



# **RS Feva (UK) Class Association Child Welfare Policy & Procedures**



**Version 2.0 Reviewed January 2017**

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## 1. Introduction

All parents, adult assistants and employees/sub-contractors/coaches will be aware that there is a legal responsibility to protect children in its care.

The RS Feva (UK) has a child welfare and procedures policy because it seeks to:

- Safeguard children from physical or emotional harm, both on and off the water.
- Assure parents that their children are safe.
- To raise awareness amongst our members, volunteers or employees so that they know what to do if they are concerned about a child, whether the concern relates to: the child's welfare when they are attending events/training or something happening outside the sport that a child discloses to someone they trust.
- To protect coaches, instructors, officials or volunteers by giving them some practical guidelines to avoid placing themselves in situations where they are open to allegations.
- To demonstrate that RS Feva (UK) takes its obligations seriously and has undertaken this policy in consultation with the RYA.
- To provide a safe environment.



## 2. RS Feva (UK) Child Welfare Policy Statement

As defined in the Children Act 1989, for the purpose of this policy anyone under the age of 18 should be considered a child. The policy also applies to vulnerable adults.

**It is the policy of RS Feva (UK) to safeguard children and young people taking part in boating from physical, sexual or emotional harm. RS Feva (UK) will take reasonable steps ensure that, through appropriate procedures and training, children participating in RS Feva (UK) activities do so in a safe environment. We recognise that safety and welfare of the child is paramount and that all children, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, religion or belief, sexual identity or social status, have a right to protection from abuse.**

RS Feva (UK) actively seeks to:

- Create a safe and welcoming environment, both on and off the water, where children can have fun and develop their skills in confidence.
- Recognise that safeguarding children is the responsibility of everyone, not just those who work with children.
- Ensure that RS Feva (UK) organised events are run to the highest possible safety standards.
- Be prepared to review ways of working to incorporate best practice.

We will:

- Treat all children with respect and celebrate their achievements.
- Carefully recruit and select all employees, contractors and volunteers.
- Respond swiftly and appropriately to all complaints and concerns about poor practice or suspected child abuse.

This policy relates to all employees, contractors and volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults in the course of the RS Feva (UK) duties. It will be kept under periodic review. All relevant concerns, complaints and their outcome should be notified to the RS Feva (UK) Child Welfare co-ordinator.



### 3. RS Feva (UK) Child Protection Procedures

**RS Feva (UK) Welfare Officer is: Joanne Harris Mobile: 07876596044 email: [welfare@rsfeva.org.uk](mailto:welfare@rsfeva.org.uk)**

If the welfare officer is unavailable and the matter is urgent, please refer to Jackie Reid, the RYA Safeguarding and Equality Manager Tel. 023 8060 4104 email [jackie.reid@rya.org.uk](mailto:jackie.reid@rya.org.uk)

#### **Staff and volunteers**

All staff and volunteers whose role brings them into regular contact with young people will be asked to provide references. The RS Feva (UK) Welfare Officer and those regularly instructing, coaching or supervising young people will also be asked to apply for Enhanced Criminal Records Disclosure, with Barred List check if appropriate.

#### **Good Practice**

All coaches, contractors and regular volunteers will be expected to read and abide by the RS Feva (UK) Good Practice Guide and the RYA Code of Ethics. The same applies for the RYA Racing Charter contained in the Rules of Sailing. Everyone should also be aware of the guidance on **recognising abuse** (see Appendix A). Those working with young people should be aware of the guidance on **recognising abuse and bullying** (see Anti Bullying Policy).

It is the policy of RS Feva (UK) that all participants, coaches, instructors, officials, volunteers and parents show respect and understanding for each other, treat everyone equally within the context of the sport and conducts themselves in a way that reflects the principle of the Class. Please see the **Code of Conduct** for further guidance.

Adults are requested not to enter the showers and changing rooms at times when children are changing. If this is unavoidable it is advisable that they are accompanied by another adult.

RS Feva (UK) 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. RS Feva (UK) should seek to limit the amount of identifying information included in any publication of images. Any concerns about inappropriate or intrusive photography should be reported to the RS Feva (UK) Welfare Officer. Please see the RS Feva (UK) photograph Policy for further information.

#### **Good practice when organising and hosting an event**

Organisers of RS Feva (UK) events should seek to ensure that all involved in the organisation of the event are operating to the same policies. RS Feva (UK) Code of Practice for Welfare of Competitors at Major Events, is intended to be practical guidance to ensure events are run with the welfare of competitors as paramount. All documents and policies should be available to be used as reference at any time should the need arise.



## **Residential 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. The RS Feva (UK) Sailor Supervision Guidelines should be followed by those involved with squads and residential training of the RS Feva (UK) group. Guidelines are published under documents/forms on the RS Feva (UK) Class Association website.

## **Concerns**

**Anyone who is concerned about a young member's or participant's welfare, either outside the sport or with training/events, should inform the Welfare Officer immediately, in strict confidence. The Welfare Officer will follow the attached procedures.**

(See Flowcharts 1 and 2)

Please report any concerns to the Welfare Officer in the first instance. However, if a child requires medical attention, call an ambulance and inform the medical professionals attending that there is a child protection concern.

## **Useful contacts:**

### **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**

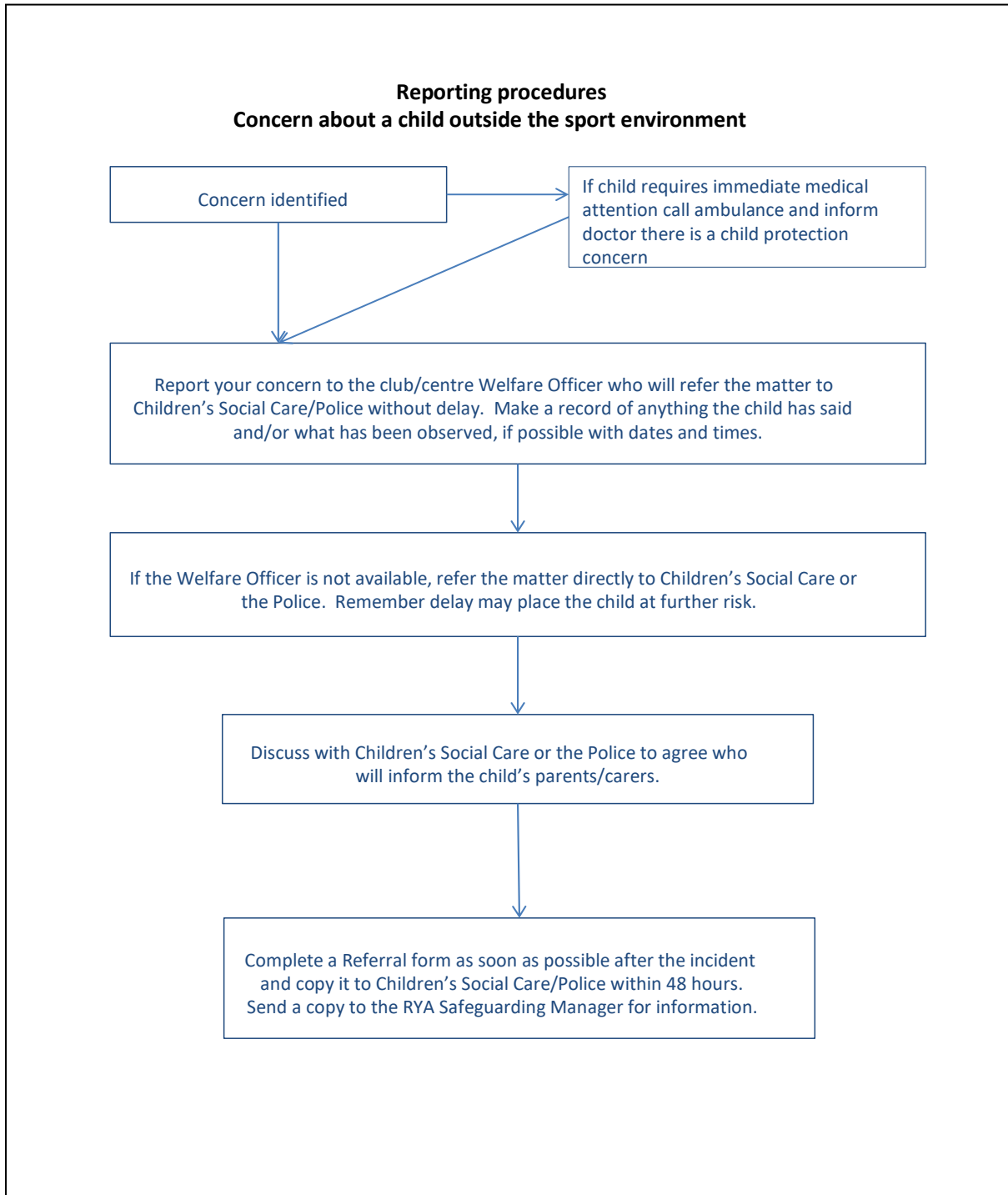
0800 1111

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

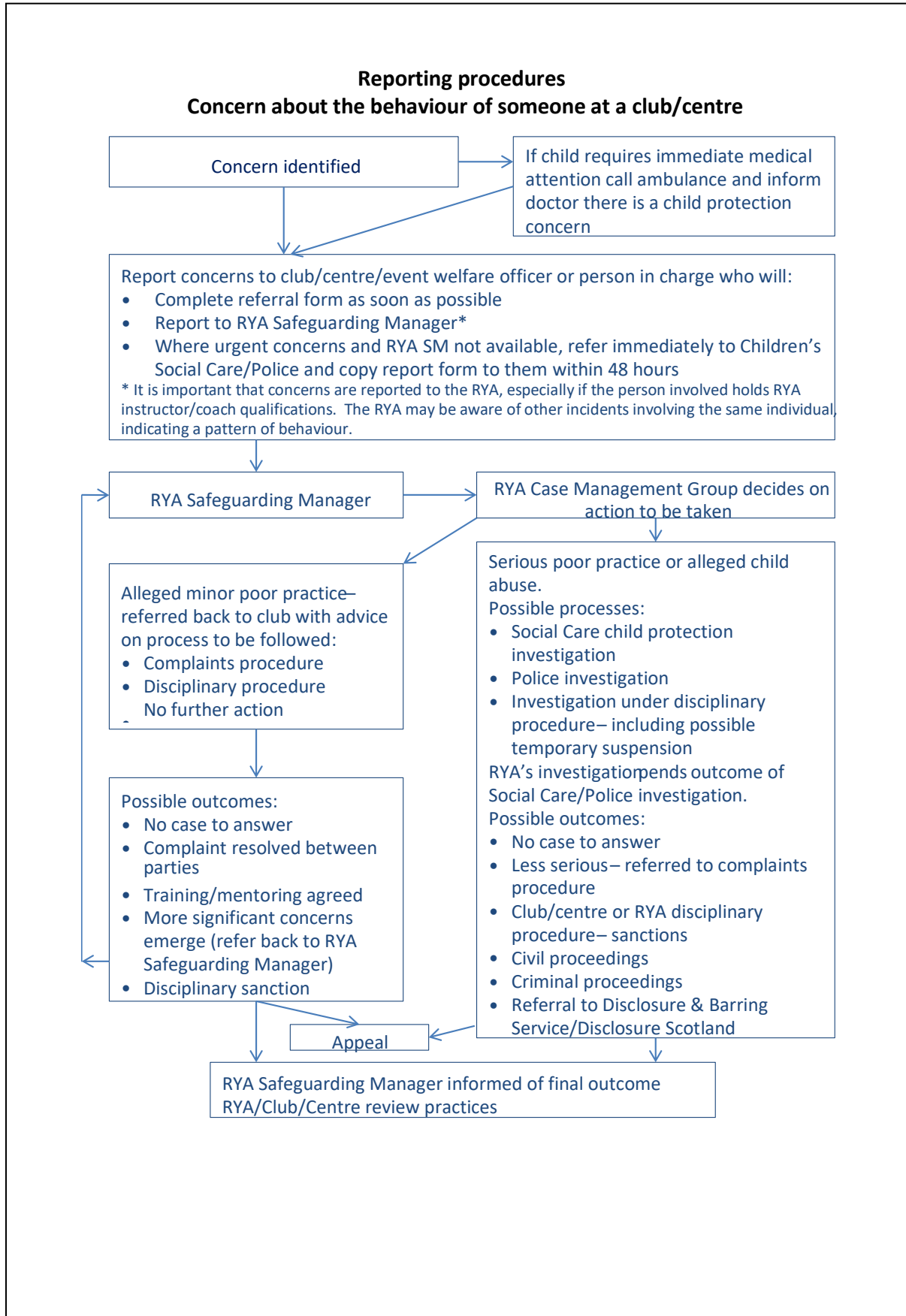
### **Social Care Services**

Your local phone book or the website for your County Council or unitary local authority will list numbers for the Children and Families Services, generally with separate numbers for Children's Social Care and for the Emergency Duty Team (out of hours service).

Flowchart 1



Flowchart 2



## Appendix A – What is child abuse?

(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** 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 (e.g. 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 (e.g. 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 (e.g. 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 (e.g. 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** 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 your organisation's designated Child Protection/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.

**Remember, if you have a concern, you must report it.**

## **Appendix B: Guidelines on appointment and terms of reference for the RS Feva (UK) Child Welfare Officer**

**This section is primarily for the organisation's designated Welfare Officer, but everyone should be aware of the procedures to follow if there are concerns.**

A complaint, concern or allegation may come from a number of sources: the child, their parents, someone else within your organisation. It may involve the behaviour of one of your volunteers or employees, or something that has happened to the child outside the sport, perhaps at home or at school. Children may confide in adults they trust, in a place where they feel at ease.

An allegation may range from mild verbal bullying to physical or sexual abuse. If you are concerned that a child may be being abused, it is NOT your responsibility to investigate further BUT it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and report them to the appropriate statutory authorities. For guidance on recognising abuse, see Appendix A.

### **Handling an allegation from a child**

#### **Always:**

- stay calm – ensure that the child is safe and feels safe
- show and tell the child that you are taking what he/she says seriously
- reassure the child and stress that he/she is not to blame
- be careful about physical contact, it may not be what the child wants
- be honest, explain that you will have to tell someone else to help stop the alleged abuse
- make a record of what the child has said as soon as possible after the event, using the child's own words
- follow your organisation's child protection procedures.

#### **Never:**

- rush into actions that may be inappropriate
- make promises you cannot keep (e.g. you won't tell anyone)
- ask leading questions (see 'Recording and handling information' below)
- take sole responsibility – consult someone else (ideally the designated Child Protection/Welfare Officer or the person in charge or someone you can trust) so that you can begin to protect the child and gain support for yourself.

You may be upset about what the child has said or you may worry about the consequences of your actions. Sometimes people worry about children being removed from their families as a result of abuse, but in reality this rarely happens. However, one thing is certain – you cannot ignore it.

### **Recording and handling information**

If you suspect that a child may have been the subject of any form of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect, the allegation must be referred as soon as possible to Children's Social Care or the Police who have trained experts to handle such cases. Do not start asking leading questions which may jeopardise any formal investigation.

A leading question is where you suggest an answer or provide options that only need a 'yes' or 'no' answer, instead of allowing the child to explain things in their own words. An example would be asking 'did X hit you?' instead of 'how did you get that bruise?' Use open questions such as 'what happened next?' Only ask questions to confirm that you need to refer the matter to someone else. Listen to and keep a record of anything the child tells you or that you have observed and pass the information on to the statutory authorities.

**All information must be treated as confidential and only shared with those who need to know.** If the allegation or suspicion concerns someone within your club or centre, only the child's parents/carers, the person in charge of the organisation (unless they are the subject of the allegation), the relevant authorities and the RYA Safeguarding Manager should be informed. If the alleged abuse took place outside the sport, the Police or Children's Social Care will decide who else needs to be informed, including the child's parents/carers. It should not be discussed by anyone within the organisation other than the person who received or initiated the allegation and, if different, the person in charge.

Confidential information must be stored securely. It is recommended that it should be retained for at least 3 years and destroyed by secure means, e.g. by shredding or burning.

## **Procedures**

It is essential to have clear and agreed procedures to follow. These include:

- procedures to be followed by anyone concerned about a child's welfare, either outside the sport or within your organisation.
- a disciplinary procedure (which may be included in a staff handbook or contract, depending on the nature of the organisation) setting out the process to be followed if an allegation or complaint is made about an employee
- a procedure for handling a complaint about a member  
The RYA's information sheet on the Expulsion of Members on the website in the Clubs section (you will need your club's login) under Support, Members, includes the key elements of a fair hearing.

## **Statutory Authorities**

If your club or centre is contacted by the Police or Children's Services concerning information received or a complaint made by or about a member, volunteer or employee, you are advised to contact the RYA Safeguarding Manager as soon as possible for guidance and support. Cooperate fully with official requests for factual information, but do not express any personal opinions on the person's conduct. See also 'Handling the media' below.

## **Handling the media**

If there is an incident at your premises which attracts media interest, or if you are contacted by the media with an allegation concerning one of your members or employees, do not give any response until you have had an opportunity to check the facts and seek advice. You may wish to contact the RYA's Communications department on 023 8060 4215 for professional advice on handling the media.

## **Reference to the Disclosure and Barring Service or Disclosure Scotland**

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) maintains the lists of people barred from working with children or with vulnerable adults in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland. Disclosure Scotland fulfils this function in Scotland. If your organisation permanently dismisses or removes someone from regulated activity/work, or would have dismissed them if they had not resigned, because they have harmed a child or vulnerable adult or placed them at risk of harm, you have a duty to refer them to the DBS or Disclosure Scotland, as appropriate. *It is a criminal offence not to make such a referral.*

## **Reporting Procedures**

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

Details of Children's Social Care departments and emergency duty teams are listed on local authority websites and in local phone books. If you are unable to find the appropriate contact number, call the RYA's Safeguarding Manager or, if a child is at immediate risk, the Police.

**End of document.**