



UPDATE ON SSAC CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES

The General Committee has now adopted a series of policies relating to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. These policies have been sent to all Branch Secretaries and will shortly be available both at HQ and on the SSAC website.

All voluntary organisations are being advised to introduce such policies ahead of the introduction of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003. With the implementation of this act, in Spring 2004, organisations may be liable for prosecution if they engage volunteers who are named on a list that will be held and maintained by Scottish Ministers.

A number of important changes will take place as a result of the introduction of these policies.

- **Changes for New Instructors**

As soon as SSAC's registration with the CRBS is finalised (this will be taking place over the next few months), changes to both branch and regional instructor courses will take place. Both SSAC branch and regional instructor qualifications allow members to train children and vulnerable adults. As such, all members applying for branch/regional instructor course will be required to abide by the new system, regardless of whether their own branch has chosen to limit membership to adults.

The new procedures will be as follows:

- Anyone wishing to attend a BI/RI course must fill out an application form, two reference forms and a self-declaration form.
- After attendance at the course, they must also complete an Enhanced Disclosure check. BI/RI qualifications will NOT be awarded until this check has taken place. This check will incur no cost to either member or branch.

Each part of these new procedures will be clearly explained to members applying for instructor courses at the appropriate time in the future. All forms come with a set of guidelines explaining how to fill them out, what the information will be used for, and why the information is required.

- **Lead Signator for Disclosure Scotland Checks**

Tony Dorrington (Paisley SAC) has been appointed as the lead signator for the Scottish Sub Aqua Club. Tony has no links to either the General Committee or the National Diving Council and will work independently of them. He will be responsible for authorising all Disclosure Scotland checks, making a decision on the suitability of



candidates based on the information he receives, and storing/ disposing of information in an appropriate manner. The manner in which checks are carried out are clearly laid down in the appropriate policies. It is important to note that only an authorised signatory will have access to confidential information and once a decision has been made, the contents of each check by law must be destroyed. Inappropriate disclosure of information obtained from a Disclosure Scotland check is a criminal offence.

All application, reference and self-declaration forms will be returned to Tony prior to course attendance.

- **Child and vulnerable adult officers**

The General Committee has appointed Iona Anthony as SSAC's Child and Vulnerable adult officer. The role of this post is clearly laid out within the CVA policy.

In addition, it is recommended that any branch with child or vulnerable adult members appoints its own Child and Vulnerable adult officer and informs HQ of the appointment. This will allow for more effective communication and point to point contact between the organisation and different branches.

- **Guidelines on Best Practice for working with children and vulnerable adults**

Good practice guidelines for working with children and vulnerable adults are laid out in the CVA policy. All existing instructors should be made aware of them and Branch Diving Officers should ensure that their branches are working within these guidelines.

- **Medical Consent Forms**

The parents/ guardians of any child or vulnerable adult must fill out a medical consent form. These forms are confidential and should be stored appropriately. Further details and guidance can be found in the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy (and Appendix G and H).

- **Accidents involving children and vulnerable adults**

An incident form should be filled out for any accident involving a child or vulnerable adult. A notification of incident form should also be completed and sent to HQ for the attention of the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer.



- **Use of Photographs, Film or Video Recordings of Children or Vulnerable Adults**

Anyone wishing to photograph or film children or vulnerable adults at a SSAC event, or within individual branches, must complete an application form and have it approved by the Child and Vulnerable Adult Officer prior to the event. It is the responsibility of all SSAC members to ensure, as far as possible, that unauthorised photographs are not used in any branch related publications without prior consent.

- **Specific Allegations of Abuse**

The CVA policy clearly lays out what constitutes abuse, and how any reported allegations should be dealt with. All Branches should make themselves familiar with these procedures.

It is important to remember that SSAC is not alone in having to deal with such issues. All voluntary organisations are undergoing a similar process in order to provide a safer environment for children and vulnerable adults to enjoy their sports. The implementation of these policies will undoubtedly take time, both at an organisational and branch level. However individual branches should aim to adopt appropriate aspects of these policies as soon as possible.



SSAC Child Protection – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Our branch has no child or vulnerable adult members – why should I have to have a disclosure check?

The SSAC branch and regional instructor awards allow members to teach children and vulnerable adults from the age of 7 upwards. Whether or not your branch chooses to utilise this facility is its decision but there is currently no separate award specifically for teaching adults.

2. I've already had a disclosure check with another organisation – do I need another one?

Yes. Each organisation must do its own checks, as disclosure information is only valid for the day it was printed.

3. Will clubs in England and Ireland be covered?

The SSAC child protection policies are based in Scots Law as the organisation is primarily based in Scotland. Whilst small differences in legislation exist between Scotland, England and Ireland, it is unlikely to have a large affect on policies. Disclosure checks can still be carried out for people living outwith Scotland.

4. Why are disclosure checks not done before BI/RI courses are run? Is this not unfair on people who may fail them?

Disclosure checks will be carried out after attendance on BI/RI courses due to practical difficulties in carrying them out beforehand. It would not be feasible to check members beforehand as course dates etc may not be suitable and some members may end up in a situation where they were checked months or years before actually attending the course. This would lead to difficulties regarding the validity of the check.

However, any member who applies to attend an instructor course will soon be asked to fill out an application and self-declaration form. The self declaration form (which can be found in the CVA policy appendices) will ask members to declare relevant criminal convictions and make it clear that a disclosure check is now part of the pre-requisite for the instructor award. Members who give false information on their self-declaration form to get on the course will NOT have their course fees refunded, will be removed from the instructor program and, if appropriate, their case will be passed to the police for further investigation.

5. Wouldn't it be better for someone outwith the organisation to deal with Disclosure checks and just pass us a 'yes/no' answer.

That would be great but sadly there are no organisations that do this at present, certainly not free of charge. All voluntary organisations are undergoing similar changes; we are all in the same boat in this respect.



The Scottish Sub Aqua Club

However, it is worth remembering that any information obtained from a disclosure check is confidential. It is a criminal offence to inappropriately disclose this information to 3rd parties. See SSAC policy section for information on the secure storage and destruction of such data.

I hope this answers some of the questions you may have. Any other questions may be sent to me via HQ or by email through the webmaster, and I'll try to post answers on the web ASAP.

**Iona Anthony
SSAC Child Protection Officer**