



SCOTTISH DISABILITY SPORT

Wellbeing and Protection Policy for Children and Adults at Risk

Approved by the Scottish Disability Sport (SDS) Management Board – November 2025

Foreword

Scottish Disability Sport (SDS) is committed to ensuring that all participants, athletes, volunteers, staff, and spectators experience sport in a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment.

This policy and accompanying procedures outline SDS's approach to safeguarding the wellbeing and protection of children and adults at risk. It is available to all and is published on the SDS website, and I would ask that you all play your part in ensuring that everyone can access and take part in sport free from harm - safeguarding is everyone's responsibility"

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Statement and Purpose of Policy

SDS is the coordinating body of sport for children, participants and athletes of all ages and abilities in Scotland. The policy recognises that the welfare and interests of children and adults at risk are paramount in all circumstances.

SDS is committed to developing policies and procedures in line with the Equality Act 2010, which aims to ensure that regardless of age, ability or disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or socio-economic background, all children and adults at risk:

- Have positive and enjoyable experiences in sport and physical activity in a safe and inclusive environment
- Are protected from abuse whilst participating in physical activity and sport.

1.0 Purpose

SDS values a rights based approach within sport and physical activity and strongly advocates for the rights of children and adults at risk to participate in sport and physical activity in safe and inclusive environments as outlined in Article 30 and Article 31 in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (Incorporation) Scotland Act 2024 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 (UNCRPD) respectively.

This considers the National guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2023 and the principles of 'Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)'.

SDS is fully committed to:

- Creating a culture of safety to ensure the wellbeing and protection of children and adults at risk.
- Providing safe and secure environments for all children, participants, players, coaches, volunteers, officials and spectators to enjoy sport; and
- Providing guidance, training and support to SDS staff, volunteers, coaches, officials, and leaders.
- Working with partners, parents, carers, participants and athletes to recognise poor practice, report abuse and know where to go to access support.
- Ensuring the voice of children and adults at risk is heard, and they are empowered to contribute to the development of policy and practice.

Sport offers many benefits and can have a very positive influence on the lives of individuals with disabilities and can offer traditionally excluded communities the opportunity to participate, compete, and achieve success in many ways within stimulating environments. Sport is fun, and through sport, essential life skills such as independence, social interaction, improved self-esteem, teamwork, leadership, and confidence can be developed.

The benefits described above can only be positive and achieved by ensuring that the wellbeing and safety of participants is paramount. Those in responsible positions, such as volunteers, leaders, or coaches, must adopt practices and follow procedures that are supportive, empowering, protective, and that motivate participants to give their best.

1.2 Scope

This policy has been developed in line with the SDS values of Inclusion, Respect, Integrity and Ambition, and it outlines how SDS will prevent harm, recognise signs of abuse or neglect, respond appropriately to concerns, and work in partnership with others to uphold the wellbeing and rights of every child and adult at risk. This would include responding to concerns or disclosures shared with SDS relating to incidents out with the sporting environment.



It provides guidance for all individuals working within or on behalf of SDS - including staff, volunteers, coaches, and affiliated organisations - and sets out our procedures in line with Scottish legislation and national best practice. By embedding safeguarding in our culture, policies, and practice, SDS aims to create a safe sporting environment where everyone can thrive.

2.0 Key Commitments and Principles

SDS will ensure a culture of safe, inclusive, and welcoming physical activity and sport by honouring and adopting the commitments and principles outlined below.

2.1 Commitments:

- **Support**
SDS will provide SDS staff, volunteers, coaches, officials and leaders with the appropriate training, guidance, and documentation to implement this policy effectively. Ongoing learning and reflection are encouraged to ensure safeguarding practice remains inclusive, up to date, and person-centred.
- **Protection**
All concerns about harm, poor practice, or wellbeing will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly, fairly, and consistently. Children and adults at risk will be supported to raise concerns and, where appropriate, to participate in the safeguarding process at a level that feels right for them.
- **Accountability**
Everyone involved in safeguarding children and adults at risk must understand their roles and responsibilities. We are committed to transparent processes, the appropriate recording and sharing of information, and handling all personal data with care and confidentiality, in line with legislative changes and advice from sector partners.
- **Prevention**
Preventing harm is always the priority. Everyone involved in SDS has a shared responsibility to promote a safe environment by recognising concerns early, providing appropriate information, and signposting children and adults at risk to support when needed.
- **Proportionality**
Safeguarding responses should be the least intrusive and most appropriate to the level of concern or risk. All actions must be in the best interests of the individual and reflect their rights and preferences.
- **Partnership**
Effective safeguarding depends on working in collaboration with children and adults at risk, families, carers, support workers, and external agencies. An inclusive, team-based approach is essential to creating safe spaces in disability sport.

2.2 Principles:

- **Dignity**
The wellbeing, rights, and dignity of every child and adult at risk are central to all our decisions and actions. Everyone has the right to participate in sport without fear of harm, discrimination, or exclusion.
- **Equality**
All children and adults at risk —regardless of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and



sexual orientation, or socio-economic background—have an equal right to be protected from harm, poor practice, exploitation, bullying, and abuse.

- **Empowerment**

Children and adults are supported to make informed decisions about their lives and care. SDS strongly advocates a person-centred approach when engaging, communicating and including people with disabilities. We actively involve individuals in the safeguarding process, respect their views, and ask what outcomes they would like to achieve. In particular, children and adults at risk have the right to express their views and be involved in decisions that affect them, should they wish to do so.

3.0 Legislation and Guidance

Listed below are the key legislation and guidance that will inform SDS's approach to wellbeing and protection.

3.1 Legislation:

- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 - establishes duties for public bodies and partners to promote, support, and safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people.
- Children (Scotland) Act 2020 – strengthened children's participation in family proceedings, capacity presumption reforms, and protections around parental separation/domestic abuse.
- Aligning closely with the UNCRC and promotes the voice, safety and best interests of the child.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 - incorporated progressively into Scots law, reinforcing the rights and voice of children in all matters affecting them.
- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 - provides a legal framework for identifying and supporting adults at risk of harm.
- The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 - establishes the PVG Scheme for vetting individuals working with vulnerable groups.
- Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020 - introduces a new framework for disclosure and regulated roles, placing safeguarding at its core.
- Equality Act 2010 - protects from discrimination for individuals with protected characteristics, relevant to inclusive safeguarding practices.

3.2 Guidance:

- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021) - outlines how all agencies, including sport, should work together to protect children from harm.
- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Code of Practice - supports implementation of adult protection duties at local and national level.
- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) Practice Guidance (2022-2023) – national framework promoting coordinated, rights-based support for children's wellbeing.
- Standards for Child Wellbeing and Protection in Sport (Children First / sportscotland) - sets out minimum safeguarding standards for sports organisations in Scotland.



4.0 Protected Characteristics

Under the Equality Act 2010, certain characteristics are legally protected from discrimination or harm, and these characteristics may constitute a safeguarding concern.

Protected characteristics include:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

SDS recognises that discrimination or exclusion based on any of these characteristics may create risk and contribute to harm. Where this is the case, the SDS Wellbeing and Protection Policy and our Equality Policy will apply.

4.1 Definitions

This section defines key terms used throughout the policy and provides practical examples to support understanding in a sport and disability context.

Child

Definition of a "Child"

The [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) – a child is defined as anyone who has not reached the age of 18.

SDS recognise anyone under 18 as a child. For the purposes of this policy, "children", "child", and "young person" refer to persons up to the age of 18.

Adult at Risk

Definition of an "Adult at Risk"

The [Adult Support and Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#) defines an adult at risk as someone who can't safeguard themselves, their wellbeing, their property or their rights; is at risk of harm and is experiencing:



- A disability
- A mental disorder
- Illness
- Physical and Mental Infirmary

An adult is at risk of harm if:

- The conduct of another person is causing (or likely to be causing) the adult to be harmed
- The adult engages in conduct that is causing (or likely to cause) self-harm.

The term “adult at risk” replaces the previously used term “vulnerable adult”. A disabled/older person is not necessarily an adult at risk, and an adult at risk may not have an impairment.

The vulnerability of an adult at risk is related to how able they are to make and exercise their own informed choices free from duress, pressure or undue influence of any sort, and to protect themselves from abuse, neglect and exploitation. It is not a given that being in one of the above categories automatically makes an adult considered to be at risk. This policy shall only take effect when an adult at risk is participating in any action covered under the jurisdiction of SDS.

Not all adults “at risk” have a disability. Risk is about an individual’s situation and ability to protect themselves, not their diagnosis alone.

4.2 Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk

Safeguarding children and adults at risk means:

- Protecting the individual’s right to live safely, free from abuse and neglect,
- Promoting their wellbeing and autonomy,
- Empowering individuals at risk to make informed choices, and
- Acting when there are concerns about abuse, harm, or exploitation.

4.3. Capacity (Only applicable to Adults at Risk)

Capacity refers to a person’s ability to understand information, weigh up options, and make decisions for themselves at a particular time.

In line with the Adult Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, a person is considered to lack capacity to make a decision if they cannot:

- Understand information relevant to the decision,
- Retain that information long enough to decide,
- Use or weigh up the information to reach a conclusion,
- Communicate their decision in any way (verbally, using signs, technology, etc.).
- Do not assess capacity yourself—but do share concerns with the Wellbeing & Protection Officer or appropriate professionals if needed.

5.0 SDS Roles & Responsibilities

SDS is responsible for promoting safe and inclusive environments for all children and adults at risk, particularly those with disabilities. **SDS will:**

- Lead on the implementation of the Wellbeing & Protection Policies and Procedures.
- Appoint a Lead Safeguarding Officer to oversee policy delivery and offer guidance.
- Promote and support member branches and associate member boccia clubs.



Sport and physical activity in Scotland are welcoming and inclusive for participants with disabilities.

- Provide clear procedures and ongoing safeguarding training for staff, volunteers, coaches and officials.
- Ensure all member branches, staff, and volunteers follow safe recruitment practices.
- Respond promptly to safeguarding concerns or allegations, in line with this policy.
- Maintain secure records of all concerns and outcomes.
- Work with external agencies (e.g. **sportscotland**, Children First) to support good practice.
- Ensure all SDS maintain the SDS Minimum Operating Requirements in relation to wellbeing and protection.
- Monitor policy implementation and gather feedback to inform improvements.

5.1 SDS Jurisdiction

Scottish Disability Sport (SDS) may or may not have jurisdiction to manage or support wellbeing and protection concerns when reported within the organisation's activities listed below.

- SDS programmes and events
- SDS member branches
- Boccia clubs
- Multi-Sports clubs
- Scottish governing body clubs
- Disability specific clubs

A copy of the SDS Jurisdiction Mapping Paper can be found [here](#).

6.0 SDS Safeguarding Team

The safeguarding team listed can be contacted at any time regarding wellbeing and protection incidents.

Report the incident to:

Safeguarding Lead

Gavin Macleod, SDS Chief Executive Officer and Safeguarding Lead

Email: gavin.macleod@scottishdisabilitysport.com

Tel: 07588 463 996

Safeguarding Officer

Lynne Glen, SDS Head of Development and Safeguarding Officer

Email: lynne.glen@scottishdisabilitysport.com

Tel: 07800 523 740

7.0 Privacy Notice

The [SDS Privacy Notice](#) applies to all staff, coaches, and volunteers engaged in regulated work under the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme. Personal information related to safeguarding concerns may be shared with Scottish Disability Sport and Children First where necessary to protect children and adults at risk and maintain the integrity of regulated roles.



7.1 Data Protection, Secure Storage

Scottish Disability Sport processes personal information in line with current data protection legislation. Personnel information forms part of records and may be shared in limited, lawful circumstances as detailed in the [SDS Data Protection Policy 2024](#)

8.0 Monitoring & Review of this Policy

This policy and these procedures will be regularly monitored and reviewed, with a full review every two years. The policy and procedures will also be reviewed in the following circumstances:

- In accordance with changes in legislation
- Changes in SDS or its governance
- Following any issues or concerns raised about the protection of children or adults at risk within SDS
- Updated guidance from Children 1st or **sportscotland**.

This policy will be monitored by:

- Keeping records of cases brought and their outcomes
- Accepting comments from Branches on the ease of implementation and effect of the policy
- Monitoring, reviewing and updating the SDS [SDS Safeguarding In Sport Action Plan 2024 - 2029 Master.docx](#)
- Internal reviews with the facilitation of Children First



Appendix 1

The policy and guidance documents listed in the table below will support this policy to help SDS staff, coaches, officials, leaders and volunteers promote and provide safe and inclusive environments and opportunities. All policies are reviewed biennially in accordance with the SDS Policy Review Cycle.

SDS Policy and Guidance List

Policy Name	Policy Link
SDS Code of Conduct	SDS Athlete and Coach Code of Conduct SDS Participant Code of Conduct SDS Parent, Carer, Guardian Code of Conduct SDS Volunteer Code of Conduct
Complaints Policy and Procedures	SDS Complaints Handling Policy
Anti-Bullying Policy	SDS Anti Bullying Policy
Anti-Corruption /(Sports Betting) and Bribery Policy 2024	SDS Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy
SDS Clean Sport Policy	SDS Clean Sport Policy
SDS Ethics Statement	SDS Ethics Statement
SDS Fraud Policy	SDS Fraud Policy
SDS Volunteer Policies	SDS Volunteer Policy
Classification Policies	Scottish Boccia Classification Policy and Procedures 2020.docx SDS Intellectual Impairment Classification Policy April 2024.doc
SDS Recruitment and Selection Policy	SDS Recruitment Selection Policy
SDS Review of the Management of Concerns Policy	SDS Review of the Management of Concerns Policy 2024.docx
SDS Secure Handling Policy	SDS Secure Handling Policy
SDS Data Protection Policy	SDS Data Protection Policy
SDS Social Media Policy	SDS Social Media Policy
SDS Whistle Blowing Policy	SDS Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy



Use of Photographic and Video Equipment Policy and Procedures	
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SDS Guidance Documents (documents are being finalised and will be added at a later date).

SDS Guidance Documents	
SDS Responding to a Direct Disclosure Guidance	
SDS Responding to Concerns Guidance	
SDS Recognising and Identifying Types of Abuse Guidance	
SDS Reporting and Managing Concerns Guidance	
SDS Historical Abuse Guidance	
SDS Good Practice Guidance	
SDS Managing Challenging Behaviour Guidance	
SDS Residential Trips (Including Overnight Stays) Guidance	
SDS Safe Recruitment Guidance	
SDS Incident Form	