



# New Zealand International Optimist Dinghy Association (NZIODA) Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Guidelines

## Introduction

Working with children and young people is a privilege. Children and young people have the right to thrive in safe and supportive environments.

Play, active recreation and sport is a vital part of life. It offers fun, great pride, a sense of achievement and is a positive influence in the lives of many children and young people, including building self-esteem, resilience, routine, teamwork and a sense of belonging. However, the wellbeing of children and young people in play, active recreation and sport also requires their safety and welfare being covered.

## Definition of a Child

The ***Children's Act 2014*** defined any person under the age of 18 as a 'child'. In this document and in day to day communications the terms 'children' and 'young people' are both used, recognising that older teenagers may prefer not to be referred to as 'children' although they are still children in the eyes of the law.

## PART 1 - POLICY

### Policy Statements

#### NZIODA Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Statement

As defined by, The Children's Act 2014 for the purposes of this policy anyone under the age of 18 should be considered as a child. The policy applies to all NZIODA employees, contractors and volunteers.

NZIODA is committed to safeguarding, from physical, sexual or emotional harm, neglect or bullying, children taking part in its activities. We recognise that the safety, welfare and needs of the child are paramount and that all children, irrespective of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual or gender identity or social status, have a right to protection from discrimination and abuse.

NZIODA takes all reasonable steps to ensure that, through appropriate procedures and training, children participating in activities organised by NZIODA do so in a safe and enjoyable environment.

NZIODA actively seeks to:

- Create a safe and welcoming environment, both on and off the water, where children can have fun and develop their skills and confidence.
- Run NZIODA organised training and events to the highest possible safety standards.
- Treat all children with respect and celebrate their achievements.

NZIODA:

- Recognises that safeguarding children is the responsibility of everyone, not just those who work with children.
- Carefully recruits and selects all NZIODA employees, contractors and volunteers in roles involving close contact with children and provides them with appropriate information or training.
- Responds swiftly and appropriately to all complaints and concerns about poor practice or suspected or actual child abuse.
- Regularly reviews safeguarding procedures and practices in the light of experience or to take account of legislative, social or technological changes.
- Communicates changes and shares good practice with training centres, clubs and class associations.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the NZIODA Committee.

NZIODA Administration should be notified of all relevant concerns, allegations or complaints by email to: [nzoptimist@gmail.com](mailto:nzoptimist@gmail.com)

### **Good Practice**

All members of NZIODA should follow the [NZIODA Good Practice Guidelines](#) and agree to abide by the [NZIODA Code of Conduct](#).

Those working or volunteering with young people should be aware of NZIODA's [Guidance on Recognising Abuse](#) (Appendix A).

NZIODA will include a clause in the [Major Event Instructions](#) for the "Rights to use names and likeness. Parents and spectators should be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state their purpose for photography/filming. If NZIODA publishes images of children, no identifying information will be included that is deemed to be unsuitable. Any concerns about inappropriate or intrusive photography or the inappropriate use of images should be reported to NZIODA Administration by emailing: [nzoptimist@gmail.com](mailto:nzoptimist@gmail.com).

### **Concerns**

Anyone who is concerned about a young member's or participant's welfare, either outside the sport or within NZIODA, should inform NZIODA Administration immediately, in strict confidence.

Any member of NZIODA failing to comply with [NZIODA's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy](#) and any relevant [Codes of Conduct](#) may be subject to disciplinary action under the [NZIODA Code of Conduct](#).

## PART 2 – PROCEDURES

### Recruitment and training

All NZIODA roles, whether for paid or voluntary work, will be subject to an appropriate level of scrutiny. The level of checking will be proportionate to the role and in line with Sports NZ's advice that: (Ref: <https://sportnz.org.nz/resources/police->

“Best practice standards go beyond the legal requirement and recommend that any person who has regular contact with tamariki or rangatahi, such as a coach, manager, or supervisor or volunteer, someone who drives children to activities and events, and anyone responsible for overnight trips away should be police checked prior to working with children.”

ROLE	Level of Check
NZIODA Committee Members	Police Vetting
NZIODA Administrators	Police Vetting
Head Coach	Police Vetting
Squad Coaches	Police Vetting
Regatta Fleet Coach	Police Vetting
Regatta Fleet Coach 17 years old	NZIODA Self Disclosure
Regatta Fleet Coach 14-16 years old	NZIODA Self Disclosure

Police vetting will be undertaken by NZIODA on appointment to the respective role and with the approval of the person concerned, the vetting process should be confidential and adverse action may not be taken against the person concerned without them having an opportunity to validate the vetting information.

NZIODA shall update vetting records every three years and records will be deleted or destroyed after three years. All records shall remain confidential.

### Safeguarding Training

All NZIODA roles, whether for paid or voluntary work, will complete an online safeguarding awareness course run by <https://sportintegrity.nz/integrity/safeguarding-and-protecting-children-and-young-people> - E learning Module.

### Good Practice Guidelines

#### Culture

It is important to develop within NZIODA a culture where both children and adults feel able to raise concerns, knowing that they will be taken seriously, treated confidentially and will not make the situation worse for themselves or others.

#### Minimising risk

(see also [NZIODA Good Practice Guide for Coaches and Volunteers](#))

The work of NZIODA will be planned to promote good practice to minimise situations where adults are working unobserved or could take advantage of their position of trust. Good practice protects everyone – children, volunteers and staff.

Common sense guidelines:

- Avoid spending any significant time working with children in isolation
- Do not take children alone in a car, however short the journey
- Do not take children to your home as part of your organisation's activity
- Where any of these are unavoidable, ensure that they only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge of the organisation or the child's parents
- Design training programmes that are within the ability of the individual child.
- If a child is having difficulty with a wetsuit or buoyancy aid, ask them to ask a friend to help if at all possible
- If you do have to help a child, make sure you are in full view of others, preferably another adult
- Restrict communications with young people via mobile phone, e-mail or social media to group communications about organisational matters. If it's essential to send an individual message, copy it to the child's parent or carer.

You should never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged, or use such language yourself when with children
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- fail to respond to an allegation made by a child; **always act**

To act on an allegation - raise it through the incident Report Form / or with NZIODA Admin

- do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves

It may sometimes be necessary to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of both the child (where possible) and their parents/carers. In an emergency situation which requires this type of help, parents/carers should be informed as soon as possible.

In such situations it is important to ensure that any adult present is sensitive to the child and undertakes personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

### **Additional vulnerability**

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse or find it more difficult to express their concerns.

For example:

- a disabled child who relies on a carer to help them get changed may worry that they won't be able to sail any more if they report the carer
- a deaf child may not be able to express themselves or speak confidentially if they need an interpreter
- a child who has experienced racism may find it difficult to trust an adult from a different ethnic background

- children with low self-esteem or mental health problems can be more vulnerable to bullying or abuse, as can LTGBQ young people, or any child who has a characteristic that marks them out in others' eyes as 'different'.

### **Grooming**

Grooming is when someone develops a relationship with a child over a period of time to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation.

Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional.

Sometimes the perpetrator grooms the entire family, building a relationship with the child's parents/carers so that they are allowed more access to the child than would normally be the case.

Similar behaviour could be used to radicalise young people and recruit them to a religious or political cause. This is unlikely to happen in a sailing club setting, but under the government's 'Prevent' strategy, teachers and others working with young people are receiving training on recognising the warning signs.

### **Bullying**

If a child alleges bullying or shows signs of being bullied, this must be investigated. NZIODA's Anti-Bullying Policy is in alignment with the NZIODA Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

### **Responsibilities of staff and volunteers**

NZIODA employees, contractors and volunteers will be given clear roles and responsibilities and made aware of the NZIODA Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Guidelines and procedures and are issued with guidelines on:

- following NZIODA Good Practice and
- recognising signs of abuse (see NZIODA Appendix A – What is Child Abuse?).

NZIODA Coaches and Volunteers are expected to comply with the NZIODA Codes and Conduct.

### **Parental responsibility and club liability**

Parents play an essential part in their children's participation, but occasionally their desire to see their child achieve success can put the child under too much pressure or give rise to friction between families or interference in coaching.

NZIODA has a Code of Conduct that everyone involved, whether they are participants, parents, employee, contractor or volunteers, should be aware of and comply with so that everyone is aware of their responsibilities towards each other and appropriate action can be taken if anyone's behaviour fails to meet the expectations set out in the Code.

Alongside the duty of care NZIODA has to members, and particularly to young people who cannot take full responsibility for their own safety, parents must be responsible for their children's welfare and behaviour, or designate another adult to take that responsibility, outside formal club-organised activities.

When children are attending a NZIODA organised training or coaching session or activity, NZIODA have a duty of care for their safety and welfare at all times when on the water. To support the work of the coaches, "House Parents" will be on site and have a duty of care for their safety and welfare at all times when ashore until such time as children are released back to parents/care giver from the coaching or activity session.

### **Changing rooms and showers**

- Under no circumstances should adults be undressed in front of children/young people in changing rooms.
- Staff and volunteers must not change or shower at the same time as children using the same facilities.
- For mixed-gender activities, separate facilities must be available for boys and girls.
- If a child or young person feels uncomfortable changing or showering in public, then no pressure should be placed on them to do so.
- If disabled children and young people need to use changing facilities, make sure they are accessible and that the disabled child or young person and their parent, caregiver or whānau are involved in deciding if and how they should be assisted. Make sure the child or young person is able to consent to the assistance that is offered.
- The use of mobile phones and/or photographic equipment with video recording capabilities by staff and volunteers and also children and young people themselves should be prohibited under any circumstance in changing facilities.
- Where no changing facilities are available, children/ young people and their parents, caregivers or whānau should be made aware of this prior to the activity taking place.
- Parents, caregivers or whānau should be discouraged from entering changing facilities unless it is truly necessary. In such circumstances, only a parent of the same sex as the children/young people may enter the changing facility and they should let the supervising adult know about this in advance. At least one member of staff/volunteer of the same sex as the children/ young people involved should be present with the parent, caregiver or whānau when other children/ young people are in the changing facility.
- Staff and volunteers, especially those of the opposite sex, should not be in the changing facility when children are undressed.

Bullying can be an issue in changing rooms and showers refer to [NZIODA Anti Bullying Policy](#).

If it is essential, in an emergency situation, for a male to enter a female changing area or vice versa, it is advised that they are accompanied by another adult of the opposite sex.

### **First aid and medical treatment**

First aid, provided by an appropriately trained and qualified person, is part of an organisation's normal duty of care. Obtain consent from the child/young person if medication or medical treatment is required in the absence of the parent/carer.

### **Away events**

It is essential that those accompanying young people to away international events or training camps, and the competitors themselves, have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the conduct expected of them.

### **NZIODA website and social media**

When promoting NZIODA and encouraging members to interact online, there are a few issues to bear in mind in relation to children and young people:

- follow the NZIODA guidance on the use of images of children (see [NZIODA Policy on Photography](#))
- ensure that the content and language on your site or page, including contributions to blogs, forums etc, is not inappropriate for younger visitors and does not link directly to unsuitable material on other sites
- provide a clear process for parents and others to report inappropriate content or online bullying and to request that content is removed
- have a robust procedure for handling and assessing such a report or request and acting promptly to remove the offending content.

### **Coaches and Instructors**

When working with children and young people you are advised to:

- where possible have a business phone and a personal phone
- only contact sailors on your business phone (or using your organisation's text system)
- avoid using over-familiar language and try to copy in the child's parent/carer
- only communicate regarding organisational matters, not for social or personal contact.

When using social media, it is recommended that you:

- have a personal and a professional page for your social media
- do not allow young sailors to follow or be friends with your personal account
- set your privacy settings as high as possible on your personal account
- challenge the way that young sailors post or comment to you or others on social media if it is inappropriate
- educate young sailors about the boundaries between them and their Coach or Instructor.

### **Parents**

Parents and Carers must accept responsibility for their children's access to and use of computers, tablets and smartphones. See [www.netsafe.org.nz](http://www.netsafe.org.nz) for information regarding this.

### **Children and young people**

Unfortunately online communication and texting can often be used as a means of bullying.

'Cyberbullying' should be treated in the same way as any other form of bullying. <https://www.bullyingfree.nz/about-bullying/cyberbullying/> provides guidance for children and young people in different age groups.

### **Photography, images and video**

**Please refer to NZIODA Photography Policy**

### **Handling concerns, reports or allegations**

A complaint, concern or allegation may come from a number of sources: the child, their parents, someone else within your organisation. It may involve the behaviour of one of your volunteers or employees, or something that has happened to the child outside the sport, perhaps at home or at school. Children may confide in adults they trust, in a place where they feel at ease.

An allegation may range from mild verbal bullying to physical or sexual abuse. If you are concerned that a child may be being abused, it is NOT your responsibility to investigate further BUT it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and report them to the appropriate statutory authorities. For guidance on recognising abuse. (see NZIODA Appendix A – What is Child Abuse?).

### **Handling an allegation from a child**

#### **Always:**

- stay calm – ensure that the child is safe and feels safe
- show and tell the child that you are taking what he/she says seriously
- reassure the child and stress that he/she is not to blame
- be careful about physical contact, it may not be what the child wants
- be honest, explain that you will have to tell someone else to help stop the alleged abuse
- make a record of what the child has said as soon as possible after the event, using the child's own words
- follow your clubs' child protection procedures

#### **Never:**

- rush into actions that may be inappropriate
- make promises you cannot keep (eg. you won't tell anyone)
- ask leading questions (see 'Recording and handling information' below)
- take sole responsibility – consult someone else (ideally the designated Child Protection/Welfare Officer or the person in charge or someone you can trust) so that you can begin to protect the child and gain support for yourself

You may be upset about what the child has said or you may worry about the consequences of your actions. Sometimes people worry about children being removed from their families as a result of abuse, but in reality this rarely happens. However, one thing is certain – you cannot ignore it.

### **Recording and handling information**

If you suspect that a child may have been the subject of any form of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect, the allegation must be referred as soon as possible to the Children's Social Care or the Police who have trained experts to handle such cases. Do not start asking leading questions which may jeopardise any formal investigation.

A leading question is where you suggest an answer or provide options that only need a 'yes' or 'no' answer, instead of allowing the child to explain things in their own words. An example would be asking 'did X-hit you?' instead of 'how did you get that bruise?' Use open questions such as 'what happened next?' Only ask questions to confirm that you need to refer the matter to someone else. Listen to and keep a record of anything the child tells you or that you have observed and pass the information onto the statutory authorities (refer to

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All information must be treated as confidential and only shared with those who need to know. If the allegation or suspicion concerns someone within your club or centre, only the child's parents/carers, the person in charge of the organisation (unless they are the subject of the allegation), the relevant authorities and NZIODA President should be informed.

If the alleged abuse took place outside the sport, the Police or Children's Social Care will decide who else needs to be informed, including the child's parents/carers. It should not be discussed by anyone within the organisation other than the person who received or initiated the allegation and, if different, the person in charge.

Confidential information must be stored securely. It is recommended that it should be retained for at least 3 years and destroyed by secure means, eg. by shredding or burning.

## Procedures

It is essential to have clear and agreed procedures to follow. These include:

- Procedures to be followed by anyone concerned about a child's welfare, either outside the sport or within your club
- A disciplinary procedure (which may be included in a handbook or contract, depending on the nature of club) setting out the process to be followed if an allegation or complain is made from someone
- A procedure for handling a complaint about a member

## Statutory Authorities

If your club or centre is contacted by the Police or Children's Services concerning information received or a complaint made by or about a member, volunteer or employee, you are advised to contact the NZIODA President as soon as possible for guidance and support. Co-operate fully with official requests for factual information, but do not express any personal opinions on the person's conduct.

## Handling the media

If there is an incident at your club which attracts media interest, or if you are contacted by the media with an allegation concerning one of your members, do not give any response until you have had the opportunity to check the facts and seek advice. You may wish to take professional advice on handling the media.

## Historical allegations

If someone raises a child protection concern relating to incidents that took place some time ago, follow the same procedure as you would for a new concern, even if the person about whom the allegation is being made is no longer active within your organisation. If the concern appears to relate to a criminal offence, encourage the individual to contact the Police. Details of Oranga Tamariki departments and emergency duty teams are listed on local authority websites. If a child is at immediate risk contact the Police.

## Policy:

- Next Policy Review August 2025
- To be added to NZIODA Work Plan
- Related Policies:
  - NZIODA Anti-Bullying Policy
  - How to run an NZIODA Ranking Regatta
  - NZIODA Appendix A – What is child abuse?
  - NZIODA Appendix B – NZIODA Coach Code of Ethics & Conduct
  - NZIODA Self-Disclosure Form
  - NZIODA Incident Report Form (General)
  - NZIODA Incident Report Form – Child Welfare
  - NZIODA Good Practice Guide for Coaches and Volunteers
  - NZIODA Code of Conduct
  - NZIODA Policy on Photography

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