

This Policy shall be applied consistently in relation to all Paddle Northern Ireland staff, volunteers and participants, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity status, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

PADDLE NORTHERN IRELAND SAFEGUARDING ADULTS' POLICY STATEMENT

Safeguarding adults is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of adults and protect them from harm.

Paddle Northern Ireland¹ recognises the need to promote the **welfare and interests** of **adults** in all circumstances. This policy aims to ensure that inclusive of age, ability or disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation **ALL** adults are able take part in paddlesports safely and are protected from **ANY form of bullying, harassment, discrimination and abuse**.

Safeguarding is a collective responsibility. **Everybody involved in paddlesports has a duty of care to safeguard and protect adults**, both inside and outside our sport. Paddle Northern Ireland has a Designated Safeguarding Lead, policies, and safer recruitment procedures in place to underpin this. **Safeguarding training** is mandatory for anyone working with adults and Paddle NI will ensure that all those working or volunteering in regulated activity have access to appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to adults.

Policies and procedures relating to safeguarding will be widely promoted and **are mandatory for everyone involved in paddlesports**. Failure to comply with these policies and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal or exclusion from the organisation.

We will respond to any safeguarding concerns effectively, transparently, consistently and fairly. We are committed to ensuring compliance with dynamic statutory frameworks, government guidance, codes of conduct and best practice and will manage any breach of these in line with **Paddle NI Safeguarding Procedure and/or Human Resources policies** where applicable. We acknowledge that **adults at risk** can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we will take reasonable and appropriate steps to protect their welfare, ensuring that **everyone has a positive, enjoyable experience in our sport in a safe and inclusive environment**.

¹ Paddle Northern Ireland is a trading name of The Canoe Association of Northern Ireland - Company Registration Number NI637999

WHO ARE WE SAFEGUARDING?

Paddle NI have a responsibility to provide safe environments and activities for all adults ensuring that they are protected from all types of abuse, discrimination, harassment and harm. We also recognise that there may be additional factors which mean some adults may be at increased risk of harm, and therefore require additional protective measures and may be eligible for more formal processes, these adults are known as “Adults at Risk” which is defined as:

The Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection Partnership Policy 2015 Identifying an Adult at Risk.

In Northern Ireland, an adult at risk is defined as a person aged 18 or over whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation, or neglect may be increased by their personal characteristics or life circumstances.

Personal characteristics may include age, physical or mental disabilities, special educational needs, or any illness. Life circumstances may involve isolation, loneliness, financial issues, work conditions, or living arrangements.

A key difference between safeguarding children and adults is an adults’ right to self-determination. **Ultimately, an adult may choose not to act at all to protect themselves.**

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following Paddle Northern Ireland policies:

- Paddle UK Anti-Bullying Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Safer Recruitment Procedures
- Paddle UK Code of Conduct for Coaching Workforce
- Paddle Northern Ireland Disciplinary and Appeals Regulations

Further details can be found on the Paddle Northern Ireland and Paddle UK websites.

This policy should also be read alongside the **Appendices** contained below.

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or as a result of changes in legislation and/or government guidance, directives from UK Sport and/or national association sports councils or as a result of any other significant change or event.

WHAT IS ABUSE OF ADULTS?

Sexual Abuse

Including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse

Including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Self-neglect

This covers a wide range of behaviour including, neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

Physical Abuse

Including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.

Domestic Abuse

Violent or aggressive behaviour within the home, typically involving the violent abuse of a spouse or partner. Can include psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse.

ABUSE is the misuse of power and control that one person has over another. It may be a single act or repeated acts. It may be the result of deliberate intent, negligence, omission or ignorance. It can occur within relationships or by strangers and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

Organisational abuse

(previously known as institutional abuse)
Neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment.

Financial or material abuse

Including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Neglect and acts of omission

Including, ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Discriminatory abuse

Including harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status or religion.

Modern slavery

Encompasses slavery, human trafficking; forced labour and domestic servitude.

RECOGNISE POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF ABUSE

There may be **physical** and/or **behavioural** signs and symptoms that might raise your concern about the welfare or safety of an adult. **The following are only indicators and should not be seen as confirmation.** Abuse is not always easy to identify and can be a combination of signs or symptoms, sometimes forming a pattern over time. This is a basic overview, there is a more detailed description of indicators of abuse for each category in APPENDIX B.

Significant changes in behaviour such as:

- Low self-esteem, passivity, becoming withdrawn, quiet.
- Isolates themselves from the group and seems unable to make friends.
- Fear, defensiveness.
- Some people with physical and/or learning disabilities may use alternative forms of communication which may indicate that abuse is happening to them.
- Change in relationship with carers/relatives/family members, e.g., reacting differently to usual around someone.
- Not wanting to go home, seemingly afraid or anxious of carers/ family members
- Becomes aggressive/verbally and/or physically.
- Significant change in sexual behaviour or attitude
- Change in appetite- excessive weight loss or weight gain for no obvious reason

Unexplained/Unlikely/Inconsistent explanations of physical injuries/indicators such as:

- Consistent untreated injuries or health issues.
- Marks on body, including slap marks, finger marks, bruising.
- Unusual difficulty in walking or sitting.
- Multiple fractures.
- Pregnancy and/or presence of a Sexually Transmitted Infection/Disease.

Unexplained changes in living conditions such as:

- Uncharacteristic inability to pay bills or maintain lifestyle, including lack of heating, clothing, food.
- Physical appearance becomes unkempt, including change in personal grooming.
- Unusual interest shown by family members or others in the person's assets.
- No identification documents in possession.
- Other adults in a non-family/caring role appearing to have control over person's time and/or decisions
- Little or no finances of their own.

REMEMBER - It is not your responsibility to investigate allegations or to decide whether an adult is being abused - it is your responsibility to pass the information on to the appropriate person.

WHEN TO REPORT ABUSE

Before Reporting any suspected/known abuse against an adult, remember **ADULTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO SELF DETERMINATION** and this means:

- **CONSENT** from the adult **MUST** be granted *before reporting any concerns (except for the exceptions listed below)*.
- We must **RESPECT THE DECISION** of the adult, regardless of our own assessment of a situation.
- The starting position is always to **ASSUME MENTAL CAPACITY** unless proven otherwise.

This may **ONLY** be overridden:

1. To protect others.
2. Where not intervening would cause further harm to the individual.
3. If the adult lacks the capacity to make the decision for themselves.
4. Where a crime may have been committed.

If an adult does not give their consent to report concerns, where possible you should always explain to, and involve the adult concerned with what you plan to do and why. It is important despite not having their consent to share information, so that they understand your actions and why you are taking them.

Paddle Northern Ireland Staff/Volunteers/Clubs/Delivery Partners do **NOT** have to determine whether an adult has capacity (**this is to be assumed**). If abuse is experienced, reported, witnessed or disclosed, the responsibility is to:

RECOGNISE possible signs of abuse, **RESPOND** to disclosures or concerns, **REPORT** them to the appropriate person (see reporting concerns), **RECORD** the concerns quickly and confidentially.

MENTAL CAPACITY

There may be situations where a person's lack of mental capacity impacts a safeguarding decision, people who lack capacity can be more at risk from abuse and neglect and may also not have the ability to consent to decisions made about their life and/or the reporting of a safeguarding incident or concern. Decisions about reporting and any actions taken should, where possible and appropriate, be in line with the Mental Capacity (Northern Ireland) Act 2016 principals as stated below.

If you are working with someone who lacks capacity in areas affecting their decision-making ability, you should ensure you have consulted with the appropriate people in their lives for example an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA), family member, social worker, etc. to ensure a best interest decision is reached.

Principles of the Mental Capacity Act (NI) are:

The Mental Capacity Act (NI) is designed to support decision making and promote autonomy and inclusion. To support this focus, there are [five statutory Principles](#) that are to be upheld at all times when working under this legislation. These are:

1. No-one should be treated as lacking capacity unless proven they do
2. No assumptions can be made (based on any condition the person may have, or any characteristics of the person)
3. Help and support must be provided
4. No assumptions can be made because of unwise decisions
5. All acts and decisions must be made in the person's best interests

The focus here is very much on the need to presume capacity unless someone is proven to lack capacity. The Act also places strong emphasis on the need to uphold an individual's rights. As such, no presumptions should be made about an individual based on their actions, diagnosis or defining characteristics. Meanwhile, all reasonable adjustments should be made to support capacity and allow the person to make their own decision.

The fifth and final Principle of the MCA (NI) draws focus on those supporting a person under the Act who is proven to lack capacity for a particular decision – requiring that all decisions be made in the person's best interest.

The **immediate safety** of the adult is paramount, the need to report a safeguarding incident can override the Mental Capacity Act if it means making someone safe.

HOW TO REPORT CONCERNS

If you have a safeguarding concern or worry about an adult, whether it relates directly to you, is something you have witnessed, or is something that someone has reported or disclosed to you, even if it does not relate to paddlesports – **don't keep it to yourself.**

Even if you think that it is a **lower-level concern** or are not sure - **REPORT IT.** Small pieces of information can help to create a big picture. **IF IN DOUBT – PASS IT ON.**

REPORTING A CONCERN

Tell the appointed safeguarding person, **Club Safeguarding Officer** / Event Welfare Officer or trip organiser and follow up with [concerns form](#) within 24 hours where possible.

If you are **unable** to speak to a Club Safeguarding Officer or **there may be a conflict of interest**, please contact Paddle NI or the Paddle UK Safeguarding Team.

FOR CLUB SAFEGUARDING OFFICERS

If you have a concern that requires escalating to the Paddle NI Safeguarding Lead or a **referral to statutory agencies** is needed (or if you are unsure), please contact the Paddle NI Safeguarding Lead **as soon as possible.**

If you have made a statutory referral, please also let the Paddle NI Safeguarding Lead know this **within 24 hrs.**

EXTERNAL HELP

If you are unable to make contact with the appropriate person(s) and need **urgent advice**, you can contact you're the **Adult Protection Gateway Service** ([Contact details for NI Trusts](#)) **OR** for out of hours service contact **028 9504 9999.** In these instances, document the advice given and any action taken and complete **concerns form** to the Paddle NI DSL within 24 hours.

CONCERNS ABOUT PADDLE NI STAFF, COACHES OR VOLUNTEERS

All concerns about the behaviour of **volunteers, coaches or other staff** involved with paddlesports, **must** be reported to Paddle NI Safeguarding Lead (or **{Paddle UK Safeguarding Team}**) either directly, or via the Club Safeguarding Officer within 24 hours.

To contact the Paddle NI Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Paddle UK Safeguarding Team you can use the [concerns form](#), call **07514 500312 or 0115 8655354** or email safeguarding@paddleni.org.uk or safeguarding@paddleuk.org.uk

Visit the Paddle Northern Ireland website [here](#) or the Paddle UK Website [here](#) for further contact details.

Key Points

SELF-CARE

Dealing with difficult situations and listening to disclosures can be difficult. It is important to make sure you look after your own emotional well-being and mental health. If you are struggling with something you have seen or heard, please talk to someone without disclosing any sensitive information. You can talk to your line manager, contact the employee assistance programme, or you can contact [The Samaritans](#): 116 123 or [Lifeline](#): 0808 808 8000

ALLEGATIONS

If you have allegations made against you and you wish to discuss the matter with an impartial person, please contact the Paddle UK Safeguarding Team. They will arrange contact with a Safeguarding Support Officer who can inform you of the investigation process and what you can expect as well as signposting for support and advice.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Paddle UK will take seriously and respond to all safeguarding concerns reported in good faith. All information reported to the Club Welfare Officers or Paddle UK will be treated confidentially and will only be shared with others where there is a need to do so, such as for the safety of others or for the prevention or detection of a crime.

COMPLAINTS

If you are unhappy with how a safeguarding concern has been responded to, in the first instance please contact the Paddle NI Designated Safeguarding Lead. ([See also Whistleblowing Policy](#)) or you can contact the **Ann Craft Trust** advice line on:

0115 951 5400 or Email ann-craft-trust@nottingham.ac.uk

HOME NATIONS SAFEGUARDING CONTACTS

England

Paddle UK Safeguarding Team Email: safeguarding@paddleuk.org.uk

Or phone BC Safeguarding Manager - Tel 0115 6660197

Scotland

Paddle Scotland Safeguarding Officer, Andy Murray -Tel: 07900 887007, Email: child.protection@paddlescotland.org.uk

Northern Ireland

Paddle Northern Ireland Safeguarding Officer, Lyn Sherriff – Tel: 07514 500312, Email: safeguarding@paddleni.org.uk

Wales

Canoe Wales Safeguarding Officer, Kerry Skidmore - Tel: 07908 683984, Email: childprotection@canoewales.com

APPENDIX A - RECORDING CONCERNS

RECORD AND REPORT CONCERNS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Report all concerns to the Club Welfare Officer or Paddle UK Safeguarding Team within 24 hours. **You should include:**

The Concern – Did you witness it or is this a report from the individual or someone else? Times, dates, people, circumstances. How did the adult present? Scared? Under the influence of substances? What makes you think this? Try to use exact words/phrases when recording.

Any evidence of harm or abuse? Bruises - what size, location, colour? (Don't take photos of the adults or ask to see bruises in places usually covered by clothes) Has the adult got evidence on their devices or at home? Advise them to keep it and not destroy/delete it.

How was it responded to? What did you say/do? Did you ring anyone such as a CWO or your Adult Local Authority Safeguarding Partnership? What advice were you given? How did you make sure the adult was made safe? Did you provide any advice or support, if so, what was this?

Who was it reported to? Did you report to the CWO and have you informed the Paddle UK Safeguarding Team? Did you refer to statutory agencies or signpost for support?

Remember - your report may be required as part of legal/disciplinary procedures. In all recording, proper consideration must be given to the requirements of current data protection legislation.

REMEMBER – it is **not** your responsibility to investigate allegations or to decide whether abuse has taken place.

It is your responsibility to pass the information on to the appropriate person.

Even if you feel the concern is LOW LEVEL, please REPORT IT.

Small pieces of information can help to create a big picture. IF IN DOUBT – PASS IT ON

APPENDIX B – POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF ABUSE

Physical Abuse

- Multiple bruising
- Fractures
- Burns
- Bed sores
- Fear
- Depression
- Unexplained weight loss
- Assault (can be intentional or reckless)

Neglect and Acts of Omission

- Malnutrition
- Untreated medical problems
- Bed sores
- Confusion
- Over-sedation
- Deprivation of meals may constitute “wilful neglect”

Sexual Abuse

- Loss of sleep
- Unexpected or unexplained change in behaviour
- Bruising
- Soreness around the genitals
- Torn, stained or bloody underwear
- A preoccupation with anything sexual
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy
- Rape – e.g. a member of staff having sex with a Mental Health client (see Mental Health Act 1983)
- Indecent Assault

Financial and Material Abuse

- Fraud/Theft
- Unexplained withdrawals from the bank
- Unusual activity in the bank accounts
- Unexplained shortage of money
- Reluctance to spend money on basics, food and clothes etc.

Organisational Abuse

- Inflexible and non-negotiable systems and routines
- Lack of consideration of dietary requirements
- Name calling; inappropriate ways of addressing people
- Lack of adequate physical care – an unkempt appearance

Self-Neglect

- This includes various behaviours; disregarding one’s personal hygiene, health, or surroundings resulting in a risk that impact on the adult’s wellbeing, this could consist of behaviours such as hoarding.

Psychological and Emotional Abuse

- Fear
- Depression
- Confusion
- Loss of sleep
- Unexpected or unexplained change in behaviour
- Self-harm
- Isolating self from others

Domestic Abuse/Violence

- Visible or hidden physical injuries
- Changes in behaviour including but not limited to; Agitation, anxiety, or constant apprehension, showing signs of fear, changes in sleep habits, developing a drug or alcohol problem, extremely apologetic or meek, loss of interest in daily activities, low self-esteem, seeming fearful, symptoms of depression, talking about or attempting suicide

Modern Slavery

- Evidence of a workplace being used for accommodation
- Workers are distrustful of authorities
- Workers look uneasy, unkempt or malnourished
- Signs of psychological trauma
- Untreated injuries
- Evidence of control over movement (being picked up and dropped off in groups)
- Signs of substance misuse
- Workers don't know work or home address
- Don't have control over own identification documents (passports, driving license, etc.)

Discriminatory Abuse

- Visible or hidden physical injuries
- A tendency for withdrawal and isolation
- Fearfulness and anxiety
- Being refused access to services or being excluded inappropriately
- Resistance or refusal to access services that are required to meet assessed needs

These are only indications, there may be other explanations and adults may have learned to hide their signs of abuse and harm.

APPENDIX C – RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

LISTEN – carefully to what is said, allowing the person to continue at their own pace.
Present as believing what is being said and show that you are taking concerns seriously.
Be open and encouraging, use body language to show that you are listening.

EXPLAIN – Options and next steps, inform the person of what options are available to them, ask them what they would like to happen next.
Explain to the person that you may have to share some of the information with a CWO or externally and explain why (risk to others, crime has occurred, continued harm, etc).
If there is any evidence of abuse either physical or virtual, ask them to keep it and not delete or destroy it.

CLARIFY – Check the person's account and that you have correctly understood what they have told you.

REASSURE – the person that they have done the right thing by talking to you and it's a step towards making things better.
Before they leave you, try to make sure they are calm and to the best of your understanding, are not at a risk of harm from others or themselves.



AVOID showing any negative feelings.

DON'T interrupt, ask lots of questions, or leading questions.

DON'T dismiss the concern, minimize it or attempt to explain it on behalf of someone else.

AVOID doubting the person, looking bored or disinterested, you may prevent them from fully disclosing key information.

DON'T allow any previous negative experiences with statutory agencies to influence reporting or sharing concerns.

DON'T panic or allow shock or distaste to show.

AVOID probing for more information than is offered, or conducting an investigation of the case.

AVOID showing any personal feelings/experiences towards the person reporting or the person of concern, stay neutral.



APPENDIX D – RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

- **The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008**

The Sexual Offences Act introduced a number of new offences concerning vulnerable adults and children.

- **Mental Capacity (NI) Act 2016**

Its general principle is that everybody has capacity unless it is proved otherwise, that they should be supported to make their own decisions, that anything done for or on behalf of people without capacity must be in their best interests and there should be least restrictive intervention.

- **The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012)**

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 makes provision for checking persons seeking to work with children or vulnerable adults, and for barring those considered to be unsuitable for such posts, whether in paid employment or voluntary work.

- **The Protection of Freedom Act 2012**

The Act includes changes to freedom of information, rights to data and criminal history checks (Vetting and Barring – DBS checks) amongst other civil liberty issues. This Act will affect sport organisations when undertaking safe recruitment and DBS checks.

- **AccessNI Service**

Criminal record checks NI: [General Information for Employers](#) During recruitment, an employer can ask job applicants or volunteers to get an AccessNI basic check to reveal unspent convictions. Employers in certain professions must get standard or enhanced checks.

- **Adult Safeguarding – Prevention and Protection in Partnership 2015 Policy**

The aim of this policy is to improve safeguarding arrangements for adults who are at risk of harm from abuse, exploitation or neglect. It has been jointly developed and published by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive