

## Child Protection Policy (part of Safeguarding portfolio)

### Introduction

It is the policy of the Spinal Injuries Association (SIA) to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people, including disabled children and young people, by protecting them from all forms of abuse including physical, emotional and sexual harm. SIA is committed to creating a safe environment in which children and young people can feel comfortable and secure whilst engaged in any SIA activities or using any SIA services. SIA personnel should at all times show respect and understanding for an individual's rights, safety and welfare and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the ethos and principles of the organisation. SIA is committed to a practice that protects children from harm. Staff and volunteers in this organisation accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of issues that cause children and young people harm.

### Policy & Procedure

#### Attitudes

Staff and volunteers should be committed to:

- Treating children and young people with respect and dignity
- Always listening to what a child or young person is saying
- Valuing each child and young person
- Recognising the unique contribution each individual can make
- Encouraging and praising each child or young person
- Being sensitive, understanding and respectful when dealing with a child or young person with a disability

#### By Example

Staff and volunteers should endeavour to:

- Provide an example that we would wish others to follow
- Use appropriate language with children and young people and challenge any inappropriate language used by a young person or child, or an adult working with young people
- Respect a young person's right to privacy
- Ensure that children and young peoples' basic right to communication is always met (this may require adaptive technology in some cases)

#### One to one contact

Staff and volunteers should:

- Not spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- In the event of having to meet with an individual child or young person, make every effort to keep this meeting as open as possible
- If privacy is needed, ensure that other staff are informed of the meeting and its whereabouts
- Communicate with a child or young person what you are going to do and give choices where possible, particularly if involved in assisting a disabled child.

#### Physical Contact

Staff and volunteers must discuss and agree with a parent/person(s) with parental responsibility or young person the care which they require and the physical contact which is necessary for them to participate in the activity. Staff and volunteers should never:

- Engage in sexually provocative or rough physical games
- Do things of a personal nature for a child or young person that they can do for themselves. If such an incident arises, for example where a child or young person has limited mobility, SIA staff/volunteers should seek a parent/person(s) with parental responsibility or member of hospital/school staff to deal with such an incident
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind

### **Vulnerability of disabled children and young people**

Staff and volunteers must be aware that disabled children and young people may be more vulnerable to being abused or be subjected to poor standards of care due a number of factors including:

- Physical vulnerability
- Communication needs
- Intimate care needs
- Need for physical handling
- Lack of support for parents/carers
- Parents/carers lacking ability to communicate adequately with child or young person
- Social isolation
- Child/young person perceived as of a lower status due to their disability
- Assumption that a behaviour is an integral part of the child/young person's disability rather than a response to abusive treatment or lack of proper care

SIA must minimise the impact of these vulnerabilities on disabled children and young people by:

- Ensuring that staff and volunteers do not take on tasks for which they are not appropriately trained
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers are appropriately trained for the activity they are required to carry out
- Promoting children and young people's right to safeguarding
- Ensuring children/young people have access to information about their rights
- Ensuring children/young people's basic right to communication is met

### **General**

Staff and volunteers should:

- Be aware that someone might misinterpret their actions, no matter how well intentioned
- Never draw any conclusions about others without checking the facts
- Never exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues or make suggestive remarks or gestures about, or to, a child or young person even in fun

### **Sharing information**

Good communication is essential in any organisation. SIA will make every effort to ensure that, should individuals have concerns, they will be listened to and taken seriously. It is the responsibility of SIA's Leadership team to ensure that information is available to, and exchanged between, all those involved in SIA and its activities. Some information is confidential and should only be shared on a strictly need-to-know basis.

### **Children and young people**

Children and young people have a right to information, especially any information that could make life better and safer for them. SIA will act to ensure they have information about how, and with

whom, they can share their concerns, complaints and anxieties. When sharing information, SIA staff/volunteers will be sensitive to the level of understanding, maturity and level of responsibility of the people with whom they are sharing.

### **Parents**

Parents/person(s) with parental responsibility are ultimately responsible for their children's welfare at all times and they should be assured that their children are involved with a credible organisation. We achieve this by publicising information on all our youth work and by publishing our Complaints procedure on the SIA website.

### **Staff & Volunteers**

As an organisation that offers support to young people, it is imperative that relevant staff members are aware of their responsibilities under the Child Protection legislation and have a working knowledge of SIA's procedures in this regard. Such staff members will receive updated training in Child Protection.

### **Other Bodies**

A copy of our Child Protection Policy will be made available to any other appropriate body.

### **Sharing concerns with relevant agencies and involving parents and children appropriately**

In any case where an allegation is made, or someone in SIA has concerns, a record will be made and all relevant details included, along with details of any action taken.

### **Designated Safeguarding Officer**

For reasons of confidentiality the only person who needs to know this information is SIA's designated Safeguarding Officer, which is currently the Operations & Compliance Manager, or the deputy Safeguarding Officer, which is currently the People Services Manager. The designated person will, if necessary, inform the relevant outside organisations of the incident, including the local Social Services Duty Social Worker, the local Police specialist child abuse investigation team and Child Line.

### **Record-keeping**

All records, information and confidential notes will be kept in separate files in a locked drawer or filing cabinet. Only the designated person will have access to these files.

### **Disclosure**

Staff members/volunteers should never guarantee absolute confidentiality in matters of Child Protection as this will always have precedence over any other issues. Instead they should listen to the child, offer him / her reassurance without making promises, and take what the child says seriously. Allow the child to speak without interruption and accept what is said (it is not your role to investigate or question). Do not overreact or pass judgement, but instead advise that you will try to offer support whilst making it clear that you must pass the information on. Explain what you have to do and whom you have to tell and record the discussion accurately as soon as possible after the event. When recording you should use the child's words or explanations. Do not translate into your own words in case you have misconstrued what the child was trying to say.

Record any discussions or actions taken within 24 hours and contact the designated Safeguarding Officer for advice/guidance, who may then discuss the concern/suspicion with the relevant organisation, and, if appropriate, make a direct referral.

**Procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers**

SIA operates employment and supervision procedures that ensure highest priority is given to issues relating to child protection. Staff and volunteers engaged in activities involving direct contact with children and/or vulnerable adults will be required to undergo relevant DBS checks as part of our recruitment policy.

**Providing effective management for staff & volunteers through supervision, support & training**

SIA encourages the development of staff and volunteers through ongoing support, supervision and training. Each new member of staff or volunteer is made familiar with SIA's policies and procedures, including the Child Protection Policy. Each new member of staff engages in regular supervision meetings with his/her designated Line Manager.

Training needs of staff and volunteers are identified and agreed as part of supervision meetings and appropriate courses are sourced and attended at the earliest opportunity. Staff and volunteers working within Outreach services meet at regional and national level on a regular basis to discuss activities, exchange information and offer support to one another.

<b>Policy Owner (responsibility)</b>	Finance & Operations
<b>Review schedule</b>	Annual
<b>Date of last review</b>	October 2020
<b>Approval levels</b>	Operational
<b>Related policies</b>	Safeguarding, Adults at Risk, Whistleblowing