



## ***Huntly Nordic Ski Club (HNSC) Child and Vulnerable Adult Policy***

Version 1.0 29<sup>th</sup> October 2007

**This document includes important information on what to do if you suspect that abuse is taking place.**

**Section 7 tells you what to do if you suspect abuse by people out with the governance of HNSC.**

**Section 8 tells you what to do if you suspect abuse by people within the governance HNSC.**

### **Introduction**

This document details the policy and procedures that must be adopted by all who act under the auspices of HNSC – whether as coaches, leaders, officials, or volunteers.

The terms “child” and “children” are to be taken as including vulnerable adults and include all who are under the age of 18.

Where other organisations such as schools or youth groups are involved in a particular activity, this document should be taken as complementary to the policies and procedures of those organisations and in no way limiting the obligations to such organisations.

In formulating and enacting this policy, HNSC recognises certain rights for children and vulnerable adults.

These are set out below.

### **THE RIGHTS OF THE YOUNG SKIER**

1. The right to enjoy both practice and competition with a wide variety of activities which are both fun and instructional.
2. The right to take part as a child and not to be treated like an adult.
3. The right to take part in competitions with rules adapted to their level of ability at each stage of their psychomotor development.
4. The right to participate in conditions of the greatest possible safety.
5. The right to participate in all aspects of the sport without risk of abuse.
6. The right to be trained by experienced and qualified coaches.
7. The right to be able to gain experience for themselves, by resolving themselves the problems which arise both in practice and in official competition.
8. The right to be treated with dignity both by their coach and their opponents and teammates.

9. The right to compete with children their own age who have similar chances of winning.
10. The right not to be a champion.

## **1. Foreword**

It is widely accepted that it is the responsibility of every adult to protect children from abuse. All children have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse and discrimination and to be treated equally regardless of age, gender, racial origin, culture, religious belief, language, disability or sexual identity.

Child abuse, particularly child sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation and it is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgment about any action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with children in order to harm them. Everyone working in - in a paid or voluntary capacity, together with those working in affiliated associations - has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of children and preventing their abuse.

A coach, instructor, leader, teacher or volunteer may have regular contact with children and be an important link in identifying cases where a child needs protection. When establishing guidelines to protect children, it is important to recognise that the organisation has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure it provides the highest possible standard of care.

HNSC recognises that there is a responsibility to:

- Safeguard and promote the interests and well-being of children with whom it is working;
- Take all reasonable practical steps to protect them from harm, discrimination, or degrading treatment.
- Respect their rights, wishes and feelings.

Child protection procedures can:

- Offer safeguards to the children with whom we work, and to our members of staff, volunteers and those in affiliated organizations.
- Help to maintain high standards of professionalism and practice within HNSC.

## **2. Principles**

These procedures are based on the following principles:

- The child's welfare is paramount.
- All children whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously; and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child for the purpose of this document.

Working in partnership with children and their parents/carers is essential for the protection of children.

HNSC recognises the statutory responsibility of the social services department to ensure the welfare of children and is committed to working together with the local Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) and to complying with its procedures.

#### **4. Recognition of Abuse**

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. However there are signs which may warrant further consideration.

**Indications that a child may be being abused include the following:**

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly
- if situated on a part of the body not usually prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else (a child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper).
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexually explicit behavior.
- Distrustful of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Has difficulty in making friends.
- Is prevented from socialising with other children.
- Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating and loss of appetite.
- Loses weight for no apparent reason.
- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.

**It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. It is not the responsibility of those working in the sport to decide that child abuse is occurring but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns (See Section 7).**

#### **5. Effects of Abuse**

Abuse in all forms can affect a child at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if untreated, may follow an individual into adulthood. For example, an adult who has been abused as a child may find it difficult or impossible to maintain a stable or trusting relationship, become involved with drugs or prostitution, attempt suicide or even abuse a child in the future.

## **6. Responding to the Child**

If a child says or indicates that he or she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a child is being abused, the person receiving this information should:

- react calmly so as not to frighten the child
- tell the child he/she is not to blame and that it was right to tell
- take what the child says seriously
- keep questions to the absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
- reassure the child but do not make promises of confidentiality which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments
- make a full record of what has been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible.

## **7. Responding to Suspicions or Allegations**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working under the auspices of HNSC in a paid or voluntary capacity, or those working in affiliated organisations to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. However, there is a responsibility to protect children in order that appropriate agencies can then make enquiries and take up any necessary action to protect the child.

The social services department has a statutory duty under **The Children (Scotland) Act 1995** 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 family, and gathering information from other people who know the child. Enquiries may be carried out jointly with the police.

### **What to do if there are concerns....**

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children. Therefore in most situations it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, he/she may have experienced bereavement in the family.

However, there are circumstances in which a child might be placed at even greater risk if such concerns were shared (e.g. where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately). In these situations or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse should be reported to the person in charge as soon as possible and recorded.

HNSC acknowledges that their staff, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, are not experts at such recognition. It therefore expects them to discuss any concern they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the person in charge as follows:

### **Working within the club**

- If you are coaching/assisting within HNSC, you should inform the head coach. If you are the head coach within the club then you will need to inform the club Chairman/President and Child Protection Officer.

### **Working with squads or groups away from home**

- If you are working with athletes away from home (for example at Coaching Camps or International Competitions), you should inform the Head Coach or Team Manager.

**It is the responsibility of these people to ensure that appropriate advice is obtained from the identified officer within HNSC who will contact the local Social Services department or the NSPCC. If the person in charge is not available, or the concern is about the person in charge, the person in receipt of the information should contact the identified officer within HNSC, who will contact the Social Services direct.**

### **Working with schools**

- If you are working with schools as part of the school curriculum or acting within a recognized school activity, you should inform the Head Teacher of the school.

### **Working within a local authority centre i.e. Huntly Nordic Outdoor Centre**

- If you are working within a local authority participation/development centre, you should inform the manager of the centre.

**It is the responsibility of these people to ensure that appropriate advice is obtained from the local Social Services department or the NSPCC.**

If you are not sure what to do, you can also obtain advice by telephoning the NSPCC 24 hour free phone helpline: the number is 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 following:

- the nature of the allegation
- a description of any visible bruising or other injuries
- the child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred
- any times, dates or other relevant information
- a clear distinction between 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 department 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.

## **8. Allegations against staff/volunteers**

This would include anyone working with children in a paid or voluntary capacity (e.g. volunteers or helpers in the club, officials, team managers on training camps, coaches). Child abuse can and does occur outside the family setting. Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse has occurred within institutions and may occur within other settings (e.g. sport or other social activities). Recent inquiries indicate that abuse which takes place within

a public setting, is rarely a one-off event. It is crucial that those involved in sport are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are taken seriously and appropriate action is taken.

The person in charge may be informed of situations where they are unsure about whether the allegation constitutes abuse or not, and are therefore unsure about which action to take. There may be circumstances here allegations are about poor practice rather than abuse, but those responsible should always consult senior colleagues and gain advice from social services or the NSPCC if there is any doubt. This is because it may be just one of a series of other instances which together cause concern.

It is acknowledged that feelings generated by the discovery that a member of staff or volunteer is, or may be, abusing a child, will raise concerns among other staff or volunteers. This includes the difficulties inherent in reporting such matters. However, it is important that any concerns for the welfare of the child arising from abuse or harassment by a member of staff or volunteer should be reported immediately.

**HNSC would want to assure all staff and volunteers that it would fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concern that a colleague is or may be abusing a child.**

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff/volunteer, there may be three types of investigation:

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

The results of the police and social services investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

### **What to do if there are concerns**

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the person in charge will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the person in charge, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be referred to the identified officer of HNSC, who should decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.
- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to a 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 or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible after advice from social services.
- The person in charge should also notify the identified officer of HNSC and they should decide who will deal with any media enquiries.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.
- If the person in charge is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the identified officer of HNSC who is then responsible for taking the action outlined above.

- HNSC will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services enquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services, HNSC will assess all individual cases under the appropriate misconduct/disciplinary procedure, to decide whether a member of staff/volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by police. In such cases HNSC will reach a decision based on the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of children should always remain paramount.
- Consideration will be given about what support may be appropriate to children, parents and members of staff/volunteers.

### **Allegations of previous abuse**

Allegations of previous abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child by a member of staff/volunteer who is still currently working with children). Where such an allegation is made, HNSC will follow the procedures given in Section 7 and report the matter to the social services department or the police. This is because other children, either within the sport or outside it, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children.

### **9. Promoting good practice**

All children have a right to be safe and to be treated with dignity and respect. False allegations of abuse are rare but the following basic guidelines will help safeguard children, staff, volunteers and HNSC.

#### **Recruitment and selecting staff/volunteers**

*A future version of this policy will include information under this heading.*

#### **Policy and procedure**

To help prevent abuse of children, clubs should have a policy which ensures that children are protected and kept safe from harm. Everyone involved in the care of children should know what to do if there are concerns about abuse and where procedures are kept.

#### **Training**

It should be clearly recognised that checks are only part of the process to protect children from possible abuse. The checks must be operated in conjunction with appropriate training of staff/volunteers, so that they are aware and sensitive to potentially abusive situations.

#### **Supervision**

Those in charge should be sensitive to any concerns about abuse and act on them at an early stage. They should also offer appropriate support to those who report concerns.

#### **Complaints**

The Management Committee of HNSC should ensure there is a well established complaints procedure in

operation and that parents and children have the relevant information to allow easy access to this procedure.

## **10. Good Practice in the care of children**

It is possible to reduce situations for the abuse of children and help to protect staff/volunteers by promoting good practice. The following are more specific examples of care which should be taken when working within a Snowsport context:

- Always be publicly open when working with children. Avoid situations where a teacher/coach and individual child are completely unobserved.
- Avoid physical contact where possible, if necessary, ensure that it is done openly.
- Where possible, parents should take on the responsibility for their children in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure teachers/coaches work in pairs. Encourage an open environment (i.e. no secrets).
- Where there are mixed teams away from home, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff.

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

- spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
- take children alone on car journeys, however short
- take children 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 or the child's parents.

You should never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- share a room with a child
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves
- invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or have disabilities. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the children involved. There is a need to be responsive to a child's reactions – if a child is fully dependent 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 the child to carry out particular activities.

If you accidentally hurt a child, 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.

## **11. Recruitment And Selection of Staff**

### **11.1 Introduction**

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. This applies equally to paid staff and volunteers, both full and part time. To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children the following steps should be taken when recruiting.

All coaches, officials and volunteers with direct unsupervised access to children should undertake an enhanced Disclosure Scotland/Criminal Records Bureau.

All staff and volunteers with direct or indirect access to children should complete an application form and declaration in respect of child protection .

HNSC should always seek two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children, from applicants working with children

### **11.2 Interview and Induction**

All employees and volunteers with direct or indirect access to children should receive an appropriate level of formal or informal induction during which:

- Disclosure Scotland/CRB check is undertaken
- their qualifications are substantiated
- the job requirements and responsibilities are clarified
- they sign up to the organisation's Code of Ethics and Conduct
- Child Protection Procedures are explained and training needs identified, e.g. basic child protection awareness

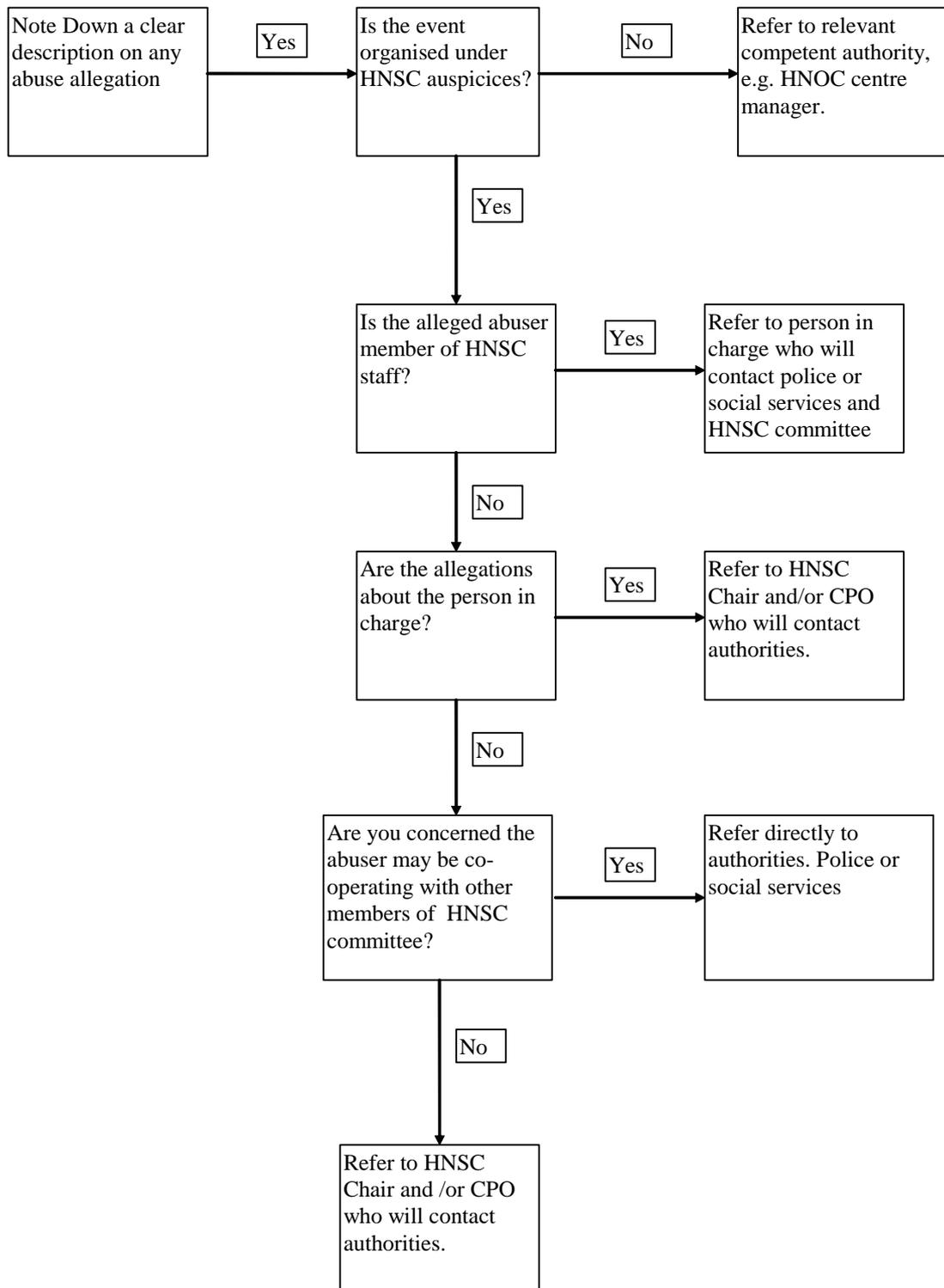
### **11.3 Training**

- All coaches must have read the club's child protection policy in addition to the Snowsports GB Policy.
- HNSC will make employees and volunteers aware of relevant local training opportunities
- HNSC supports child protection training for its staff and volunteers.
- HNSC will review disclosure requirements for coaches and volunteers on a regular basis.

### **11.4 Implementation and monitoring procedures**

HNSC will maintain a list of coaches who will be disclosed to the enhanced standard.

Disclosures must be renewed every three years.



Decision Tree In the Case a Criminal Abuse Allegation is made