

Child Welfare



March 2004

WELFARE OF CHILDREN (& Other Vulnerable People) IN SNORKELLING AND SCUBA DIVER TRAINING.

Purpose. To outline for parents and young people, some important differences in Aquarius Sub Aqua Club's interpretation of the guidance adopted from BSAC's Technical Services Manual, which is available for inspection upon request.

Why is there a difference? Because Aquarius differs from many other clubs, in that it is essentially a **diving** club, as opposed to a **training** club. Therefore, we **will** train divers, but it is not the most important focus of our activities. As a consequence, the way in which Under 16's are trained is subject to rather more parental involvement than in other clubs.

What does this mean in practice? That as a parent, you will be more fully involved with the activities of the club. We offer the highest standards in training, and the Health and Safety of all divers and diving activities are paramount, irrespective of their level of experience or training. **However – we will not act in “loco parentis” as a school or other organisation into which you entrust the welfare of your child, would do. Young people are welcome and welcomed, but they remain the responsibility of the parent at all times.** We believe it to be unrealistic for adults acting in a social context to assume responsibility for children, which is why we require parents to be fully involved. This extends to both pool based and open water activities.

Why is this? It is as much for the protection of Club members, as it is for the protection of young people. Perceived wisdom tells us that a sport which requires a degree of physical contact and is undertaken in a partially clothed state, must be carried out in a manner in which there is no room for doubt or mis-interpretation as to the appropriateness of conduct involving a minor. Therefore if a parent is present and observes what is happening, the risk of misinterpretation is minimised.

Doesn't this imply a major commitment on my behalf? Yes.

What if I am not in agreement to this? If you are unhappy that the club does not assume parental responsibility for your child, this is not the training route that is best suited to you.

In Summary. Aquarius is a professional standard diving club who have the capacity to train to the highest level. Diving is a hazardous sport rather than a dangerous sport, and every opportunity to minimise risk is taken. This is the primary reason that we are eager not to allow issues of “loco parentis” to distract us and cloud our objectives. Diving is a strongly social activity, and an additional benefit of our preferred method of training is that it encourages the social dimension. Training young people to SCUBA dive safely requires an enormous investment of time on behalf of the people who are instructing, and we are hopeful that the return on our investment in training, is a steady flow of new divers, which increases the diving opportunities for existing members due to increased membership.

P. Walsh. 03/2004.