

# **The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults**

**Fife Canoeing Activities Group (FCAG)  
Policy and Procedures**

**March 2011**

## **Managing Fife Canoeing Activities Group in Order to Protect Children and Vulnerable Adults.**

Protecting children and vulnerable adults from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse is an integral part of the policy and practice of Fife Canoeing Activities Group (FCAG), and is in accordance with the Scottish Canoe Association (SCA) and British Canoe Union (BCU) policies. In order to ensure the safety and welfare of children, club coaches, adult members and volunteers, FCAG has put in place the following rules in relation to children (a child being defined as anyone under the age of 18).

In addition to offering safeguards against abuse or neglect, the guidelines are designed to ensure that allegations are taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

Paddlers, coaches and helpers should know that all children whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, religious belief and sexual identity have the right to be protection from abuse of any kind.

Adult participants and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults should be aware at all times that caution is necessary, and that they should always avoid situations where they may be put in a compromising position.

People canoe in varied venues, and problems of privacy, safety and child protection should always be in the minds of adults and older junior paddlers working with younger or vulnerable paddlers.

All adult participants and volunteers should remember that accusations can be made about anybody, and they should not rely on their reputation or good name to protect them.

The FCAG 'Child Protection Guideline' is based on the SCA Child Protection Policy, and is designed to protect children and vulnerable adults. It should be adhered to by all individuals involved with FCAG activities.

### FCAG Child Protection Co-ordinator.

As recommended by the SCA, FCAG have appointed a Child Protection Co-ordinator. This person will attend a relevant training course provided by the SCA, whose function is to provide advice and raise awareness of the Policy. Contact details for this person can be found in the club policy statement on the next page.

### SCA Child Protection Officer

The SCA's Child Protection Officer can be reached via the Scottish Canoe Association office. (S)He is available to organise training opportunities and to support the Clubs Child Protection Co-ordinators.

### Acknowledgements

This document has been compiled based on the recommendations within the SCA 'Guidelines for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults', (2002 and 2008) and BCU's 'Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policy', (1999). Copies of the documents can be obtained from:

Scottish Canoe Association  
Caledonia House  
South Gyle  
Edinburgh EH12 9DQ  
Tel 0131 317 7314  
Fax 0131 317 7319  
Email: [general.office@canoescotland.com](mailto:general.office@canoescotland.com)  
Web: [www.canoescotland.com](http://www.canoescotland.com)

BCU website: [www.bcu.org.uk](http://www.bcu.org.uk)

## FCAG Child Protection Policy Statement

All individuals involved in FCAG's activities, in any capacity, have a duty of care to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse and the neglect of all children and vulnerable adults with whom they come into contact.

FCAG believe that taking part in paddlesport should be a positive and enjoyable part of young people's lives and to achieve this have the following aims:

- Club coaches should follow the BCU Code of Ethics.
- FCAG's coaches, adult members and volunteers work within the BCU / SCA's / FCAG's Child Protection Policies. The club will follow the guidance within the SCA policy in the event of any concerns or allegations.
- All club members are made aware of the Club Code of Conduct - (appendix 1) and Child Protection Policy.
- All paddlers must have provided a signed Consent Form before participating in Training or other water based activities organised by the club.
- The Club will obtain written medical details of paddlers which will be made available to session leaders and anyone involved in coaching.
- All paddlers will provide the club with signed consent / non-consent to photos / videos being taken / used for coaching and publicity
- Club training and sessions will be run by coaches qualified for the type of paddling environment concerned. This includes sessions run by unqualified coaches who meet FCAG guidelines. The Club will encourage and support helpers to gain qualifications and assist coaches to stay updated.
- FCAG will plan sessions so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children may occur.
- FCAG will give all coaches and helpers clear roles.
- FCAG will use supervision as a means of protecting children.
- FCAG will ensure that all individuals involved in FCAG's activities / helpers / parents are issued a copy of FCAG's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- FCAG will issue guidelines on how to report / deal with the disclosure or suspicion of abuse or unethical conduct.
- The SCA Child Protection Co-ordinator will facilitate a training programme in child protection information / awareness / procedures for all coaches / individuals involved in FCAG activities.
- FCAG will review their child protection policy at least yearly to ensure that any child protection systems in place are working.

FCAG applies current procedures in accordance with the Scottish Canoe Association Policy, which must be adhered to. FCAG will facilitate appropriate training and provide information so that all individuals connected with FCAG activities can fulfil this duty of care.

### **Concerns re Alleged / Suspected Abuse**

In the event that any parent / guardian / adult, junior or family member has concerns as to the suitability of a club coach / volunteer / member to work with young people, they are encouraged to raise this concern with the FCAG's Child Protection Co-ordinator.

As club members we are not qualified to act nor investigate possible abuse, but must take concerns seriously. The child must be taken out of immediate danger, the concern reported to the Child Protection co-ordinator, or any other club official, and procedure followed as laid down by the SCA. (2008 – Responding to concerns).. **Doing nothing is not an option.**

**In the event of a concern / allegation being raised concerning the actions of a coach, member or helper of FCAG, the person may be asked to stand aside from club activities pending the outcomes of any investigation.**

### **Contacts**

Iain McBride, Chairperson, FCAG

Karen Sneddon, Child Protection Officer, FCAG

Both can be contacted via the members' section of the website, [here](#)

### **Reporting concerns**

The following process should be followed in reporting concerns re abuse to the Authorities:

1. Report concerns to person in charge / FCAG CPO, or any adult you feel comfortable talking to.
2. FCAG will follow procedure in Appendix 2 / 3, as laid down by the SCA 'Responding to Concerns', (available on SCA website).
3. In the event that the concern is connected to the actions of a member or helper in the club, the person may be asked to suspend their involvement from club activities pending the outcome of any investigations.
4. The safety of the child and any others who may be at risk should be ensured, and this should take precedence over any other consideration. In this regard the club should take any immediate steps to protect the children
5. Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information using Appendix 4.
6. Report the matter as soon as possible to the person designated for reporting child abuse (e.g. the Club Child Protection Co-ordinator (CPC), they will make a report to the Scottish Canoe Association (SCA) Child Protection Officer (CPO).
7. In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Child Protection Co-ordinator (CPC) is unable to contact the SCA CPO a duty social worker or the Police authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.
8. If the CPC is unsure whether reasonable grounds exist or not they should informally consult with the Social Work Department / police and they will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

9. When the CPC is reporting suspected or actual abuse to the Statutory Authorities they should first inform the families of their intention to make such a report, **unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation.**
10. A report should be given in person or by phone **and** in writing, although it is best to make initial contact in person.

### **Response to a young person or vulnerable adult reporting any form of abuse**

The following points should be taken in to consideration:

1. It is important to deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened.
2. It is important to stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously.
3. It should be understood that the child has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation.
4. The child should understand that it is not possible that any information will be kept a secret.
5. No judgmental statement should be made against the person against whom the allegation is made.
6. The child should not be questioned unless the nature of what they are saying is unclear. Leading questions must be avoided. Open non-specific questions should be used such as "Can you explain to me what you mean by that?"
7. The child should be given some indication of what happens next, such as informing parents, or the Social Work Department. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.

**DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION**

## **FCAG Coaching Procedures**

FCAG will use a mixture of BCU qualified / updated coaches and non BCU qualified coaches- unqualified coaches can only work within FCAG guidelines. Club training and sessions will be run by coaches qualified for the type of paddling environment concerned. FCAG will encourage and support helpers to gain qualifications and coaches to stay updated. This may include, where funds are available, the training and assessment costs that this involves (at the discretion of the planning committee).

Coaches will ensure that:-

1. Coach : student recommended ratios are maintained.
2. Students are given individualised or group coaching as appropriate
3. Students progress through an individualised programme, progressing from pool - loch - rivers etc at their own pace, and only when capable.
4. Good practice would advocate that male and female coaches or helpers accompany mixed teams and that juniors are not left avoidably alone with an adult.. This is sometimes not possible. In this case, or if there is only one junior, the parent/guardian should be informed to ensure that there is permission for the junior to attend the trip. When an under 18 person is going on an overnight trip with the club, a regime should be agreed re supervision, with their parent/guardian.

### **Qualifications**

All coaching, first-aid, up date training and life-saving qualifications will be checked and held in a central database. In addition photocopies of coaching and first-aid qualifications will be held by FCAG's Coaching lead person.

### **FCAG Coach Update**

To meet SCA requirements, FCAG qualified coaches have a responsibility to keep their coaching up to date to ensure that their practice is current and safe. In addition to keeping first-aid status up to date, in any three-year period coaches are encouraged to follow the SCA guidelines to stay 'up to date' with current coaching ideas. This can be achieved via:

- Attending an SCA Coaching Course; or
- Attending an 'update' training course - minimum 6 hours duration; or
- Through self-assessment, which demonstrates recent equivalent training in water safety; health and safety and coaching and assessment.

### **Protecting Vulnerable Adults Scheme (PVG)**

All club members who regularly work with children (as defined in the PVG scheme) will require to be members of the PVG scheme.

These procedures will help to ensure the safety of participants undertaking FCAG activities.

## **FCAG Code of Conduct**

It is the policy of Fife Canoeing Activities Group that all paddlers, volunteer helpers, coaches and parents show respect and understanding for each other and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the Club. The aim is for all paddlers to improve performance and have fun.

Everyone involved in the club should abide by FCAG's guidelines, rules and policies.

### **All members**

- Follow SCA and FCAG guidelines and policies.
- Take care of all property belonging to the club or club members.
- Treat other club members with respect at all times - on and off the water - treat other paddlers as you would want to be treated yourself.
- Control tempers and avoid behaviour which may inconvenience or upset others.
- Co-operate and listen to your coach or club officials.
- Use correct language at all times.
- Do not purchase or consume any illegal substances - this includes alcohol and cigarettes for those under the age of 18.
- Adults and juniors must have an appropriate relationship at all times. This applies to contact out with club activities, and includes communication via the internet and social networking sites. Adults should be aware that contact with juniors without the knowledge of their parents may be misunderstood and result in serious consequences. Use of the club website is monitored and is therefore an acceptable means of communication.

### **Club officials, coaches and volunteer helpers**

- Volunteer helpers and coaches must develop an appropriate working relationship with members, based on mutual trust and respect, especially with children and vulnerable adults.
- Consider the wellbeing and safety of paddlers before the development of performance.
- Ensure activities are appropriate to the age, ability and experience of those taking part.
- Display consistently high standards of behaviour and appearance.
- Hold appropriate, updated qualifications and insurance.
- Encourage paddlers to value their performance and not just results.
- Promote the positive aspects of the sport and never condone rule violations or the use of prohibited substances.

### **Parents / Guardians**

- Help your child to recognise good performance, not just results.
- Never force your child to take part in sport.
- Never punish or belittle a child for losing or making mistakes.
- Publicly accept official's judgements.
- Support your child's involvement and help them to enjoy the sport.
- Use correct and proper language at all times.
- Set a good example by applauding good performances of all paddlers.

### **All coaches / adult members / parents / helpers**

- Avoid situations where coach / helper and child are alone. The SCA acknowledges that occasionally there may be no alternative, for example, a child may be taken ill and have to be taken home. We would stress however that one to one contact must be avoided if at all possible and should never be allowed to occur on a regular basis. Ascertain the child's and the parent / carer's views about manual support for children who need this kind of help.
- If it is necessary to do things of a personal nature for a young person or vulnerable adult make sure that you have another adult accompanying you. Get their consent if at all possible, and certainly get consent from the parent or carer. Let the child know what you are doing and why.
- Ask parents / carers and / or nominated club officials to be responsible for children and vulnerable adults in changing rooms.
- Get adults to work in pairs if classes or groups of children or vulnerable adults have to be supervised in the changing rooms.
- Ensure that male and female coaches or helpers, particularly on trips or residential outings, always accompany mixed teams. If this proves impossible, or if there is only one junior, the parent /guardian should be informed to ensure that they are aware of the situation. A supervision regime should be agreed with the parent/ guardian.
- Do not allow any physically rough or sexually provocative games, or inappropriate talking or touching by anyone, in any group for which you have responsibility.
- At events and competitions look out for people who do not appear to be relatives or friends of children who are participating but, nevertheless seem to spend a lot of time videoing or photographing them. Report these incidents to the organisers.

### **What is Abuse?**

It is generally acknowledged that there are four main types of abuse: Physical, Emotional, Sexual, Neglect. These may be because of issues of gender, race or disability and in general the behaviour will be unwanted by the recipient.

#### **Physical Abuse**

As the term implies hurting or injuring a young person, e.g. hitting, kicking, biting, squeezing or shaking them. In sport this might result if the nature or intensity of training is inappropriate for the capacity performer. Bullying can also be determined as physical abuse, as can giving children alcohol or inappropriate drugs.

#### **Sexual Abuse**

Where adults use young people to meet their own sexual needs. It could range from sexually suggestive comments to full intercourse and includes the use of pornographic material.

There is also the offence of 'Abuse of Trust' where it is illegal for a person aged 18 or over to engage in sexual activity with a person under that age where they are in a position of trust in relation to that younger person (e.g. coach to athlete).

#### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse occurs when a young person or vulnerable adult is not given love, help and encouragement and / or are constantly derided or ridiculed or, perhaps even worse, ignored. Other types of emotional abuse are when they are constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted, subjected to unrealistic pressure by the parent or coach, or bullied in order to consistently perform to high expectations.

Conversely it can also occur if a young person or vulnerable adult is over-protected.

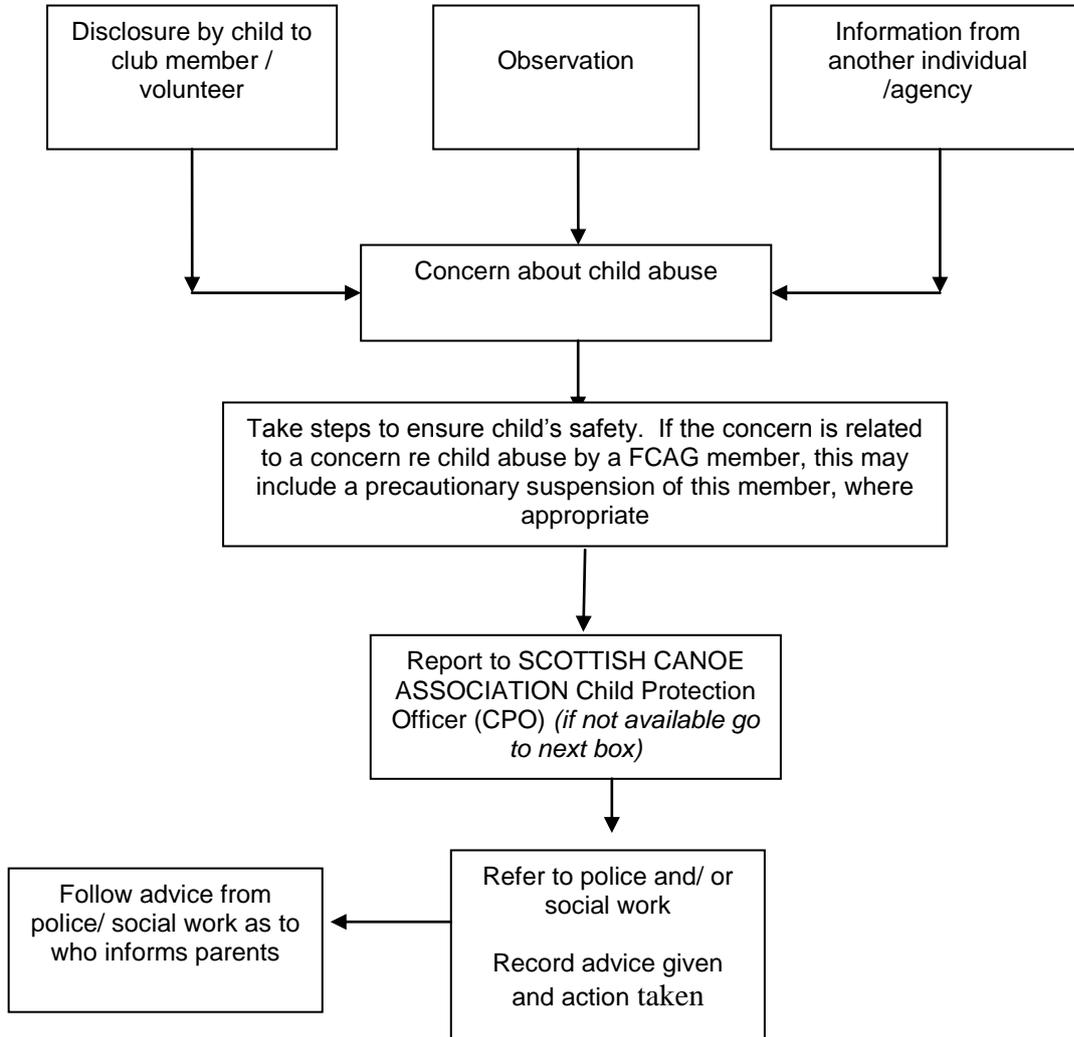
**Neglect**

Failing to meet a young person's basic needs such as food, warmth, adequate clothing, medical attention etc. It can also mean failing to ensure they are safe or exposing them to harm, being constantly left alone unsupervised, exposing canoeists to unsuitable weather conditions, and not ensuring paddlers are wearing suitable clothing.

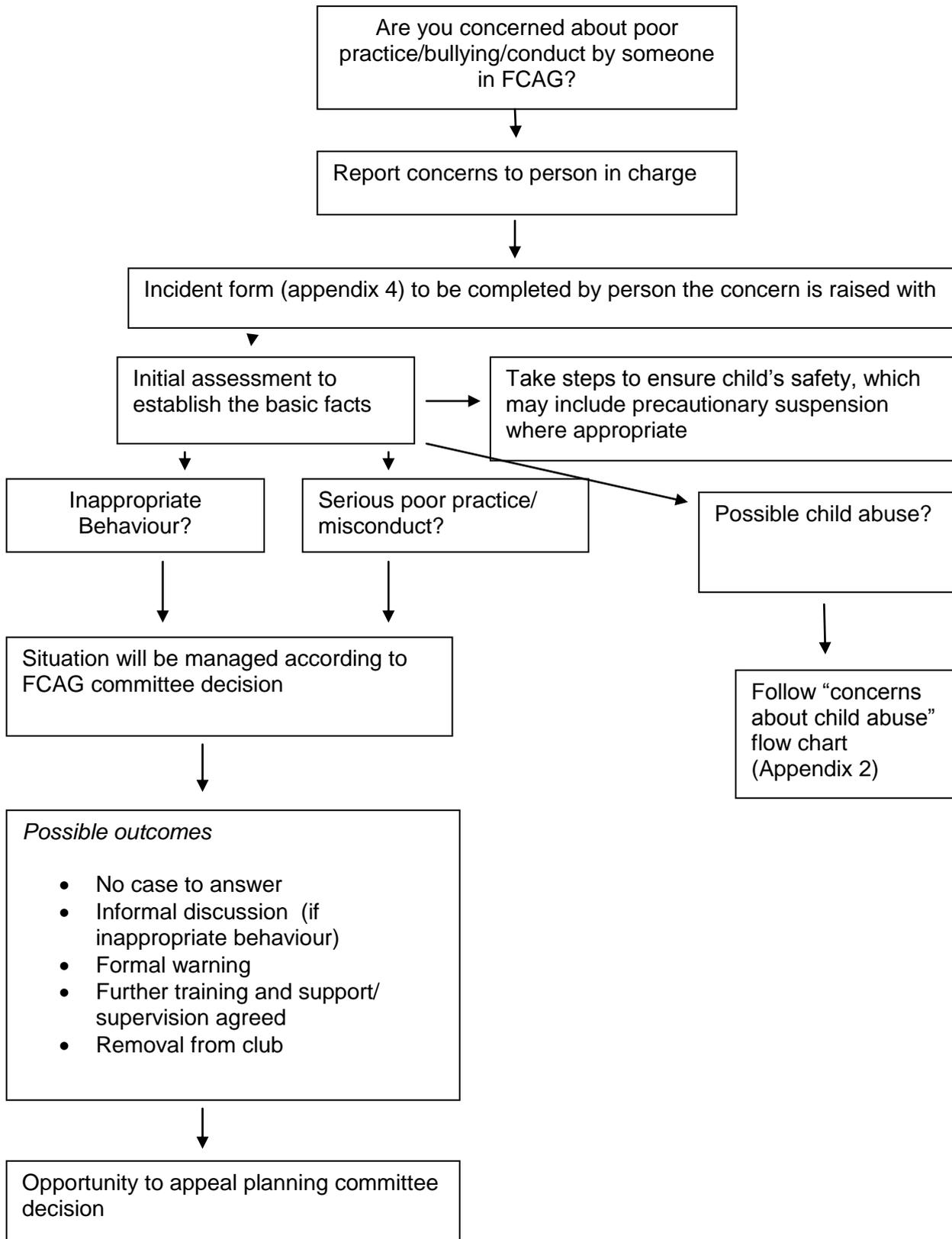
**Bullying**

Bullying may be seen as particularly hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Bullying is a significant issue for children and has been the main reason for calls to Childline. Allegations of bullying will follow Appendix 3.

## RESPONDING TO CONCERNS ABOUT CHILD ABUSE



## RESPONDING TO CONCERNS ABOUT POOR PRACTICE / BULLYING / THE CONDUCT OF SOMEONE IN FCAG? *Any concerns will be taken seriously by FCAG*



**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**SCA**

*Navigating for the Future*

**Recording allegations or suspicions of abuse**

**Checklist**

The following is a checklist of what should be recorded:

Name of Person \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth or Age \_\_\_\_\_

Any special factors \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Home address and telephone  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is the person making the report expressing their own concerns or passing on those of somebody else ? \_\_\_\_\_

If for somebody else record their details  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What has prompted these concerns?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Are there any
- physical signs? \_\_\_\_\_
  - behavioural signs \_\_\_\_\_
  - indirect signs \_\_\_\_\_

Has the child / vulnerable adult been spoken to? YES / NO  
If yes please record what was said and by whom on a separate sheet.

Have the parents / guardians been contacted? YES / NO  
If yes please record what was said and by whom on separate sheet.

Has the suspected abuser been identified?  
YES / NO  
If yes please record details on separate sheet.

Has anyone else been consulted?  
YES / NO

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date and time  
\_\_\_\_\_

Designation \_\_\_\_\_

All details as outlined above, plus any other relevant information should be recorded on a separate sheet of paper, which should also be signed and dated and attached to this form.

It is advisable for you to keep a copy of this referral for your own information if needed at a later date.

The completed paperwork should then be given to your Child Protection Co-ordinator immediately.