



# **Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults**

## **Ramblers policy and guidance**

*October 2013*

This document is in several parts. You only need to read the sections of the document that are relevant to you.

### **1. Policy statement**

*Read this to find out about the Ramblers' general policy on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.*

### **2. Guidance for the public and Ramblers members**

*Read this if you are a child, young person or vulnerable adult planning to attend a Ramblers walk or other activity, or if you are a parent, guardian or carer.*

### **3. Guidance for Ramblers Area and Groups**

*Read this if you organise activities for your Area or Group, especially if children or vulnerable adults are likely to participate.*

### **4. Guidance for Walk Leaders in Areas and Groups**

*Read this if you lead walks and/or other activities for your Area or Group.*

### **5. Guidance for volunteers managed by staff**

*Read this if your volunteering for staff-managed projects regularly brings you into contact with the public and participants in projects which may include children or vulnerable adults.*

### **6. Guidance for staff**

*Read this if you are a member of Ramblers staff.*

# 1. Policy statement

The Ramblers provides activities for its own members and volunteers; members, staff, volunteers and service users of other organisations; and to the public. These groups may sometimes include children and young people under the age of 18, and adults who may be particularly vulnerable.

We are committed to ensuring the well-being of everyone who participates in Ramblers activities and will take every practical step to minimise the risk of harm, paying particular attention to the needs of those who are most vulnerable, including children and vulnerable adults.

We are also committed to supporting fully our volunteers and staff in their work to deliver our charitable aims and strategic objectives, including protecting them from potential liabilities and false suspicions and allegations of abuse.

## 1.1 Who are children and vulnerable adults?

In this document, a **child** is anyone aged 0-18 years old, as defined by relevant child protection legislation in England, Scotland and Wales.

*Note that although Scotland has some age limits which are historically different from those in England and Wales, the Scottish Government's guidance is that for child protection purposes, a child is someone under the age of 18.*

A **vulnerable adult** is someone of 18 years or older who is unable to care independently for themselves.

This might include people who:

- have a physical disability, illness or injury, or have become severely frail, though old age.
- are experiencing mental health issues including dementia, or have learning disabilities.
- are in need of community care.
- are unable to protect themselves from harm, through domestic violence or substance addiction.

## 1.2 Welcoming children and vulnerable adults

The Ramblers works to make walking accessible to all, and share its benefits with as wide a range of people as possible, including children and vulnerable adults. We welcome children and vulnerable adults on all activities that are suitable for them as individuals. We are 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.

However, while we are the experts at providing and supporting walking activities, we are not able to provide specialist care and support for people who have special

needs or who are unable to care independently for themselves, or to take special responsibility for looking after children and young people under the age of 18.

- 1 We should only accept children under the age of 15 on activities when they are accompanied by a parent, legal guardian or other person with equivalent responsibility for them such as a teacher or youth worker.
- 2 We should only accept young people aged 15, 16 or 17 on activities unaccompanied when they provide clear and preferably written consent of their parent or legal guardian. The exceptions are: 1. any activity involving an overnight stay and 2. any activity involving the use of tools such as footpath maintenance, where under 18s must be supervised by a parent, guardian or responsible adult at all times.
- 3 We should only welcome adults in need of special care when they are accompanied by a carer or support worker to assist with their everyday needs. In the case of activities aimed at Ramblers members, if a person with special needs is a member, we do not expect their carer or support worker to be a member too.

Participation in all activities is subject to their suitability for individual participants. Walk leaders and other activity organisers have an enhanced duty of care towards participants, and sometimes need to make judgements that take into account the safety and enjoyment of everyone involved in an activity. They have a right to refuse a participant if in the leader's opinion this would result in danger to the individual or danger or major disruption to the rest of the group. We will strive to make such judgements on a fair and practical basis and without making stereotypical or unwarranted assumptions.

### **1.3 Who is responsible?**

Everyone helping the Ramblers run its activities is responsible for providing children and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection. This includes:

- 1 Members of staff, both practically when working with children and vulnerable adults and in ensuring management practices, procedures and guidance are in place to ensure children and vulnerable adults are protected.
- 2 Volunteers, including those working on staff-managed projects where they regularly come into contact with children and vulnerable adults on a regular basis, and volunteers in Ramblers Areas and Groups who organise and deliver activities where children and vulnerable adults are likely to participate.
- 3 Trustees, who are expected to ensure the Ramblers complies with the law and that Ramblers policies and objectives are implemented as effectively as possible.

### **1.4 What we will do**

We will take all reasonable measures to protect the welfare of children and vulnerable adults involved with Ramblers activities and minimise their risk of harm by:

- 1 Having appropriate safeguarding procedures and practices in place, tailored to the organisation's needs, and striving to ensure they are implemented.
- 2 Producing practical and appropriate guidance for the public, volunteers and staff on our procedures, and ensuring it is easily available and publicised.
- 3 Working closely with appropriate partner agencies.
- 4 Referring any concerns promptly to the appropriate authorities.

Our specific policies and procedures include:

<b>Safe recruitment</b>	Selection and vetting procedures that check the eligibility and the suitability of all Ramblers staff and volunteers who will have direct, regular contact with children and vulnerable adults through Ramblers activities, including a criminal records disclosure check provided by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in England and Wales or Disclosure Scotland.
<b>Equal opportunities policy</b>	Clear policy, guidelines and procedures for staff to access and follow, recognising the right of everyone to protection regardless of age, gender, ethnic origin, sexuality, disability or beliefs.
<b>Confidentiality procedures</b>	Including a data protection policy and guidance on photo consent.
<b>Guidance</b>	Clear and targeted guidance appropriate to people's role within the Ramblers, well publicised and easily accessible. Currently we have guidance for members and the public, Ramblers Areas and Group volunteers and walk leaders, staff managed volunteers working in Ramblers projects, and staff. There is also a general Code of Conduct for everyone involved in the Ramblers, based on mutual respect and dignity, and detailed best practice guidance on specific practical matters such as leading walks safely. Compliance with guidance can be linked to grievance and disciplinary procedures.
<b>Designated person</b>	A centrally based safeguarding officer to coordinate policies, ensure guidance is distributed, deal with enquiries, record incidents and escalate as necessary.
<b>Civil liability insurance and incident reporting</b>	A comprehensive civil liability insurance policy covering staff and volunteers, with an effective incident reporting system. Copies of reports are stored securely in compliance with relevant legislation, and are available for the insurers to view in the case of any claims or allegations.

<b>Training and awareness raising</b>	Working with partners such as Action for Children, awareness workshops and induction packs can be provided to anyone who in the course of their Ramblers work has regular and close contact with children and vulnerable adults.
<b>Complaints procedure</b>	An open and well-publicised complaints procedure enabling anyone in confidence to voice concerns about unacceptable and abusive behaviour towards children and vulnerable adults. <i>To be completed before September 2014.</i>

## 1.5 Updates and revisions

The Ramblers safeguarding policy, procedures and guidelines will be reviewed on a yearly basis. However they are subject to change at any time, based on updated legislation and feedback regarding best practice. This policy and guidance was reviewed in October 2013 to reflect name changes to criminal records disclosure agencies. The next review date is October 2014.

## **2. Guidance for the public and Ramblers members**

**We are committed to ensuring the well-being of everyone who participates in Ramblers activities and will take every practical step to minimise the risk of harm, paying particular attention to the needs of those who are most vulnerable, including children and vulnerable adults. We are also committed to supporting our hardworking volunteers and staff who help deliver our charitable aims.**

**Please help us by reading the following guidance and following it where appropriate. It is particularly relevant to children and young people; their parents, guardians and carers; vulnerable adults and others with special needs; and their carers and support workers.**

We work to make walking accessible to all, and want to share its benefits with as wide a range of people as possible. We are 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.

Everyone is welcome to participate in our activities, so long as an activity is practically appropriate for a particular individual. However we are not able to provide specialist care and support for those that need it. We are also unable to accept responsibility for children under the age of 15 or those aged 15-18 without parental consent.

When attending Ramblers activities:

- 1 Check that an activity is appropriate for you before turning up. Led walks listings usually include an indication of length, pace and difficulty so check this carefully, and follow any advice about clothing and equipment. If in doubt, contact the organisers in advance.
- 2 If you are under 15, you will need to be accompanied by a responsible adult when participating in activities, such as your parent, legal guardian, carer, teacher or youth worker.
- 3 If you are aged 15, 16 or 17 you can join in any activity unaccompanied that does not involve an overnight stay or the use of tools (such as footpath maintenance) if you bring along a valid 15-17 Year Old Parental Consent Card as proof of parental consent. Consent is needed to enable decisions to be made about and/or administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment if necessary. The cards are available free to 15-17 year olds so long as the application is signed by your parent or legal guardian. For more information see [www.ramblers.org.uk/localgroups](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/localgroups) or phone 020 7339 8500 and ask for the Safeguarding Officer. Some local Ramblers Groups issue these cards too.
- 4 Alternatively you could provide the leader with a signed and dated letter from your parent or legal guardian that clearly indicates that consent has been given for participation in Ramblers activities. The letter should include the names and address of the parent/guardian and the young person(s) concerned.

- 5 On some activities we may ask parents or guardians to fill in a parental consent form.
- 6 If you are under 18, you can only participate in activities involving an overnight stay if accompanied by an adult with parental responsibility for you. You can only participate in activities using tools, such as footpath maintenance, if supervised at all times by a parent, guardian or responsible adult.
- 7 Please do not be offended if asked for proof of age or of parental consent.
- 8 If you are a responsible adult accompanying children or young people under 18, be aware that you are responsible for their direct care and supervision, and that this is not the responsibility of Ramblers staff and volunteers.
- 9 If you are an adult who is unable for whatever reason to care for themselves independently, or needs specific help in order to participate in an activity safely (for example because of an illness or disability), you must be accompanied by another adult such as a carer or support worker who takes responsibility for your care. If you are also a Ramblers member and the activity is aimed at members, there is no need for your carer or support worker to be a member too.
- 10 If you are a carer or support worker accompanying someone who is unable to care for themselves independently or who needs special assistance, please be aware you are responsible for their direct care and/or special assistance, and that this is not the responsibility of Ramblers staff and volunteers.
- 11 Please tell the walk leader or organiser discreetly and in confidence about any medical conditions that may affect the ability of you or the people in your care to participate safely in the activity.
- 12 Before and during the activity, please follow the advice of the leader or activity organiser. Leaders have to take responsibility for everyone's safety and enjoyment, and can refuse to accept people who in their judgement may place themselves or the group in danger or seriously disrupt the activity.
- 13 If you have any concerns about the behaviour of anyone participating in an activity, such as abusive, threatening or inappropriate behaviour, raise this discreetly with the walk leader. If you have concerns that a child or vulnerable person is being placed in danger or abused, you can raise this with your local authority, the NSPCC helpline (tel 0808 800 5000, [www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline)) and/or the Ramblers Safeguarding Officer (tel 020 7339 8500, [safeguarding@ramblers.zendesk.com](mailto:safeguarding@ramblers.zendesk.com)).

For more information about our policies and guidelines on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, see [www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/safeguarding](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/safeguarding).

## 3. Guidance for Ramblers Area and Groups

### 3.1 Who should read this guidance

Volunteers involved in organising activities specifically targeted at families/children and vulnerable adults, or where children or vulnerable adults regularly attend, should be familiar with this guidance and ensure it is implemented. Coordinators and organisers in Areas and Groups that don't run targeted activities should still be aware of the contents of this guidance and be prepared to implement it when appropriate.

This guidance is part of a comprehensive policy with specific guidance notes for several different audiences. It is also useful to read the Guidance for the Public and Ramblers Members and the Guidance for Walk Leaders in Areas and Groups. For the full policy and guidance see [www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/safeguarding](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/safeguarding).

### 3.2 Why we need this guidance

The 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 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 vulnerable adults. Our partner organisations and funders increasingly require us to demonstrate that we have appropriate policies and procedures in place. And it is vital we support fully our volunteers and staff, including protecting them from potential liabilities and false suspicions and allegations of abuse.

### 3.3 General principles

The Ramblers works to make walking accessible to all, including children and vulnerable adults. 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 are the experts at providing and supporting walking activities, we can't provide specialist care, supervision or support for children and for those who are unable to care independently for themselves. Children under 15 and those with special needs should be accompanied by others who take responsibility for meeting their needs. Young people 15, 16 and 17 can only participate in our activities with parental consent, preferably with written proof. The exceptions are any activity involving an overnight stay or the use of tools (such as footpath maintenance) where all under 18s must be accompanied and supervised – see below.

**It is important to ensure that volunteers don't work unsupervised on a regular basis with children and vulnerable adults. Otherwise our activities might be classified by law as 'regulated activities' and 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 walks 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 assumption or prejudice, they are well 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 also not our responsibility to investigate or intervene in suspected cases of abuse or ill treatment, but it **is** our responsibility to refer such cases 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.

When organising activities:

- 1 Ensure that when promoting activities you help potential participants judge their suitability by including details such as walk length, pace, grade/difficulty, and advice on matters such as clothing, footwear and equipment required. Give contact details for more information and be prepared to discuss this in more detail with individual enquirers. Try to refer to other organisations more suitable for an enquirer's needs where necessary.
- 2 If working with other organisations who work with children or vulnerable adults (for example schools or community groups) make clear from the outset that they are responsible for the supervision and support of their participants.
- 3 As outlined in existing guidance, leaders should inform people at the start of an activity what to expect, and be prepared to turn away those they consider ill-equipped or incapable, so long as their decision is based on practicalities and not stereotypical or prejudiced assumptions.
- 4 Look for further information about providing suitable walks for children and people with specific disabilities on the information section of the Ramblers website: see [www.ramblers.org.uk/info/firststeps](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/info/firststeps).
- 5 Arrange for extra volunteers on activities aimed at children or people with special needs, to ensure there is cover in case of accident or illness.
- 6 Always report incidents promptly and correctly using the standard form (see [www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer) under Essentials: Insurance).
- 7 Be sensitive about taking photos and films of activities. It's always polite to ask the participants first if anyone would prefer not to be featured, and respect their wishes. If working with schools or organisations dealing with children or vulnerable adults, abide by any policies they have about written permission. You could use a photo consent form – see Appendix 2.

### **3.4 Welcoming children and young people**

Ramblers volunteers cannot provide direct care and supervision to **children under 15**. Instead the children must be accompanied by an adult who holds parental responsibility, such as a parent, legal guardian, carer, teacher or youth worker.

**Unaccompanied young people aged 15, 16 and 17** can participate in Ramblers activities with the consent of a parent or legal guardian, so long as these activities do not involve an overnight stay or the use of tools (for example footpath maintenance).

We are responsible for ensuring that accompanying adults are aware of their responsibility for supervision and direct care, and ensuring that people aged 15, 16 and 17 have parental consent. This is particularly important when the participants concerned are not already well-known to the Area or Group. To make this easier we

have introduced a Consent Card, available from central office.

- 1 Include a statement in your programmes and publicity, for example: “Walkers must be 18+ or accompanied by an adult holding parental responsibility. Unaccompanied walkers aged 15-17 are welcome (except on overnight stays) with a valid 15-17 Year Old Parental Consent Card, obtainable free from Ramblers main office, tel 020 7339 8500 or see [www.ramblers.org.uk/localgroups](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/localgroups).” Alternatively Areas and Groups can issue these cards themselves – please contact the Safeguarding Officer for more details.
- 2 If working with a school or youth organisation bringing young people 15-17 on a walk, it is likely to be impractical to expect all participants to apply for Consent Cards. Make clear to the organisation that they must provide sufficient supervising adults who will take responsibility for the young people.
- 3 Leaders may also accept a clear signed letter or statement from a parent or legal guardian as proof of parental consent, so long as this includes:
  - The name and address of the parent / guardian and their relationship to the young person(s).
  - The name(s) of the young person(s).
  - A clear statement that consent is being given for the young person(s) to participate in Ramblers’ activities.
  - The date and signature of the parent / guardian.
- 4 For activities involving an overnight stay, anyone under 18 must be accompanied by an adult with parental responsibility for them. For activities using tools, such as footpath maintenance, under 18s must be supervised at all times by a parent, guardian or responsible adult.
- 5 Where accompanied children under 18 are present, the walk leader should remind the group verbally before setting out that Ramblers volunteers are not responsible for their direct care and supervision.
- 6 Alternatively, if you use a signing in form or register, consider including a tick box for responsible adults to confirm they understand their responsibilities.
- 7 If unaccompanied 15-17 year olds are present, the walk leader should check they have valid Consent Cards or letters. Don’t be afraid or embarrassed to ask for proof of age or parental consent if necessary
- 8 If an unaccompanied person is under 18 and doesn’t have proof of consent, or wishes to join an activity involving an overnight stay, or is under 15, it is best for everyone that they do not participate in the activity. Under special circumstances, for example, if you are far from the young person’s home, you may choose to include them as a one off. In this case:
  - Ask for a contact number of a parent or guardian and try to contact that person to advise them of the situation and check their permission. Tell them you will require proof of consent next time, and advise them where they can obtain a consent card.
  - Keep a close eye on the young person and check they are accounted

for throughout the activity.

- Keep a note, and report the incident and your actions to whoever is responsible for coordinating the activity.

- 9 Volunteers who regularly work with children (under 18) on at least a weekly basis are required to have a criminal records disclosure check (Disclosure and Barring Service or DBS check in England and Wales, formerly known as a CRB check; a Disclosure in Scotland). Please contact the Safeguarding Officer.
- 10 We welcome and encourage young people under 18 to volunteer for the Ramblers. However there are specific recruitment procedures that need to be followed. Please contact the Safeguarding Officer for more details.

*Please note this guidance applies across Great Britain. Although Scotland has some age limits which are historically different from those in England and Wales, anyone under 18 is considered to be a child in Scotland for child protection purposes.*

### **3.5 Welcoming vulnerable adults**

A vulnerable adult is someone 18 or over who is unable to care independently for themselves. This could be due to a physical or learning disability, illness or injury or mental health issues; old age; substance addiction; domestic violence or abuse or other reasons. It can be a temporary or a permanent condition.

Ramblers volunteers cannot provide direct care to anyone with special needs. We ask for a carer or support worker to accompany them if necessary. Vulnerable adults may have varying degrees of independence and sometimes it will be at the walk leader's or organiser's discretion whether or not they can participate unaccompanied. We encourage people with special needs to contact leaders or organisers beforehand to discuss suitability of activities.

Note that providing care for adults with special needs is generally classified by law as a 'regulated activity' and organisations must take special precautions before permitting individuals to provide it (see under General Principles above).

- 1 Make sure the carer or support worker knows they are responsible for the direct needs of the person they're accompanying.
- 2 Take a note of an emergency contact number and any important medical details that can be passed to the emergency services if required.
- 3 It can be difficult to identify levels of independence, and these may change over time. For example an individual who has been attending activities on a regular basis may experience deteriorating physical or mental health. If you have concerns and feel they should be accompanied by a carer, you can seek advice from your Group/Area or the safeguarding officer and could ask them tactfully and discreetly to arrange to bring along a carer in future.
- 4 Carers and support workers accompanying vulnerable adults on activities intended primarily for members are not required to be members themselves.
- 5 Volunteers who regularly work with vulnerable adults on at least a weekly

basis are required to have a criminal records disclosure check (Disclosure and Barring Service or DBS check in England and Wales, formerly known as a CRB check; a Disclosure in Scotland).. Please contact the Safeguarding Officer.

### 3.6 Concerns about abuse

Your Area or Group may typically have little contact with children or vulnerable adults, so it is unlikely volunteers will encounter concerns about abuse. However if you regularly welcome children and vulnerable adults, though abuse remains thankfully rare, it is possible you may have concerns from your own observations of participants, or have such concerns raised with you. As a trusted adult, you may even have abuse disclosed to you by a victim. Abuse can include not only physical and sexual abuse but also emotional abuse and neglect. Vulnerable adults can also be at risk of financial exploitation or may come to harm through self neglect or their own behaviour.

- 1 If anyone is under serious threat of physical harm or in need of urgent treatment during a 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.
  - When it is safe to do so, make notes of the incident and its outcome, fill in an incident report form and return to Ramblers central office (see Insurance under [www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/essentials](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/essentials))
  - If there is an issue of violence or abuse, be prepared to answer further questions from the police and/or the local authority. Contact the Safeguarding Officer for further advice.
- 2 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 possible, within an hour of any incident if you can.
  - Contact the local authority's children and family services team (see contacts). They may ask for a written report and will advise what should be in it. If you need further advice, contact the Safeguarding Officer.
  - Notify your Area or Group organisers.
  - Fill in an incident report form and return to Ramblers central office (see Insurance under [www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/essentials](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/essentials)), attaching a copy of any written report made to the local authority. Don't record personal details of people involved on the report form.
- 3 Generally:
  - When working with children and vulnerable adults, be sensible and self-aware, and avoid placing yourself into situations where your actions may be misinterpreted. Avoid agreeing to supervise a child or vulnerable adult while a parent or carer is absent especially if this means being left alone with them.

- If someone discloses abuse to you, be sympathetic and supportive, but don't agree to keep confidences. Explain it is your duty to pass on information appropriately.
- Keep concerns confidential. Only share details as necessary with trusted senior volunteers and staff and the appropriate authorities.
- Don't risk putting yourself in difficulty or danger by attempting to investigate the case yourself or to challenge the alleged abuser.

## **Summary – for organisers and programme coordinators**

- 1 Be familiar with this guidance and ready to explain it to walk/activity leaders.
- 2 Ensure publicity helps people judge the suitability of an activity.
- 3 Communicate our policy on children and young people:
  - Children under 15, and everyone under 18 on activities involving an overnight stay, must be accompanied by an adult with parental responsibility.
  - Unaccompanied young people aged 15, 16 or 17 should have proof of consent (card or letter).
- 4 Be prepared to discuss the suitability of an activity with enquirers, and ensure people with special needs know they must be accompanied by someone responsible for their direct care. Carers don't have to be Ramblers members.
- 5 Enlist extra volunteers on activities specifically aimed at children and people with special needs.
- 6 Ensure volunteers who work regularly and closely with children and vulnerable adults have a criminal disclosure check: contact the Safeguarding Officer.
- 7 Know how to get hold of the contact details for your local authority Child and Family services.
- 8 Ensure incident reports are made correctly and promptly.
- 9 Support leaders in dealing with concerns about abuse, keep appropriate contact details and ensure incidents and referrals are reported to Central Office promptly and accurately.

## **Useful contacts**

1. **Emergency:** Police/Ambulance tel 999
2. **Ramblers Safeguarding Officer** tel 020 7339 8574, [safeguarding@ramblers.zendesk.com](mailto:safeguarding@ramblers.zendesk.com)
3. **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. They normally have out of hours emergency contacts.

4. **Police** (non-emergency calls). England 0300 123 1212, Scotland 01382 207101, Wales 101.
5. **NSPCC helpline** tel 0808 800 5000, [www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline)

## 4. Guidance for Walk Leaders in Areas and Groups

The Ramblers works to make walking accessible to all. We welcome children and vulnerable adults on all activities that are suitable for them as individuals. If you organise walks (or other activities) directly targeted at children or vulnerable adults please refer to the Guidance for Areas and Groups. For more details see [www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/safeguarding](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/safeguarding).

### Be aware that:

- 1 Children under 15, and everyone under 18 on activities involving an overnight stay, must be accompanied by an adult with parental responsibility.
- 2 Unaccompanied young people aged 15, 16 or 17 on activities not involving an overnight stay should be able to show clear, preferably written, consent from a parent or guardian. Ideally this will be a 15-17 Year Old Parental Consent Card, available on request from Ramblers Central Office (and issued by some Areas and Groups), or a letter signed and dated by the parent/guardian (clearly giving consent to participate in Ramblers activities, with the names and address of the parent/guardian and the young person(s) concerned).
- 3 People with special needs must be accompanied by someone responsible for their direct care (who needn't be a Ramblers member).

### At the start of an activity:

- 4 Inform people what to expect
- 5 Say that people with medical concerns can raise them discreetly and confidentially with you. If they do, take a note of emergency contact numbers or vital medical details that could be of use to the emergency services.
- 6 Remind adults accompanying children and young people of their responsibility for direct care and supervision. Remind carers of their responsibilities.
- 7 Ask to see proof of consent for unaccompanied young people under 18, especially if they're not already well-known to the Area/Group.
- 8 Don't be afraid to exclude people for whom you believe the activity to be unsuitable.

### During the activity:

- 9 If anyone is under serious threat of physical harm or in need of urgent treatment dial 999 and ask for the police and/or ambulance as appropriate.
- 10 Be sensible and self-aware. Avoid placing yourself into situations where your actions may be misinterpreted.

*Note this guidance applies only to led walks. On activities involving tools, such as footpath maintenance, under 18s must be supervised at all times by responsible adults.*

## **5. Guidance for volunteers managed by staff**

### **5.1 Who should read this guidance**

This guidance is intended for volunteers managed by staff as part of a Ramblers project such as Get Walking Keep Walking who are likely to have regular contact with children and/or vulnerable adults through their volunteering work. If you're involved in such a project only in a role that doesn't involve regular contact with participants, for example a route developer, there is no need to read this guidance.

There is separate guidance for volunteers in Ramblers Areas and Groups. For the full safeguarding policy and guidance see [www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/safeguarding](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/safeguarding).

### **5.2 Why we need this guidance**

The 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 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 vulnerable adults. Our partner organisations and funders increasingly require us to demonstrate that we have appropriate policies and procedures in place. And it is vital we support fully our volunteers and staff, including protecting them from potential liabilities and false suspicions and allegations of abuse.

Ramblers projects such as Get Walking Keep Walking often work with external organisations specifically delivering services to children and vulnerable adults, including schools, youth and community organisations, NHS bodies and charities helping people with physical and mental health issues and disabilities. It is therefore particularly important that volunteers working closely with participants on these projects are aware of procedures for safeguarding vulnerable people.

These projects are managed by trained staff and they will largely deal with our relations to external organisations on matters such as the division of responsibilities, as well as closely supporting volunteers. But it is important that you understand the general principles of safeguarding and have an idea of our policy in case you are called upon to make a decision when a member of staff is not present.

### **5.3 General principles**

The Ramblers works to make walking accessible to all, including children and vulnerable adults. 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 are the experts at providing and supporting walking activities, we do not undertake to provide specialist care and support for children and people who have special needs or who are unable to care independently for themselves. Children under 15 and people with special needs must be accompanied by others who take responsibility for meeting their needs. Young people 15, 16 and 17 can only participate in our activities with parental consent, and anyone under 18 on an activity involving an overnight stay must be accompanied by an adult with parental



responsibility. On activities involving the use of tools such as footpath maintenance, under 18s must be supervised by a parent, guardian or responsible adult at all times. This is normally agreed with our partner organisations by staff before the activity takes place.

**As a general rule, Ramblers volunteers must not work unsupervised on a regular basis with children and vulnerable adults. Otherwise our activities might be classified by law as ‘regulated activities’ and 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. Activity leaders 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 assumption or prejudice, they are well 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 also not our responsibility to investigate or intervene in suspected cases of abuse or ill treatment, but it **is** our responsibility to refer such cases 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 to have it disclosed to us.

- The member of staff managing your work should make it clear to you if there are special needs or issues with a particular group you’re working with. When in doubt, ask them.
- If you are leading an activity, inform people at the start what to expect, and be prepared to turn away those you consider ill-equipped or incapable, in consultation with the member of staff and/or a responsible person from a partner organisation if present.

## **5.4 Criminal records disclosure**

If you work on a project where you are likely on a regular basis to come into contact with children and/or vulnerable adults, we require you to undergo a criminal records disclosure check (Disclosure and Barring Service or DBS check in England and Wales, formerly known as a CRB check; a Disclosure in Scotland). If you haven’t had such a check but think you should have one, talk to your staff manager or contact the Safeguarding Officer at Ramblers Central Office (see below).

## **5.5 Welcoming children and young people**

Ramblers volunteers cannot provide direct care and supervision to **children under 15**. Instead the children must be accompanied by an adult who holds parental responsibility, such as a parent, legal guardian, carer, teacher or youth worker.

When working with groups of children, such as on a project with a school, sufficient responsible adults should be present in addition to Ramblers staff and volunteers in accordance with the official supervisory guidelines. At least two additional adults should be present with any group in case one of the adults has to accompany a child

away from the activity. The guidelines are:

- **Age 0-2:** 1 adult to 3 children
- **Age 2-3:** 1 adult to 4 children
- **Age 3-8:** 1 adult to 8 children
- **Over 8:** 2 adults to 20 children (NSPCC advisory)

**Unaccompanied young people aged 15, 16 and 17** can participate in Ramblers activities with the consent of a parent or legal guardian, so long as these activities do not involve an overnight stay or work involving tools such as footpath maintenance.

Arrangements for the supervision of children and young people should have been arranged in advance with the partner organisation, but individual family groups and unaccompanied young people may also turn up spontaneously to some activities especially if these have been promoted to the public.

We **are** responsible for making clear that accompanying adults are aware of their responsibility for supervision and direct care, and ensuring that people aged 15, 16 and 17 have parental consent.

- 1 If you are leading an activity where accompanied children under 18 are present, make sure those supervising them are aware that you are not responsible for their direct care and supervision.
- 2 If unaccompanied 15-17 year olds are present, you must check they all have parental consent. Normally your staff manager will arrange this beforehand and provide you with a list or copies of parental consent forms, or the participants may bring completed forms with them for you to collect. Ensure you return all consent forms to your staff manager. Some may also have 15-17 Year Old Parental Consent Cards which we accept as proof of consent. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask for proof of age or consent.
- 3 For activities involving an overnight stay, anyone under 18 must be accompanied by an adult with parental responsibility for them. For activities using tools, such as footpath maintenance, under 18s must be supervised at all times by a parent, guardian or responsible adult.
- 4 If an unaccompanied person is under 18 and doesn't have parental consent, or is under 15, it is best for everyone that they do not participate in the activity. Under special circumstances, for example, if you are far from the young person's home, you may choose to include them as a one off. In this case:
  - Ask for a contact number of a parent or guardian and try to contact that person to advise them of the situation and check their permission. Tell them they will need to arrange parental consent next time and explain how to do this.
  - Keep a close eye on the young person and check they are accounted for throughout the activity.

- Keep a note, and report the incident and your actions to your staff manager.
- 5 Make sure you use any signing in sheets or registration forms provided, ensuring they are completed properly including emergency contacts and key medical details where necessary.

## **5.6 Welcoming vulnerable adults**

A vulnerable adult is someone 18 or over who is unable to care independently for themselves. This could be due to a physical or learning disability, illness or injury or mental health issues; old age; substance addiction; domestic violence or abuse or other reasons. It can be a temporary or a permanent condition.

Ramblers volunteers cannot provide direct care to anyone with special needs. We ask for a carer or support worker to accompany them if necessary. Vulnerable adults may have varying degrees of independence and sometimes it will be at the walk leader's or organiser's discretion whether or not they can participate unaccompanied.

Note that providing care for adults with special needs is generally classified by law as a 'regulated activity' and organisations must take special precautions before permitting individuals to provide it (see under General Principles above).

Arrangements for those with special needs should have been arranged in advance with a partner organisation, but individuals may turn up spontaneously to some activities especially if these have been promoted to the public.

- 1 If you are leading an activity where people are present with carers or support workers, make sure the carers understand they are responsible for direct care.
- 2 Make sure you use any signing in sheets or registration forms provided, ensuring they are completed properly including emergency contacts and key medical details where necessary.
- 3 It can be difficult to identify levels of independence, and these may change over time. For example an individual who has been attending activities on a regular basis may experience deteriorating physical or mental health. If you have concerns and feel they should be accompanied by a carer, seek advice from your staff manager.

## **5.7 Concerns about abuse**

Cases of abuse are thankfully rare, but if you regularly welcome children and vulnerable adults, 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 abuse and neglect. Vulnerable adults can also be at risk 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 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 your staff manager as soon as possible.
  - When it is safe to do so, make notes of the incident and its outcome.
  - If there is an issue of violence or abuse, be prepared to answer further questions from the police and/or the local authority.
  - Assist your staff manager in completing an incident form as required.
- 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 possible, within an hour of any incident if you can.
  - Raise them discreetly with your staff manager as soon as possible. They should take them up with the local authority who may wish to question you further.
  - If necessary, contact the local authority's children and family services team (see below). They may ask for a written report and will advise what should be in it.
  - Assist your staff manager in completing an incident form as required.
  - If you need further advice, contact the Safeguarding Officer.

- Generally:
  - When working with children and vulnerable adults, be sensible and self-aware, and avoid placing yourself into situations where your actions may be misinterpreted.
  - Avoid agreeing to supervise a child or vulnerable adult while a parent or carer is absent, especially if this means being left alone with them. Don't arrange to meet with them socially outside the Ramblers activity.
  - If someone discloses abuse to you, be sympathetic and supportive, but don't agree to keep confidences. Explain it is your duty to pass on information appropriately.
  - Keep concerns confidential. Only share details as necessary with your volunteer manager, the Safeguarding Officer and the appropriate authorities.
  - Don't risk putting yourself in difficulty or danger by attempting to investigate the case yourself or to challenge the alleged abuser.
  - Don't be afraid to raise genuine concerns about other volunteers or staff if you see examples of bad practice or failure to follow our policy or even have suspicions of abuse. Speak discreetly to your staff manager or the Safeguarding Officer.

## Useful contacts

- **Emergency:** Police/Ambulance tel 999
- **Ramblers Safeguarding Officer** tel 020 7339 8574, [safeguarding@ramblers.zendesk.com](mailto:safeguarding@ramblers.zendesk.com)
- **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. They normally have out of hours emergency contacts.
- **Police** (non-emergency calls). England 0300 123 1212, Scotland 01382 207101, Wales 101.
- **NSPCC helpline** tel 0808 800 5000, [www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline)

## 6. Guidance for staff

### 6.1 Who should read this guidance

This guidance is intended for Ramblers staff whose work involves regular contact with children and/or vulnerable adults, or who are responsible for developing and managing projects and ongoing volunteer activities that might involve such contact by other staff and/or volunteers.

The guidance is part of a comprehensive safeguarding policy that includes a policy document and separate guidance for Ramblers members and the public; volunteers in Areas and Groups; and volunteers managed by staff. For the full safeguarding policy and guidance see [www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/safeguarding](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/safeguarding).

In addition to familiarising yourself with this document, you should read the general policy and the guidance for members and the public. If your work involves project volunteers who deal regularly and directly with participants you should also read the guidance for volunteers managed by staff. If you deal with Areas and Groups you should also read the guidance for Area and Group volunteers and walk leaders.

### 6.2 Why we need this guidance

The 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 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 vulnerable adults. Our partner organisations and funders increasingly require us to demonstrate that we have appropriate policies and procedures in place. And it is vital we support fully our volunteers and staff, including protecting them from potential liabilities and false suspicions and allegations of abuse.

Ramblers projects such as Get Walking Keep Walking often work with external organisations specifically delivering services to children and vulnerable adults, including schools, youth and community organisations, NHS bodies and charities helping people with physical and mental health issues and disabilities. It is therefore vital that staff and volunteers working closely with participants on these projects are aware of procedures for safeguarding vulnerable people.

While many Areas and Groups do not run activities specifically targeted at families or people with special needs, a growing number do, and all of them may encounter children and vulnerable adults on an occasional basis. Areas and Groups also should be aware of the correct procedures and implement them when appropriate.

### 6.3 Who are children and vulnerable adults?

In this document, a **child** is anyone aged 0-18 years old, as defined by child protection legislation in England, Scotland and Wales.

A **vulnerable adult** is someone of 18 years or older who is unable to care independently for themselves.

This might include people who:

- have a physical disability, illness or injury, or have become severely frail, though old age.
- are experiencing mental health issues including dementia, or having learning disabilities.
- are in need of community care.
- are unable to protect themselves from harm, through domestic violence or substance addiction.

## 6.4 General principles

The Ramblers works to make walking accessible to all, including children and vulnerable adults. 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 are the experts at providing and supporting walking activities, we do not undertake to provide specialist care and support for children and people who have special needs or who are unable to care independently for themselves. Children under 15 and vulnerable adults or others with special needs should be accompanied by others who take responsibility for meeting their needs. Children 15, 16 and 17 must have parental consent in order to participate. On activities involving overnight stays, anyone under 18 must be accompanied by an adult with parental responsibility. On activities involving the use of tools such as footpath maintenance, under 18s must be supervised by a parent, guardian or responsible adult at all times.

**As a general rule, Ramblers staff and volunteers must not work unsupervised on a regular basis with children and vulnerable adults. Otherwise our activities might be classified by law as 'regulated activities' and the person carrying them out will require enhanced checks. Organisations which knowingly allow barred people to work on regulated activities are breaking the law. Any exceptions must be agreed with the Safeguarding Officer.**

Participation in all activities is subject to their suitability for individual participants. Activity leaders 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 assumption or prejudice, they are well 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 also not our responsibility to investigate or intervene in suspected cases of abuse or ill treatment, but it **is** our responsibility to refer such cases 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 to have it disclosed to us.

In general:

- 1 Make sure all volunteers and staff you manage are alerted to the appropriate guidance and do your best to ensure they implement it. Be prepared to support them on questions that arise from it. Failure to implement the

guidance by staff or volunteers could cause serious problems for Ramblers and could become a disciplinary matter.

- 2 When designing projects or developing other forms of volunteer or staff guidance or support, ensure they are compatible with this policy and guidance, and refer to it where appropriate.
- 3 Make sure partner organisations are aware of the policy where appropriate.
- 4 Ensure all staff and volunteers you are responsible for who are likely to work regularly with children or vulnerable adults on at least a weekly basis have a criminal records disclosure check: contact the Safeguarding Officer.
- 5 When in doubt, refer to the Safeguarding Officer (see below).

When delivering activities:

- 1 Ensure our policies are clear to delivery partners and reflected in any contracts, agreements or memoranda of understanding. It is particularly important in the case of organisations working with children and vulnerable adults that they understand their responsibilities for providing supervision and everyday care (see below). Ensure they appreciate that we may wish to exclude people from the activity if we judge it unsuitable for them.
- 2 When working with delivery partners, plan activities carefully with them beforehand so you have a good idea what to expect.
- 3 In publicity, ensure you help potential participants judge their suitability by including details such as walk length, pace, grade/difficulty, and advice on matters such as clothing, footwear and equipment required. Give contact details for more information and be prepared to discuss this in more detail with individual enquirers if necessary.
- 4 When leading an activity, inform people at the start of an activity what to expect, and be prepared to turn away those you consider ill-equipped or incapable, so long as the decision is based on practicalities and not stereotypical or prejudiced assumptions.
- 5 Ensure there is sufficient cover on activities aimed at children or people with special needs in case of accident or illness.
- 6 Brief volunteers clearly and with regard to the sort of people you expect to turn up and their likely abilities.
- 7 Have clear procedures for the use of registration forms and registers/signing in sheets and ensure these are followed. Signing in and emergency/medical details are particularly important when people under 18 or vulnerable adults are present.
- 8 Be sensitive about taking photos and films. It's always polite to ask the participants first if anyone would prefer not to be featured, and respect their wishes. If working with schools or organisations dealing with children or vulnerable adults, abide by any policies they have about written permission. For an example photo consent form, see Appendix 2.



- 9 Always report incidents promptly and correctly using the standard form: ask your manager or the Safeguarding Officer for more details.

## 6.5 Welcoming children and young people

Ramblers cannot provide direct care and supervision to **children under 15**. Instead the children must be accompanied by an adult who holds parental responsibility, such as a parent, legal guardian, carer, teacher or youth worker.

When working with groups of children, such as on a project with a school, sufficient responsible adults should be present in addition to Ramblers staff and volunteers in accordance with the official supervisory guidelines. At least two additional adults should be present with any group in case one of the adults has to accompany a child away from the activity. The guidelines are:

- **Age 0-2:** 1 adult to 3 children
- **Age 2-3:** 1 adult to 4 children
- **Age 3-8:** 1 adult to 8 children
- **Over 8:** 2 adults to 20 children (NSPCC advisory)

**Young people aged 15, 16 and 17** are welcome to participate in Ramblers activities unaccompanied with the consent of a parent or legal guardian, though when dealing with large numbers of people in this age group you may well consider it best that they have additional supervision. The exceptions are: 1. any activity involving an overnight stay and 2. any practical activity such as footpath maintenance work. In these cases anyone under 18 must be accompanied by another adult with parental responsibility.

You should normally agree supervision arrangements in advance with a partner organisation, but individual family groups and unaccompanied young people may also turn up spontaneously to some activities especially if promoted to the public.

We **are** responsible for making clear that accompanying adults are aware of their responsibility for supervision and direct care, and ensuring that people aged 15, 16 and 17 have parental consent.

- 1 When working with partner organisations targeting children and young people, make sure their responsibilities and the supervision levels required are understood in advance.
- 2 When working with organisations targeting 15-17 year olds it is best for the partner organisation and/or parents/carers to provide supervision. If you wish to permit 15-17 year olds to participate unaccompanied, you must obtain clear written consent from someone with parental responsibility using the consent form in Appendix 1 below before you allow them to participate. Make sure you collect forms handed to volunteers and other staff, store all the forms safely and destroy after six months.
- 3 15-17 year olds can also obtain free 15-17 Year Old Parental Consent Cards on application to the Safeguarding Officer or at

[www.ramblers.org.uk/localgroups](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/localgroups). These cards are also issued by some Ramblers Areas and Groups. These are mainly intended for the benefit of our Area and Group volunteers so please do not encourage large groups of people to apply for them; however if a young person already has a valid one you can accept it as proof of parental consent.

- 4 For activities involving an overnight stay, anyone under 18 must be accompanied by an adult with parental responsibility for them. For activities using tools, such as footpath maintenance, under 18s must be supervised at all times by a parent, guardian or responsible adult.
- 5 If you are leading an activity where accompanied children under 18 are present, make sure those supervising them are aware that you are not responsible for their direct care and supervision.
- 6 If unaccompanied 15-17 year olds are present, you should check they have proof of parental consent or are covered by pre-arranged consent. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask for proof of age or consent if necessary
  - If an unaccompanied person is under 18 and doesn't have parental consent, or is under 15, it is best for everyone that they do not participate in the activity. Under special circumstances, for example, if you are far from the young person's home, you may choose to include them as a one off. In this case:
  - Ask for a contact number of a parent or guardian and try to contact that person to advise them of the situation and check their permission. Tell them you will require consent the next time.
  - Keep a close eye on the young person and check they are accounted for throughout the activity.
  - Keep a note of the incident and report to your manager if appropriate.

## 6.6 Welcoming vulnerable adults

Ramblers cannot provide direct care to anyone with special needs. We ask for a carer or support worker to accompany them if necessary. Vulnerable adults may have varying degrees of independence and sometimes it will be at the walk leader's or organiser's discretion whether or not they can participate unaccompanied.

Note that providing care for adults with special needs is generally classified by law as a 'regulated activity' and organisations must take special precautions before permitting individuals to provide it (see under General Principles above).

You should normally agree care arrangements in advance with a partner organisation, but individuals may turn up spontaneously to some activities especially if promoted to the public.

- 1 When working with partner organisations targeting vulnerable adults and/or people with special needs, make sure their responsibilities to provide care and support are understood and agreed in advance.

- 2 If you are leading an activity where people are present with carers or support workers, make sure the carers understand they are responsible for direct care.
- 3 It can be difficult to identify levels of independence, and these may change over time. For example an individual who has been attending activities on a regular basis may experience deteriorating physical or mental health. If you have concerns and feel they should be accompanied by a carer, speak to a partner organisation if appropriate. If not, raise the issue tactfully with the person concerned. Speak to your manager and/or the Safeguarding Officer for further support and advice.

## 6.7 Concerns about abuse

Cases of abuse are thankfully rare, but if you regularly welcome children and vulnerable adults, it is possible you or the staff and volunteers you manage may have concerns about abuse from your own observations of participants. Abuse can include not only physical and sexual abuse but also emotional abuse and neglect. Vulnerable adults can also be at risk 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 trusted adults, 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 Ramblers activity:
  - 1 **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.
  - 2 Alert your manager as soon as possible.

- 3 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 3 when making notes.
  - 4 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 below.
  - 5 Fill in and file an incident report and attach copies of any written reports to the police or local authority. Don't 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:
    - 1 Make a note of your concerns as soon as you can, ideally within an hour of any incident.
    - 2 In agreement with your manager, ensure they are immediately taken up with the local authority children and family services team. They 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 3. They may return to you with follow up questions.
    - 3 Fill in and file an incident report within 24 hours and attach copies of any written reports to the police or local authority. Don't include sensitive personal details on the form.
    - 4 If you need further advice or are unhappy with your manager's decision, contact the Safeguarding Officer.
  - Generally:
    - 1 Find out the contact details of your local authority child and family services team (see below), including the out of hours emergency contact, and keep them in a safe place and up to date.
    - 2 Be supportive, confidential and responsive to the staff and volunteers you manage if they come to you with concerns about abuse. When in any doubt, report to the local authority, whose job it is to investigate.
    - 3 If a concern about abuse arises when working with a partner organisation, unless you believe there is a good reason not to do so, discuss the matter in confidence with their Safeguarding Officer or, if they do not have one, another senior representative, and inform them of any action you have taken.
    - 4 When working with children and vulnerable adults, be sensible and self-aware, and avoid placing yourself into situations where your actions may be misinterpreted.
    - 5 Avoid agreeing to supervise a child or vulnerable adult while a parent or carer is absent, especially if this means being left alone with them. Don't arrange to meet with them socially outside the Ramblers activity.

- 6 If a participant discloses abuse to you, be sympathetic and supportive. Thank them for telling you, tell them it is not their fault, but don't agree to keep confidences. Explain it is your duty to pass on information appropriately and tell them what you will do next.
- 7 Keep concerns confidential. Only share details as necessary with your manager, the Safeguarding Officer and the appropriate authorities.
- 8 Don't risk putting yourself in difficulty or danger by attempting to investigate the case yourself or to challenge the alleged abuser.
- 9 Don't be afraid to raise genuine concerns about volunteers or staff if you see examples of bad practice or failure to follow our policy or even have suspicions of abuse. Speak discreetly to your staff manager or the Safeguarding Officer.

## Useful contacts

- **Emergency:** Police/Ambulance tel 999
- **Ramblers Safeguarding Officer** tel 020 7339 8574, [safeguarding@ramblers.zendesk.com](mailto:safeguarding@ramblers.zendesk.com)
- **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). England 0300 123 1212, Scotland 01382 207101, Wales 101.
- **NSPCC helpline** tel 0808 800 5000, [www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline)

## Appendix I: Example parental consent form

*You can edit the details of whom to send it to as required.*

### Parental consent form

*For parents, legal guardians, carers or other authorised adults with parental responsibility for a 15, 16 or 17 year old wishing to join Ramblers activities unaccompanied.*

The Ramblers has a legal duty of care to ensure that a 15, 16 or 17 year old\* joining Ramblers activities unaccompanied has obtained consent from an adult with parental responsibility. Please complete this form and send to the activity organiser, or hand to the leader before the start of the activity. Please write clearly.

**My name is**

.....

**My address is**.....

.....

**I give parental permission for** (name(s) and age(s) of young person(s)

**Name**.....**Aged**.....

**Name**.....**Aged**.....

**Name**.....**Aged**.....

to join a Ramblers activity that does not involve an overnight stay unaccompanied.

**Relationship to young people**.....

**Emergency contact number**.....

I understand that this is to enable Ramblers volunteers or staff to act if the need arises to administer and/or make decisions about emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.

**Signature** ..... **Date**.....

\*Please note Ramblers cannot accept unaccompanied children under 15, or anyone under 18 on an activity involving an overnight trip, unless accompanied by an adult with parental responsibility.

## Appendix 2: Example publicity, photography, film and video consent form



### Publicity, Photography, Film and Video Consent Form

I (print name) \_\_\_\_\_ consent to have mine or my child(ren)'s image recorded whilst attending activities organised by the Ramblers. I understand that my image may be used for publicity purposes to promote the work of the Ramblers.

I am aware that my image may be used in a publishable format, for example, television, cinema, brochures, posters, newspaper and Internet articles or displays and may also feature on the Ramblers website.

I give my consent for photos of myself of my child(ren) to be used in this manner, by the Ramblers.

I am aware that my or my child(ren)s personal details, for example name and address **will not** be passed on to any other organisation without my full written consent and will be held only by the Ramblers for record keeping purposes.

Print Name:

Name of Child (if required):

Signature:

Date:

## **Appendix 3: 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.

- 1 Your name and contact details.
- 2 The organisation's name and contact details.
- 3 Your role.
- 4 Child or vulnerable adult'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 vulnerable adult's account of any signs or injuries, if any.
- 7 Whether or not the child or vulnerable adult 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.