

SAFEGUARDING ADULTS AT RISK POLICY



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Mountaineering Ireland Version Control			
Version	Author	Date	Amendments
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1. Introduction

Mountaineering Ireland is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and positive environment and accepts its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of adults at risk of abuse who are unable to protect themselves from harm involved in mountaineering, hillwalking and climbing through Mountaineering Ireland, in accordance with legislation.

Mountaineering Ireland is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all individuals over the age of eighteen by protecting them from abuse listed in this policy. Mountaineering Ireland recognises that in all matters concerning adults at risk, the welfare and protection of such adults is of paramount importance. Mountaineering Ireland will encourage and support partner organisations, including clubs, counties, suppliers, and sponsors to adopt and demonstrate their commitment to the principles and practice of equality as set out in this policy.

This policy aims to promote a zero-tolerance approach to abuse with regards to adults at risk. This Policy applies to all people involved in Mountaineering Ireland and its affiliated bodies.

Vulnerable Person: means a person, other than a child, who—

- (i) (a) is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,
- (b) has an intellectual disability,
- (c) is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness, or age, or
- (d) has a physical disability, which is of such a nature or degree—
 - (i) as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or
 - (ii) that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing, and bathing.

In Northern Ireland, 'Adult at Risk' is the preferred term.

Adult at risk of harm is a person aged eighteen or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) Personal characteristics which may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special

educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain. AND/OR

b) Life circumstances which may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors, and environmental living conditions.

In this document, the term 'Adult at Risk' will be utilised to refer to both jurisdictions.

2. Policy Statement

Mountaineering Ireland believes all adults regardless of age, ability or disability, gender, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, marital or gender status have the right to be protected from abuse and poor practice and to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment. Mountaineering Ireland will seek to ensure that our sport is inclusive and make reasonable adjustments for any ability, disability, or impairment, we will also commit to continuous development, monitoring, and review. The rights, dignity and worth of all adults will always be respected.

Mountaineering Ireland recognises that ability and disability can change over time, such that some adults may be additionally vulnerable to abuse, for example, those who have a dependency on others or who have different communication needs. We also recognise that a disabled adult may or may not identify themselves or be identified as adult 'at risk.'

We have a shared responsibility to ensure the safety and wellbeing of adults and will act appropriately and report concerns. All allegations will be taken seriously and responded to quickly in line with Mountaineering Irelands Safeguarding Adults at Risk policy.

3. Principles:

The guidance in this document is based on the following safeguarding principles which are enshrined within the [Care Act 2014](#) and the [Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership Policy Document 2015](#) :

Principle 1: Empowerment

People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.

Example: *"I am asked what I want as the outcomes from the safeguarding process and these directly inform what happens."*

Principle 2: Prevention

It is better to take action before harm occurs. Example: *"I receive clear and simple information about what abuse is, how to recognise the signs and what I can do to seek help."*

Principle 3: Proportionality

The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented. Example: *"I am sure that professionals will work in my interest, as I see them, and they will only get involved as much as needed."*

Principle 4: Protection

Support and representation for those in the greatest need. Example: *"I get help and support to report abuse and neglect. I get help so that I am able to take part in the safeguarding process to the extent to which I want."*

Principle 5: Partnership

Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting, and reporting neglect and abuse. Example: *"I know that staff treat any personal and sensitive information in confidence, only sharing what is helpful and necessary. I am confident that professionals will work together and with me to get the best result for me."*

Principle 6: Accountability

Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

Example: *"I understand the role of everyone involved in my life and so do they."*

4. Guidance and Legislation

Guidance and Legislation Ireland
Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at risk of abuse – National Policy and Procedures (2014)
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014
The Data Protection Act 2018
Disability Act 2005
National Vetting Act 2012 to 2016
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Ratified 2018)
The Equal Status Acts 2000-2015
Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015

Guidance and Legislation UK
Care Act 2014
Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership Document (Published 2015)
Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (Amendment) Act 2012
Equality Act 2010
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Mental Capacity Act 2005
Sexual Offences Act 2003
Human Rights Act 1998
Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Ratified 2009)

5. Definitions

Adult at Risk is any adult, who has a need for care or support, long or short term (whether or not any of those needs are being met by authorities), and is experiencing, or is at risk of. Abuse or neglect, and as a result of those care or support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.

Vulnerable Person means a person, other than a child who –

- a) Is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,
- b) Has an intellectual disability,
- c) Is suffering from physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness, or age, or
- d) Has a physical disability,

Which is of such nature or degree –

- I. As to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or
- II. That results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing, and bathing.

Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by another person or persons.

Adult is anyone over the age of 18 years of age.

Adult safeguarding is protecting a person’s right to live safely, free from abuse and neglect.

Capacity refers to the ability to make decisions at a particular time, for example, when under considerable stress. The starting assumption must always be that a person has the capacity to make a decision unless it can be established that they lack capacity (MCA 2015).

6. Types of Abuse and Neglect

This is not an exhaustive list but an illustrative guide as to the sort of behaviour or issue that could give rise to a safeguarding concern. The following definitions are taken from the Care Act 2014.

Self-neglect: covers a wide range of behaviour: neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health, or surroundings, and includes behaviour such as hoarding. In Mountaineering Ireland this could be an adult whose appearance becomes unkempt, does not wear suitable kit, shows deterioration in hygiene, or does not care about themselves.

Modern slavery: encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive, and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude, and inhumane treatment.

Domestic abuse: includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional abuse. It also includes so called 'honour' based violence. Sport participants may notice a power imbalance between a participant and a family member. For example, a participant may be looking quiet and withdrawn when one person comes to collect them from sessions, in contrast to another person whom they greet with a smile.

Discriminatory: discrimination is abusing which centres on a difference or perceived difference particularly with respect to race, gender, or disability or any of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act. This could be the harassing of a club member because they are or are perceived to be different in some way.

Organisational abuse: includes neglect and poor care practice within an institution or setting

such as a club for people with learning disabilities or a military training institution, for example, or in relation to groups from a college or training organisation. This may range from one-off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes, and practices within an organisation. In Mountaineering Ireland's activities, this could be training without a necessary break or poor treatment of participants by staff.

Physical abuse: includes, for example, hitting, pushing, slapping, or punching an individual, and the inappropriate use of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.

Sexual abuse: includes rape, sexual assault or harassment, indecent exposure, sexual grooming or coercion, 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 was pressured into consenting, e.g. a mentor who puts pressure on a person to be more "friendly" than they are comfortable with, in order to maintain a good training relationship.

Financial or material abuse includes 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. This could be someone taking equipment from an athlete or asking them to pay for things for others.

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

Emotional or Psychological abuse: includes threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

Not included in the Care Act 2014 but also relevant:

Cyber bullying: occurs when someone repeatedly makes fun of another person online or repeatedly picks on another person through emails or text messages, or uses online forums with the intention of harming, damaging, humiliating, or isolating another person. It can be used to conduct many different types of bullying (such as racist bullying, homophobic bullying, or bullying related to special educational needs and disabilities) but instead of the perpetrator conducting the bullying face-to-face, they use technology as a means to do it.

Forced marriage is a term used to describe a marriage in which one or both of the parties are married without their consent or against their will. A forced marriage differs from an arranged marriage, in which both parties' consent to the assistance of a third party in identifying a spouse. The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 makes it a criminal offence to force someone to marry.

Hate crime: Hate crime is any incident which constitutes a criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice, discrimination or hate towards a person's actual or perceived race, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, or gender identity.

Radicalisation: the aim of radicalisation is to attract people to their reasoning, inspire new recruits, embed their extreme views, and persuade individuals of the legitimacy of their cause. This may be direct through a relationship or through social media.

7. Signs and Indicators of Abuse and Neglect

Abuse can take place in any context and by all manner of perpetrator. Abuse may be inflicted by anyone in the organisation who a person comes into contact with; other club members, workers, volunteers, or coaches may suspect that a person is being abused or neglected outside of the club setting. There are many signs and indicators that may suggest someone is being abused or neglected, these include but are not limited to:

- ✚ Unexplained bruises or injuries – or a lack of medical attention when an injury is present.
- ✚ Person has belongings or money going missing.
- ✚ Person is not attending/no longer enjoying their sessions.
- ✚ Someone losing or gaining weight/ an unkempt appearance.
- ✚ A change in behaviour or confidence of a person.
- ✚ Self-harm.
- ✚ Person may have a fear of a particular group or individual.
- ✚ They may tell you/another person that they are being abused i.e., a disclosure.

8. Safeguarding Concerns

If you have a safeguarding concern in relation to an adult at risk of abuse, in line with the above listed categories of abuse, please follow these guidelines:

- ✚ Ensure the safety of the person at risk. If the adult in question needs immediate medical attention, call the emergency services.
- ✚ Stay calm and reassure that you are there to assist them. Do not promise secrecy on the issue.
- ✚ You do not need consent to discuss a concern with a Safeguarding Officer.
- ✚ Concerns need to be reported to the authorities. Consent from the person affected can be obtained at this point by the authorities who have the power to investigate.
- ✚ Listen to what the adult has to say.
- ✚ Confidentiality is of the utmost importance in a situation like this.
- ✚ Ask the adult what they would like to happen, make sure their views, wishes and choices are voiced and listened to.
- ✚ Record all the relevant information, especially what is seen and heard, so that facts can be considered in any investigation.

9. Raising a Concern

You may become aware that abuse or poor practice is taking place, or you may suspect abuse or poor practice may be occurring. You may be told about something that may be abuse or poor practice. This can be within a Mountaineering Ireland event, activity, or club; or relates to the behaviour of Mountaineering Ireland staff, coaches, or volunteers. Please follow the

procedures outlined in this document and contact Mountaineering Ireland's National Children's Officer (Lead Safeguarding Officer), Catherine Hibbitt: safeguarding@mountaineering.ie. If the National Children's Officer is implicated, or you receive an 'out of office' reply, then report to the Mountaineering Ireland CEO Murrough McDonagh: murrough@mountaineering.ie.

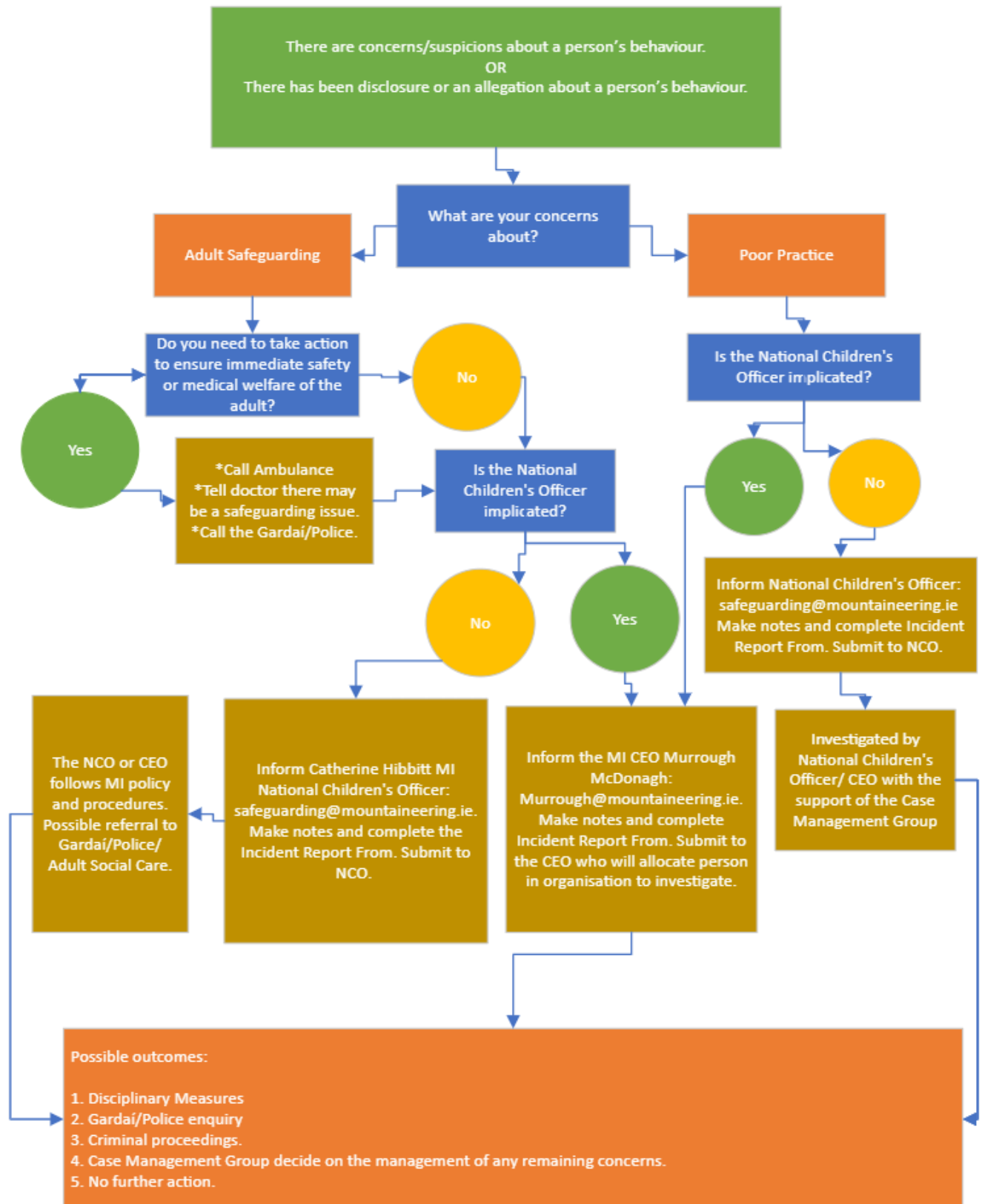
If you are concerned someone is in immediate danger, contact the Gardaí/Police straight away by calling 112 Or 999.

**Remember:
Reporting is NOT accusing. If you have a concern, do not delay.**




It is important when considering your concern that you also consider the needs and wishes of the person at risk, consider the nature of the concern and disclosure.

Remember to involve the adult at risk throughout the process, wherever possible, and gain consent for any referrals to social care if the person has capacity (i.e., to make their own decisions).

10. Reporting Procedure



11. Relevant Policies

-  Poor Practice and Whistleblowing policy
-  Complaints and Disciplinary policy
-  Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Policy

Policies and procedures and supporting information are available on the [Mountaineering Ireland Website](#).