

## **British Caving Association**

### **Good practice for adults caving with children and vulnerable adults**

When planning activities for children and vulnerable adults:

- Consider the needs and capabilities of everyone in the group, and plan activities that are appropriate. For example, avoid trips that are overly physical or too wet, given the age and experience of your group. Aim for them to have fun and want to come back for more.
- Ensure that children and vulnerable adults are wearing clothing, footwear, helmet and lighting that are appropriate for the caving environment.
- Ensure any other equipment (for example, harnesses) is appropriate for the size of the participant and in good condition.
- Carry a first aid kit and spare light in your group. If doing vertical caving, carry a spare rope of the length of the tallest pitch, so that rescues can readily be effected
- Ensure children and vulnerable adults cave in an environment where risk is kept to a minimum. For example, experienced adult cavers will sometimes traverse a cave passage at a high level when progress lower down is difficult or impossible, confident that their caving skill will prevent a fall. Children and young adults are unable to make that judgment. Thus you should pick venues where such risks are minimised, or use traverse ropes or safety lines that you might not bother with when caving with adults.
- Do not allow children or vulnerable adults to cave when injured, if the injury could be made worse or could impact their ability to cope.
- Think about arrangements for changing. Children and vulnerable adults are less able to think ahead, so if a change of clothes or a towel might be needed, check that they have these things.
- Motivate children and vulnerable adults through positive feedback and constructive criticism.

During activities with children and vulnerable adults:

- Ensure that the welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount.
- Treat everyone with dignity, respect, sensitivity and fairness as well as with equality.
- If physical support is required, for example when tackling an awkward section in a cave, ensure the individual is aware of what is happening and has consented to this physical help. If possible, ensure that your help is visible to other members of your group. Avoid physical contact that could be misconstrued, for example helping with a climbing move by pushing on someone's bottom. In some situations, other children or vulnerable adults in your group may be better placed to provide help, under your supervision.
- Explain why you are doing something and try to facilitate, as far as is practical, an open and inclusive approach to the activity. People often respond better if they feel they are part of the process.
- Respect children's and vulnerable adults' need for privacy when changing. For example, they could change inside a vehicle, or maybe they could stand at the back of a vehicle whilst adult members stand at the front.

Avoid:

- Taking children and vulnerable adults alone on car journeys, or spending time alone with a child or vulnerable adult. This might become necessary in emergencies, or if a youngster has to leave a cave before the rest of the group. In such an event, maintain a respectable distance (for example by sitting them in the back of the vehicle) and ensure that their parent or guardian is aware.

The following must never happen:

- Taking a child or vulnerable adult alone to your home.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun.
- Doing things of a personal nature for a child or vulnerable adult that they can do themselves.
- Allowing allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, not acted upon or not recorded.
- Allowing children to consume alcohol or take illegal recreational drugs.

- Allowing any physically rough or sexually provocative, contact or games.

### **Good practice for clubs**

BCA is keen to encourage young people and vulnerable adults to go caving with clubs. Clubs may of course decide not to invite children and vulnerable adults to use club facilities or take part in club activities. If clubs do decide to let youngsters and vulnerable adults participate, BCA advises the following.

- Put safeguarding on the agenda for the club committee on an annual basis.
- Ensure that all children and vulnerable adults are either accompanied by their parent or carer. Alternatively, ensure that the parent has nominated an adult who will be responsible for their child 'in loco parentis'. Best practice would be for parents to sign a very short form confirming this in writing (a sample copy is in the appendices). This adult would be someone that the parents already know, not a member of the club that they've just recently met.
- A few clubs may wish to do activities with young people, when neither their parent nor a friend of the family will be there. In that event, clubs will need to 'vet' members who will be responsible for the children. Vetting will consist of a DBS check (which BCA will arrange and pay for), plus a few supporting documents including references. See the full Safeguarding policy for details. Clubs unsure about these options are encouraged to contact the BCA's safeguarding officer for help.
- Consider adopting a policy that when children and vulnerable adults will be using club facilities, other users who have booked in at the same time will be notified. This is to address the fact that some behaviour in club facilities can sometimes be appropriate when only adults are present.
- Ensure that all members have been given a copy of this 'good practice' advice, and provided with a link to the full BCA safeguarding policy.

### **Good practice: BCA**

The BCA is responsible for its Safeguarding Policy and implementation. Individual clubs who are involved with children and vulnerable adults are required to work within this guidance. They are also encouraged to produce their own guidance and ensure that all members are aware of procedures and guidelines for good practice.

The BCA recommends that every club involved with children and vulnerable adults should have a designated Officer for youth and vulnerable adults. This person should ensure that the club is familiar with BCA and current guidance.

The BCA will publicise its Safeguarding Policy to show its commitment to providing a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults.

Clubs are advised to follow the BCA procedures contained within the Safeguarding Policy in the event of an incident.

Parents should be clear what the BCA or a club are doing and that the activities are being run in relation to accepted good practice. The BCA provides a consent form which ensures that parents are aware of the proposed arrangements. Clubs may amend the consent form to reflect their arrangements. A copy must be forwarded to the BCA's national safeguarding officer before being sent to parents.

The BCA and clubs will develop and promote their anti-bullying policy.