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Circular: 08/35
Date: June 2008
Contact: Hazel Robinson, CEO & HR Project Support and Child Protection Officer

To: All Area Secretaries, Area Chairs and Group Secretaries (via Summer Group News)

Keeping Children Safe

Everyone has a responsibility for helping to keep children safe. They are more vulnerable than adults. This is true for the Ramblers' Association as well as every other organisation. We have developed a Child Protection Policy to help us meet this responsibility. The policy contains basic information, including how to welcome children on Group activities and work with them safely.

Below is a summary of the policy. This policy is nothing to panic about. Much of it is common sense and reflects current practice. However, it provides some standard advice and information that all volunteers should be aware of, and should think about.

The full policy can be found on our website at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/walks/child-full-policy.html> or you can request a paper copy from Hazel Robinson hazel.robinson@ramblers.org.uk / 020 7339 8574.

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/guardian/carer

(OR, in the case of some children over 14, they have clear parental consent to participate.

Consent forms are available on <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/walks/child-full-policy.html>).

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/guardians/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 <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/walks/behaviour-code.html> for more information.

Report any concerns to the Child Protection Officer at Central Office. A reporting form and details are available on <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/walks/reporting.html>

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

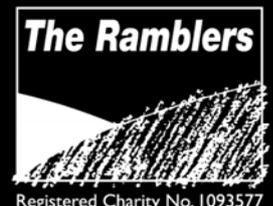


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The Ramblers' Association

2nd Floor, Camelford House,
87-90 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TW
Tel: 020 7339 8500 Fax: 020 7339 8501
ramblers@ramblers.org.uk

www.ramblers.org.uk



The following Q & A's are some examples of regular questions raised by volunteers.

Q. If I feel a child is being neglected or harmed, do I call the RA central office immediately or is there a form for me to complete?

A. Full guidelines can be found on <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/walks/childpol.html> along with a form for reporting concerns, the procedures are very easy to follow. There is nothing to panic about; you will be provided with full support from Hazel Robinson the Child Protection Officer/Central Office (contact details enclosed).

Q. I have five local teenagers aged 15 years old who have asked if they can join our walk on Sunday. The walk is suitable for them and we have a range of mixed ages attending, so I would like to accept them, I cannot remember if they are allowed to walk without their parents?

A. If the walk is suitable for them, then yes it is good that you have welcomed them on your walk. It is important to ask either a parent or guardian to complete a consent form for young people who are 14 years of age and over (until they are an adult at 18 years of age) this includes the parent/guardians signature, contact details in case of an emergency, health check etc. The form can be found on <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/walks/childpol.html>

Q. A member has asked if we will accept her and her three year old toddler on a walk. They will be using a buggy. We've never had a toddler or a baby on walk before and I don't know what to advise?

A. The parent or guardians of children need to know whether the terrain of the walk is suitable for children and a buggy – are there stiles, how long is the walk, are there café and toilet facilities on the way? Describe the walk to the parent and they can make their mind up whether they feel it would be suitable for them.

Children should be made welcome on Ramblers walks and some Groups do put on specific child-friendly or buggy-friendly walks aimed at families. However, not all walks will be suitable for young children – parents need to check which walks are suitable in advance.

It should be made clear to parents that they must supervise their children at all times. Our volunteer walk leaders must not take responsibility for unaccompanied children (aged under 14) under any circumstances.

Q. Why does the RA accept children as part of membership, our walks are all long and designed for adults?

A. Children and young people can enjoy walking as much as adults do and some adults enjoy walking with their families. Walking can contribute toward children growing up in confidence; living healthier and happier lives and can teach them to care for their environment. If you do have children or young people who are interested in walking, but you do not have any walks suitable for them, please fully explain the reasons, so they understand why. You could consider setting up a shorter walk as a tester, to see if it is of benefit to them, or recommend an alternative Group that is more suitable for them to join.

Q. This information is very brief; I would like to read more about the safety of children, where can I access the full Child Protection policy?

A. If you have access to a website, please go to <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/walks/child-full-policy.html> If you would like a hard copy mailing to you, please call 0207 339 8574 or e-mail HazelRobinson@ramblers.org.uk.

Please note: incidents relating to children on walks are infrequent; all we ask is for you to be aware, and note that guidelines and support is available.

Thank you for reading this information, I hope you have found it useful.