

## Code of Conduct

It is the policy of SUI to:

- Ensure that all members are treated with respect and are able to be part of a community that is inclusive, accepting, and tolerant of differences.
- Encourage all member clubs, groups and individuals of SUI to operate in a fair, just and transparent manner.
- Provide a safe learning environment for all members, especially those new to the sport.
- Provide effective procedures to deal with any complaints that cannot be resolved informally.

### Interaction with fellow cavers

As part of an inclusive organisation, members must be respectful of each other and tolerant of differences. They must conduct themselves in a fair, just and accepting manner. Any abusive behaviour will not be tolerated under any circumstances – see appendix I.

It is the responsibility of members to report instances where concerning behaviour has been witnessed – see Complaints procedure below. It is the responsibility of the SUI to address any concerns raised or witnessed.

Every caver is responsible both for their own safety and ensuring best practice is followed in groups that they cave with. This responsibility extends beyond the cave environment to any training or practice sessions.

The leader on a given caving trip has an additional responsibility to follow correct callout procedures as published on the SUI website, and to be aware of best practice as taught in the Cave Leader I training course run by the SUI.

### Interaction with the SUI

The SUI is the National Governing Body for caves and cavers on the island of Ireland. As such, cavers should follow the guidelines and policies published by the SUI in order to maintain access, to conserve the cave environment, and to ensure the good standing of cavers nationally and internationally.

### Interaction with the public

At all times members should be respectful of any members of the public and landowners while caving.

There is no guaranteed right to roam on the island of Ireland, and therefore it is important that permission is sought before accessing caves on private land. Cavers should check for updates on the SUI website prior to any caving trips, and be aware of any published access restrictions.

### Interaction with the environment

Members should at all times follow the SUI guidelines on “leave no trace”, both within caves and in the surrounding environment.

There are many delicate formations within caves which can be damaged when touched. It is the responsibility of all cavers to avoid contact wherever possible and ensure that those they cave with take similar care.

Cavers should be aware of the various animals and plants that may live in or around caves and at all times minimise the risk of disturbing or harming them. This includes completely avoiding caves that are known roosting grounds for bats during their hibernation period as listed on the SUI website.

When considering placing new bolts for rigging in caves, members should follow the published Bolting Policy of the SUI in order to minimise damage to the cave.

## Complaints, Discipline and Appeals Procedures

It is the right of any person to make a complaint to the SPELEOLOGICAL UNION OF IRELAND (SUI) about a member, club or group where standards are perceived to fall short of what is acceptable and should reasonably be expected. Likewise, it is the right of SUI to take disciplinary action against any member, club or group for breaches of conduct as expected by SUI.

These Rules and Procedures apply to all members, committees, sub-committees, affiliated clubs and groups, and any other unit of SUI.

The Rules and Procedures are not an appropriate mechanism for dealing with certain complaints such as allegations of physical or sexual abuse or potential child abuse issues for which other procedures exist using the appropriate statutory authorities. In this regard reference is made to the SUI 'Safeguarding Policy'.

All persons who administer complaints and disciplinary matters at any level in SUI shall not be liable to any party for any act or omission in connection with their function, role or service provided by such persons in relation to the administration of complaints, appeals and disciplinary matters.

### Formal Complaints Procedure

1) An official complaint should be made in writing (letter or email) with information including:

- Complainants name
- Date(s) of incident(s)
- Contacts details for the complainant
- Person(s) or incident(s) or group(s) complaint is referring to

2) The complaint should be sent to the Safeguarding Officer at [safeguarding@caving.ie](mailto:safeguarding@caving.ie) or by post at:

Safeguarding Officer  
Speleological Union of Ireland  
c/o Burren Outdoor Education Centre  
Turlough  
Bell Harbour  
Co. Clare

If the complaint relates to the safeguarding officer, or the complainant feels that the safeguarding officer will be compromised, complaints can be submitted to the SUI Chairperson ([suichairperson@gmail.com](mailto:suichairperson@gmail.com)) or SUI Secretary ([secretary@caving.ie](mailto:secretary@caving.ie)).

If the complainant feels that the complaint cannot reasonably be addressed by the SUI committee, then it should be sent to Sport Dispute Solutions Ireland following the arbitration procedure as outlined on their website:

<http://sportdisputesolutions.ie/>

In the absence of a formal complaint the SUI Committee may establish a disciplinary sub-committee where an incident comes to their attention which is significant enough to require investigation. In this case a representative of the Committee will act as complainant.

## How complaints are addressed by the SUI

- A sub-committee will be formed consisting of three SUI members, including at least one member of the SUI committee and at least one ordinary member.
- The sub-committee will review the complaint, gathering any additional information from the complainant and other affected parties as may be required. A written record shall be kept of all proceedings of the sub-committee.
- The sub-committee will either reject the complaint as invalid (in writing) or make a recommendation to the SUI committee on how the complaint should be addressed.
- The sub-committee will inform the SUI committee if any member of the SUI committee is involved in the incident or compromised by their relationship with others involved in the incident. Under these circumstances, the committee member identified must not take part in discussions or decision-making on the complaint or disciplinary action to be taken.

## Disciplinary Procedures

The SUI committee, taking into account the findings and recommendations of the sub-committee, may take disciplinary action.

- For breaches of the code of conduct, a written warning may be issued explaining how their behaviour has breached the code of conduct, and any action required to redress the situation.
- For breaches by a member who has a formal role within the SUI (such as committee member, trainer, cave leader, etc), the committee may choose to remove that person from their position.
- For repeat breaches of the code of conduct, or in cases of gross misconduct, the SUI committee has the authority to revoke a person's membership either for a defined period or permanently.
- If a complaint is received that indicates a crime may have been committed, the SUI will be obliged to report the matter to the relevant authorities, and the complainant will be informed of this.
- If a complaint is received that is a breach of the SUI Safeguarding Policy, the safeguarding officer and TUSLA will be immediately notified.

The complainant will be notified if disciplinary action has been taken by the SUI. Both complainants and any members against whom disciplinary action is taken must formally acknowledge receipt of the notification.

## Appeals Procedure

If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution reached by the complaint review, they may appeal the decision. A separate sub-committee may be formed to review the case, or it may be brought to Sport Dispute Solutions Ireland for arbitration.

If a member has been disciplined as a result of a complaint, they can also appeal. This appeal will be referred directly to Sport Dispute Solutions Ireland for arbitration.

All appeals must be lodged in writing (email or post) within 28 days of receipt of the decision made by the SUI Committee. While an appeal is being processed, any disciplinary action originally taken will stand until the appeal has been addressed.

## Appendix I – Example behaviours

### **Bullying**

Bullying is *repeated* aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour, which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting or extortion against a victim. It is the responsibility of all cavers to deal with bullying that may take place. Incidents of bullying should be dealt with immediately and not tolerated under any circumstances.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Examples of emotional abuse include:

- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- Unresponsiveness or exclusion;
- Inconsistent or unrealistic expectations of a group member;
- Withholding opportunities for training and development;
- Use of unrealistic or over-harsh disciplinary measures.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm, including:

- Shaking, hitting or throwing;
- Use of excessive force;
- Deliberate poisoning;
- Suffocation or drowning;
- Burning or scalding;
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm;
- For those with disabilities it may include confinement, or incorrectly given drugs to control behaviour.

## Appendix II – Guidelines for disciplinary sub-committee

When investigating a complaint, the sub-committee shall take into account the following: -

- Age
- Intellectual Capacity (vulnerable adult/ child)
- Cooperation
- Prior warnings & Repeat offences
- Apology made & Remorse shown
- Gravity of offence
- Effect on other party
- Effect of sanction of Respondent
- Any other factor deemed relevant

The disciplinary sub-committee shall ensure the Safeguarding Officer is present at any hearings or discussions where the matter concerns an under 18 year old member or vulnerable adult.

The disciplinary sub-committee and SUI committee shall act on a simple majority vote in arriving at a decision. No minority or dissenting decisions shall be produced. In the event of a majority decision, this shall be the decision of the SUI.

### **Timeframes**

The disciplinary sub-committee and SUI committee should endeavour to resolve all complaints in a timely manner. Barring any extenuating circumstances, all complaints should aim to be resolved within 3 months from when the formal complaint is lodged.