

Safeguarding children, young people, and adults – a short guide for club members

What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the action that an organisation takes to promote the welfare of children, young people, and adults, to protect them from abuse including physical, emotional, sexual, and financial harm and neglect. This includes making sure that the appropriate policies, practices, and procedures are put in place.

What is the difference between Safeguarding and Child Protection?

The term “Child Protection” is normally used to describe the process of protecting an individual child identified as either suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm because of abuse or neglect.

In boating terms, you might think of *safeguarding* as doing a risk assessment, following good operating procedures, checking boats, equipment, weather, and tides, making sure everyone wears a lifejacket or buoyancy aid, while *child protection* would be carrying out a rescue or calling the coastguard or RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution).

What is safeguarding adults?

Safeguarding adults means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

What is meant by “Adult at Risk”?

It may be lacking capacity through illness, old age or through a condition. However, someone who is defined as an adult at risk because they have difficulty in caring for themselves may not be lacking in capacity. Every person must be considered on an individual basis and all adults can be classed as vulnerable at some point in their life.

What is “Mental Capacity” in adults?

Mental capacity is the ability to make decisions about your own life. Making safe decisions could be affected by a disability, or medical conditions such as dementia, brain injury or stroke. If a person lacks mental capacity, they may not be able to do the following:

- understand information given to them to make a particular decision
- remember the information long enough to be able to make the decision
- use or weigh up the information to make the decision
- communicate their decision (even if it is a blink of an eye or a squeeze of a hand)

People who cannot do these things lack the mental capacity to make decisions. This can apply to major decisions, for example about personal finance, social care or medical treatment, or everyday decisions such as what to wear or eat.

What has safeguarding got to do with me?

Government guidance makes it clear that ‘Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.’

All children, young people, and adults, irrespective of any protected characteristic¹ or social status, have a right to be treated with respect and protected from abuse, harm, and discrimination.

Anyone who has a negative experience of sport at any age is less likely to become a regular long-term participant. Therefore, it is important for the future of your club and the sport, that children, young people, and adults have an enjoyable experience, both on and off the water. All club members have a part to play in making that happen.

Isn't it the responsibility of parents/carers and the people who run the club's activity programme?

Of course, parents/carers are responsible for their children's welfare and conduct. Those with specific roles that involve teaching, training or supervising children and adults at risk should be suitable people who have received the appropriate training and criminal records disclosure checks. But all adults should contribute to the club's overall duty of care by being aware of their club's safeguarding policy, being able to identify the Club Welfare Officer (if in post) and know what to do if they are concerned about the way a child, young person, or a adult at risk is being treated.

What do I need to do?

The main thing is to treat everyone with respect – as you would expect them to behave towards you. Follow your club's code of conduct. On the water, race in accordance with the RYA Racing Charter which encourages fair, enjoyable, and safe racing for all, in compliance with the rules, and states that 'foul or abusive language, intimidation, aggressive behaviour or lack of respect for others and their property will not be tolerated.'

For your own protection, avoid putting yourself in a situation that could be misinterpreted:

- Try to avoid using the changing room when there are children or young people there, or if it is unavoidable make sure you are not the only adult in the changing room.
- Do not give a child a lift in your car unless it is with their parents' full knowledge and consent.
- Think very carefully before contacting a young person via mobile phone, e-mail, or social media. In general stick to group communications. If it is essential to send an individual message, where possible copy the communication to a parent and only communicate about organisational matters.

I sometimes do safety boat duty. Is it OK to physically handle a child, young person, or an adult at risk?

Of course, it is fine to handle a child, young person, or adult in an emergency, whether it is rescuing them from the water or giving first aid. Try to tell the child, young person, or adult what you are planning to do before you do it and make a written record of the incident at the earliest opportunity.

Will I have to have a criminal record check?

You should not be asked to apply for a criminal record check unless you are involved in running activities (regulated activity) specifically for children, young people, or adults at risk on a regular basis (teaching, training, or supervising on 3 or more occasions per month). If you only do occasional safety boat duty, or provide cover for general club racing, it is unlikely that you would be eligible for a check.

¹ Protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010: Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion, Disability, Pregnancy / Maternity, Age, Marriage / Civil Partnership & Sexual Orientation.

However, you may be asked by your club to complete a self-declaration form and or a volunteer application form. If your club has a Disclosure Coordinator, you can contact them for further advice. Or alternatively, you can contact the RYA safeguarding team at disclosure@rya.org.uk.

What should I do if I am concerned about a child, young person, or adult at risk?

A concern may involve the behaviour of:

- An adult towards a child or young person
- A child or young person towards another child or young person
- An adult towards another adult or adult at risk
- A child or young person towards an adult or adult at risk

This behaviour can be identified both within the club environment and external to it. Children and young people may confide in adults they trust or members of their peer group, in a place where they feel comfortable. An allegation may range from bullying (face to face or virtual) to inappropriate contact online, to neglect or emotional abuse, to physical or sexual abuse.

If you are concerned about a child, young person, or an adult, it is not your responsibility to investigate further, but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and report them.

Listen to and make a record of anything they tell you or that you have observed. Only ask open non leading questions to clarify the facts, never promise to keep secrets and make it clear that you will need to tell someone else to help them. Pass the information to your club's Welfare Officer who will follow your club's procedures. Their details should be available on the club notice board, website, or Safe & Fun poster. If you are not sure who it is, or they are not available, you can call one of the numbers below for advice. Or visit the RYA "[What to do if you're worried](#)" Pages on the RYA website.

If you believe the child is at immediate risk of harm, you must call the Police immediately.

You can also fill in a [referral form](#) for the RYA safeguarding team to provide support and guidance.

Useful contact numbers

Organisation Name	Contact Details
NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) 24-hour helpline The UK's leading children's charity, preventing abuse and helping those affected to recover.	Tel: 0808 800 5000 E-mail: help@nspcc.org.uk
Children 1st Scotland A helping hand for every family in Scotland	Tel: 0800 028 2233 (9am – 9pm Mon – Fri) E-mail: parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk
Support line Support for children, young adults and adults including those affected by sexual, emotional, and physical abuse.	Tel: 01708 765200 www.supportline.org.uk
Samaritans Emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress, despair, or suicide.	Tel: 08457 90 90 90 (24hrs)

RYA Safeguarding Team

Dedicated team of subject matter experts available for support and guidance²

Tel: 023 8060 4297

E-mail: safeguarding@rya.org.uk

[RYA Safeguarding Referral Form](#)

[What to Do if You're Worried](#)

One thing to remember - Safeguarding is Everyone's Responsibility

"For those agencies whose job it is to protect children or vulnerable people, the harsh reality is that if a sufficiently devious person is determined to seek out opportunities to work their evil, no one can guarantee that they will be stopped. Our task is to make it as difficult as possible for them to succeed."

Sir Michael Richard



² The RYA can provide advice, guidance and signposting for safeguarding related enquiries. However, it does not have any jurisdiction to enforce decision making at RYA Affiliated Clubs or Recognised Training Centres.