

# SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN IN SHOOTING

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*The advice offered here should also be applied in the case of vulnerable adults*

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## Introduction

Safeguarding and protecting children is an important issue. It crosses all activities and is particularly important in sport where the potential for close and personal contact between coaches and competitors is high. In consequence, the Isle of Man Target Shooting Federation has drawn up this document which sets out a policy for child protection in shooting and gives advice for clubs and individuals to follow to ensure the policy is put in practice.

Everyone in the sport of shooting in the Isle of Man has a part to play in looking after children with whom they are working. This is both a moral and legal obligation. People have a responsibility to report genuine concerns and, where suspicion or allegation of abuse takes place, to take such matters seriously and respond swiftly and appropriately. Abuse can occur anywhere children gather: in the home, at school, in the park or while engaged in sport. Sadly, there are people who will actively become involved with sport simply to be near children and to harm them.

In other circumstances, when a child has been subject to abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. There are many ways in which good practice in child protection can support the welfare of children. To be effective it is essential that this policy not only exists but is actively pursued. In fact, it is a condition of membership of the Isle of Man Target Shooting Federation that its constituent bodies must ensure that the clubs and individuals for which they, in turn, are responsible adhere actively to the policy.

To this end everyone involved in shooting needs to see and understand this document. Member bodies and clubs are asked to make sure the document is discussed openly and widely within their organizations and is actively adopted by them as part of their own constitutional procedures.

## Aim

This policy is designed to provide a safe and secure environment for both children and adults involved in shooting in the Isle of Man. To achieve this clubs and individuals must recognize that:

- the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration, and
- all children, regardless of age, racial origin, disability, religious belief, gender or sexual identity have the right to be protected from abuse.

For the purposes of this policy a child is defined as a person under the age of 18.

## Forms of Abuse

While these descriptions are necessarily general, and abuse can take many forms, they nevertheless highlight the four main types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. It should also be borne in mind that abuse may be inflicted by women as well as men.

*Physical Abuse* is just what the term implies: hurting or injuring a child, for example, by hitting or shaking. It might also occur if a child is forced to train beyond his or her capabilities. Bullying should also be watched for in this category.

*Sexual Abuse* occurs when a child knowingly or unknowingly takes part in something which meets the sexual needs of the other person or persons involved. It could range from sexually suggestive comments to actual intercourse.

*Emotional Abuse* occurs when a child is not given love, help and encouragement and is constantly derided or ridiculed or, perhaps even worse, ignored. Conversely, it can also occur if a child is over-protected. It is present in the unrealistic expectations of parents and coaches as to what a child can achieve. Racially and sexually abusive remarks constitute emotional abuse and it can be a feature of bullying.

*Neglect* usually means failing to meet children's basic needs such as food, warmth, adequate clothing, medical attention, etc. It can also mean failing to ensure they are safe or exposing them to harm.

## Indications of Child Abuse

Recognising child abuse is not always easy, even for experts. The following examples are not exhaustive and they are only indicators - not confirmation.

*Information* - The child says that she or he is being abused, or another person says they believe (or actually know) that abuse is taking place.

*Injuries* - The child has an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.

*Behaviour Changes* - The child's behaviour changes, either over time or quite suddenly, and he or she becomes quiet and withdrawn, or alternatively becomes aggressive.

*Reaction to Others* - The child appears not to trust adults, for example, a parent or coach with whom she or he would be expected to have, or once had, a close relationship and does not seem to be able to make friends.

*Appearance* - The child becomes increasingly neglected-looking, or loses or puts on weight for no apparent reason.

*Sexual Awareness* - The child shows inappropriate sexual awareness for his or her age and sometimes behaves in a sexually explicit way. It should be borne in mind that physically disabled children and children with learning difficulties are particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them.

## Good Practice when Dealing with Children in Shooting

- Encourage parents or carers to become involved with the sport, or at least to come and watch what takes place on the range.
- Avoid physical contact as much as possible. If it may be necessary, for example, when learning a new shooting position, discuss this with the child and his or her parent or carer, ascertaining their views before proceeding.
- Avoid situations where the coach or official is alone with the child. There may of course be occasions when there is no alternative, for example, if a child falls ill and has to be taken home. In these circumstances let others know what is happening, and why. It should be stressed that one to one contact should not be allowed to occur on a regular basis.
- If it is necessary to do things of a personal nature for a child, perhaps a child who is disabled, make sure you have another adult accompanying you. Get the child's consent if at all possible and certainly get the consent of the parent or carer to act in this way. Let the child know what you are going to do, and why.
- Steps should be taken to ensure that competitors are discreet about changing into and out of shooting clothing, especially shooting trousers, and do not strip down to underwear publicly. This practice should be adhered to irrespective of whether members of the opposite gender are present.

When teams involving children are travelling off the Island:

- Written parental consent should be requested for officials to transport young people in their cars.
- At tournaments or residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- Written parental consent should be obtained to act in loco parentis if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- A written record should be kept of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given.
- Male and female coaches/officials should always accompany mixed teams and parents should be encouraged to be involved.
- If it is necessary to supervise groups of children in changing rooms or overnight accommodation, parents/coaches/officials should work in pairs.

If the practices and guidance contained here are followed they can offer safeguards to everyone involved in shooting, children and adults alike. This will help to maintain the credibility of the shooting sports in the Isle of Man and the respective bodies involved. Most of all, though, they will help to prevent children being abused.

## If You Have Concerns About The Welfare of a Child...

Remember, **it is not your responsibility to decide whether a child is being abused**. You are, however, being asked to act on your concerns. Make a detailed note of what you have seen or heard but **don't delay passing on the information**.

If you are a member, or the parent/carer or friend of a member, of a club you should tell a club official such as the Secretary, Chairman, Committee member or, at an event, the Chief Range Officer, unless, of course, you suspect them of being involved.

If you are a club official or range officer you can:

- Talk to the child's parents/carers about the concerns if you think there may be an obvious explanation such as a bereavement or pressure from exams.
- Contact your governing body for guidance.
- Contact the Isle of Man Social Services Duty Social Worker (Tel: 686179) or, in an emergency, the Police.

**If you suspect abuse may be taking place outside the environment of the club and does not involve a club member**, contact the Social Services.

**If suspected abuse is reported to the club involving a club member**, the Committee has a duty to act in the interest of the child. Advice should be sought immediately. The Committee should be careful over any immediate response towards the club member suspected, bearing in mind that there may be legal implications, and only in the most urgent of circumstances act prior to receipt of professional advice. In any such event, the Committee should review its procedures to see if there are ways in which the occurrence can be avoided in the future. This recognizes that what is suspected in good faith to be abuse may only be the result of poor practice.

## If a Child Tells You He or She is Being Abused...

Stay calm

- Don't promise to keep it to yourself
- Listen to what the child says and take it seriously
- Only ask questions if you need to clarify what the child is telling you. Don't ask the child about explicit details
- Make a detailed note of what the child has told you but, as advised above, don't delay in passing on the information.

## Further Information

- Isle of Man Social Services, Hillary House, Prospect Hill, Douglas. Tel: 686179.
- Manx Sport & Recreation - speak with Gianni Epifani - 688556
- The Child Protection In Sport Unit - [www.thecpsu.org.uk](http://www.thecpsu.org.uk) (a partnership between the NSPCC and the UK Sports Councils). Helpline: 0116 234 7278 or email: [cpsu@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:cpsu@nspcc.org.uk)
- Safeguarding & Protecting Children: a Guide for Sportspeople (Order from - [www.1st4sport.com/1st4sportsite/pages/product/product.asp?prod=B40266](http://www.1st4sport.com/1st4sportsite/pages/product/product.asp?prod=B40266))
- The Child and Young Persons Act 2001 (Isle of Man legislation)
- Isle of Man Police. Tel: 631212

**ISLE OF MAN TARGET SHOOTING FEDERATION**

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