

# **Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk**

## **Disabled Ramblers' Guidance for Volunteers and Ramble Leaders**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** This document is intended for general guidance only. It does not and cannot cover every possible eventuality. Any safeguarding issues should always be referred immediately to the designated Safeguarding Officer for action. It should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy document and the General Guidance document.

### **1. Who should read this guidance**

Any member of Disabled Ramblers who is involved in organising or leading rambles or other activities.

### **2. Why we need this guidance**

Disabled Ramblers provides activities for a wide range of people. We have a duty of care to ensure the well-being of everyone who participates in Disabled Ramblers' activities and to minimise the risk of harm, and a moral duty as well as a legal and an insurance obligation to safeguard those who are particularly vulnerable, including children and adults at risk. Also it is vital we support fully our volunteers, including protecting them from potential liabilities and false suspicions and allegations of abuse.

### **3. General principles**

Disabled Ramblers works to make rambling accessible to all, including children and adults at risk. We are also committed to equal opportunities and aim to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and not to discriminate on grounds of age, ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, disability or beliefs.

While we provide and support rambling activities, we cannot provide specialist care, supervision or support for children and for those who are unable to care independently for themselves. Children under 18 and those with special needs must be accompanied by others who take responsibility for meeting their needs.

**It is important to ensure that volunteers do not work unsupervised on a regular basis with children and adults at risk, otherwise our activities might be classified by law as 'regulated activities'. In this case the person carrying them out will require enhanced checks. Organisations which knowingly allow barred people to work on regulated activities are breaking the law.**

Participation in all activities is subject to their suitability for individual participants. Leaders of rambles and other activities sometimes need to make judgements that take into account the safety and enjoyment of everyone involved in an activity. So long as a judgement is not based on stereotypical assumptions or

prejudice, ramble leaders are within their rights to refuse a participant if they believe this would result in danger to the individual or danger or major disruption to the rest of the group.

It is our responsibility to refer any suspected cases of abuse to the appropriate authorities, and to recognise that as organisers and leaders of activities in a position of trust, we may be made aware of signs of abuse, or even have it disclosed to us.

#### **4. Specific Safeguarding Guidance for Ramble Organisers and Ramble Leaders**

**4.1 When advertising rambles:** Ensure that you help potential participants judge their suitability by including details such as:

- ramble length
- difficulty category
- duration
- advice on matters such as clothing, footwear and equipment required
- contact details for more information

**4.2 Immediately before the ramble:** Remind yourself of what is required of the Ramble Leader as set out in the Ramble Procedures Manual and associated documents, including points to be made to participants at the start of a ramble.

#### **4.3 At the start of the ramble:**

- Inform people what to expect on the ramble
- Say that people with medical concerns can raise them discreetly and confidentially with you.
- Don't be afraid to exclude people for whom you believe the activity to be unsuitable.
- Ensure that all participants complete the signing-in sheet, including the image consent. Photographs, videos or any other images of participants in Disabled Ramblers' activities, for whatever purposes, should only be taken if participants explicitly consent is recorded on the Signing In form. Any participant who has declined to give explicit consent should not be photographed. If any images from which an individual might be identified are to be published in any form, consent must first be obtained. Explicit consent can be obtained by use of the Image Consent Form or the Image Consent column on the Signing In Form.

**4.4 During the ramble:** If any reportable incidents occur, always report them promptly and correctly using the standard Incident Report Form.

## 5. Concerns about abuse

Cases of abuse are thankfully rare, but if you regularly welcome children and adults at risk, it is possible you may have concerns about abuse from your own observations of participants. Abuse can include not only physical and sexual abuse but also emotional and psychological abuse and neglect. Adults at risk can also be in danger of financial exploitation or may come to harm through self-neglect or their own behaviour.

Judging outward signs of abuse can be difficult as there are usually other explanations for particular signs, and sometimes it is matter of judgement or instinct, or a combination of indicators. Signs might include:

- Marks in odd places and unexplained injuries, or clothing that appears to hide these
- Evidence of alcohol or drug misuse
- Fear of parents or carers
- Uncharacteristic behaviour or language
- Habitual severe criticism, discrimination or deliberate humiliation by a parent or carer
- Constant hunger, lack of personal hygiene, neglected appearance
- Withdrawn, angry or violent behaviour or unexplained distress

You may also directly witness abuse taking place or have concerns about abuse raised with you by another participant. As a trusted adult, you may even have abuse disclosed to you by a victim.

If anyone is under serious threat of physical harm or in need of urgent treatment during a Disabled Ramblers' activity:

- **Dial 999 immediately** and ask for the **police**, if a criminal offence is being or is likely to be committed, and/or **ambulance** in cases of medical need.
- Alert the Chairman and Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.
- When it is safe to do so, make notes of the incident and its outcome. It may be helpful to refer to the questions in Appendix 2 when making notes.
- If there is an issue of violence or abuse, be prepared to answer further questions from the police and/or the local authority. They may ask for a written report which is likely to include many of the questions in Appendix 2 1.
- Complete and file an incident report and attach copies of any written reports to the police or local authority. Do not include sensitive personal details on the form.

If there is no immediate danger but you have a suspicion or concern that abuse is taking place or when an allegation of abuse has been made:

- Make a note of your concerns as soon as you can, ideally within an hour of any incident.

- Contact the Safeguarding Officer without delay to agree next steps. In consultation with the Chairman, the Safeguarding Officer will assist you, where necessary, to take up your concerns with the appropriate local authority children and family services team. Such a team will normally ask for a written report within 24 hours and will advise what should be in it; however it will typically include many of the questions in Appendix 2. They may return to you with follow up questions.
- Complete and file an incident report within 24 hours and attach copies of any written reports to the police or local authority. Do not include sensitive personal details on the form.

### Generally:

- When working with children and adults at risk, be sensible and self-aware, and avoid placing yourself into situations where your actions may be misinterpreted.
- Avoid agreeing to supervise a child or adult at risk while a parent or carer is absent, especially if this means being left alone with them. Do not arrange to meet with them socially outside the Disabled Ramblers' activity without their parent or carer being present.
- If a participant discloses abuse to you, be sympathetic and supportive. Thank them for telling you, tell them it is not their fault, but do not agree to keep confidences. Explain it is your duty to pass on information appropriately and tell them what you will do next.
- Keep concerns confidential. Only share details as necessary with the Safeguarding Officer and the appropriate authorities.
- Do not risk putting yourself in difficulty or danger by attempting to investigate the case yourself or to challenge the alleged abuser.
- Do not be afraid to raise genuine concerns about volunteers if you see examples of bad practice or failure to follow our policy or even have suspicions of abuse. Speak discreetly to the Safeguarding Officer.

### Useful contacts

- **Emergency:** Police/Ambulance: Tel. 999
- **Disabled Ramblers' Safeguarding Officer:** Mark de Rivaz, tel. 07976 435846, email [mark@disabledramblers.co.uk](mailto:mark@disabledramblers.co.uk)
- **Local authority child and family services:** Contact the County or unitary council and ask for child and family services. See the phone book or [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) which has a list of all councils in the UK.
- **Police** (non-emergency calls). Tel. 101
- **NSPCC helpline:** Tel. 0808 800 5000, [www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline)

## Appendix 1: Questions when referring concerns about abuse

The following questions are likely to be asked by the local authority in the event that you refer to them a concern about abuse. You may find it helpful to consider them when making notes or a referral. Keep any written documents containing personal details strictly confidential and store them in a safe place, until no longer required, when they should be securely destroyed.

- 1 Your name and contact details.
- 2 The organisation's name and contact details.
- 3 Your role.
- 4 Child or adult at risk's name, age/date of birth (estimated if unknown) and contact details.
- 5 Whether or not you are reporting concerns on behalf of someone else
- 6 A brief description of what prompted the concerns, including dates, times and other specific factors, making a clear distinction between fact, opinion and hearsay, including:
  - Any visible bruising or injuries.
  - Any indirect signs such as behavioural changes.
  - The child or adult at risk's account of any signs or injuries.
- 7 Whether or not the child or adult at risk has been spoken to directly, and their account of any signs or injuries, or any disclosures.
- 8 Any contact with parents/carers or support workers including:
  - Their names and contact details.
  - Times and dates of discussion.
  - What was said.
- 9 Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Give further details.
- 10 Where and when do you suspect the abuse to have taken place? Was it on your activity or elsewhere?
- 11 Is anyone else involved and have they been contacted? Are there any witnesses?
  - Their names and contact details
  - Times and dates of discussion
  - What was said

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Date first approved: October 2014

Date reviewed & approved: 5 December 2018



Registered Charity Number 1103508

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