



## **Guidelines on Keeping Young People Safe**

This circular supersedes Operations Circular No 06/2010, dated 15 November 2010.

### Foreword

Scout Association of Hong Kong is committed to youth development. It is our responsibility to provide a safe environment for scouting activities, and to protect our Youth Members from harm. In addition, Scout Leaders (all Leaders at all levels of Scouting) should render assistance to Youth Members who are observed to have been possibly subject to abuse, in their daily lives. This circular has the following objectives:

1. To give Scout Leaders a basic understanding of abusive behaviour;
2. To detail the measures for protecting youth members and procedures to follow if there is any case of abuse; and
3. List other relevant issues that Scout Leaders should be aware of.

### Abusive Behaviour

Any act of commission or omission that endangers or impairs a young person's physical/psychological health and development is abusive behaviour. Abusive behaviour usually includes the following:

1. Physical or psychological abuse;
2. Sexual abuse or sexual harassment; and
3. Neglect.

Explanation of the above behaviour can be found in Appendix 1.

### Measures to be taken to protect our young people from harm

1. Care for and observe the behaviour of Youth Members.  
During scouting activities or in daily contact with Youth Members, Leaders should be alert to any signs of abuse, e.g. abnormal behavioural or emotional change, and physical injury such as bruises and lacerations.
2. Teach Youth Members to protect themselves.
  - (a) Understand what abuse means, and be vigilant to protect themselves.
  - (b) Voice their concerns to parents or Scout Leaders whom they trust if they are abused.
3. During scouting activities (including meetings, training and all types of outdoor activities), the following rules should be adhered to:
  - (a) No Sectional Unit may recruit female Youth Members unless the Unit has a female Leader holding a valid Warrant or Certificate of Appointment.
  - (b) In camping, male and female Members must sleep in separate tents, and male Members are not permitted to enter the tents of female Members or vice versa. Whenever possible, male and female campers should have separate tent areas. Members who violate this rule must be cautioned from doing so and dealt with immediately.
  - (c) In residential programmes, male and female Members must have separate sleeping accommodation, and male Members are not permitted to enter the rooms of female Members or vice versa. Members who violate this rule must be cautioned from doing so and dealt with immediately.
  - (d) In camping and residential programmes, male and female Members must have separate bathroom and sanitary facilities. If circumstances do not allow separate facilities, suitable arrangements must be made to avoid any misunderstanding or embarrassment.

- (e) Prior approval from Sectional Scout Leader or Scouter-in-charge followed by a written record must be obtained for patrol camp or hiking activities.
- (f) All Members should wear appropriate clothing and avoiding any inappropriate body exposure.
- (g) Corporal punishment and any acts or dialogue which are disturbing, agitating, embarrassing, insulting are strictly prohibited.
- (h) Leaders must not induce or force Youth Members to perform any acts which are not appropriate to their age or physical strength, or to perform any illegal acts.
- (i) Comply with all the guidelines of the Association relevant to safety in activities, including:
  - (i) Programme Circular No 99/2011, “Principles and Guidelines on Outdoor Activities”
  - (ii) Programme Circular No 100/2011, “Anti-Mosquitoes Measures”
  - (iii) Administration Circular No 10/2011, “Contingency Measures in Cases of Inclement Weather and Air Pollution”

Other concern that Scout Leaders must be aware of

Scout Leaders are mentors to Youth Members and as such, their conduct must be trustworthy as well as meeting the expectations of parents and society. Scout Leaders should observe the following guidelines during scout activities and in daily contact with Youth Members:

1. Respect a young person’s right to personal privacy. Scout leaders should not be watching Youth Members changing clothes or bathing.
2. Do not share tents with Youth Members during camping.
3. Do not share rooms with Youth Members in residential programmes, unless special care is necessary.
4. Male and female Leaders, even a married couple, should not share sleeping accommodation.
5. Be mindful of dialogue and behaviour, particularly body contact that may be misconstrued.
6. Do not have one-to-one isolated encounters with youth members.

If you suspect, or become aware of the occurrence of abuse of a Youth Member, you should consider the following actions:

1. In handling any case, ensure the confidentiality of the person(s) concerned.
2. Should there be any need for clarification of legal aspects, you may consult our Legal Adviser through the Chief Scout Executive (Tel: 2957 6321, 6130 3020), or Deputy Chief Scout Executive (Tel: 2957 6328, 6823 2270).
3. If you prefer to talk to a male or female Professional Scouter / Commissioner, the Chief Scout Executive or Deputy Chief Scout Executive will arrange accordingly.
4. If you suspect, or become aware of any occurrence of abuse of a Youth Member, you should report to the Chief Scout Executive or Deputy Chief Scout Executive as soon as possible. Alternatively, you may report to your District or Regional / Branch Commissioner directly, who will attend to the case with the Chief Scout Executive or Deputy Chief Scout Executive.
5. If any Youth Member is injured and requires medical attention, arrange for medical care immediately.

  
(Garson LEE)

for Chief Commissioner

**Interpretation of Sexual Harassment**

(Extract from website of Equal Opportunities Commission <http://www.eoc.org.hk/EOC/GraphicsFolder/TopicalIssues.aspx>)

There are two forms of sexual harassment. The first is any unwelcome sexual behaviour or conduct which is offensive, humiliating or intimidating. The second form can be a working environment where there are actions, languages or pictures of a sexual nature that make it hard for you to do your work. This is called “a sexually hostile working environment”.

A person is a sexual harasser if:

1. he/she makes unwelcome sexual advances or unwelcome request for sexual favours,  
OR
2. he/she makes other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in which a reasonable person would anticipate that the subject of attention would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

**Definition of Child Abuse**

(Extract from Procedural Guidelines for Handling Child Abuse Cases (revised 1998) 2001 Edition, Social Welfare Department)

As a general guide, child abuse is defined as any act of commission or omission that endangers or impairs a child’s physical/psychological health and development. Such act is judged on the basis of a combination of community standards and professional expertise to be damaging. It is committed by individuals, singly or collectively, who by their characteristics (e.g. age, status, knowledge, organizational form) are in a position of different power that renders a child vulnerable. Child abuse is not limited to a child-parent/guardian situation but includes anyone who is entrusted with the care and control of a child e.g. child-minders, relatives, teachers, etc.

Child abuse includes the following:

**PHYSICAL ABUSE** is a physical injury or suffering to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child (including non-accidental use of force, deliberate poisoning, suffocation, burning or Munchausen’s Syndrome by Proxy), where there is a definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion that the injury has been inflicted non-accidentally or knowingly not prevented;

**SEXUAL ABUSE** is the involvement of a child in sexual activity which is unlawful, or, although not illegal, to which a child is unable to give informed consent. This includes direct or indirect sexual exploitation and abuse of a child by individuals whether inside the home or outside; abuse by parents, or carers or other adults singly or acting in an organized way, or children; abuse which is rewarded or apparently attractive to the child; an abuse by individuals whether known or strangers; (Child sexual abuse is different from casual sexual relationship e.g. between a boy and a girl, though the boy can be liable for offences like indecent assault or unlawful sexual intercourse with an underaged girl.)

**NEGLECT** is severe or persistent lack of attention to a child’s basic needs (such as adequate food, clothing, shelter, education or medical care) that endangers or impairs the child’s health or development (including non-organic failure to thrive) or the avoidable exposure of a child to serious danger (including cold, starvation, a child habitually left unattended or forcing a child to undertake duties inappropriate to his/her physical strength or age);

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE** is the pattern of behaviour and attitudes towards a child that endangers or impairs the child’s emotional or intellectual development. Examples include acts of spurning, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting/corrupting or denying emotional responsiveness. Such act damages immediately or ultimately the behavioural, cognitive, affective, or physical functioning of the child.

The definition of child abuse has neither legal effect nor legal implications. It only provides operational guidelines in dealing with child abuse cases.

For further information of the above, please visit the following websites:

Social Welfare Department ([http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site\\_pubsvc/page\\_family/sub\\_fcwprocedure/](http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_family/sub_fcwprocedure/))

Equal Opportunities Commission (<http://www.eoc.org.hk/EOC/GraphicsFolder/TopicalIssues.aspx>)