



## POLICIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

### 1. Statement of Intent

Brathay Exploration Group recognizes that all members, leaders and employees have a right to be treated with respect and able to take part in group activities in an environment free from physical or mental abuse from others, regardless of gender, age, race, sexual orientation or beliefs. It is the responsibility of all parties to ensure that abuse is not intentionally or by neglect inflicted on others. This is particularly important when dealing with children or vulnerable adults.

### 2. Introduction

The Brathay Exploration Group accepts that in all matters concerning the protection of children and vulnerable adults, the major aim is to protect them from neglect and from physical, emotional and sexual harm. These terms are defined in Section 3.

- The Group seeks to protect **all** its Leaders and Members but these Guidelines apply especially to Children and Vulnerable Adults.
- The Brathay Exploration Group is not an investigative agency and its leaders and members are not trained for this work. Therefore, in accordance with the provisions of the *Children Act 1989* matters will normally be placed in the hands of Social Services and/or the Police.
- The Group's Child Protection Officer (CPO) is the Director. If he is unavailable then the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman should be contacted in that order.
- Whilst these Guidelines are based on the requirements of the *Children Act 1989* it is recognized that some limited variants may be necessary in the case of Overseas Expeditions (see Section 7).
- Because prevention of abuse is vital the Brathay Exploration Group requires its Leaders (and other adults) to observe the **Code of Behaviour** set out in Section 5.
- In an expedition situation members may disclose information on abuse unrelated to the actual expedition. Such information should be handled in the same way as other information received about child abuse.

### 3. Definitions

**Neglect:** This means a failure to safeguard health, safety and well being, and includes nutritional neglect, failure to provide medical care, and failure to protect from physical and social danger.

**Physical Abuse:** Physical injury to a child where there is definite knowledge or reasonable suspicion that the injury is not accidental in its nature and was inflicted or knowingly not prevented. This includes hurting or injuring a child by, for example, hitting or shaking him/her or through any form of bullying, by plying the child with alcohol or inappropriate drugs, or forcing a child to participate in an activity where the nature and intensity of that activity exceeds the capacity of the child's body.



**Sexual Abuse:** The involvement of children in, or their intentional exposure to, sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family roles. This includes an adult using his/her power, authority or position to use a child sexually to satisfy his/her own needs. It ranges from sexually suggestive comments to full intercourse and includes involving the child in any form of pornography

**Emotional Abuse:** This is the severe adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. This includes depriving a child of help and encouragement and replacing it with derision, ridicule or ostracising, and includes racially and sexually abusive remarks. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment: this category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse.

**Child:** For the purposes of this document a **Child** is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children Act 1989) and all statements here should be also taken to apply to Vulnerable Adults.

#### 4. Appointment of Leaders, Employees and Helpers

The Brathay Exploration Group Trust expects its leaders, employees and any other person acting on behalf of the Charity, to take a professional approach of the highest standards when dealing with ALL expedition and course members. Any form of abuse, be it physical, sexual, verbal or mental is unacceptable whether it is directed at children, adult member or leaders. Any leader, who perpetrates, encourages or through neglect allows such abuse to take place acts in opposition to the policy of the group. Prospective Leaders, helpers and employees must agree to CRB and any other checks thought necessary being made before their appointments are confirmed.

#### 5. Code of Behaviour

Adults (Leaders and any others) involved in Brathay Expeditions and Courses are in a position of trust and their actions and attitudes will have much to contribute to the prevention of possible abuse. Therefore all members, and especially the Leaders, should bear the following points in mind (whilst recognizing that in an expedition situation some will be difficult to arrange):

- Treat everyone with respect and dignity;
- Act as a role model of appropriate behaviour;
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism;
- Situations that compromise your relationship with young people are unacceptable within a relationship of trust and must be avoided. It is unacceptable and against the law for an adult to enter into a sexual relationship with a child. It is also unprofessional and often ill advised for a leader to enter into such a relationship with an adult expedition member during an expedition;
- Do everything possible to develop a feeling of comfort and mutual support in the expedition team so that members are willing to point out matters of behaviour or attitudes with which they are uncomfortable;
- Be aware that one's own actions may be misinterpreted, no matter how well intentioned;
- Respect a young person's right to a sense of privacy;
- provide appropriate sleeping arrangement for the group being mindful of the different sexes and leaders, these arrangements may of course be limited by the nature of the expedition;



- Appropriate toilet / shower arrangements should be available to members and leaders taking account of gender but also constraints placed by the nature of the expedition
- Leaders should be aware of the position they could put themselves in by being alone with an expedition/course member, especially a child and should think hard about whether the situation warrants this. It would be far better where one to one contact with a member is necessary, that this is done in the open sight of others, preferably other leaders;
- Ensure that opportunities are available for young people to talk about concerns which they may have;
- Be aware that very sensitive counselling is needed in matters such as bereavement, bullying or possible abuse;
- Leaders should be aware that during periods of relaxation when ball or other games may be played, that actual contact between a leader and a child requires the leader to be mindful of what is considered acceptable and what is not; Any such contact in the context of a relaxation period, should preferably be open to the direct sight of other members and preferably leaders;
- Within an expedition environment physical contact between all members is an inevitable part of life where all rely on each other, for physical and emotional well being. However leaders should bear in mind that to touch a member should be appropriate to the circumstances and with consent (implied consent is acceptable).

#### **Do Not:**

- Permit abusive youth peer activities such as bullying, ridiculing or initiation ceremonies;
- Have any inappropriate verbal contact with others, or make suggestive remarks or gestures even in fun;
- Show favouritism or hostility to an individual;
- Jump to conclusions without checking the facts;
- Exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues;
- Let suspicion, disclosure or allegation of abuse go unchallenged and unreported;
- Believe that “this can never happen to me”.

## **6. What Happens If...**

Remember that you must refer but must not investigate.

#### **If you suspect that a child is being abused:**

- 1) Immediately inform the Main Leader
- 2) Record the facts as you know them, send them to the CPO and keep a copy
- 3) Ensure that the child has access to an independent adult
- 4) Ensure that the alleged risk is ended.

#### **If a child tells you about abuse by someone else:**

- 5) Allow the child to speak without interruption, accepting what is said
- 6) Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgment
- 7) Advise that you will offer support, but you must pass the information on
- 8) Follow steps 1-4

#### **If you receive an allegation about an adult or about yourself:**



- 9) Immediately tell the Chief Leader and/or the CPO
- 10) Record the facts as you know them, send them to the CPO and keep a copy
- 11) Try to ensure that no one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

## 7. Responding to Allegations or Suspicions

- Concerns about abuse (or possible abuse) may be expressed by leaders, by a person who considers himself/herself the victim, or by other members of the expedition. The allegations could concern one or more of the leaders, other members, or outsiders.
- All suspicions and allegations (no matter how trivial) are to be treated as strictly confidential and must be referred as soon as possible to the Brathay Exploration Group's Child Protection Officer.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a 'need to know' basis.
- Ensure that the reported abuse situation is ended as quietly and effectively as possible.
- The person making the complaint should be listened to without interruption, and the facts recorded for the CPO; but no investigation or questioning should be carried out, as this might prejudice any future enquiry ("Refer do not Investigate").
- The leader must explain that whilst full support will be offered, the information **will have** to be passed on. The Leader should never give guarantees of absolute confidentiality but should assure the person involved that he or she will only pass the information to the CPO who will ensure that the correct action will be taken.
- If the child wishes to talk to an independent adult this should be agreed if at all possible.
- If the child wishes to be accompanied by a friend that should be allowed so long as the friend does not take part in the conversation.
- In the UK the CPO is required to contact the local Police, Child Protection Unit of local Social Services within 24 hours. It is their job and not that of the leaders to investigate the complaint or suspicion.
- If a leader or member is worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, (s) he can contact Social Services or the Police direct (explain that it is a child protection issue), or the NSPCC Child Protection Help line (0808 800 5000) or Childline on 0800 1111.
- In the case of overseas expeditions the same principles apply: the cause of alleged abuse information received should be quietly ended and the facts recorded and passed to the CPO as soon as possible. Investigations by the police/social services will have to await the return of those involved. The child should be offered maximum support, **but** no further investigations should be carried out on the spot unless the Main Leader is unable to contact the CPO and is convinced that they are absolutely necessary and expects to have to justify this decision. If a national of the host country is involved, the matter should normally be reported to the local Police.
- Referral will normally be made to the CPO by the Main Leader or another leader. If the CPO is implicated in any way the referral must be to The Chairman.

## 8. Action by the Child Protection Officer

All allegations or suspicion of abuse, no matter how insignificant they might seem to be, or when they occur, must be referred to the Child Protection Officer (CPO) as soon as possible. Nothing must be withheld or filtered. At all times the young person's welfare should be paramount. No interviewing or questioning is to



be undertaken. The Group is not an investigation or intervention agency. Swift reporting will enable the correct authorities to give advice and take appropriate action.

The CPO should follow the following procedures. All information must be conveyed immediately to the correct agency and nothing must be withheld or filtered. These procedures must be followed as they enable the Group to fulfil its legal as well as moral responsibilities.

**I. Write down notes** (dates, times, facts, observations (verbatim speech if possible)).

**II. Ensure correct details are available**

- Young person's name and address
- Name and address of parent / carer

**III. Contact Social Services/Social Work Department of the Local Authority**

(N.B. This might also be the Police Child Protection Team or NSPCC - an inter-agency approach is usually in operation) Cumbria Social Services Kendal 01539 773300 or out of hours 01228 526690

- Ask for the Duty Officer and say that it is a Child Protection matter
- Ask for the name of the person to whom you are speaking
- Discuss all the information you have (nothing is to be filtered or withheld)
- State your intention to advise the Chairman of the Brathay Exploration Group Trust.
- Ask if anyone else should be informed
- Keep a record of the conversation and of any advice given

**IV. Contact the Chairman** (or in his absence the vice-Chairman) of the BEG.

- Inform of the situation and advice received from the Social Services Department

**V. Follow the advice given**

- Take no action unless advised to do so by the Social Services Department

**VI. Prepare a Confidential File**

- Record all notes, all conversations, and advice received, these should be recorded in an incident file with numbered pages; ensure you date, time and sign your notes.