

British Caving Association

DRAFT - Safeguarding guidelines for clubs

1. Introduction

The guidance given in this document is intended to help clubs and their officers to act both reasonably and prudently in the area of safeguarding and assist them in fulfilling their duty of care.

These guidelines are an appendix to the full BCA Safeguarding Policy. There is also a 'good practice' document which we are keen for every BCA member to have read.

BCA advice and policy in this area is likely to evolve over time. If you need clarification or have any suggestions please contact the BCA Safeguarding OfficeA.

2. Overview

A quick summary of whether DBS checks are needed:

If...

1. Your club does not allow under 18s to join as members and/or attend club meets.
2. Your club allows under 18s to join as members and/or attend club meets, but only with a parent/carer.
3. Your club allows under 18s to join as members and/or attend club meets, but only with a parent/carer or an adult *in loco parentis*, nominated by a parent.

...then

These three situations are similar and your club is not required to appoint a Youth Officer or carry out DBS checks.

However when children are caving a consent form, and appropriate monitoring by the club's committee, are still important.

If...

Your club allows under 18s to join as members and/or attend meets without a parent/carer or an adult *in loco parentis*.

...then

- The BCA must be informed.
- The club and/or the officers have additional responsibilities and duties that relate to those under 18
- An appointment of a Youth Officer should be made.
- Adults directly responsible for young people, either in club premises or on caving trips, will need to be vetted, including a check.

Regardless of which of the following two scenarios apply, a consent form is appropriate for youngsters to go caving, as is a system for club officers to satisfy themselves that trip leaders have the necessary skills and good judgment, and also that proposed venues are appropriate. This is dealt with in the following pages.

3. In loco parentis

A parent may give consent to anyone they wish to, take their child or vulnerable relative caving. This is an arrangement between the parent and the person taking the child or vulnerable adult. The person taking the child or vulnerable adult will be in *loco parentis* and this requires them to exercise a duty of care that would be provided by a reasonably prudent parent.

4. Consent forms and statements of participation

It is wise to use a consent form which sets out who is responsible for the child or vulnerable adult. There should also be a letter which explains the accommodation arrangements, nature of the caving envisaged and clothing required.

5. Ensuring that trips are appropriate for the participants and that adults in charge have the necessary skills

It's important that the club's committee has some governance over activities for children and vulnerable adults. To that end:

- Parents should complete a consent form, stating the needs of the child and giving a rough outline of their previous caving experience, if any. That form only needs to be completed once, not for every trip, provided that the trips are similar in nature. If a child moves to more advanced caving, parents should be made aware of the different nature of the proposed trips, and agree to this.
- An officer of the club needs to know which adult will be in charge of a trip, and should be satisfied that they are a fit person, in terms of experience, skills and temperament.
- Discussion must be held between a club officer and the adult leading the trip(s) regarding the venue(s) they propose to visit (including any backup plans). For example, a list of possible caves might be agreed, which appropriate to the children's age and experience.

6. Safeguarding policy if parents or other carers will not be present

For clubs which allow under 18s to attend meets without a parent/carers, nor a friend of the family in loco parentis:

- The club should have a designated Youth and Vulnerable Adult Officer who is responsible for safeguarding within the club. It is essential that this person should know how to respond if any allegation or concern is raised and that they should know what to do next. Full guidance is given in the BCA's safeguarding policy.
- At meets it is recommended that there is a designated person responsible for safeguarding issues. This person should be identified as such to all present – including children or vulnerable adults. They don't have to be the Youth and Vulnerable Adult Officer.
- Wherever possible, an adult should not be alone with a child or vulnerable adult.
- Children should not sleep in the same room as adults where separate facilities are available, unless of course they are staying with their parents.
- When both males and females are present there should also be male and female supervising adults and there should be separate male and female sleeping areas
- Those **supervising** the children or vulnerable adults and those **likely to be on their own** with children or vulnerable adults should be DBS checked.
- When children and vulnerable adults are using club premises, it may be wise for the club to notify members, especially if it is rare for young people to visit.

7. Frequently Asked Questions

Q. *I'm a BCA individual member and I offer to take my friends' 16 year old son and 17 year old daughter caving. Am I affected by safeguarding issues?*

A. You will have an enhanced duty of care to be responsible in the judgements you make above and below ground and you will be acting in *loco parentis* for the two youngsters. It's

important that your friends understand the nature and risks of caving so that they can make an informed decision about whether or not to let their children accompany you and put you in the position of being in loco parentis. You also need to consider privacy issues when they are getting changed.

CLUBS - OCCASIONAL VISITS

Q. Occasionally, I would like to take my grandchild/niece/nephew or a friend's children or a vulnerable adult with me when I attend a club meet. Can I do this?

A. Yes, provided it is permissible within the club rules. Also, be clear to have the consent of the child's parent/carer and inform them of the activities and arrangements. You will be in loco parentis for that particular child or vulnerable adult. And be mindful of the maximum of four days of caving permitted by insurance for non members.

PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS and INSURANCE COVER

Q. A prospective member of our club wants to bring their child or a vulnerable adult on a club meet. Is that permissible?

A. Yes, providing it is permissible within your club's rules. BCA's insurance covers prospective members for caving on up to four days in a year. For any more than that, they would have to become a club member to continue to have insurance.

Q. We're asked if we can take under-18s on our mid-week caving meets. Is this OK?

A. Yes, providing it is within club rules. If the under 18 is accompanied by a parent/carer who will eventually join the club after a period of being a prospective member, or if a friend of the family will be nominated by a parent to be *in loco parentis*, then DBS checks are not required. If the club decides to allow under-18s to attend without a parent/care or adult *in loco parentis*, vetting including DBS checks, for those directly responsible for the youngster(s), is required.

Q. Can children join the club as a member?

A. If the club decides to allow child members, this is perfectly acceptable. Indeed, for children to take part in more than four days of caving in a year, they must be members in order to be covered by BCA insurance.

Q. What age counts as being a child?

A. Anyone under the age of 18.

CAVING

Q. Is our club's sign-out board sufficient for groups containing youngsters and adults?

A. See the earlier section about ensuring trips are appropriate. A club needs to be satisfied that the trip leader has the skills and judgment required, and that the likely venues are appropriate for the age and experience of the participants.

DBS checks

Q. Are our club members required to have a DBS check if children go caving?

A. Actually, it should be called 'vetting', since there is a bit more involved than just the DBS check. There are two scenarios:

a) If the child is accompanied by a parent/carer, or the parent nominates a friend of the family to be 'in loco parentis', then vetting is not required.

b) Otherwise, the club is agreeing to supervise and care for the children. In that event, vetting is required.

Q. *Does everyone in the club require a DBS check?*

A. No. Vetting is only needed if neither a parent nor a friend of the family are present. And even then, it's only required for those directly responsible for the child, or anyone who might be on their own with the child (which should be avoided). Other members of the club can continue to use club facilities, stay overnight and go caving, without a DBS check.

Q. *What does vetting entail?*

A. A few things. Firstly, proof of identity is required, for example a passport and also a couple of household bills proving your address. You then fill in an application online. Club members are not paid, so they are volunteers. Thus the DBS check is free, though the online agency we use do levy a small fee. BCA nationally will cover that fee. As well as applying for the DBS check, members should join the free 'DBS update service' which would allow the BCA safeguarding officer to verify their status at a later date, but only with the member's permission. In addition to the DBS check, two very short references are required to confirm that the member is a fit person to look after children in a caving context.

Q. *How do we go about getting DBS checks done?*

A. Contact the BCA National Safeguarding Officer who will send full details. Expect the process to take several weeks at least, so plan well in advance.

Q. *Can we accept a copy of a DBS check that a member has from another organisation?*

A. We can only re-use a DBS certificate if that person has already joined the 'DBS Update Service' and gives permission for the certificate to be verified online. Online verification may be done either by the BCA National Safeguarding Officer, or by a club officer. A copy of the original certificate, together with a printout of the result of the online verification, must be kept.

Q. *We are aware of concerns about a member, outside of a caving context, that could imply issues if children are using club premises or going on meets. What should we do?*

A. This becomes relevant if the concerns relate to children and vulnerable adults. In the event that children or vulnerable adults are going to use club premises or go on meets, the club's officers need to ensure that they don't come into contact with that member. This is a sensitive issue and there are a range of solutions. For example, the member could be asked not to use the club hut that weekend, or the youngsters could avoid the hut and go caving directly. Club officers need to recognise that safeguarding has to take the priority in decision making.

HUTS AND NIGHTS AWAY FROM HOME

Q. *We have Family Rooms within our club hut where children or vulnerable adults are allowed to share a room with their parents. Is this permissible?*

A. Absolutely. That said, the club and its officers do have a duty of care, for example to make parents/carers, together with children and vulnerable adults aware of known hazards and risks.

Q. *I believe that when a parent – or an adult acting in loco parentis - accompanies a child, they can make decisions about the sleeping arrangements that might be available for that child or vulnerable adult. Is this correct?*

A. Yes. If possible, both parent/specified adult and child or vulnerable adult should be happy with the arrangements prior to the trip taking place.

If you are acting in loco parentis it is wise in these circumstances that in addition to obtaining parental consent, you make clear to the children and parents before the trip precisely what the sleeping arrangements are likely to be in the hut (or on the campsite). If the parent, child or vulnerable adult or you as the in *loco parentis* adult are not happy or not satisfied with the arrangements it is best that alternative arrangements are found or that the child or vulnerable adult does not go on the trip.

Q. *Children have so far very rarely used our hut. Some members get a bit rowdy in the evenings. What should we do?*

A. It would be a good idea to let other hut users know that there will be children or vulnerable adults present. If the club's membership are keen to encourage participation by children and vulnerable adults, it might be wise to develop a short code of conduct for members.

SUPERVISED GROUPS AT CLUB HUTS WITH UNDER 18s AMONGST THE GROUP

Q. *I believe that when a school or youth group is allowed access to a club hut, it is wise not to allow members of the club who have nothing to do with the group to use the hut?*

A. BCA thinks that club members can still use the building, provided:

- The club must ensure that the children have rooms that have no adult members in them, for example by putting a notice on the door saying it's reserved for the school, and by advising members in advance.
- Club members about whom there are concerns that would relate to children (even if outside a caving context), must not use the hut at that time.
- Club members who do use the hut should have respect to the needs of the children, for example by being reasonably quiet at very late hours.
- The agreement with the school or youth group must state whether other club members are allowed to use the facilities. The school or youth group must advise parents of what the arrangements will be.