Working with Vulnerable Adults

Prepared by   Policies and Procedures Subcommittee

Version   2

Date Last Updated   Aug 2015

Date to be reviewed by Sept 2018

WORKING WITH VULNERABLE ADULTS

BACKGROUND

The ambiguous nature of this enquiry has proven difficult to develop a policy that is based around working with vulnerable adults in a volunteer organisation which runs outdoor activities. Therefore this recommendation is based on advice and guidance from NCVO, Manchester CVO, Lancashire and Cumbria CVO, Manchester Community Volunteer Centre, A-CAF, Breakthrough UK, Disabled Living, I did Adventure and Calvert-Trust.

1.   OutdoorLads defines Vulnerable Adults as:

"Vulnerable adult", generally means a person aged 18 or over who has a condition of the following type:

   i.   a learning or physical disability; illness or injury, or has become severely frail through old age; a reduction in physical or mental capacity.

   ii.   a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs; or substance addiction

   iii.   are in need of community care.

   iv.   are unable to protect themselves from harm.

2.   OutdoorLads uses the following definitions in regards to disabilities:

"**Impairment**" is the loss or limitation of physical, mental or sensory function on a long term, or permanent basis." (Disabled People's International 1981)

"**Disablement**" is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers. (Disabled People's International 1981)

"**Disabled People**" include people with: physical impairments; sensory impairments (deaf people, blind people); chronic illness or health issues including HIV and AIDS; and all degrees of learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural problems. It also includes people with hidden impairments such as epilepsy, diabetes, sickle cell anaemia; specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, speech and language impairments; people who identify as 'disfigured'; people of diminutive stature and people with mental distress. All are excluded by barriers, though not all have impairments.

3. Inclusion

3.1 OutdoorLads work to make walking accessible to all, and share its benefits with as wide a range of people as possible, including children (see 3.2) and vulnerable adults. We welcome vulnerable adults on all activities that are suitable for them as individuals. We are committed to equal opportunities and aim to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and not to discriminate on grounds of age, ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, disability or beliefs. However, while we are the experts at providing and supporting walking activities, we are not able to provide specialist care and support for people who have special needs or who are unable to care independently for themselves, or to take special responsibility for looking after children and young people under the age of 18.

3.2 Attendance of those under 18: OutdoorLads primarily runs events for those **over the age of 18**. The majority of our events such as hostels, camping, and mountaineering are **not suitable for children.** There are a few events (for example AGM, prides etc) which we may label 'child friendly'. However explicit permission must be sort from the event leader before bring any children along.

4. Accessibility

Wherever possible, OutdoorLads will make its event as assessable as it can to its members. As an organisation we will it important not to turn members away based on their physical or mental condition. We will endeavour to make 'reasonable' adjustments to our events in line with the following criteria;

4.1 Defining "reasonable"

The Disability Discrimination Act does not define "reasonable" – this depends on individual cases and will be a matter for the Tribunal/Courts and/or appeal panels to decide. However our organization can take account of the:

1. Risk factor involved in the outdoor activity.
2. Money available
3. Practicalities of making the particular adjustment
4. Health and safety of the members and others
5. Interests of other members
6. Training/skill set of the activity leader.

5. Specific Requirements

The organisation must be aware of member's access requirements prior to the event; and it is the **responsibility of the member** to make the declaration to the group via the event leader. The event leader will then look at the factors stated in 3.2 and assess whether the needs of this individual can be met without compromising the safety of the group and the individual in question.

6. Duty of Care

Participation in all activities is subject to their suitability for individual participants. Walk leaders and other activity organisers have an enhanced duty of care towards participants, and sometimes need to make judgements that take into account the safety and enjoyment of everyone involved in an activity. They have a right to refuse a participant if in the leader's opinion this would result in danger to the individual or danger or major disruption to the rest of the group. We will strive to make such judgements on a fair and practical basis and without making stereotypical or unwarranted assumptions.

7. Details of event activity

In the event description, details of access needs must to be stated. These details do vary hugely from what is already on event description; but must state clearly what the event activity includes.

8. Exclusions

In certain circumstances, reasonable adjustments cannot be made due to physical location, terrain, risk factor and financial implications. If this circumstance arises, the leader must contact the individual in question and explain the reason behind this decision. If that member feels like their needs could have been met; that member will contact either the Regional Co-Ordinator or the designated Trustee.

9. Recording Inclusions

Where reasonable adjustments have been successfully made, that leader will record the details on a central database as a positive example. This database will be used for other leaders throughout the organisation to find examples of best practice and also act as an information sharing set.