

## MENDIP CAVING GROUP

### VULNERABLE PERSONS PROTECTION POLICY

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Mendip Caving Group recognises that whilst it is not predominantly a young persons group, it has a duty of care towards all children and young persons and indeed vulnerable adults who may participate in group activities and or stay at the group premises at Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse on Mendip, from time to time. On such occasions the welfare of children, young persons and vulnerable adults are of paramount importance.

#### **1.1 POLICY STATEMENT:**

The Mendip Caving Group is committed to ensuring that children (under 16s) and young persons (16 -18) and vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm whilst they are engaged in any activity associated with the group and when staying at the group premises.

We will endeavour to achieve this by:

- Ensuring that MCG members are aware of the duty of care placed upon them.
- Ensuring that whilst MCG members are only occasionally to be involved with children that they are aware of the recommended practices and are alert to the risks to which children and young persons are exposed and the ways in which these can be minimised.
- Ensuring that whilst MCG members are only occasionally to be involved with children during their group activities they are mindful of the risk they face.
- Highlighting that the safety of participants and cave conservation are of paramount importance when engaged in cave and mine activities.
- Sharing this information with MCG guests on caving trips and staying at the group headquarters.
- Ensuring that vulnerable adults are accompanied by their guardian/carer.  
It is not the role of the Mendip Caving Group to determine if an individual is at risk or experiences abuse. The identification, assessment, protection and care of vulnerable adults is that of their carer.
- Nominating a Child Protection Officer to offer advice to group members and to ensure that any allegations are dealt with correctly.

#### **2.1 POLICY OBJECTIVE:**

- To ensure that where possible all facilities and activities associated with the Mendip Caving Group are managed in such a way as to limit the risk to children, young people and vulnerable adults
- To promote the general welfare, health and development of children by being aware of child protection issues and to be able to respond where appropriate as a caring organisation.
- To develop procedures in recording and responding to accidents and complaints and to alleged or suspected incidents of abuse.
- If there is a child abuse incident it should be reported to the Child Protection Officer who will be responsible for ensuring the matter is handled correctly
- If there is a vulnerable adult abuse incident it should be reported to his/her carer who will be responsible for ensuring the matter is handled correctly

- This Policy will be reviewed as and when the committee consider it necessary.

## **2.0 DECLARATION:**

Mendip Caving Group is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of vulnerable persons by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm or neglect.

All Mendip Caving Group members should read the Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy and guidance notes. Having read the Policy they should be proactive in ensuring a safer environment for children and young persons and vulnerable adults who are sometimes involved with the Groups caving activities and who may stay at the group's premises from time to time.

Any breaches in Policy will be dealt with in an appropriate manner by the MCG Committee.

As agreed by the Committee on:

Signed: Mike Richardson  
Secretary

## MENDIP CAVING GROUP

### VULNERABLE PERSONS PROTECTION POLICY GUIDANCE NOTES FOR MEMBERS

#### **Introduction**

The Protection of Children Act 1999 places a duty of care upon ALL ADULTS regarding the abuse of children (under 16) and young persons (16-18). Whilst we (the MCG) do not actively promote the involvement of children in our normal caving activities there are occasional times when they do participate in group activities or stay at Nordrach Cottage.

Examples of children/young people involved with the MCG:

- as guests of MCG members
- Scout Groups, Guide groups, or other groups using the cottage.
- family beginners trips

#### **Guidance information**

The following guidance information has been prepared to help members reduce the risk to vulnerable persons, and themselves when participating in MCG activities or staying at the group premises:

1. At least 2 responsible adults present at all times when around children.
2. During caving trips be aware that children are more susceptible to hypothermia, dehydration, 'exhaustion- exposure' syndrome than adults. The journey to and from the cave can present a particular risk in bad weather.
3. Be aware that children can outwardly be confident and comfortable but inwardly quite the opposite. Any serious requests to return to the surface should be dealt with quickly. Beware of 'bravado' as this may lead to attempting manoeuvres beyond their capability.
4. Be vigilant in circumstances when young persons are staying overnight.
5. Adults should not change or shower at the same time using the same facilities.
6. Inform parents of any injuries as soon as possible, make a record of the incident and advise the MCG Child Protection Officer.
7. In a caving situation if physical contact is required adults should ask permission and explain the reason. Ideally have another adult with you as a witness.
8. Do not use inappropriate and unnecessary physical contact. The belay belt is useful.
9. Beware over zealous volunteers for activities involving children.
10. Do not take any one under 18 and or vulnerable adults caving without their parent, guardian or carer present.

## **WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A COMPLAINT**

If someone suspects that abuse has taken place, or has had an incident disclosed to them, they should report this to the Child Protection officer and or carer as appropriate who will:

- Ensure that a record of the incident is made. What took place, who was involved, when and where the incident occurred.
- Ensure that Social Services Dept or Family unit of the local Police Force are informed.
- Ensure that parents or carers are informed following advice from the social services dept.
- Ensure that confidentiality is maintained

Note: Do not 'grill' the the person involved in the incident. will ensure only the necessary information is recorded.

**MENDIP CAVING GROUP**  
**PROCEDURES IN PLACE TO SUPPORT CHILD PROTECTION**

1. Members at the 2010 AGM, will asked to agree to raising the age of membership to anyone over the age of 18. and the rewording of the “Note” to

1.1 Persons aged under 18 years may be sponsored by a member and in the company of their parent(s); legal guardian and or carer may attend caving meets and or stay at the cottage as their guests.

2. When Scout groups, guide groups or other groups of mainly children are using the cottage facilities as guests then members must sleep in the room indicated by the group leader. This will be in a room with the staff or a separate room entirely. Members should be mindful of the presence of children and, for example, not use the changing rooms at the same time. It is advisable to knock on the changing room door and await a reply before entering and avoid going into the dorms other than the one occupied by members. Discipline issues should be raised with the group leader. Be careful to set a good example!

3. Ensuring that vulnerable adults are accompanied by their guardian/carer. It is not the role of the Mendip Caving Group to determine if an individual is at risk or experiences abuse. The identification, assessment, protection and care of vulnerable adults is that of their carer.

## ROLE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

1. Become familiar with the background information by reading the documents held in the Child Protection Policy File:
  - British Caving Association Child Protection Policy and Guidance Notes
  - Child Protection in Sport Unit, Club Guidelines ([www.theCPSU.org.uk](http://www.theCPSU.org.uk))
2. Ensure that all new members are made aware of the groups CPP.
3. Be the first point of contact should an incident of child abuse occur. He or she will ensure that appropriate agencies are made aware of any allegations made. If an incident occurs it is advised to retain a record of what happened, the time, the date and the persons involved, including the details of the person/agency it was reported to. It is not the responsibility of any member of the MCG or the CPO to make judgements of any kind. The information should be passed directly to the authorities to deal with. Appropriate agencies are: Family support unit of local police force, Social Services, NSPCC. Take due care at all times as the accusation may be false.

### References:

1. BCA Child Protection Policy and Guidance Notes produced by David Judson
2. National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Web site (Child Protection in Sport Unit). [www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/cpsu/HelpAndAdvice/Organisations/ClubGuidelines](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/cpsu/HelpAndAdvice/Organisations/ClubGuidelines)
3. The various documents and websites listed in the BCA guidance notes mostly do not apply to the MCG, which is not involved in regular activities with children. For example:
  - they are aimed at organisation who deal with children on a regular basis e.g Schools, Sports Centres
  - they are aimed at professional organisations/people, e.g. child welfare
  - they are aimed at organisations who employ people
  - they direct you back to the NSPCC information
  - they detail responsibilities for the registering names of people who are unsuitable to work with children (The POCAct 1999).