OGA SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Policy Statement

All members of the OGA should be aware of this Policy.

This Policy refers to anyone under the age of 18, defined as a child by the Children Act 1989[1].

The OGA is committed to safeguarding children, and vulnerable people of all ages, taking part in its activities from physical, sexual or emotional harm, neglect or bullying. We recognise that the safety, welfare and needs of the child are paramount and that any child, irrespective of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual or gender identity or social status, has a right to protection from discrimination and abuse.

The OGA takes all reasonable steps to ensure that, through the election of suitable officers and selection of event organisers and appropriate procedures, it offers a safe and fun environment to children taking part in OGA events and activities.

The OGA, at the discretion of the event organiser, recommends that members who have regular contact with children who are not accompanied by parents or guardians, provide references and an Enhanced Criminal Records Disclosure is obtained. Further information can be found on the RYA website at:- https://www.rya.org.uk/about-us/rya-policies/safeguarding/Pages/criminal-records-disclosures.aspx

The child's positive and memorable experience of sailing gaffers is our priority. We will create a safe and welcoming environment, both on and off the water, where children can have fun and develop their knowledge, skills and confidence. We will treat all children with respect, celebrate their achievements and listen to their views and experiences.

The OGA:

- Recognises that safeguarding children is the responsibility of all members.
- Carefully selects volunteers in roles involving close contact with children.
- Responds swiftly and appropriately to all complaints and concerns.
- Regularly reviews safeguarding procedures and practices.

The Association Secretary (**Colin Stroud: secretary@oga.org.uk or 07932 186 845)** should be immediately notified of all relevant concerns, allegations or complaints.

Note [1]:- Applies in England and Wales. The relevant legislation in Scotland is the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, and in Northern Ireland the Children (Northern Ireland) order 1995).

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Good Practice Guidelines

Culture

It is important to have a culture within the OGA 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

- 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 event or the child's parents.
- Design events and activities 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 OGA matters. If it's essential to send an individual message, copy it to the child's parent.

You should never:

- Spend time working with children in isolation.
- Enter the showers/changing rooms when in use by children. If this is unavoidable ensure you are accompanied by another adult.
- 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.

Photography

The OGA should seek written consent from parents before taking photos or video of a child at an event or publishing such images. Parents and spectators should be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state their purpose for photography/filming. If the OGA 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 Association Secretary.

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Giving Assistance to Children

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'.

Responsibilities of Volunteers

Make sure all volunteers are given clear roles and responsibilities, are aware of the OGA's Safeguarding Policy and procedures.

Parental Responsibility and OGA Liability

Although the OGA has a duty of care to 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 OGA organised activities.

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

First Aid and Medical Treatment

First Aid should only be provided by an appropriately trained and qualified person. Consent from the child, the parent or the guardian should be obtained before administering First Aid. If this is not possible, ensure that another adult is present.

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Handling Concerns, Reports or Allegations

A complaint, concern or allegation may come from a number of sources: the child, their parents or carers, someone else within your organisation, a member of the public, or the statutory authorities (Police or Children's Social Care). It may involve the behaviour of a member or something that has happened to the child outside the OGA event/activity, 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.

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
- Take a record of what the child has said as soon as possible after the event, using the child's own words.
- Follow the OGA's child protection guidelines.

Never:

- Rush into actions that may be inappropriate.
- Make promises you cannot keep (eg. 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.

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All information must be treated as confidential and only shared with those who need to know.

If the allegation or suspicion concerns someone within the Association, only the child's parents/carers, the Association Secretary and the relevant authorities should be informed. If the alleged abuse took place outside the OGA, 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.

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 *(see flowcharts below).*
- A procedure for handling a complaint about a member. (See OGA Rules).

Statutory Authorities

If you are contacted by the Police or Children's Services concerning information received or a complaint made by or about an OGA member, you are advised to contact the RYA Safeguarding and Equality Manager as soon as possible for guidance and support. Co-operate fully with official requests for factual information, but do not express any personal opinions on the person's conduct.

Handling the Media

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

Insurance

If there is a serious allegation involving harm caused to a child as a result of taking part in your activities, the person in charge should consider notifying your insurers in case there is a subsequent claim against the organisation.

Data Retention

If a member is expelled from the OGA for a safeguarding reason, the GMC, in consultation with the relevant Area Committee, will decide what details of the incident will be retained and who will have access to that file. It may be necessary to refer to this information in the event of the former member attempting to re-join at a later date or if a further allegation is made about them.

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Historical Allegations

If someone raises a child protection concern relating to incidents that took place some time ago, follow the same procedure as you would for a new concern, even if the person about whom the allegation is being made is no longer active within the OGA. If the concern appears to relate to a criminal offence, encourage the individual to contact the Police on 101.

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 the OGA permanently dismisses or removes someone from a role involving 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 and Equality 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 and Equality Manager or, if a child is at immediate risk, the Police.

October 24, 2020

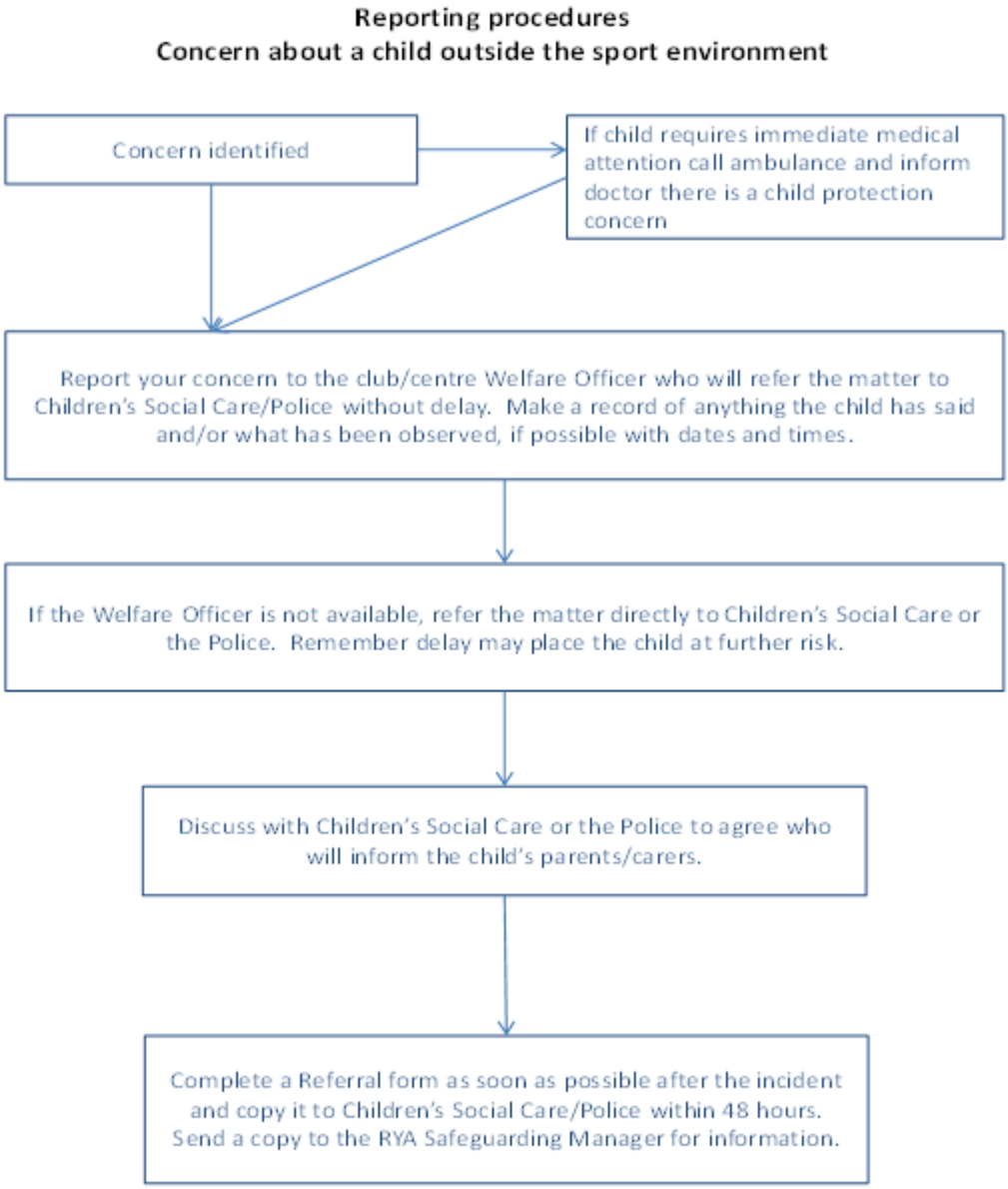
Colin Stroud
Association Secretary
secretary@oga.org.uk

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Flowchart 1

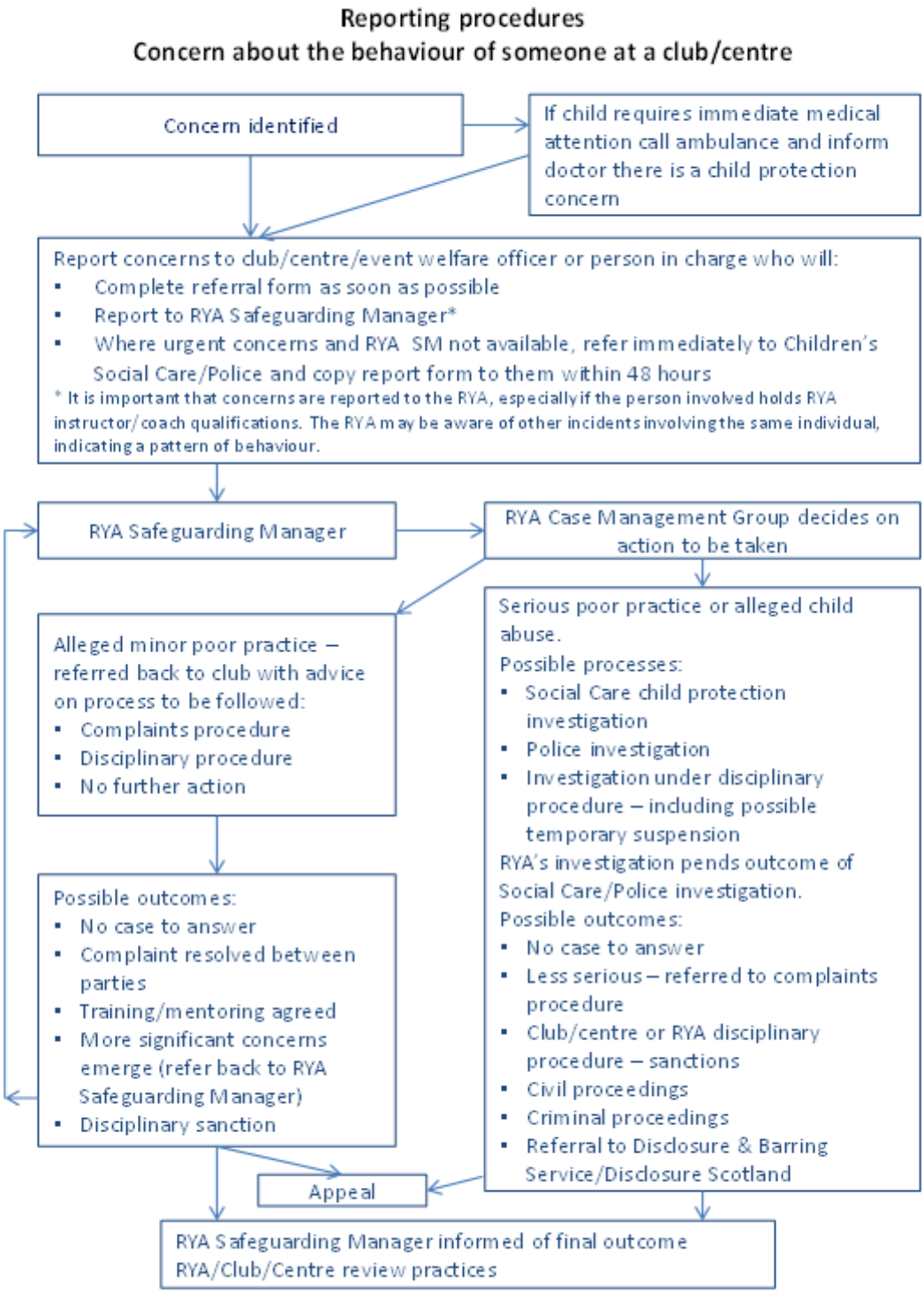


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Flowchart 2



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