubt.

The BSAC assures all instructors that it would fully support anyone who, in good faith, reports their concern that a fellow instructor is, or may be abusing a student.

Complaints against a BSAC instructor may initiate three types of investigation:

- criminal investigation;
- child protection investigation;
- disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

### ***ACTIONS TO TAKE***

If the allegation is clearly one about poor practice then the person in charge may deal with the matter or seek advice from the Regional coach or directly from BSAC HQ.

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by an instructor should be reported to the person in charge who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The person in charge will refer the allegation to the Social Services Department who may involve the police.

- The parents / carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Social Services Department.
- The person in charge should notify BSAC HQ who will then deal with any media enquiries.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.
- If the Secretary is the subject of the suspicion then the Welfare Officer must be informed and then be responsible for taking the action outlined above, and *vice versa*.
- BSAC will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending enquiries. In the light of enquiries the BSAC will make the decision about reinstatement of a suspended instructor and decide how the matter may best be handled. The welfare of children is paramount in this decision.
- Consideration should be given to what support may be appropriate for children, parents and instructors.

### **Allegations of previous abuse.**

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event. Where such allegations are made, the organisation should follow the above procedure and report the matter to the Social Services Department. This is to minimise the risk to other children in the sport. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children.

## **SECTION 7**

## **PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE**

Abuse may occur within or outside your training session. **Don't be afraid to report your concerns, whatever their origin.**

### *TEACHING PRACTICES FOR SNORKELLING*

This sport often involves the instruction of young children and the following are a few simple guidelines for instructors:

- Don't be alone with your students. Parents must attend the sessions and children must be supervised at all times.
- Don't mix age groups. By mixing adult and child classes you could be offering the opportunity for abuse.
- Confine your teaching, where possible, to the side of the pool. If it is necessary to demonstrate in water have a fellow instructor with you.
- Ensure adequate supervision. ESAC recommend a maximum instructor / student ratio for pool and sheltered open water sites as 1:4 with a vigilant pair of eyes.
- In open water do not exceed 1:2, again with a vigilant pair of eyes.
- Watch out for the effects of cold and exhaustion especially when training in open water.

### *TEACHING PRACTICES FOR DIVING*

If teaching children diving then again ensure that you are not left alone with your students. Also, it is recommended that parents are advised that physical contact is necessary.

- Certain underwater skills require close physical contact, such as Alternative Air Sharing, Controlled Buoyant Lift. Before taking hold of your student in a manner which may be misinterpreted, dry run the skill and give a verbal commentary to the whole class explaining what you are going to do.

- Advise students to wear T-shirts or pool suits. This can avert potentially embarrassing situations.
- Guard against the effects of cold especially when training in open water.
- Avoid training in a one to one situation.
- Ensure adequate supervision. ESAC recommend an instructor / student ratio for pool and sheltered open water sites of 1:2. In open water the ratio should never exceed 1:2.

#### *GENERAL GOOD PRACTICE IN THE CARE OF CHILDREN*

- Be publicly open when working with children.
- Where possible parents must be made aware of the contact aspect of the sport and, further, should take on responsibility for their children at all times including changing, carrying of equipment, poolside and training, both in the classroom and in the water.
- When away from home ensure that there are male and female instructors or parents with the group.

#### *YOU SHOULD NEVER:*

- engage in rough or sexually provocative games;
- share a room with a child;
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching;
- make sexually suggestive comments;
- allow allegations made by anyone to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;
- do things of a personal nature for students which they can do for themselves;
- invite or allow children into your home unsupervised;
- give a lift to a solo child in your car or other vehicle.

If you accidentally hurt a child and they seem distressed in any manner, appear to be sexually aroused by your actions, misunderstand or misinterpret something which 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.**

#### *COMPLAINTS*

The Executive Committee or Activity Centre Management should ensure that there is a well established complaints procedure in operation and that students and parents of students, where applicable, have easy access to the procedure.

## **SECTION 8**

## **SOURCES AND CONTACTS**

#### *BSAC CONTACT:*

David Roberts (Business Director on 0151 350 6266 (direct line)

Charlotte Hope (Technical Support Administrator) 0151 350 6261 (direct line)

NSPCC - 24 hour HELPLINE freephone 0800 800 500

*CONTACT ADDRESSES*

**Department of Health**

CS2B

Room 133

Department of Health

Wellington House

133-155 Waterloo Road

London SE1 8UG

*For general enquiries in connection with "Safe from Harm"*

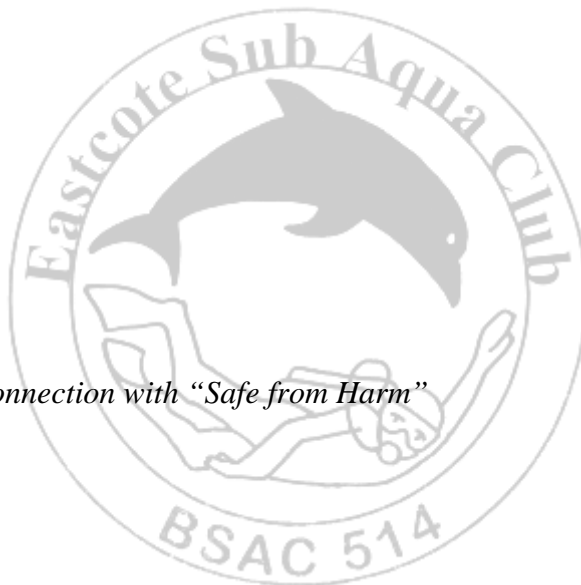
**Home Office**

F2 Division

Room 531

50 Queen Anne's Gate

London SW1H 9AT



*The part of the Home Office which deals with the disclosure of criminal background*

**Department of Health Consultancy Service**

Room 133

Department of Health

Wellington House

133-155 Waterloo Road

London SE1 8UG

*Holds lists against which names of prospective staff may be checked*

**The Volunteer Centre UK**

29 Lower King's Road

Berkhampstead

Herts. HP4 2AB

*Provides information, training and support to people who work with volunteers*

**Voluntary Organisations Consultancy Service**

Unit 4

Pride Court

80/82 White Lion Street

London N1 9PF

*Makes criminal record checks for some national voluntary organisations which work with children*

**NSPCC National Child Protection Helpline**

0800 800 500 (24 hr, 7 day)

**Childline**

0800 1111



**Eastcote Sub Aqua Club**

**CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT RECORD FORM**

|  |
|--|
| Your name:   |
| Your position:   |
| Child's name:  |
| Child's address:   |
| Parents/carers names and address:  |
| Child's date of birth:   |
| Date and time of any incident:   |
| Your observations:   |
| Exactly what the child said and what you said:<br>(Remember, do not lead the child – record actual details. Continue on separate sheet if necessary) |
| Action taken so far:   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| External agencies contacted (date & time) |  |
| <b>Police</b><br>yes/no                   | If yes – which:<br>Name and contact number:<br>Details of advice received: |
| <b>Social services</b><br>yes/ no         | If yes – which:<br>Name and contact number:<br>Details of advice received: |
| <b>Sport Governing body</b><br>yes/no     | Name and contact number:<br>Details of advice received:                    |
| <b>Local authority</b><br>yes/no          | If yes – which:<br>Name and contact number:<br>Details of advice received: |
| <b>Other (e.g. NSPCC)</b>                 | Which:<br>Name and contact number:<br>Details of advice received:          |
| Signature:                                |  |
| 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.

NB A copy of this form should be sent to social services after the telephone report and to the BSAC Child Protection Officer