

Child Protection Policy

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.

This Child Protection policy applies to all employees, officers, consultants, self-employed contractors, casual workers, agency workers, volunteers and interns. It does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time.

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

Who Might Abuse?

Children may be abused by a wide range of people including relatives and family members, professional staff, paid care workers, volunteers, other service users, neighbours, friends and associates, people who deliberately exploit vulnerable children, and strangers.

Forms of Abuse

Abuse can take many forms, and incidents of abuse may be one-off or multiple and can affect one person or more. Abuse may also be very subtle. Any or all types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance and targeting of vulnerable people.

No abuse is acceptable and some abuse is a criminal offence and must be reported to the Police as soon as possible. The forms of abuse as set out below is not an exhaustive list therefore staff and volunteers are encouraged to be alert and take the initiative to spot these and other forms of abuse that might occur.

- **Physical abuse:** including hitting, slapping, scratching, pushing, rough handling, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint without justifiable reasons, inappropriate sanctions including deprivation of food, warmth, clothing and health care needs.
- **Sexual abuse:** including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, unwanted sexual text messages, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into and sexual coercion,
- **Emotional or Psychological abuse:** including threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, ridicule, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, unwanted communication, stalking, harassment, inappropriate messaging; with kisses attached, verbal abuse and cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal from services or supportive networks. Deliberate denial of religious or cultural needs and failure to provide access to appropriate skills and educational development.

- **Neglect and acts of omission:** including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care and support or educational services or equipment for functional independence, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition, heating and lighting. Failure to give privacy and dignity.
- **Modern slavery:** encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.
- **Discriminatory abuse:** including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, colour, language, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion. Hate crime.
- **Use of social media in an abusive way:** abuse can also occur through social media and this is often harder to detect. It is important to remember that the type of abuse that can occur through social media does not always include emotional and psychological abuse and can include sexual and financial abuse. Social media includes (but is not limited to) networking sites such as Facebook, X (previously Twitter), TikTok, Instagram, and LinkedIn, email, text messages, Skype and instant messaging services.
- **Radicalisation** - Radicalisation is the name given to the process that moves a person to legitimise their support or use of violence. It's where terrorism begins. Radicalisers groom people using online platforms. There are also web pages which are not so noticeable, such as social media networking groups that draw people in. These groups look innocent on the outside but are actually extremist groups.
- **County lines and cuckooing** - County Lines is a national issue involving the use of mobile phone lines to extend a drug dealing business into new locations outside a dealer's home area. County lines often involve the exploitation of vulnerable people. Cuckooing is the term used to describe the practice where professional drug dealers/crime gangs take over the property of an adult at risk and use it as a place from which to run their drugs business/crime activity.
- **Female genital mutilation (FGM)** – the practice, traditional in some cultures, of partially or totally removing the external genitalia of girls and young women for non-medical reasons. It is illegal in many countries.

Vulnerability of disabled children and young people

Staff and volunteers must be aware that disabled children and young people may be more vulnerable to abuse or 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 unless we have a legal obligation.

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 co-leads

For reasons of confidentiality the only people who needs to know this information are SIA's designated Safeguarding co-leads, who are the Head of Services and the Head of people & operations. The Safeguarding co-leads will coordinate an appropriate response, which may include 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. The DPO should be informed where there is a safeguarding action, but you need not share the personal data of the individual, only the facts as you know them.

Record-keeping

All records, information and confidential notes will be recorded and uploaded on SIA's CRM. Only designated persons 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 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 one of the designated Safeguarding co-leads for advice/guidance. The Safeguarding co-leads will coordinate the response, which may involve discussing the concern/suspicion with the relevant organisation, and, if appropriate, make a direct referral. A process flow setting out the safeguarding procedure to be followed is in Appendix One.

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. Specifically:

- 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.

Data Protection is not a barrier to sharing concerns about a child or an individual at risk. You should make a note in the safeguarding report of any express wish not to share the information but not let this prevent you from sharing. If you have any concerns about information sharing, contact the NSPCC helpline for advice. For guidance on information sharing, see:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf.

Lawful Basis

When a safeguarding incident takes place, it may be difficult to gather consent because the priority is to ensure safety of the individuals. If there's a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult, their safety takes priority over confidentiality.

In such circumstances mentioned above, in order to comply with our duty of care and safeguarding, our organisation would process information raising safeguarding concerns and share them with relevant authorities when required, based on the lawful basis of Vital Interest, or legitimate interest, read with substantial public interest and conditions from the legislation (eg. Safeguarding of children and of individuals at risk / Safeguarding of economic well-being of certain individuals)

Data Subject Rights

Data subjects' rights and other UK GDPR provisions may be restricted when concerning personal data processed for safeguarding incidents. Examples of exemptions that might apply in the circumstances of safeguarding are defined under the UK GDPR such as the Crime and Taxation, the Rights of Others and Child Abuse Data.

Policy Owner (responsibility)	Safeguarding co-leads – Head of services and Head of people & operations
Review schedule	Annual
Date of last review	December 2025
Date of next review	December 2026
Approval levels	SLT (if significant changes)
Related policies	Safeguarding policy, Adult Safeguarding policy, Whistleblowing policy, Complaints policy



Dave Bracher
Head of people & operations
December 2025

Appendix One: Safeguarding Process Flow

