

DISCOVER GROOMSPORT CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Discover Groomsport fully recognises its responsibilities for Child Protection and our policy applies to all members of the Management Committee or local volunteers on behalf of the group working with children under the remit of Discover Groomsport. These are:

1. The welfare of the child is paramount.
2. All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.
3. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
4. All Volunteers working with children in-group activities have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate Designated Officer.

Discover Groomsport Child Protection Policy Statement

- Discover Groomsport Volunteers have a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in the group activities from harm.
- All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account.
- Discover Groomsport Volunteers will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in-group activities through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines adopted by the Organisation.
- A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Northern Ireland Children's Order 1995).

Policy aims:

The aim of the Discover Groomsport Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of Discover Groomsport Volunteers.
- Allow all Discover Groomsport Volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Promoting good practice

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school, and social environments. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child enters group activities having been subjected to child abuse, the Organisation can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. In such instances Discover Groomsport Volunteers must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

Good practice guidelines

All Discover Groomsport Volunteers should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice means:

- Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- Treating all young people equally with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with children/young people.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children to share in decision making.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children if they are assisting in activities. If groups have to be supervised always ensure Discover Groomsport Trustees/Management Committee/ Volunteers, or parents, work in pairs.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled young people.
- Securing parental consent in writing to, if the need arises, administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if Discover Groomsport Volunteers are required to transport young people in their cars.

Practices to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (e.g. the child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of Discover Groomsport Management Committee or the child's parents.

Otherwise, avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Taking or dropping off a child to an event.

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or young people that they can do for themselves.
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a child/young person.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a child/young person appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a child/young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Use of Social Media Communication with Young People

There is evidence to suggest that social media has become a new methodology for potential abuse of Children and Young People. Therefore Discover Groomsport would regard the individual texting, telephone calls, emailing or facebook of children and young people as being inappropriate and unacceptable. In instances where activities are offered that could include children and young people, we will:

- Pass on information regarding events, training or other activities for children and young people via group texts that should be sent to the parents or guardians of anyone under 18 years of age. The same good practice guidance applies when using emails, no Volunteer of Discover Groomsport should make contact with children and young people outside their own family circle.
- Volunteers of Discover Groomsport should not be in contact with children and young people via Facebook.
- If, for whatever reason, a parent/guardian insists or requests that the information is sent directly by Discover Groomsport to their child and gives this request in writing Discover Groomsport may, if they so wish, accede to this request. However, if Discover Groomsport accedes to the request, the information can only be sent as part of a group text and cannot be communicated individually to the child or young person.

Use of photographic/filming equipment at events

There is evidence that some people have used social/sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children/ young people in vulnerable positions. All Discover Groomsport Volunteers should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the Designated Officer.

Written parental consent is required for the use of images, both still and moving, of children and young people attending events run by Discover Groomsport for publicity/ recording of achievements purposes.

Recruitment and training of Discover Groomsport Management Committee

Discover Groomsport recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. In cases where Volunteers have regulated unsupervised access to work with Children through Discover Groomsport activities, Access NI Enhanced Disclosure Checks will be required.

The Policy requires:

- Discover Groomsport Volunteers to receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

The first priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of Children/Young People. To this end it is the responsibility of all Volunteers to act on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect and to pass on their concerns to a responsible person and agency.

It is not the responsibility of anyone volunteering in Discover Groomsport to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

Discover Groomsport will assure all Discover Groomsport Volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a volunteer there may be three types of investigation:

- A child protection inquiry, by Discover Groomsport Designated Officer;
- An investigation by Social Services; and
- A criminal investigation by PSNI.

Action

1. Concerns about poor practice:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the Designated Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Designated Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Chairperson of Discover Groomsport, who will decide how to deal with the allegation.

2. Concerns about suspected abuse:

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of Discover Groomsport or from an outside individual should be reported to the Designated Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The Designated Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department, which may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Social Services department.
- If the Designated Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to a Director of Discover Groomsport who will refer the allegation to social services.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

This includes the following people:

- The Designated Officer
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation
- Social Services/Police
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child). Information will be limited in this case so as not to further compromise the safety of the person making the allegation.

Seek Social Services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse

- Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents and Discover Groomsport Volunteers may need. Use of help-lines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process.
- Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

Action if bullying is suspected

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.

Action to help the victim and prevent bullying:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you **cannot/must not** promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when, date, time, etc).
- Report any concerns to the Group's Designated Officer.

Action towards the bully(ies):

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully(ies)'s parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all Discover Groomsport Trustees of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.

3. Concerns outside the jurisdiction of Discover Groomsport (e.g. a parent or carer):

- Report your concerns to the Designated Officer, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.
- See **4.** below for the information Social Services or the Police will need.
- If Discover Groomsport Designated Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact Social Services or the Police immediately.
- Social Services and Discover Groomsport Designated Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.

4. Information for Social Services or the Police about suspected abuse:

REMEMBER IT IS NOT NECESSARY OR ADVISABLE FOR YOU TO SEEK EVIDENCE. By supporting the child or young person and carefully logging any information given to you at this stage, you will lay the foundations for an effective formal investigation.

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth.
- The child's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.

- The nature of the allegation, details of the incident should be recorded but it should not be investigated as that is the role of Designated Officer, Social Services and Police. Include date incident reported, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Understand the need not to contaminate, or to preserve evidence if a crime may have been committed.
- Where possible referral to the Police or Social Services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact Social Services or the Police direct, or the **NSPCC Child Protection Helpline** on **0808 800 5000**, or **Childline** on **0800 1111**.

Declaration

On behalf of Discover Groomsport, we, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.

Signed:

A Thomas Elaine L Nixon

Name:

A. Thomas

Name:

ELAINE NIXON

Position within
Discover Groomsport

Trustee

Position within
Discover Groomsport

Chairperson

Date:

8/12/22

Date:

8/12/22.