

## **Background**

The Eagle Ski Club wishes to promote in children as well as adults an enjoyment of the mountains and remote regions in winter, and in particular to encourage them to try ski touring once they have adequate skills. The Club is committed to ensuring that children who participate in Club meets do so in as safe an environment as is practical.

The Club, its officers, leaders and members at large have a responsibility under the Children Act 1989 (for England and Wales), the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, to protect the welfare of children who participate in the Club's activities, and this document sets out the Club's policy in this respect. For the purposes of this document a child is defined as a person under the age of 18. Children under 18 (whether members or not) are accepted on meets/tours at the organiser's discretion, and normally only where a parent or legal guardian attends the meet/tour and takes responsibility for the child.

## **Mountaineering Scotland Child Protection Policy and Procedures**

As a member club of Mountaineering Scotland, the Club follows Mountaineering Scotland's policy for safeguarding children, and any future versions of the policy. The club is committed to promoting a Safeguarding Culture throughout the club, and Committee members, leaders and guides who have contact with children should be aware of and follow Mountaineering Scotland's child protection policy.

## **Understanding the risks**

Children who attend meets, their parents and guardians must accept that ski mountaineering is a dangerous sport; accidents in the mountain can lead to injury and, in extreme cases, to death. Club leaders will, through their skills and experience, minimise those risks but they cannot be eliminated completely.

Social, walking and cycling meets in the UK have the lowest level of risk. Tours and training courses that take place in the UK and in ski resorts are safer than sustained tours in remote areas, while professional mountain guides have higher levels of skill and experience than most club leaders. Children, parents and guardians must ensure, through comparison and discussion with the leader or with a Club officer, that they have clearly understood the level of risk associated with the activity to be undertaken.

## **Safety on Club tours**

Club meets are led and/or co-ordinated by Club members (some of whom are guides); where a group on a Club meet or tour makes use of a mountain guide in a professional capacity, the guide must always be fully qualified under UIAGM<sup>1</sup> or local rules, and it is the responsibility of the members to ensure that the guide is qualified and has sufficient knowledge of the area for the activity to be undertaken. The Club does not itself employ guides or other professionals.

It is the Leader's or Guide's responsibility to ensure that the group does not assume unnecessary risks in the context of the group's goals; those goals should be clearly understood by all participants (including participating children) and revised when necessary in the light of prevailing conditions.

The Club does not normally promote competition in ski mountaineering. Club leaders must ensure that group members do not indulge in competition that would be inappropriate in the context of the group's goals. Children may often be motivated by a degree of competition, in particular competition against themselves, but leaders must ensure that this is never harmful and that it would not lead to over-exertion or additional risk-taking.

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<sup>1</sup> Union International des Associations de Guides de Montagne

Mike Hendry 2005, updated Declan Phelan 2012 and 2016, updated Rya Tibawi June 2020

### **Welfare of children**

Children may only be accepted on tours and meets if the Leader / Guide has completed the necessary registration procedures and enhanced DBS checks, OR if the child is accompanied by a parent or guardian who accepts responsibility for them at all times.

Leaders have full discretion as to whether to accept children on their meets and are not required to do so. In addition to verifying the levels of fitness and skills, which a leader is required to do for all participants, leaders must satisfy themselves that any child is sufficiently mature to understand the risks and to cope, both physically and mentally, with the conditions that may be met on the tour or meet.

Leaders and guides who accept children must assume a higher level of care for the children than for other members. The parent or guardian may sometimes be tired or less skilled and may not always be able to make the best decisions on behalf of their ward. It is the leader's duty to monitor the child's behaviour and to assess his or her physical and mental ability to continue safely.

The duty to ensure a child's welfare extends to "off-the-snow" time, when exhaustion and mental stress may often show. Leaders should avoid situations where a child may be vulnerable to abuse, by the parent/guardian, any other member or other persons. Leaders should exercise particular care over sleeping arrangements in mountain huts and similar accommodation. All members should be alert to signs of abuse and should alert the parent/guardian and the Leader.

If the Leader detects signs of excessive stress in the child, he or she should first discuss it with the parent or guardian if they are present. Under the Club's rules, each member on a member-led tour is responsible for their own behaviour and decisions; the leader may influence but may not instruct. A professional guide assumes a higher level of responsibility for his or her charges and may, for example, require participants to withdraw or to rest.

### **Incident reporting**

Leaders are required to report to the Club's officers any incidents that led to, or could have led to, injury. In addition, leaders and all club members are required to report to the Club's officers any incidents or concerns of actual or potential safeguarding risk. Members and leaders are not required to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place, but it is their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse, and to report any concerns about the welfare of the child.

- If you have any questions or concerns to report you should contact your Club Safeguarding Lead.
- In an emergency contact the Police or Children's Services in the relevant local authority without delay.

### **Child Welfare Officers**

The Club has two designated Safeguarding Leads:

Rya Tibawi, [Rtibawi@aol.com](mailto:Rtibawi@aol.com). Tel: 020 8769 1034

Anna Seale, [annaseale@hotmail.com](mailto:annaseale@hotmail.com). Tel: 07714327845

The role of the Safeguarding Leads is to:

- receive information from club leaders, guides, children or parents and carers who have child protection concerns and record it;
- assess the information promptly and carefully, clarifying or obtaining more information about the matter as appropriate;
- consult initially with a statutory child safeguarding agency, to test out any doubts or uncertainty about the concerns as soon as possible;
- where necessary make a formal referral to a statutory child safeguarding agency or the police, without delay;

- report the concerns to Mountaineering Scotland

Any child (or parent on their behalf) who feels that their welfare or safety is at risk or has been jeopardised during a club activity should contact the Safeguarding Lead(s) at the earliest opportunity. The Safeguarding Leads shall follow the procedures set down in the Mountaineering Scotland Child Protection Policy.

#### **Child Safeguarding Recruitment policy**

Recruitment to the Safeguarding Lead role should meet the requirements of Mountaineering Scotland. The Safeguarding Leads and coaches/leaders working unsupervised with under 18s, are undertaking Regulated Activity and should have DBS check with Children's Barred List Status check.

#### **Vulnerable Adults**

Although the policy is primarily concerning children, Eagle Ski Club members and leaders have a duty of care towards vulnerable adults, for instance those with mental health difficulties or an invisible disability or condition. Concerns about practice or events may be discussed appropriately with the Safeguarding Leads, and are encouraged to do so.