

## Special Olympics GB: Children Protection Policy (Scotland)

Protecting children from abuse of any kind is a high priority for everyone involved in any capacity with Special Olympics GB. This policy sets out how all staff (paid or unpaid), athletes and unified partners should recognise and respond to allegations of abuse of children.

Whilst local authorities play a lead role, safeguarding children and protecting them from harm is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play by:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

### 1. Key Responsibilities

Everyone who comes into contact with children has three main responsibilities:

#### 1.1 Responsibility to Protect

Protect children<sup>1</sup> from abuse:

- Follow examples of good practice and the relevant Special Olympics GB Staff and Volunteers, Athlete and Unified Partner Codes of Conduct in dealing with children
- Be open and clear about what Special Olympics GB does to avoid abuse and neglect by making sure that everyone involved with a Special Olympics GB programme<sup>2</sup> knows that there are policies and procedures in use and make copies available to them on the SOGB Website Resources Section.

#### 1.2 Responsibility to Act

Please refer to Appendix A herein for the legal framework overview for Scotland

Prevent potential further abuse:

- Always report allegations or suspicions of abuse to the appropriate authorities. (See appendix B: flowchart )
- Where possible take immediate action to minimise the risk of further abuse (See appendix B: flowchart)
- A large number of areas have a MASH where the police, social care, health services, education and youth offending teams are working together to safeguard children. <https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse-to-local-council>. In areas where there is not a MASH, referrals are made to the Children's Social Care in the area where the child lives.

#### 1.3 Responsibility to Record and Preserve Evidence

- Always write down details of conversations, incidents and action taken (Safeguarding & Welfare Incident Reporting Form & Body Map )
- Special Olympics GB **does not** undertake Child protection investigations (Section 47, Children Act 1989) – Statutory agencies (police, social care and the NSPCCC) undertake this role. **Therefore you must NOT investigate an allegation of abuse.**
- Remember to maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis – only if it will protect the child or vulnerable adult. Do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know.

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<sup>1</sup> Athletes, Unified Partners and Volunteers

<sup>2</sup> Home Country, Region, Club and Network

## **2. Recognising Abuse or Neglect – Definitions**

### **2.1 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children**

The process of protecting children, including safeguarding from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and securing that they grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, that enables children to have optimum life chances and enter childhood successfully.

### **2.2 Child Protection**

The process of protecting individual children identified as suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.

### **2.3 Child**

**Anyone who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.** It can also include a person aged 18, 19 or 20 who has been looked after by the Local Authority after they turned 16 years old or has an intellectual disability. There are separate safeguarding adults procedures that protect people aged 18 or over. (As defined in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014.)

### **2.4 Children can be identified as having increased vulnerability in a variety of settings and under a number of different circumstances, as follows:**

- Disabled children (physical, emotional, intellectual disabilities etc.)
- Sick children in a hospital setting, hospice or a children's home
- Children in families where domestic violence/abuse is present
- Children in families where drug/alcohol use is affecting parenting
- Children in families where parents/guardians/carers have mental health issues/learning difficulties/problems coping with parenthood
- Children growing up with parents in prison
- Children in families where the child is a "young carer" for a parent/guardian/carer who is physically/mentally ill or disabled
- Children who are primary carers of younger children
- Looked after children
- Children living in un-registered private fostering arrangements
- Children who are bullied or abused by a peer
- Children of young/unsupported parents
- Children living in poverty/poor housing
- Children who change address, school and/or carers frequently
- Children missing education
- Children who are disadvantaged on the grounds of race, religion or ethnicity
- Children who are trafficked
- Children whose first language is not English
- Children at risk of sexual exploitation

## **3. Abuse**

### **What is child abuse?**

Child abuse falls into one or more of four categories: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

### **3.1 Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

It may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates symptoms of, or induces illness in a child.

### **3.2 Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development, and may involve:

- Conveying to a child that s/he is worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as s/he meets the needs of another person
- Imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations e.g. interactions beyond the child's developmental capability, overprotection, limitation of exploration and learning, preventing the child from participation in normal social interaction
- Causing a child to feel frightened or in danger e.g. witnessing domestic violence, seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another
- Exploitation or corruption of a child
- Some level of emotional abuse is involved in most types of ill treatment of children, though emotional abuse may occur alone

### **3.3 Sexual abuse/sexual exploitation**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution/exploitation, whether or not s/he is aware of what is happening.

Activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. 'Penetrative acts' include 'rape' (forced penetration of vagina, anus or mouth with a penis) and 'assault by penetration' (sexual penetration of vagina or anus with a part of the body or an object).

Sexual activities may also include non-contact activities, e.g. involving a child in looking at/production of abusive images, watching sexual activities or encouraging her/him to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. It may include use of photos, pictures, cartoons, literature or sound recordings via internet, books, magazines, audio cassettes, tapes or CDs.

Children under 16 years of age cannot lawfully consent to sexual intercourse. A child of less than 13 years of age is considered in law incapable of providing consent.

### **3.4 Neglect**

Neglect is defined as **the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs**, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health and development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse and once the child is born, neglect may involve failure to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing or shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Meet or respond to basic emotional needs
- Ensure adequate supervision including the use of adequate care-takers
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- Ensure that her/his educational needs are met
- Ensure that her/his opportunities for intellectual stimulation are met

## **4. Responding abuse or neglect – What to do**

When there is an allegation or suspicion of abuse, everyone must be clear about their role. All staff (paid or unpaid) need to act impartially, not as "friends" of the child or their parents. It is essential that all staff follow these procedures.

#### **4.1 Address any immediate safety and protection needs**

- Make an immediate evaluation of the risk and take steps to ensure that the child is in no immediate danger. Where appropriate, call 999 for emergency services if there is a medical emergency, other danger to life or risk of imminent injury, or if a crime is in progress;
- Summon urgent medical assistance, if there is a concern about the child's need for medical assistance or advice. You can call the NHS 111 service for urgent medical help or advice when it's not a life-threatening situation
- If there are other children with care and support needs who are at risk of harm, take appropriate steps to safeguard them
- Contact the Police if a crime has been or may have been committed
- Take steps to preserve any physical evidence if a crime may have been committed, and preserve evidence through the recording of everything that has happened and been said on the Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form.
- Contact your Special Olympics club designated Safeguarding & Welfare officer and also advise SOGB Safeguarding & Welfare team. If neither are available and the incident is deemed urgent then refer to Social care agency immediately. (see Appendix B: Flowchart)
- Inform parents/guardians/carers only if it will not place the child at greater risk

#### **5. Dealing with disclosures**

It is often difficult to believe that abuse or neglect can occur. Remember, it may have taken a great amount of courage for the child to tell you that something has happened. They may fear the abuse could get worse if they tell, or fear that they will not be believed which may prevent children from revealing the information.

- Accept what the child is saying – do not question them or get them to justify what they are saying – reassure them that you will take what they have said seriously
- Don't 'interview' the child; just listen calmly to what they are saying. If they want to give you lots of information, let them. Try to remember what they are saying in their own words so that you can record it later. Record the information using the child's own words at the time if possible.
- You can ask questions to establish the basic facts, but try to avoid asking the same questions more than once, or asking them to repeat what they have said - this can make them feel they are not being believed
- Don't promise the child that you'll keep what they tell you confidential or "secret". Explain that you will need to tell other people but you'll only tell people who need to know so that they can help

#### **6. Responding to Child Safeguarding Concerns – a summary of what to do**

There are some key responsibilities and actions for anyone who identifies the possibility of abuse or neglect. These responsibilities must be addressed as soon as possible on the **same day** as the concern is raised.

- **Immediate protection** - Take any immediate actions to safeguard anyone at immediate risk of harm, including summoning medical assistance
- **Detection and prevention of crime** - Where there is evidence a criminal offence has taken place, or a crime may be about to be committed, contact the Police immediately
- **Inform your Special Olympics club designated officer** or in their absence please contact Special Olympics GB's Safeguarding & Welfare team.
- **Report and inform - Report to Children's Social Care** as soon as possible, and in all circumstances on the same day as the concern is raised.

- **Record and preserve evidence** - Preserve evidence through recording and take steps to preserve any physical evidence. If you are at an event and the alleged incident has just taken place, you should try to ensure that anything that might be used as evidence is not interfered with

## **7. Practice Guidance**

### **7.1 Who do I speak to when I contact the police?**

Different police authorities work differently. Ask if there is a Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

A large number of areas have a MASH where the police, social care, health services, education and youth offending teams are working together to safeguard children. In other areas referrals are made to children's social care. <https://www.mygov.scot/report-child-abuse/>

Make sure that you find out:

- The name of the person you have been speaking to (you will need to record this in your incident report)

### **7.2 Who else has to be informed?**

- Parents/guardians or carer as long as it will not place the child or the general public at further risk of harm or abuse

### **7.3 What if the victim is a volunteer?**

- Follow the same guidelines. Volunteers have the same right to be protected from abuse as athletes/unified partners do
- Provide support

### **7.4 What if a volunteer who has an intellectual disability first hears the allegation or suspicion?**

- Give them support to follow the same guidelines

### **7.5 What about the person who has been accused?**

- If the person who has been accused **is not** involved with Special Olympics GB it is not your job to tell them that they have been accused of abuse or neglect. You must avoid "alerting" the person accused
- If the person who has been accused **is** involved with Special Olympics GB then the managing allegations policy should be followed

### **7.6 How do I write the Report?**

You should complete the standard Special Olympics GB Safeguarding & Welfare Incident Report Form with the following information:

#### *Persons Involved:*

- This should include name, gender, address, age, date of birth, what role they have with the organisation or if at a sanctioned Special Olympics event or training session, what role e.g. athlete, coach, staff member, volunteer, spectator etc. If possible include a telephone number for immediate follow-up action if necessary
- Also include names and contact information of any witnesses to the incident if applicable

#### *Incident Details:*

- State factual information only.
- If the child involved in the incident is distressed or upset, keep questions to a minimum but obtain enough information to ensure you understand what is being said or communicated
- Remember you are reporting a concern, not investigating it!

- If someone has been hurt in the incident, include a description of any physical marks (including the site) or any visible bruising or injuries (Use a body map to record this. DO NOT remove any clothing or take any photos)

*Action Taken:*

- Include details of the action taken. If the incident was referred to another person or organisation (e.g. Games Medical Service, athlete's coach etc.) include the name and position of the person and their contact telephone number

*Follow-up Action:*

- If you feel that particular follow-up action is necessary or have suggestions to prevent this type of incident occurring again in the future, please state details and recommendations
- This guidance is on the back of the Safeguarding & Welfare Incident Report Form. Give the completed Incident Report Form to your Special Olympics Club Safeguarding & Welfare Officer. If you are at an event please give the completed form to the designated Safeguarding & Welfare Officer or Head of Delegation
- Because the Safeguarding & Welfare Incident Report Form contains personal information you should not keep a copy yourself. If you need a copy later because you are going to be interviewed by the police or social services you should get this from your Special Olympics Club Safeguarding & Welfare Officer.
- Special Olympics Club Safeguarding & Welfare Officers must forward a copy of the Safeguarding & Welfare Incident Report Form to the Special Olympics GB Safeguarding & Welfare Leads.

**8. Who Needs to Know?**

This is a summary of who should be told about an allegation of abuse:

*The Police*

- You inform the local police force. If you are at an event or competition and the alleged incident has just taken place this means the police force local to the event even if it is abroad

*Social Care*

- You inform the local Social Care Department The definition of local is the same as in 1 above. The Police may contact Social Care but make sure you are very clear who is going to do this

*Special Olympics GB*

- Your Special Olympics Club Safeguarding & Welfare Officer, or if you are at an event or competition, the Safeguarding & Welfare Officer or Head of Delegation. Special Olympics GB's Safeguarding & Welfare Leads.

**9. Key Contacts**

**NSPCC Helpline** – 0800 028 0285

**Special Olympics GB**

For assistance or support in completing this form, please contact a member of the Special Olympics GB Safeguarding & Welfare team on;

- Karen Wallin 07990 573604 [karen.wallin@sogb.org.uk](mailto:karen.wallin@sogb.org.uk)
- Andy Heffer 07973 838988 [andy.heffer@sogb.org.uk](mailto:andy.heffer@sogb.org.uk)

## Appendix A

### Legal Framework

Children (Scotland) Act 1995

This act provides the legislative framework for Scotland's child protection system. It sets out:

- parental responsibilities and rights, and
- duties and powers public authorities have to support children and intervene if there are concerns about a child.

View the Children (Scotland) Act 1995:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/36/contents>

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/scotland/legislation-policy-guidance/#>

Report child abuse (Scotland) <https://www.mygov.scot/report-child-abuse/>

**APPENDIX B: FLOWCHART** – please download from Resources/Safeguarding & Welfare

**APPENDIX C: SAFEGUARDING & WELFARE INCIDENT REPORT FORM AND BODYMAP** – please download from Resources/Safeguarding & Welfare

### SOGB WHISTLEBLOWING STATEMENT

It is important that people within SOGB have the confidence to come forward within the organisation to speak or act if they're unhappy with anything.

Whistleblowing occurs when a concern is raised about dangerous or illegal activity, or any wrong doing within the organisation.

Complaints that count as whistleblowing -You're protected by law if you report any of the following:

- a criminal offence, e.g. fraud
- someone's health and safety is in danger
- risk or actual damage to the environment
- a miscarriage of justice
- the company is breaking the law, e.g. doesn't have the right insurance
- you believe someone is covering up wrongdoing

**Complaints that don't count as whistleblowing**

- Personal grievances (e.g. bullying, harassment, discrimination) aren't covered by whistleblowing law, unless your particular case is in the public interest. Report these under your employer's grievance policy.

The NSPCC whistleblowing advice line Call: 0800 028 0285 or E-mail: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) will support staff who have concerns about how a child protection issue is being handled their own or another organisation.