

TOTNES SUB AQUA CLUB

Welfare of Vulnerable People

BRANCH POLICY GUIDELINES

This document has been developed to highlight the areas for potential abuse in the instruction and conduct of both snorkelling and diving. It is aimed both at providing vulnerable members with a safe environment in which to enjoy the sport and also to protect those responsible for their care from the risk of accusation of abuse. It may be argued that the age groups of snorkelling and scuba diving are different and that therefore they should be considered separately. However, as TSAC currently teaches minors to dive, the implications of taking responsibility for children must be considered for both sports.

The welfare of vulnerable members, both adults and children, is the first consideration. Vulnerable members potentially means all members.

- All members have the right to be protected from bad practice, neglect, bullying and all forms of emotional and physical abuse.
- Suspicions and allegations of inappropriate behaviour will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- It is the duty of all members suspecting inappropriate behaviour and actions to act on any concern.
- As defined in the Children Act 1989, anyone under the age of 18 years should be considered as a child for the purposes of this Policy
- All members must be treated fairly, equitably and without prejudice.
- Members must not participate in or tolerate behaviour that frightens, degrades, embarrasses, demoralises or negatively affects a members self esteem
- Members must not tolerate acts of aggression
- Members should be aware that recording of photographic images might be inappropriate.
- The members of Totnes Sub-Aqua Club (TSAC) should not discriminate on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, colour, disability, sexuality, age, occupation, religion or political opinion.
- Branch Officers and Instructors will be made aware of good practice with a specific Welfare course available - free of charge, together with appropriate documentation, training and support from BSAC or other diving agencies, to ensure that Branches are able to implement the Welfare Policy.

Awareness of these issues, and the adherence to these simple guidelines, will help maintain professionalism, safeguard good practice and secure the protection of both the vulnerable and those responsible for them, from accusations arising from mis-interpretation of innocent actions.

BSAC leaves it to individual branches to decide upon the type of training offered and to what age groups, but to ensure the welfare of all vulnerable people BSAC asks that all members observe and promote its policies with regard to the "Welfare of Vulnerable People". TSAC strongly recommends that all those directly involved with the training of minors or vulnerable adults complete the self declaration process.

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TSAC have a policy whereby 14-17 year olds may learn to dive and dive with the club PROVIDED that a parent or guardian is also a diver and a current member of TSAC and is present during all training and diving. Similarly, if TSAC members wish to use the pool on a Wednesday night for swimming or snorkelling and bring their children and guests along then they must be present during the pool session and take full responsibility for the safety, welfare and behaviour of the children. Unaccompanied children and non-TSAC members will be unable to use the pool during TSAC Wednesday night sessions.

Many sports environments provide a relaxed and "safe" place for those who are abused outside of the sport. Diving and Snorkelling instructors (or dive buddies) may develop such a relationship of mutual trust and respect with their students (buddies) that they may hear of abuse occurring outside of the direct influence of the club. As responsible citizens it is our duty to protect our friends from abuse wherever it may occur. The information and guidance given therefore applies to situations that occur outside the club but come to our attention as a result of our club activities as much as to situations that occur within the club. Indeed the information provided here also applies to our everyday lives outside of TSAC.

Finally, please remember that both the BSAC and the TSAC committee will support any member who, in good faith, reports his or her concern that a vulnerable person is at risk of, or may actually be, being abused.

Conditions of membership within the BSAC

All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that people with convictions or past history of an inappropriate nature are prevented from significant contact with children or vulnerable adults.

Controlling access to children and vulnerable adults

Anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children and also vulnerable adults. The particular circumstances of individual cases need to be taken into account. The fundamental principle is that those in charge of activities involving vulnerable persons must take all reasonable steps to satisfy themselves as to the suitability of those who are given significant contact with the children and vulnerable adults in their care.

Self-Declaration

The BSAC welfare policy suggests that members in positions that involve significant access to young people under training and supervision are typically instructors and Branch Officers. For such members, as a minimum requirement, a Self-Declaration should be completed. This would ask for any information about a criminal record or other matter that might have a bearing on their suitability to work with children to be revealed (e.g. previous investigations by police or social services or disciplinary investigations in relation to contact with children). However, given TSAC's policy with regard to parental control of minors, TSAC strongly recommends that all those members directly involved with the training of minors or vulnerable adults and/or those members providing safety cover at the pool complete the self declaration process.

General Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

This code of conduct details the types of practice required by all members of the BSAC when in significant contact with children or vulnerable adults. The types of practice are categorised into good practice; practice to be avoided and practice never to be sanctioned. Suspicions or allegations of non-compliance of the Code by a member will be investigated by the branch Welfare Officer. Where required this may be passed to the welfare officer of the appropriate agency.

Good Practice and Observation

This is the most reliable way to strive to ensure the safety of all vulnerable people within the TSAC environment. Following the guidelines of this Policy will promote vigilance where inappropriate behaviour and early signs of potential problems can be spotted and dealt with.

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Promoting Good Practice

Abuse may occur within or outside training sessions. Don't be afraid to report your concerns, whatever their origin.

Some situations may be open to misinterpretation by those unfamiliar with the teaching of diving and/or snorkelling. The following points are raised so that you are aware of where misunderstanding has occurred in the past and, by taking the actions recommended, you can limit the risks of innocent actions leading to an accusation.

Good Practice

TSAC strongly recommends that all members directly involved with the training of minors and/or vulnerable adults and those members providing safety cover at the pool complete the self declaration process.

When working with children or vulnerable adults:

- Make activities fun, enjoyable and promote fair play.
- Always work in an open environment e.g. avoid private or unobserved situations and encourage an open environment for all activities.
- Treat all children and vulnerable adults equally, with respect and dignity.
- Put the welfare of each child or vulnerable adult first before achieving performance goals.
- Be an excellent role model.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Ensure that if any form of manual or physical support is required for a child or vulnerable adult, it is provided openly, the child or vulnerable adult is informed of what is being done and their consent is obtained.
- Deliver educational instruction first verbally; secondly role-modelled', and thirdly, and only if necessary, with hands on - after obtaining the child's or vulnerable adult's consent and having told them where you are putting your hands and why it is necessary to do so.
- Involve parents, guardians and carers wherever possible.
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust that empower children and vulnerable adults to share in the decision-making process.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of children and vulnerable adults and avoid excessive training and either pushing them against their will or putting undue pressure on them.

First Aid and Treatment of injuries:

If, in your capacity as a member of TSAC, a child or vulnerable adult requires first aid or any form of medical attention whilst in your care, then the following good practice must be followed:

- Keep a written record, of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Where possible, ensure access to medical advice and/or assistance is available.
- Ideally, only those with a recognised First Aid qualification should respond to any injuries.
- In more serious cases, assistance must be obtained from a medically qualified professional as soon as possible.
- Where possible, the permission for any course of action should be sought from the child or vulnerable adult after such action has been discussed with them in language they understand.
- The child's, or vulnerable adult's parents/guardians or carers must be informed of any injury and any action taken as soon as possible, unless it is in the child or vulnerable adult interests and on professional advice not to do so.
- A Notification of Accident Form must be completed and signed and passed to the Branch Welfare Officer as soon as possible.

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Specific points to follow:- IF YOU ARE TEACHING/MANAGING SCUBA DIVING:

(These points should be borne in mind in any training situation.)

- ⌘ **Avoid training in a one to one situation.** Always have an independent observer to support your position in case of misinterpretations of your actions
- ⌘ **Physical contact**
Certain underwater skills require close physical contact, such as Rescue Breaths (RB), Controlled Buoyant Lift, etc. Before taking hold of your student in a manner that may be misinterpreted teach the skill out of the water (do a dry run) and give a verbal commentary to the whole group explaining what you are going to do. Advise students to wear Tee shirts or pool suits. This can avert potentially embarrassing situations.
- ⌘ **Never engage in rough or unnecessary physical contact.**
- ⌘ **Guard against the effects of cold, especially when training in open water.**
- ⌘ **Where children are involved, the parents should be aware of what will be required of their children and agree to abide by the branch policies before training commences. Specific help and advice on this issue is available from BSAC.**

Ensure adequate supervision

BSAC recommend a maximum instructor/student ratio for pool and sheltered open water of 1:4. In open water the ratio should not exceed 1:2. (specific exceptions to this rule may be detailed in the diver training programme - but instructor and managers should be aware that whatever is stated in the programme is a MINIMUM requirement and then only in ideal conditions)

Specific points to follow: IF YOU ARE TEACHING/MANAGING SNORKELLING:

This sport often involves the instruction of young children and the following are a few simple guidelines for the instructors to follow in addition to those under the previous heading;

- ⌘ **Don't be alone with your students or snorkel divers.**
- ⌘ **Don't mix age groups**
By mixing adult and child classes you could be offering the opportunity for abuse - and this should therefore be avoided whenever possible.
- ⌘ **Confine your teaching, where possible, to the side of the pool**
If it is necessary to demonstrate in water, have a fellow instructor/snorkeller with you - to support your position in any subsequent discussion with concerned parents.
- ⌘ **Ensure adequate supervision**
BSAC recommend a maximum instructor/student ratio for pool and sheltered open water sites as 1:12 with a vigilant pair of eyes as additional cover.
- ⌘ **Open water -**
Do not exceed 1:6 students, again with a vigilant pair of eyes as additional cover.
- ⌘ **Physical effects**
Watch out for the effects of cold and exhaustion especially when training in open water. Be particularly aware that children get cold more quickly than adults - especially when those adults are wearing drysuits!

If you accidentally hurt a child, if he or she seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something which you have done, report any such incident as soon as possible to another colleague and make a brief written note of it. This should then be passed to the Branch Welfare Officer.