

**SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE MINES RESEARCH GROUP
CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE 3
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

This policy was adopted by SGMRG Committee at a meeting dated 28 August 2007.

1.00 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1.01 SGMRG recognises the requirements of the Protection of Children Act 1999 (PoCA).

1.02 PoCA includes "children", that is under 16's, and "young persons", that is 16 to 18s as well, (further referred to here as "young persons" or "children").

1.03 PoCA takes in sexual, emotional and physical abuse and also "neglect" (which includes all aspects of failure to ensure the safety of a young persons and vulnerable adults).

2.00 POLICY STATEMENTS

2.01 SGMRG recognises

- a. the importance of the welfare of young persons and vulnerable adults and their right to protection from abuse.
- b. its duty of care to young persons and vulnerable adults, for the actions of its officers and members.

2.02 SGMRG will take all allegations of child abuse seriously and will respond to such allegations quickly.

2.03 SGMRG considers that in any mine and mining heritage activity safety of the participants and conservation of the site is of paramount concern at all times.

2.04 Underlying this it must be borne in mind that SGMRG does not proactively promote the participation of young persons or vulnerable adults in mining site exploration and conservation, although they are welcome at Open Days on managed sites. It takes this stance for a number of reasons:-

- a. mining site exploration and conservation can often be a strenuous activity requiring a mature physical and mental approach;
- b. a working knowledge of how the inherent dangers of former industrial and mining sites can be vital for safe exploration;
- c. mining heritage is a strictly limited physical resource that deserves a mature appreciation of its conservation requirements.

3.00 SGMRG: OFFICERS and MEMBERS

3.01 If SGMRG receives an allegation of child abuse against one of its officers or members, then it will treat it as a potential criminal activity and report it to the police.

3.02 In addition, one or more of the officers, (Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary or Treasurer), will immediately be informed and will then take prompt action, to consider such matters as suspension from club activities and all necessary further actions.

4.00 SGMRG: RECOMMENDATIONS TO ITS MEMBERS

4.01 SGMRG recommends that in any activity involving children, there should be at least two adults present at all times.

4.02 SGMRG does not currently have **regular** activities with children. Should such a project develop, the group will ensure all involved are fully aware of best practice in responding to alleged or possible child abuse as set out in the publication ("Protecting Children - a guide for sportspeople" (NSPCC 2000) and it will be followed in the selection, vetting and recruitment of the participating adults.

GUIDANCE NOTES

GENERAL DUTY OF CARE - The Legal Framework and What it Means

The Protection of Children Act 1999 (POCA) places a broad duty of care upon **all adults** where the abuse of children, or possible abuse of children is concerned. The term "children" for this purpose includes all young persons under the age of 18 years.

POCA clearly spells out "abuse" as including "sexual", "emotional" and "physical" abuse and also "neglect". Neglect in terms of mine exploration, must be taken to include failing to ensure physical safety, adequate/ appropriate nutrition and protection against hypothermia, injury through falling, etc.

It should be recognised that any adult who is in charge of children may place themselves in a position of special trust whereby abuse in other spheres of a child's life such as the home may be disclosed to them and this must also be handled appropriately.

Where 'employment' is concerned PoCA makes no distinction between paid, part-time, contract or totally volunteer persons. All are covered by this legislation. In the mining setting this takes in not only officers, but additionally all members who regularly take responsibility for children/young persons (under 18's) in mine exploration training activities or the mine environment under the general auspices of the group.

In all activities, whether above ground training or within mines it is considered good practice that there should always be more than one adult present. Where there are a number of children or young persons involved then the ratio of adults to children should be carefully considered bearing in mind the precise nature of the venture being undertaken.

Before planning to take children onto mining sites, careful consideration should be given to the three factors set out at 2.04 of the Policy Document, (physical & mental maturity, environmental awareness and mine conservation). The trip should then be arranged accordingly, bearing in mind the nature of the site, the experience of the adults, the physical and mental abilities of the children concerned and the prevailing weather and ground conditions, in preference to the wishes of adults.

Some children may give all outward appearances of being fully competent and comfortable

in the environment but inwardly be quite the opposite.

DISCLOSURE

It is not the responsibility of the club to take responsibility for the resolution of any child abuse matter or to make a judgment of any sort. Such responsibilities rest with the police, the DPP and the courts, acting upon the advice of the designated professionals, Directors of Social Services, the NSPCC and with the co-ordination of such agencies as the police Family Support Unit and the Area Child Protection Committee.

It is however the responsibility of all adults to take necessary actions to ensure that the appropriate agencies are made aware of allegations once they have been made. Any person so reporting an allegation of child abuse is advised to retain a written record of their report, together with the date, time and relevant details of the person reported to.

Although false allegations against adults tend to be rare they do occasionally occur and due care must be exercised by colleagues at all times when dealing with disclosure.