

SAFE PRACTICE FOR VOLUNTEERS

INTRODUCTION

These guidance notes are intended as a reference to:

- Provide volunteers with information to help them fulfill their volunteer role with confidence
- Respect the dignity and individuality of athletes depending on their level of need
- Ensure a safe and supportive environment for everyone interacting with athletes
- Enhance awareness and understanding

This is not a policy document, but we would encourage all volunteers to read it and absorb the content into their volunteer role. Should you require any clarification, further information or have any concerns please contact the National Volunteer Office:

Telephone: 01295 709378 / Email: volunteer@sogb.org.uk

MAKING THE COMMITMENT

Everyone in Special Olympics GB should recognise that we have a responsibility to our athletes to ensure:

- The interests and well-being of people with a learning disability are safeguarded and promoted at all times
- The rights, wishes and feelings of our athletes are respected
- All Special Olympics GB volunteers and staff are carefully selected, trained and managed and should be protected from being in vulnerable situations
- Special Olympics GB volunteers and staff adhere to and be aware of the procedures in place to ensure that all reasonable practical steps have been taken to protect our athletes and to help them protect themselves from abuse, harm, discrimination or degrading treatment

GOOD PRACTICE

When working with Special Olympics, we all have a responsibility to protect our athletes, our volunteers and our staff. Everyone has the right to be safe and treated with dignity and respect.

There are established Codes of Conduct for volunteers and staff in Special Olympics. It is a requirement that all members of Special Olympics GB or parties acting on behalf of Special Olympics GB subscribe to our policy and procedures. Everyone should **MAKE THE COMMITMENT** to adopt good practice to safeguard the welfare of our athletes and protect coaches, escorts, voluntary or paid staff from false allegations.

HOW WE CAN MAKE THE COMMITMENT

- Make sure that everyone in your Special Olympics group has a copy of the Special Olympics GB Policy for Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults in Sport and understands and subscribes to the content
- Appoint a key volunteer as your contact for implementing and reviewing policy in your group and have a key volunteer for reporting purposes
- Ensure that everyone who needs to has completed Special Olympics GB's Volunteer Registration process, which includes disclosure checks
- Ensure that volunteers are appropriately trained
- Be aware of local services that can help, e.g. Social Services, the Police and ensure you have their contact details recorded and accessible

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Following good practice helps everyone in Special Olympics and it will help you provide a quality service to people with a learning disability, thus helping them to improve as athletes and develop as people. Good practice is also about everyone in Special Olympics making a commitment to minimise the potential for the abuse of our athletes and protecting ourselves, other volunteers and staff. The following list is not exhaustive, but gives some examples of good (and bad!) practice.

Ultimately, regardless of written policy, everyone in the organisation has a moral and legal obligation to protect their athletes and themselves from abuse.

GENERALLY

- ✓ Always be publicly open and avoid situations where you and an athlete are completely unobserved
- ✓ Try to minimise the time you spend alone with an athlete
- ✓ Try to avoid taking an athlete home in your car/minibus alone
- ✓ Try to involve and inform your athletes as much as you can about their coaching, events and Special Olympics generally. Every group should have at least one person with a learning disability on its committee
- ✓ Consult with your athlete in any situation where you think they may require manual support
- ✓ Family Liaison: Families/carers play an integral part in athletes' lives. Aim to work with families, as they can be a great source of support to your athletes and your club/group activities
- ✓ Always report accidents, incidents or concerns to the appointed person in your group/club; complete the incident report form and follow the procedures
- ✓ Individuals' care needs should be planned and agreed in advance with themselves, their parents/carers. Plans for appropriate procedures for medication, finances, diet and personal care should be in place prior to events/training
- ✓ Special Olympics rules stipulate a minimum coach/escort:athlete ratio of 1:4 at Special Olympics events. This may be increased to ensure the safety and well-being of athletes with higher support needs
- ✓ Ensure that you have an adequate ratio of male/female coaches/escorts to meet the needs of your athletes, particularly at residential events
- ✓ If you think your intentions or communication to athletes may have been misunderstood then report this immediately to the appointed person in your group or a colleague



- ✓ It is important to remember that while you have a moral and even legal obligation to safeguard and promote the interests of disabled sports people, it is not your responsibility to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. There are trained professionals who will make these judgements. Follow the Special Olympics GB policies for dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse

NEVER

- * Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games or horseplay
- * Share a room with an athlete (unless prior informed consent is gained in writing with full cooperation of the athlete and parents/carer)
- * Have an athlete in your home alone with you
- * Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- * Demonstrate inappropriate language, e.g. sexual or discriminatory remarks, or allow these to remain unchallenged
- * Do things of a personal nature for an athlete unless you are the appointed carer for that task or unless you gain the informed consent of the athlete and involve a colleague in the gaining of that consent. Always be as open as possible whilst respecting the dignity of the athlete
- * Close the door if you have to go into an athlete's room at a residential event
- * Let allegations that are made by athletes go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- * Deny athletes daily basic needs, e.g. food, liquid, adequate rest
- * Deny athletes access to equipment they may use to aid them in daily life, e.g. electric wheelchair, communication board, etc.
- * Physically restrain an athlete unless you have reason to think they may pose a risk to themselves or others

ALWAYS

- ✓ Treat Athletes and with dignity and respect
- ✓ Ensure that the safety of athletes is paramount at all times and follow relevant health and safety guidelines for aspects, such as lifting and manual support
- ✓ Promote independence whilst ensuring that care needs are adequately met for each athlete
- ✓ Always ensure that individuals providing care have received accurate information and training regarding the needs of the individual
- ✓ Ensure that vehicles or methods of transportation are appropriate and roadworthy
- ✓ Ensure that you have the emergency contact details for all athletes and that these are easily accessible
- ✓ Ensure that you are aware of the emergency procedures and evacuation routes when away from home and communicate these to athletes
- ✓ Have an awareness of the power coaches and staff can have over athletes and strive to promote a positive relationship between coaches/escorts and the athletes they work with
- ✓ Ensure the safekeeping and effective administration of medication and ensure accurate records are kept
- ✓ Keep medical records available when at coaching sessions and competitions and have these available for GPs, Hospital and medical personnel in emergencies as appropriate. Ensure the confidentiality of information as appropriate
- ✓ Make provision for the safekeeping of valuables and belongings at training and competition and ensure that athletes are aware of this provision
- ✓ Make provision to assist athletes in safeguarding their finances/spending money when at events. Encourage open record keeping with full athlete involvement
- ✓ Ensure the safeguarding of athletes' personal kit and belongings and encourage athletes to take responsibility for these themselves
- ✓ Always remember your 'Duty of Care' and that you are in 'loco parentis' whilst at Special Olympics events



- ✓ Always ASK, if you are not sure. Athletes, parents, carers or sports colleagues can be a great source of support if you involve them