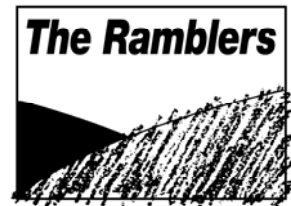


Ramblers' Association Child Protection Policy and Guidelines



Contents

Ref	Topic	Page
	Index / Contents	2
1	Introduction	3
1.1	Welcoming children	3
1.2	Why this guide	3
2	Definitions	4
2.1	Children	4
2.2	Abuse	4
3	What Areas and Groups need to know	4
3.1	Three areas of responsibility	4
4	Ensuring conditions are right	5
4.1	Gauging the suitability of the activity	5
4.2	Children under 14	5
4.3	Children over 14	6
4.4	Avoiding being left alone with a child	6
4.5	Giving the right message to the public and parents/carers	6
5	Your own behaviour and that of others	7
	Code of Behaviour	7
6	Reporting abuse or concerns of abuse	8
7	Running activities specifically aimed at children	9
	A guide for Ramblers Areas and Groups in involving and welcoming children	10
	Child Protection Incident Report Form	11

The Ramblers' Association believes in sharing a love and appreciation of walking for everyone, including children. Children have a great deal to gain by learning to appreciate the pleasures and benefits of walking whether in the countryside or urban areas.

The Ramblers Association is not a specialist organisation for children, and not every Ramblers event will be suitable for them. However, where children can take part in Ramblers events, they are welcomed.

The Ramblers Association is committed to safeguarding the well being of all children who participate in Ramblers activities by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm.

Every child under 14 must be accompanied by an adult at all times during Ramblers activities and have the consent of their parent or carer to participate. Some older children over 14 may be able to take part in Ramblers activities unaccompanied providing they have the consent of their parent or carer.

Every adult aged eighteen or over who participates in a Ramblers activity, whether a member of the Ramblers Association or not, is expected to put this policy in practice at all times.

1. Introduction

1.1 Welcoming children

Sharing a love of the countryside and an appreciation of walking is at the heart of what the Ramblers exists to do. As a charity we work to spread this appreciation to everyone in our society. This is why, although we are a membership association, our activities must remain open to all sectors of the public where possible and practical. Of course, we always encourage individuals to join us and support our work too.

The Ramblers has a great deal to offer children. In the countryside, getting out walking is a fantastic way for children to experience the natural environment first hand. Walking, whether in the town or the country, is one of the most effective and accessible forms of exercise which can help children to keep fit and active.

Most of the activities of Areas and Groups are, of course, aimed primarily at adults. This is absolutely fine, and to be expected. However, increasingly, Groups or Areas are organising and planning activities that include children. Some Groups run buggy-friendly walks or have established Family Walking programmes. With the growth of 20s-30s Groups, there is the greater potential for older children to be attracted to the Ramblers. Whether its activities are aimed at children or not every Group and Area is in the position where children may come along wishing to participate. (Often, of course, they will be accompanied by an adult).

Not every Ramblers event will be suitable for children. A walk leader may, for instance, consider that the distance or terrain of a walk is too demanding to be walked safely by a child. However, where children do wish to take part in Ramblers events, it is hoped that Areas and Groups will make them welcome and allow them to participate as far as possible.

1.2 Why this guide

Children are more vulnerable to abuse than adults. When children do take part in Ramblers activities, there is a duty to ensure their safety and to protect them from physical, sexual or emotional harm, including bullying.

All adults should be aware of their responsibilities. They should adhere to the general code of behaviour set out by the Ramblers and are expected to report any concerns of child abuse that they may come across during a Ramblers activity.

However, there is an enhanced duty of care incumbent upon Ramblers volunteers who are responsible for organising and leading activities where children are or may be present. This guide outlines how organisers and leaders of activities can ensure that children are protected. Those amongst whom it is intended are members of Area and Group committees and walk leaders.

It is nothing that anyone need be fearful of. Nor does it involve vast amounts of bureaucracy or police checks! These are simple, straight-forward procedures that will be considered common sense by many, and which are already likely to be incorporated by Groups and Areas as good practice.

Definitions

2.1 Children

A child is anyone under the age of 18.

It may occasionally seem odd to bracket all 0-17 year olds in the same category. The relative vulnerability of children clearly changes over the years. In particular, some 16 and 17 year olds may be exceptionally mature and be able to act as responsibly as adults. The law makes certain distinctions between younger children and those over 16 who can get married and sign up for the armed forces. Perhaps most relevant for Ramblers may be the fact that 16 & 17 year olds can currently drink wine, beer or cider in a pub if it's with a sit down meal and accompanied by an adult!

Nevertheless, no matter how mature and "adult" an older teenager may appear, it is important to remember that, under the age of 18, they remain children.

2.2 Abuse

Abuse: The NSPCC identifies three main types of abuse. These are sexual abuse, emotional abuse and physical abuse.

Physical abuse: Physical abuse includes hitting, shaking, kicking, punching, scalding, suffocating and other ways of inflicting pain or injury to a child. It also includes giving a child harmful substances, such as drugs, alcohol or poison. If a parent or carer reports non-existent symptoms of illness in a child, or deliberately causes illness in a child, this is also a form of physical abuse.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse is when a child or young person is pressurised, forced or tricked into taking part in any kind of sexual activity with an adult or young person. This can include kissing, touching the young person's genitals or breasts, intercourse or oral sex. Encouraging a child to look at pornographic magazines, videos or sexual acts is also sexual abuse.

Emotional abuse: Emotional abuse is when a parent or carer behaves in a way that is likely to seriously affect their child's emotional development. It can range from constant rejection and denial of affection, through to continual severe criticism, deliberate humiliation and other ways of verbally "terrorising" a child.

The NSPCC website has much fuller details on what constitutes abuse and how to recognise it. Comprehensive information is available in the Government's 2006 guide: *Working Together to Safeguard Children*

3. What Rambler's Groups and Areas need to know

3.1 Three areas of responsibility

For Ramblers volunteers and committees, safeguarding children from abuse means three things.

Firstly, it means ensuring that activities are designed and conducted suitably and avoid the conditions under which abuse may take place.

Second, it means ensuring your own behaviour, and that of others is in keeping with the codes of good behaviour expected to protect children from abuse.

Third, it means being alert to the indications of abuse and reporting any concerns you may have to the Child Protection and Vulnerability Officer at Central Office.

4. Ensuring conditions are right

4.1 Gauging the suitability of the activity

One of the first concerns when involving children in an activity is to ensure that the activity is suitable for them. For Ramblers' Groups, this is most likely to be a concern when organising led walks. If a walk leader considers that the walk planned is likely to be too demanding for a child, he/she should make this clear to the child and his/her carer. A walk leader is quite entitled to refuse to include a child and carer on a walk if he/she genuinely feels that it will be too difficult. The walk leader should explain clearly to the child and the carer the reasons for excluding them on this occasion.

In any case, where a child and carer arrive for a walk, the leader should take particular care to explain to both the nature of the walk (the distance, the terrain, the estimated return time), and to ensure that the child is suitably equipped.

4.2 Children under 14

On any Ramblers activity, children under 14 should always be accompanied. This should be by a parent or the legal carer.

Being accompanied by the parent or carer is important as it is only the person with legal parental responsibility who can give consent to their child receiving medical attention. (Except in the cases of older children (some 14 & 15 year olds and most 16 & 17 year olds) who may be able to give their own consent).

There may well be occasions in the Ramblers Association where children are accompanied on walks by their grandparents, an older family member or a close family friend. In these instances, walk leaders should seek assurance that the adult has the parent's consent for the child to take part in the activity.

In practice, where the child's companion is well-known to the Group as a regular participant, and where their relationship to the child is well-known to others in the Group, walk leaders should remain confident about putting their good faith in the adult and accepting the child on the walk.

However, if the walk leader is in any doubt about the relationship between the child and adult, they should request written consent from the parent before allowing the child to take part. (A model consent form is available)

Adults who take part in walks with their children may need to be reminded that the children remain their responsibility at all times in the walk. Although this may appear to be self-evident, there have been instances where a parent has left a child with a Group for part of a walk (perhaps turning back early with a second younger child), agreeing to meet up again at the end point. Group leaders, in particular, are encouraged to avoid the situation arising where they, or other adults on the walk, are left in sole charge of any child.

4.3 Children over 14

For some children over 14, it may be possible to take part in walks and other activities unaccompanied as long as written parental consent has been given.

On a walk, for instance, a Group may decide that it is happy to let an older child take part unaccompanied by an adult if he or she is considered mature and responsible enough to walk with the Group alone. As long as the child is over the age of 14, Groups should use their discretion to decide whether to allow individual children to participate unaccompanied.

In taking the decision, Groups should also bear in mind the following

Under no circumstances should Groups feel under pressure from parents to let their children walk unaccompanied with them.

The desire of the child to take part, the value of walking for children and the benefit they will be able to get.

4.4 Avoiding being left alone with a child

All adults should avoid the situation arising where they are left alone with a child. In the context of Group led walks, it is rare that such situations will arise frequently. However, particular care should be taken to ensure that children are not given lifts in cars with only one adult. Where children are given lifts, drivers should make sure that another adult is also taken, and that the child is dropped off first.

If an unaccompanied older child needed to leave a walk early, the Group should arrange for two adults to stay with him/her if possible rather than just one.

Ramblers work at Group level can also involve meetings of small numbers of people, sometimes in private houses. It is possible to imagine that some older children may occasionally get involved with this organising/committee side of work. Should this arise, care should be taken by all to ensure that no situation arises where a child is left one-to-one with an adult.

If a child comes to confide in you about something that is concerning them, it is important to listen and to provide re-assurance to them. However, you should, again, avoid the situation where you are left alone one-to-one. Where possible, try to make sure that another adult is present, or that, at least, you are in eye or ear shot of others. Avoid being in a closed room alone with a child, or isolated at the back of a walk group.

The only exception to this rule is in a situation where to leave a child alone will place them at greater risk than not. Clearly, it would be more dangerous to leave a child alone in a car park than to take them back home.

4.5 Giving the right message to the public and parents/carers

It's important that parents and carers are aware that they must accompany their children and remain responsible for them throughout the activity.

To help to communicate this, Groups may consider adding some wording to their programmes, website and other publicity to that effect. A suggested form of words could be:

Children are welcome to join our Group walks, or take part in other Group activities when accompanied by their parent and carer, provided the leader is comfortable that it is suitable. Responsibility for the participation of children remains with the parent or carer at all times. Some older children may be welcome to walk with the group unaccompanied provided express consent is given by their parent and carer. Contact us to discuss.

5. Your own behaviour and that of others

1. All adults who take part in Ramblers activities are expected to adhere to this code of behaviour.

Do

- treat children with dignity and respect
- set an example you would wish others to follow
- encourage others to challenge any attitudes and behaviours they do not like
- ensure relationships with children are not exclusive
- remember someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned
- allow children to talk about any concerns they may have
- take any allegations or concerns of abuse seriously and refer immediately

Do not

- trivialise abuse
- form a relationship with a child that is an abuse of trust
- engage in inappropriate behaviour or contact – physical, verbal, sexual
- use inappropriate language – writing, phoning, email or internet
- let allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse go unreported

2. All Ramblers volunteers (office holders at Area and Group level, walk leaders, back-markers and any other volunteers) are expected to adhere to the following rules.

Do

- welcome children and let them take part where possible
- consider whether the activity is suitable for the children who wish to take part.
- make sure children have their parent or legal carer with them at all times (or that they have appropriate parental consent to take part)
- ensure that parents and carers are aware that they remain responsible for their children
- plan to have more than one volunteer present when carrying out activities where you expect children.

Do not

- get into a situation where you are left alone with a child (including lifts in cars)
- force or intimidate a child to do something they are not comfortable with (eg walk a narrow ridge, jump across a river)
- let a child take part if you feel the activity is unsuitable and can not be modified

6. Reporting abuse or concerns of abuse

If you have a concern about the well being of a child, refer it. Do not investigate.

The Ramblers Association expects you to report your concern to the

Child Protection Officer, Ramblers Association,
2nd Floor, Camelford House, 87-89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TW
020 7339 8574; Child.protection@ramblers.org.uk

In an emergency (i.e. if you suspect a child to be at imminent risk of significant harm), contact the police or social services directly. Then inform the Ramblers Association of the action you have taken.

To help you report appropriately according to the situation, the following may be helpful

a. If a child tells you about abuse by someone else

Allow them to speak without interruption, accepting what is said.
Offer immediate understanding and reassurance, while passing no judgement.
Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you must pass the information on.
Immediately contact the Ramblers Child Protection Officer (CPO) at Central Office.
Write careful notes of what was said (using actual words where possible) and complete a Concern Report Form (available from the CPO).
Sign, date and pass the notes and report to the CPO.
Try to ensure that no Ramblers activity arises that could cause further concern.

b. If you have a concern about a child's safety and well-being

Immediately contact the Ramblers Child Protection Officer (CPO) at Central Office.
Write careful notes of what you witnessed, heard or saw and complete a Concern Report Form (available from the CPO, Child.protection@ramblers.org.uk)
Sign, date and pass the notes to the CPO.
Try to ensure that no Ramblers activity arises that could cause further concern.

c. If you receive a complaint or allegation about any adult or about yourself

Immediately tell the Ramblers Child Protection Officer (CPO) at Central Office.
Write careful notes of what you witnessed, heard or saw and complete a Concern Report Form (available from the CPO)
Sign, date and pass the notes to the CPO
Try to ensure that no Ramblers activity arises that could cause further concern

Other useful numbers:
The NSPCC have a confidential Child Protection helpline: 0808 800 5000
Childline is a dedicated free helpline for children: 0800 1111

7. Running activities specifically aimed at children

Groups that run regular activities aimed at children, or who are establishing Family Walking Groups aimed at parents and their children should take particular note of these guidelines. It is important that all walk leaders and other volunteers working with these programmes are aware of them. Group and Area committees should make sure that they are brought to the attention of the relevant volunteers.

Any Group or Area that is considering establishing a regular programme aimed at children is expected to contact the Child Protection Officer at Central Office first.

A guide for Ramblers Areas and Groups in involving and welcoming children

The following guidelines are intended for committee members of Ramblers Association Groups and Areas and Walk Leaders. They explain how Groups and Areas should approach any activities involving children and the measures Group and Area volunteers should take to safeguard child protection.

These guidelines are underpinned by the key principle that the welfare of the child is paramount.



Keeping Children safe A guide for Ramblers Areas and Groups in involving and welcoming children

Summary of guidance

Welcome children on walks and other activities as long as

You consider the activity to be suitable for them **AND**
They are accompanied by a parent/carer
(OR, in the case of some children over 14, they have clear parental consent to participate.

Be open and approachable to children, but avoid situations arising where you or any another adult are left alone with a child.

Ensure that parents/carers are aware that they are responsible for their children at all times.

Adhere to the code of good behaviour and ensure other adults do too Please read www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/walks/behaviour-code.html for more information.

Report any concerns to the Child Protection Officer at Central Office
www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/walks/reporting.html

If planning an event or programme of events aimed at children, contact the Child Protection Officer at Central Office first to discuss.

This guide mentions three forms that are available to help Groups get parental consent, or to report concerns.

- A form for reporting concerns about a child
- A parental consent form for parents who wish their children to be accompanied by another adult
- A parental consent form for parents to allow children over 14 to take part unaccompanied

Each form is available to download from the Volunteers Section of the Ramblers website (www.ramblers.co.uk/volunteer/walks/childpol.html) or can be requested from Ramblers Central Office (020 7339 8574; Child.protection@ramblers.org.uk)
Details about Child Protection can be found on www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/walks/childpol.html

Please find below a sample Child Protection Report Form:



Child Protection Incident Report form

This form is to help you provide the Ramblers with important information if you suspect that a child or young person may be experiencing abuse.

Use this form to report if:

you suspect a child is being abused (whether in the course of their participation with the Ramblers or not)

a complaint is made about any adult or about yourself

This form should be returned

By post to the: Child Protection Officer, Ramblers Association, 2nd Floor, Camelford House, 87-89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TW.

By fax to: 020 7339 8501

By email to Child.protection@ramblers.org.uk (if you would like a copy of the form to complete electronically, email us and we can send it to you)

If you have any queries, you can speak to our Child Protection Officer at Central Office by calling 020 7339 8574.

For internal use only

	Date	initials
Report received by Child Protection Officer on		
Receipt of report acknowledged on		

Action taken

Date

initials

About you

Your Name	
Your contact details (Please include a day-time contact)	

Are you a member of the Ramblers? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If so, please give memb. no (or if not known ensure you list your postcode)
Are you an elected member of an Area or Group committee? (give details)
Are you a Ramblers volunteer not on the committee? (eg walk leader)

About the child in question

Do you know?

The child's name	
Their contact details Or any other details that may help to identify the individual?	

Where you suspect the abuse may be taking place

- a) Do you suspect abuse is being carried out in the course of a Rambler's activity?
Yes **No**
- b) Through your involvement with the Ramblers, have you been alerted to possible abuse that may be taking place outside of any Ramblers activity?
Yes **No**

c) If you are reporting a concern that became apparent during the course of a specific Ramblers activity, please give details.

The type of activity (eg led walk, meeting)	
The time and date	
The location	
The Ramblers Group or Area organising the event	
The names of any Ramblers volunteers present operating in a leadership role	
Other	

Are you concerned about the behaviour of another adult known to you?

If you have seen or heard something that leads you to have concerns about abusive behaviour from another adult, please provide details

<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Their name</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Their name		
Their name			
Their contact details Or any other details that may help to identify the individual?			
Their relationship to the child or vulnerable adult in question			
How you know this individual, and for how long			
Is this person a member of the Ramblers ?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>		
Is this person a regular participant in Ramblers activities	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>		

Your report

Now please provide as full details as possible of your concern.

If you are reporting what a child has said to you, use the actual words used where possible

If you are reporting a concern or have received a complaint, give details of what you witnessed, heard or were told

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Your signature		Date	
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