

UK Mirror Class Association (UKMCA)

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Guidelines

1. Introduction

The UK Mirror Class Association (UKMCA) is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all people involved in sailing and related activities. We recognise our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults, and to ensure that all activities are conducted in a safe and responsible manner.

This policy outlines the steps we will take to protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults from harm, and the measures that will be implemented to ensure their welfare is always our top priority.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all members of the UK Mirror Class Association, including:

- Sailors under the age of 18 (children and young people)
- Vulnerable adults (adults who may be at greater risk of harm or abuse due to factors like disability, illness, or social vulnerability)
- Coaches, volunteers, and other adults working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults in the Mirror Class sailing community
- Event organisers and anyone else involved in activities organised by the UKMCA

3. Our Commitment

- To ensure that all children, young people, and vulnerable adults involved in Mirror Class Association activities are provided with a safe environment.
- To promote the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults in accordance with UK child protection and safeguarding law.
- To ensure that those in positions of responsibility are adequately trained and aware of safeguarding issues.
- To encourage best practices in safeguarding and child protection.
- To respond to concerns regarding safeguarding in a timely, transparent, and appropriate manner.

4. Key Safeguarding Principles

The UKMCA adheres to the following safeguarding principles:

- **Best Interests of the Individual:** The welfare of the child, young person, or vulnerable adult is always paramount. All decisions and actions will be made with their best interests in mind.
- **Non-discrimination:** All individuals, regardless of age, background, race, gender, religion, disability, or any other status, have the right to be protected from harm.
- **Zero Tolerance of Abuse:** Any form of abuse, including physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, or exploitation, will not be tolerated within the Mirror Class community.

- **Right to be Heard:** Children, young people, and vulnerable adults will be encouraged to express their concerns and be listened to in a supportive environment.
- **Safe Recruitment and Training:** Individuals working with children, young people, or vulnerable adults will undergo appropriate recruitment checks (such as DBS checks) and safeguarding training, including how to identify and respond to concerns, as well as safe working practices. The level of training and checks will be proportionate to the role and level of risk involved and inline with statutory requirements. The risk is higher if the person will be in regular contact with the same child or children, in sole charge of children with no parents or other adults present, or in a role involving authority and trust, eg as a coach or instructor.

5. Responsibilities

5.1. Role of UKMCA Members and Volunteers

- Members and volunteers working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults have a responsibility to ensure that they act in accordance with this policy and adhere to safeguarding procedures.
- They should be vigilant and immediately report any concerns about the welfare of children, young people, or vulnerable adults to the appropriate authorities.
- Volunteers and coaches should complete safeguarding training where required.

5.2. Welfare Officer

The UKMCA will appoint a Welfare Officer who will be responsible for the overall implementation of this policy, providing advice and support to coaches, volunteers, and parents, and ensuring that safeguarding practices are followed.

5.3. Role of Parents, Carers, and Support Networks

- Parents and carers of children and young people should be encouraged to actively participate in the safeguarding process by being aware of The Association's safeguarding policy.
- Vulnerable adults should be encouraged to identify any concerns they may have regarding their participation in activities and to share these concerns with the Welfare Officer or a trusted individual.
- Parents and carers should also ensure that children and young people are aware of how to report any concerns they may have regarding their safety.

6. Safeguarding Procedures

6.1. Responding to Allegations or Concerns

If anyone has concerns about the welfare of a child, young person, or vulnerable adult, or if an allegation of abuse is made, the following procedures should be followed:

1. **Listen and take the individual seriously:** Do not dismiss or trivialise concerns. Ensure that the individual feels heard and understood. Do not ask leading questions.
2. **Record the information:** Write down what was said or observed as soon as possible, keeping accurate and factual records.
3. **Report the concern:** Immediately inform the Welfare Officer. If the concern involves the Welfare Officer, report to the Chair of the UKMCA, Club Safeguarding Lead or the RYA.
4. **Follow up:** The Welfare Officer will ensure that appropriate actions are taken, including reporting to statutory authorities (e.g., local social services or the police) if necessary.

6.2. Safe Practices for Activities

To minimise the risk of abuse during sailing and training sessions, the following safe practices should be followed:

- **Supervision:** Children, young people, and vulnerable adults should always be supervised by at least two responsible adults during training sessions, races, and social events.
- **Changing Facilities:** Where possible, boys and girls should have separate changing rooms. If this is not possible, at least ensure that changing rooms are supervised by an adult at all times. Where adults must change in the same facilities as children then adults should avoid being in the changing facilities without another adult.
- **Transport:** If children or vulnerable adults need to be transported to events or training sessions, parents, carers, or guardians should be informed of transport arrangements in advance. Ideally, transportation should not involve one-to-one journeys with an adult unless in an emergency situation.

6.3. Anti-Bullying

Bullying of any kind, whether physical, verbal, or online, will not be tolerated in the UKMCA. Any incidents of bullying should be reported immediately, and appropriate action will be taken to address the situation. The RYA British Youth Sailing Anti-Bullying Policy outlines sets out what the RYA means by bullying, how you can recognise it and what to do about it if you think it might be happening.

6.4. Mental and Emotional Health

The mental and emotional well-being of children, young people, and vulnerable adults is also a priority. If an individual is experiencing emotional distress, appropriate support should be provided, and any safeguarding concerns should be addressed.

7. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains up to date with best practices and legal requirements. Any changes to the policy will be communicated to UKMCA members and stakeholders via the Class Association website.

8. Contact Information

If you have any concerns about safeguarding or child protection, please contact the UKMCA Welfare Officer:

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welfare@ukmirrorsailing.com

RYA Safeguarding Team

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