

# Safeguarding Policy

## The SNP Safeguarding Policy

The Scottish National Party acknowledges the duty of care it holds to safeguard and protect children who are involved in the SNP or affected by the activities of the party.

This Safeguarding Policy outlines the behaviour expected of:

1. Staff, volunteers, members and elected representatives of the SNP and;
2. Staff, members and volunteers of other organisations who engage with children and adults at risk through the SNP and its activities.

This policy covers those under 18 years of age, and adults deemed at risk by their local authority.

The underpinning principles of the policy are:

- **Empowerment:** Those in contact with children and young people are supported and educated in protection from harm
- **Prevention:** Being aware – it is better to take action before harm occurs
- **Protection:** Protecting those most vulnerable from harm
- **Accountability:** accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice. It is the responsibility of all staff, volunteers, members and elected representatives to behave with integrity, maturity and good judgement

## The purpose of the Policy

The Safeguarding Policy is intended to provide a minimum framework for safer working practice for staff, members, volunteers and elected representatives who work with, or come into contact with, children and adults at risk at all levels of party engagement and activity.

It serves to help to protect children and adults at risk from abuse and/or inappropriate behaviour from other individuals and to clarify the standard of behaviour required of staff, members, volunteers and elected representatives.

## Upholding the Safeguarding Policy

It is the responsibility of all staff, members, volunteers and elected representatives to ensure that their behaviour meets the standards of this policy at all times. Any breaches of the policy must be reported.

Staff and members who are found to have breached this policy may be subject to the SNP disciplinary procedures. Any breach of the code involving a volunteer or member of staff from another organisation will result in them being reported to the appropriate safeguarding officer within that organisation.

The SNP will work with local authorities, community agencies and Named Persons where it is felt behaviour that has breached the policy constitutes a safeguarding allegation.

## Acting in a position of trust

Staff, members and volunteers, including elected representatives and senior officials, should be aware that they may be seen as role models by children, young people and adults at risk and therefore they must act in an appropriate manner at all times.

Elected representatives and others in positions of authority must take particular care that their status and power is not used, or may seem to be used, inappropriately to influence children or adults at risk or to cause them harm.

**If you have, or receive, any information that a child or an adult at risk has been harmed, or is at risk of being harmed by their own or someone else's behaviour, you must report it immediately. Do not wait to report.**

When engaging with children and adults at risk on behalf of the SNP, staff, volunteers and elected representatives are considered to be acting in a position of trust.

- A relationship of trust can be described as one in which one party is in a position of power or influence over the other by virtue of their work or the nature of their activity.
- It is vital for any person working on behalf of the Party in a position of trust to understand the power this can give them and the responsibility they must exercise.
- Any behaviour which could allow a sexual relationship to develop between a person in a position of trust and a child or young person must always be avoided.

## Working with children and adults at risk

Staff members, volunteers, members and elected representatives must adhere to the below at all times:

### Positive relationships:

- Treat children and adults at risk fairly, without prejudice or discrimination and avoid favouritism
- Ensure that all contact, interactions and communications (face-to-face and online) with children and adults at risk are appropriate and **relevant to the work of the SNP**
- Use language which is appropriate and be mindful of the Party's equality policy.

- Ensure that the focus of any relationship with a child or an adult at risk that they have met through the SNP remains professional at all times
- Foster a culture where everyone, and in particular children, young people and adults at risk feel comfortable enough to raise any concerns they may have about inappropriate behaviour towards children or adults at risk, without fear of reprisal.

## Planning events or activities:

- Maintain appropriate conduct and avoid threatening or aggressive behaviour that may lead to children or adults at risk feeling anxious or frightened during meetings or events
- Value and take the contributions of children and adults at risk seriously, actively involving them in planning activities wherever possible
- Plan activities so that they involve more than one other person being present, or at least within sight and hearing of others. There may be occasions where this is not possible so in such circumstances the meeting should be conducted in a room with an open door and/or in sight of other adults
- Plan activities so that they are held in suitable venues and locations for children and adults at risk and ensure that appropriate travel arrangements and health and safety measures are in place.

## Reporting abuse and concerns

- Ensure that allegations or disclosures about abuse by an adult or child are taken seriously and reported, including peer-on-peer abuse by children or young people
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations and suspicions of abuse
- Respect a child or an adult at risk's right to personal privacy but never agree to keep any information relating to the harm of a child or an adult at risk confidential

## Physical contact

- Carefully consider any physical contact with a child or an adult at risk. Ensure that physical contact is appropriate and not unnecessary or unjustified.
- Be aware that physical contact with a child or an adult at risk may be misinterpreted, no matter how well intentioned
- Staff, volunteers members and elected representatives should:
  - Consider the way in which they offer comfort and reassurance to a distressed child or adult at risk and do it in an appropriate way
  - Record and report situations which may give rise to concern from either party
  - Not assume that all children or adults at risk seek physical comfort if they are distressed
  - Ensure that if any kind of physical support is required during any activities, it is provided only when necessary in relation to the activity and that this is done in a way that other colleagues can observe and in a way that the child or adult at risk is comfortable

It is essential that staff, volunteers, members and elected representatives do not:

- Conduct in behaviour which leads to sexual contact or a sexual relationship with a child, or with a child involved in SNP activity.
- Physically, emotionally or sexually abuse, maltreat or exploit any child or an adult at risk or neglect their basic physical and psychological needs
- Exaggerate or trivialise child abuse or the abuse of adults at risk
- Make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to, or in front of, children or discuss adult sexual relationships in front of them
- Give or receive gifts and/or substances such as drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, e-cigarettes to or from a child
- Encourage or appear to encourage children to drink alcohol or take drugs
- Allow their judgment to be impaired by alcohol or any other substance when acting in a position of trust
- Photograph or film children without first obtaining consent
- Take advantage of the vulnerability of an adult at risk to achieve financial gain for themselves or the SNP
- Investigate safeguarding concerns – reporting concerns is their immediate responsibility
- Undertake activity which lessens the effectiveness of this code or display attitudes or behaviours which are not conducive to protecting and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk

## Online safety

The SNP acknowledges the positive impact that involvement with social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram can have on the lives of our members and their ability to learn about and engage in political debate. The SNP uses the online environment to encourage people in our campaigning work and events.

At the same time, we recognise the dangers and potential risks that online activity can pose to both children and adults at risk. There are a wide range of ways to communicate and this is a rapidly changing environment as new technologies, applications and social media sites emerge. To safeguard children, adults at risk and protect themselves whilst using online media and apps, staff, volunteers, members and elected representatives must adhere to the standards below:

### 1. Openness and scrutiny

- Try to avoid use of private messaging facilities on social networks or apps. If communication needs to be private then do this by email exchange or phone and note the conversation afterwards
- Ensure there is always a record of these conversations that would be open to others to check if necessary e.g the use of Snapchat is inappropriate
- It should always be clear who a communication is from when communicating with a child or an adult at risk

- Never use anonymous apps (where the sender can remain anonymous)

## 2. Content

- When communicating online observe the same rules of behaviour as if speaking in person. Be professional, polite and respectful
- Ask yourself whether the content of the message could be misunderstood or misinterpreted by someone else
- Always ensure the content of any online communication has clear SNP business purposes
- Don't use any 'text speak' abbreviations, symbols or emojis even if you ordinarily use these in your personal life
- Never disclose non-public and confidential information about the SNP, its staff/volunteers or the children or adults involved

## 3. Text messaging

The use of text messaging to communicate with individual children and adults at risk increases the vulnerability of both the child and the member or volunteer. **It should therefore be avoided where possible.**

There may, however, be circumstances in which it is justified, subject to appropriate safeguarding considerations. In these circumstances:

- Members and volunteers should only send individual text messages to a child in response to a specific question or immediate request. Members and volunteers should not engage in general conversation with children via text message
- All messages should be stored and backed up regularly on a computer – phone messages should not be edited or deleted
- Children's mobile phone numbers should be kept secure via passcode locks on phones and computers. The mobile phone numbers should not be shared with anyone else unless consent has been given
- The content should relate solely to SNP activity
- All bulk text messages sent to children and young people should also be sent through approved channels and recorded for external moderation if required

## Safeguarding reporting principles

**Recognise** – that a child, young person or adult at risk is being harmed or might be at risk of harm

**Respond** – appropriately if a child, young person or adult at risk tells you about what is happening to them or somebody else

**Report** – your concern. Don't keep it to yourself or try to deal with it on your own

**Record** – your concern and who it has been reported to

## Reporting a safeguarding concern

It is important that safeguarding concerns are reported promptly so that the report can be assessed and action taken to protect the people involved. Members of staff, volunteers, members or elected representatives of the SNP must report safeguarding concerns no later than the next working day that the concern is raised or received.

The contact email is [safeguarding@snp.org](mailto:safeguarding@snp.org)

Guidance can be sought from the SNP at any time on 0800 633 5432.

If any person is at immediate risk of harm or requires medical attention the emergency services should be contacted immediately by telephoning 999. Once the safety and welfare needs of the individual have been addressed, the National Secretary must be contacted as soon as practical.