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**Approved by:**

- Thomas Stabbins
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This is the Safeguarding Policy of Bristol Inclusive Thrill Seekers, referenced in this document as BITS.

BITS acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and BMC, Parkour UK and Charity Commission requirements.

The policy recognises that the welfare and interests of children and vulnerable adults are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, ability or disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, socio-economic background, all children and vulnerable adults:

- have a positive and enjoyable experience of sport/physical activity at BITS in a safe and participant centred environment
- are protected from abuse whilst participating in adventure sports or outside of the activity.

BITS acknowledges that some children and vulnerable adults, including those with disabilities or those from ethnic minority communities, can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

As part of our safeguarding policy BITS will

- promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults
- ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and vulnerable adults. See Appendix A.
- ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern. See Appendix B.
- ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored. See Appendix C.
- prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals. See Appendix D.
- ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation with Volunteers abiding by a Code of Conduct. See Appendix E.

The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved with BITS. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.

### **Monitoring**

The policy will be reviewed annually, or in the following circumstances:

- changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- as required by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, UK Sport and/or Home Country Sports Councils
- as a result of any other significant change or event.

### **Contact Details**

Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

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### **CEOP**

[www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

### **NSPCC Helpline**

0808 800 5000

## Appendix A

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child and vulnerable adult. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child or vulnerable adult either directly by inflicting harm, or indirectly, by failing to act to prevent harm. Children or vulnerable adults may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them; or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

It is not the responsibility of anyone volunteering with BITS to decide whether or not abuse has taken place.

However, BITS' primary aim is to ensure that appropriate concerns and information are reported to the relevant statutory agencies without delay. These agencies are the Police and Children's Social Care Services (and for those over 18, Adult Services). These organisations have the statutory responsibility to make enquiries to establish if a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of harm. Concerns are more likely to be reported by an associated adult than the child or vulnerable adult themselves. However, disclosures do happen and must be dealt with carefully and quickly. A 'disclosure' is if a child or vulnerable adult informs you directly that he/she, or another individual, is concerned about someone's behaviour towards them.

### **Definitions**

In the UK, the terms child or children refers to all young people under the age of 18. At the age of 16 a Young Person is allowed to leave home, consent to lawful sexual intercourse, get married or get a full time job, however, child protection extends to the age of 18yrs. In the case of care leavers, child protection can extend to the age of 21yrs.

This policy also extends to Vulnerable Adults. A vulnerable adult (a person aged 18 or over) is someone who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and is or may be unable to take care or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

There are four types of abuse. They are defined in the UK Government guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010* (1.33 – 1.36) as follows:

1. Physical abuse
2. Emotional abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Neglect

Bullying is not defined as a form of abuse in *Working Together* but there is clear evidence that it is abusive and will include at least one, if not two, three or all four, of the defined categories of abuse. For this reason, it has been included in this policy.

### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or vulnerable adult. Physical harm may

also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child or vulnerable adult.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on their emotional development. It may involve conveying to children or vulnerable adults that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving them opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children or vulnerable adults. These may include interactions that are beyond their developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing them from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children or vulnerable adults frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children or vulnerable adults. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult, though it may occur alone.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child or vulnerable adult is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children or vulnerable adults in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming them in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's or vulnerable adult's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect a child or vulnerable adult from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's or vulnerable adult's basic emotional needs.

### **Bullying**

Bullying may be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are:

- Physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft)
- Verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling)
- Emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group).

The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children or vulnerable adults to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm). All settings in which children or vulnerable adults are provided with services or are living away from home should have in place rigorously enforced anti-bullying strategies.

### **Signs of Abuse**

#### **Physical Abuse**

Injuries should always be interpreted in light of the child's or vulnerable adult's medical and social history, developmental stage and the explanation given. Most accidental bruises are seen over bony parts of the body, e.g. elbows, knees, shins, and are often on the front of the body. Some children or vulnerable adults, however, will have bruising that is more than likely inflicted rather than accidental. Important indicators of physical abuse are bruises or injuries that are either unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given, or visible on the 'soft' parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, e.g. cheeks, abdomen, back and buttocks. A delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern, although this can be more complicated with burns, as these are often delayed in presentation due to blistering taking place sometime later.

#### **The physical signs of abuse may include:**

- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- Multiple bruises- in clusters, often on the upper arm, outside of the thigh
- Cigarette burns
- Human bite marks
- Broken bones
- Scalds, with upward splash marks,
- Multiple burns with a clearly demarcated edge.

#### **Changes in behaviour that can also indicate physical abuse:**

- Fear of parents/carers being approached for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when approached or touched
- Reluctance to get changed, for example in hot weather
- Depression
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Running away from home.

## **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, as there are often no outward physical signs. There may be a developmental delay due to a failure to thrive and grow, although this will usually only be evident if the child or vulnerable adult puts on weight in other circumstances, for example when hospitalised or away from their usual care. Even so, children or vulnerable adults who appear well-cared for may nevertheless be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may receive little or no love, affection or attention from their parents or carers. Emotional abuse can also take the form of children or vulnerable adults not being allowed to mix or play with others.

### **Changes in behaviour which can indicate emotional abuse include:**

- Neurotic behaviour e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking
- Being unable to play
- Fear of making mistakes
- Sudden speech disorders
- Self-harm
- Fear of parent/carer being approached regarding their behaviour
- Developmental delay in terms of emotional progress

## **Sexual Abuse**

Adults who use others to meet their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers. Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child's or vulnerable adult's behaviour that may cause you to become concerned, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children or vulnerable adults who tell about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that they are listened to and taken seriously. It is also important to remember that it not just adult men who sexually abuse children or vulnerable adults – there are increasing numbers of allegations of sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults against women and sexual abuse can also be perpetrated by other children or young people.

### **The physical signs of sexual abuse may include:**

- Pain or itching in the genital area
- Bruising or bleeding near genital area
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Vaginal discharge or infection
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Pregnancy

### **Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:**

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- Having nightmares

- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age, or developmental level
- Sexual drawings or language
- Bedwetting
- Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia
- Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- Substance or drug abuse
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults

### **Neglect**

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise, yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children or vulnerable adults.

#### **The physical signs of neglect may include:**

- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from others
- Constantly dirty or 'smelly'
- Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight
- Inappropriate clothing for the conditions.

#### **Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect may include:**

- Complaining of being tired all the time
- Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
- Having few friends
- Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised.

### **Bullying**

Bullying is not always easy to recognise as it can take a number of forms. A child or vulnerable adult may encounter bullying attacks that are:

- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching and other forms of violence or threats
- Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing
- Emotional: excluding, tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating.

#### **Persistent bullying can result in:**

- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Shyness
- Poor academic achievement

- Isolation
- Threatened or attempted suicide

**Signs that a child or vulnerable adult may be being bullied can be:**

- Coming home with cuts and bruises
- Torn clothes
- Asking for stolen possessions to be replaced
- Losing dinner money
- Falling out with previously good friends
- Being moody and bad tempered
- Wanting to avoid leaving their home
- Aggression with younger brothers and sisters
- Doing less well at school
- Sleep problems
- Anxiety
- Becoming quiet and withdrawn

N.B: These definitions and indicators are not meant to be definitive, but only serve as a guide to assist you. It is important too, to remember that many children or vulnerable adults may exhibit some of these indicators at some time, and that the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring. There may well be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as a death or the birth of a new baby in the family or relationship problems between parents/carers. In assessing whether indicators are related to abuse or not, the authorities will always want to understand them in relation to the child's or vulnerable adult's development and context.

## **Appendix B**

### **Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegations**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in Bristol Inclusive Thrill Seekers, in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not abuse has taken place.

A 'disclosure' is if a child or vulnerable adult informs you directly that he/she, or another individual, is concerned about someone's behaviour towards them.

#### **The person receiving the information should:**

- React calmly so as not to frighten them;
- Thank them and say that he or she was right to tell someone;
- Take what they say seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a young or vulnerable person who has a speech disability or differences in language;
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said;
- Reassure them but do not make promises of confidentiality, which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments;
- Make a full and accurate record of what has been said, heard or seen as soon as possible
- Continue to follow the step-by-step process shown diagrammatically below.

#### **Actions to Avoid - The person receiving the disclosure should not:**

- Panic;
- Allow their shock or distaste to show;
- Probe for more information than is offered;
- Speculate or make assumptions;
- Make negative comments about the alleged abuser;
- Approach the alleged abuser;
- Make promises or agree to keep secrets.
- Non-action is not an option.

N.B: It can be more difficult for some children or vulnerable adults to disclose abuse than for others. Those from ethnic minorities may have regularly experienced racism, which may lead them to believe 'white people', including those in authority roles, do not really care about their well-being. Disabled children and vulnerable adults will have to overcome additional barriers before feeling they can disclose abuse. They may rely on their abuser for regular care and not know of alternative sources of care or residence. The abuse may be the only attention or affection they have experienced. Communication difficulties may mean that it is hard for them to complain or to be understood. However, where there are concerns about the safety of a child or vulnerable adult, record exactly what has been observed in detail and follow the procedures to report these concerns.

## **Procedure for responding to concerns and possible abuse**

### **Records and Information**

Information passed to the Children's Social Care Services department, Police or Adult Services must be as helpful as possible and it may be used in any subsequent legal action, hence the necessity for making a detailed record. The report should contain the following information:

- The child's or vulnerable adult's name, address and date of birth, ethnicity and disability (if appropriate);
- The nature of the allegation;
- Record any questions which are actually asked;
- Description of the circumstances that brought about the disclosure;
- The child's or vulnerable adult's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred using their own words and phrases;
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries;
- Any observations that have been made by you or to you;
- Any times, locations, dates or other relevant information;
- Your knowledge of and relationship to the young or vulnerable person;
- Information and details of the abuser, where possible;
- Keep a record of the name and designations of the Children's Social Care Services member of staff or Police Officer to whom concerns were passed and record the time and date of call, in case any follow-up is needed.

### **Process and Support After a Disclosure or Investigation**

BITS Committee will take advice from the Police, Children's Social Care Services or Adult Services and consider all cases with regards to the appropriate reinstatement of any staff member, or volunteer.

It may be the situation that there is insufficient evidence for criminal proceedings. In this case BITS will use all the information available to decide whether the allegation and evidence is enough to remove the alleged abuser from the organisation or to reinstate them. Such cases are extremely difficult and will be handled with sensitivity and tact. At all times the safety and wellbeing of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount.

BITS recognises the clear need to have support mechanisms for all those involved in or surrounding the issue, including those making the allegation, those who may be being abused and those against whom the allegation is made. BITS is primarily concerned with the wellbeing and safety of all its members and participants. It will support any staff member, or volunteer, who in good faith and where they have reasonable grounds for doing so, reports concern that someone is, or may be, abusing a young person or vulnerable adult. The support provided to each individual will vary depending on their needs.

### **Responding to Previous Abuse**

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child, or by a member of staff or volunteer who is still currently working with children). Where such

an allegation is made, BITS will follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter as appropriate. This is because other children or vulnerable adults, either within or outside sport, may be at risk from this person.

### **Dealing with Bullying**

#### **Preventing Bullying and helping those being Bullied**

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in '*Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegation*' above.

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children or vulnerable adults to speak and share their concerns by helping the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- Create an open environment.
- 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 must never promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the BITS DSO.

#### **Dealing with 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's parents.
- Insist on the return of stolen 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/carers to report on progress.
- Inform all organisation members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.
- Most 'low level' incidents will be dealt with at the time by coaches and volunteers. However, if the bullying is severe (e.g. a serious assault), or if it persists despite efforts to deal with it, incidents should be referred to the BITS DSO who will advise next steps.

### **Whistle Blowing Policy**

This procedure enables staff and volunteers to share, in confidence with the BITS Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), concerns they may have about a colleague's behaviour. This may be behaviour not linked to child abuse but that pushes the boundaries beyond acceptable limits.

BITS supports and will provide protection for whistle-blowers. While it is often difficult to express concerns about colleagues, it is important that these concerns are communicated to the DSO. Staff and volunteers should be encouraged to talk to the DSO if they become aware of anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. Any concerns about the DSO should be reported to the Chairperson.

All information received and discussed will be treated in the strictest confidence and only shared with appropriate designated individuals within BITS.

On occasion, it may be necessary for BITS to seek advice, or inform the statutory agencies. All concerns will be taken seriously and managed accordingly within these policy and procedures.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact Children's Social Care Services, Adult Services or the Police.

## **Appendix C**

### **Records and Confidentiality**

The safety and wellbeing of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Information should be handled and disseminated very carefully on a need to know basis only. This can include the following people:

- BITS Designated Safeguarding Officer;
- The Parent/Guardian of the person who is alleged to have been abused;
- The person making the allegation;
- Children's Social Care Services, Adult Services (where someone is over 18) and the Police;
- The alleged abuser;
- Parents of the abuser, (if the alleged abuser is a child) - Seek Children's Social Care Services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

Information should be stored in a secure cabinet in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant, proportionate and secure). Records will usually be kept for no longer than six years after the subject's last contact with the authority, unless the records need to be retained for one of the following reasons:

- The information is relevant to legal action that has been started
- We are required to retain the records for longer by law
- The records are archived for historical purposes (e.g. BITS was party to legal proceedings – in this case BITS will seek legal advice about retention of records)
- Records consist of a sample of records maintained for research purposes
- Records relate to individuals and providers of services who have, or whose staff have been judged unsatisfactory
- Records are held in order to provide, for the subject, aspects of his or her personal history (e.g. where the child or vulnerable adult might seek access to the file at a later date and the information would not be available elsewhere).

## **Appendix D**

### **Recruitment and Training of Staff/ Volunteers**

BITS recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children or vulnerable adults in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children or vulnerable adults.

The following procedure will be followed:

- All volunteers will complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- Safeguarding procedures are explained and training needs are identified.
- They should sign up to the Code of Conduct for Volunteers as well as the Safeguarding Policy.
- All volunteers are subject to relevant training. During this training, volunteers will be trained and assessed on
  - o Their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.
  - o Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
  - o Respond to concerns expressed by a child or vulnerable adult.
  - o Work safely and effectively with children.
- Once suitably inducted a DBS check will be obtained.