

# Safeguarding Children in Mountain Huts

## 2. Scotland

*These guidelines were approved by the MCoFS Board on 8 October 2015*

### Scope and context

These guidelines should not be regarded as definitive. They are intended to help mountaineering clubs to understand the basic requirements of the child safeguarding legislation in relation to the operation of mountain huts.

This document must be read in conjunction with the [MCoFS Child Protection Policy and Procedures](#), and MCoFS guidance: [Children & Vulnerable Adults on Meets: Guidance for Clubs](#).

All individuals involved in the provision of sport and recreational activities for children have a duty of care. All children have a right of protection and in particular the needs of disabled children must be taken into account. This means that all reasonable steps should be taken to minimise the risk of harm or injury to the children. In particular, clubs operating huts that permit children to use their hut(s) must take much more care to run their huts with children in mind, e.g. to have guards over fires and heaters, and guards protecting children against hot cooking surfaces. In the event of an accident involving children officers of the club may be held liable for their injuries or deaths.

### Children - definition

A child is defined as a person under the age of eighteen by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Anyone under the age of eighteen is by law a child.

### Children - duty of care

When considering under 18s, it is important to make clear precisely who has a duty of care for each child and when that duty is handed from one person to another. Usually, a parent accompanying their child has a duty of care for their own child. However, a parent may, with agreement, pass that duty to another person, known as a 'Nominated Adult'. Once this has been agreed and the child is handed to or left in the care of the Nominated Adult, the duty of care also passes to that person.

### Risk and reasonableness

When considering difficult issues there are two questions the club should ask itself –

1. What are the risks to the young people and how can these be managed?
2. What is reasonable in these circumstances and how can we take all reasonable steps to ensure the well being of the young people in our care?

These provide useful guidelines. It is advisable to keep a written record of the questions asked and the answers given.

\*See notes in the information box on page 4 re. the currency (version no.) of this guideline

### The Nominated Adult

A parent may give consent to anyone they wish to take their child to a hut. This is an arrangement between the parent and the person taking the child. The person taking the child will be acting as the Nominated Adult and this requires them to exercise a duty of care that would be provided by a reasonably prudent parent.

# Safeguarding Children in Mountain Huts

When taking another person's child to a hut it is wise to inform both the parent(s) and the child about the nature of the activities to be undertaken and any other arrangements so that they can decide whether they are happy with these or decline if they are not.

## Affiliated clubs

Affiliated clubs range from those that are a loose collection of friends, who have come together to form a club because they have similar interests, to those that are more formal, with an agreed constitution and rules.

Some clubs do not allow under 18s to join the club or attend meets. There are other clubs that allow under 18s to participate in club activities provided –

- (a) They are accompanied by a parent, or
- (b) They are accompanied by a Nominated Adult for a specific child.

On the other hand –

- (c) There are some clubs that do, or may, take under 18s when they are not accompanied by a parent or Nominated Adult for a particular child. These clubs and their officers have additional responsibilities and duties relating to the safety and well being of those under 18s in their care.

An affiliated club that allows under 18s to participate in its activities when they are not accompanied by a parent or a Nominated Adult must –

- Adopt the MCofS Child Protection Policy or a child protection policy of their own.
- Appoint a Child Protection Officer with responsibility for safeguarding children within the club.

## Supervised groups including under 18s

Clubs may allow outside groups to use their hut(s), e.g. school parties or Scouts. These clubs should comply with the [MCofS guidance: Children & Vulnerable Adults on Meets: Guidance for Clubs](#).

. These are as follows –

- When children, supervised by adults other than their parents or a Nominated Adult, are using the hut it is recommended that only properly vetted adults or those who are members of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme use the hut.
- It is also recommended that there is a designated person, who is identified as such to all present including the children, responsible for safeguarding children issues be present at all times. This may be the person in charge of the group, e.g. the teacher or the club Child Protection Officer.
- Whenever possible, an adult should not be alone with a child.
- Children should not sleep in the same room as an adult or adults where separate facilities are available.
- There should be separate male and female sleeping areas for children if there are both boys and girls present. When both boys and girls are present there should also be male and female supervising adults.
  - **N.B.** Those supervising must be properly vetted or be members of the [Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme](#) (PVG Scheme).

## PVG Scheme – Definition of Regulated Work

Regulated work includes unsupervised activities: teaching, training, instruction, caring for or supervising children or driving a vehicle only for children. It does not include work by supervised volunteers. Work is regulated only if done on a regular basis, i.e. more than once a week, or on 4 or more days in a 30 day period, or over night.

# Safeguarding Children in Mountain Huts

## Volunteers

A volunteer will not be undertaking a regulated work if they are supervised by a regulated activity provider or they are not providing the service regularly. Therefore they will not require to be a member of the PVG Scheme.

## Potential problems for clubs – Child Protection Officers

Clubs will need to determine whether their Child Protection Officer requires to be a member of the PVG Scheme. This will depend on whether their work is a 'regulated activity'. Do they carry out their work on a regular basis? If they do so then they will need to be a member of the PVG Scheme.

## Pro-forma documents

The pro-forma documents provided below (pages 4 and 6) may be used by MCofS clubs to satisfy their obligations with regard to children staying in their hut(s). Clubs may need to amend these documents to meet their particular requirements. For example, document no. 1 should be amended to identify any risks which are specific to the club hut(s). The text of the .pdf form may copied and edited.

**Note:** *If viewing this .pdf while online then clicking on any [URL](#) will take you to that website.*

## Hut Guidelines

These guidelines have been produced by the Huts Group of the British Mountaineering Council and the Huts Advisory Group of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland to assist those operating mountain huts in Britain.

Contact the BMC Huts Group by e-mail – [huts@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:huts@thebmc.co.uk) or telephone 0161 445 6111.

Contact the MCofS Huts Advisory Group by e-mail - [huts@mcofs.org.uk](mailto:huts@mcofs.org.uk)

**Websites:** [www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk) and [www.mcofs.org.uk](http://www.mcofs.org.uk)

**URLs:** If any of the [URLs](#) (web addresses) given on the preceding pages are found to be 'dead links' please notify [huts@mcofs.org.uk](mailto:huts@mcofs.org.uk)

**Disclaimer:** These guidelines were revised on the date shown below and the information herein is believed to be accurate at the time of writing. No responsibility can be accepted for any loss of benefit or entitlement arising through use of these guidelines – they are not intended to be definitive.

**Version no. 5 – August 2015**

These guidelines are updated periodically; to check on the currency of this version go to one of the websites above where the latest version will always be displayed.

# Safeguarding Children in Mountain Huts

Pro-forma document No. 1

## Children in huts – Points for consideration

### General points

Adults can easily note the differences between hut and home and can react accordingly. It is much more difficult for children, especially young ones, for whom this may well be a new environment, and who are unlikely to be able to adapt their behaviour to the different environment easily, if at all. It is not reasonably practicable for clubs to operate their huts like domestic houses and therefore the accommodation and facilities available are likely to differ from those found in homes. It is not reasonable to expect members and their guests to modify their normal behaviour in the hut as soon as they are made aware that a child is present. Parents or Nominated Adults should be aware of these differences and their potential implications for children. They must be responsible for the care and control of their charges and it is in this context that parents should take note of the following:

### 1. General safety considerations

- The standards of hygiene and cleanliness may be less than at home.
- Stairwells may be dark, uneven under foot and even slippery when wet.
- There may not be guardrails on the stairs.
- There may not be any covers on electrical sockets.
- There may be open fires; fire guards are to prevent hot fuel falling out, not children falling in!
- Members may walk about with hot kettles and they may not expect to encounter small children.
- Members are likely to leave hot drinks in mugs and cold drinks in glasses on floors or low tables.
- Members are likely to come in late, after some children have gone to bed, and they cannot reasonably be expected to modify their level of speech (or content!).
- Members manoeuvring in congested car parks may drive on the assumption that adults will keep out of their way and they will not expect the presence of small children.

### 2. Accommodation

The sleeping accommodation in huts is provided by individual bunks and alpine-style sleeping platforms (wide bunks sleeping several people ). Bunks may be two or even three tier. Dormitories or rooms vary in size considerably. They may sleep between 4 to 20 people. Some huts have family rooms.

#### **Club Meets**

In order to safeguard all members the Meet Leader / Meet Co-ordinator, should discuss with all those present on the meet how the sleeping accommodation should be arranged. It may be arranged in family groups or on a single sex basis, according to the ages of the children and the needs of the group.

On any occasion when a parent or adult is accompanied by children they should be mindful of the need to safeguard children by ensuring that the sleeping arrangements are appropriate for the children and for the needs of the other members and their guests in the huts. Where a hut has family rooms then children can share a room with their parents. Ultimately, if a parent is with their child or the Nominated Adult is with a child, they can decide whether they are satisfied and happy with the sleeping arrangements available for the children for whom they are responsible.

# Safeguarding Children in Mountain Huts

Parents need to bear in mind that there may well be insufficient appropriate accommodation in huts and that they may need to review their plans.

In exceptional circumstances where adults wish to take children for whom they do not have parental responsibility to a hut, they should get permission from the childrens' parents using the parental consent form (see pro-forma document no. 2). A copy of this document should also be given to the parent. The consent form enables parents to provide medical details in an emergency and also outlines to parents the shared nature of accommodation in mountain huts.

## **Additional considerations**

Identify the risks that are specific to your hut(s). These may include –

- Free access to roads, lanes and farm tracks;
- Free access to a lake, river or stream;
- Free access to deep drainage ditches;
- Unguarded drops from hut, car park, garden, e.g. into a field.

Any child protection issues should be referred to the club's Child Protection Officer\* who will be able to provide advice and guidance.

Name\* .....

Contact numbers –

Tel ..... Mobile .....

E-mail .....

# Safeguarding Children in Mountain Huts

Pro-forma document No. 2

## MCOFS HUTS CONSENT FORM FOR NOMINATED ADULTS

### Parental Consent Form

I give consent for my child (full name) .....

to accompany (name of adult\* and his/her family) .....

To (location) .....

On these dates: From..... to .....

1. I have received a copy of the MCoFS guidance: Children & Vulnerable Adults on Meets: Guidance for Clubs and understand that huts have communal facilities and that these include communal sleeping arrangements.
2. I understand that the above adult will endeavour to ensure that appropriate sleeping accommodation will be arranged for my child with regard to its age and sex and with regard to the needs of other members present.
3. In the event of illness or an accident requiring emergency hospital treatment, I authorise the adult named on this form to sign on my behalf any written form of consent required by the hospital authorities, if the delay required to obtain my signature is considered inadvisable by the doctor or surgeon concerned.

Signed (parent) ..... Date .....

Address.....

Tel ..... Mobile .....

E-mail .....

Signed (Nominated Adult as indicated above\*).....

Date .....

### Details of any medical condition and current medication –

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**N.B.** This form must be completed in duplicate and signed by both parties and a copy given to the Nominated Adult before the visit to the hut takes place.