



SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY (SSPD) ORGANISATION CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY

SSPD Org. has a responsibility to ensure to make provision for children, young people and vulnerable adults and must ensure that:

- the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount
- all children and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- the rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and their families are respected and listened to
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately

SSPD Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy aims to ensure that the actions of any person in the context of the work carried out by Sydney St. Patrick's Day Organisation are transparent and safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults associated with the organisation. The Policy provides guidance on appropriate standards, including reducing any opportunities for abuse, harm or bullying, staff and participant recruitment and training, behaviour towards children and vulnerable adults, professional boundaries, ethical behaviour, acceptable and unacceptable relationships, how to avoid or better manage difficult situations and how to report suspicions, allegations or incidents.

Implementation

- We continually undertake formal training and recommendations based on New South Wales and Australia best practice.
- All committee members and participants working with young people must be trained in, and follow, the SSPD Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.



SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

Framework for communication

All SSPD members and participants have a duty to report any suspicions, allegations or incidents of abuse. Staff and participants are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred and should record the details as accurately as possible and immediately refer any suspicions, allegations or incidents to SSPD senior committee members in the first instance, who will consider the information and decide upon the next steps.

Policy statement

SSPD Org. has a duty of care to safeguard all children and vulnerable adults involved in SSPD from harm. All children and people have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. SSPD Org. will ensure the safety and protection of all children and vulnerable adults involved in SSPD Org. through adherence to the SSPD Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection guidelines adopted by the SSPD committee and described below.

Zero-tolerance statement

SSPD Org. maintains a zero-tolerance policy for the sexual abuse of children or vulnerable adults by SSPD Org. members, contractors, subcontractors and participants in their care. Anyone found guilty of such an offence will be subject to immediate dismissal and prosecution within the law of the relevant jurisdiction.

Definitions

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

A vulnerable adult is defined as a person who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

Policy aims

The aim of the SSPD Organisation Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- providing children and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of SSPD Org.



SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

- allow and helping all members and participants to make informed and confident responses to specific child and vulnerable adults protection issues.

PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE

Abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school, sporting and participant environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with children and vulnerable adults in order to harm them. A committee member or participant may have regular contact with children and vulnerable adults and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child or vulnerable adult enters a SSPD Org. activity having been subjected to abuse outside the SSPD Org. environment, the activities can play a crucial role in improving the person's self-esteem. In such instances, if past abuse is reported, SSPD Org. must work with the appropriate local agencies to ensure the required local support is received.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote welfare and reduce the possibility of harm and abuse. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice means:

- All members and participants must work in an open environment and remain visible when working with children and vulnerable adults, e.g. avoid private or unobserved situations, whenever practical and possible, and ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children and vulnerable adults.



Sydney St. Patrick's Day Organisation

ABN 72 613 986 380

SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

- Encourage open communication with no secrets.
- Treating all children and vulnerable adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting welfare first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children and vulnerable adults to share in the decision-making process.
- Making SSPD activities fun, enjoyable and promoting fairness
- All lesson and seminar areas must be smoke and alcohol free.
- Being an excellent role model - this includes following all local laws, not smoking and drinking alcohol inappropriately in the company of children and vulnerable adults.
- Removing inappropriate piercings and covering tattoos, whenever possible, when in the company of children.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity and avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance (e.g. it is not appropriate for members or participants to have an intimate relationship with a child or a vulnerable adult or to share a room with them).
- SSPD Organisation members and participants should not enter a child or vulnerable adult's room or invite them into their rooms unless accompanied.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual / physical support is required, it should be provided openly.
- Involving local partner members and parents wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure people work in pairs.
- Ensuring that young people have access to both a male and female member of staff. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur, as can female to male abuse and young person to young person abuse.



SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

- Securing parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis*, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.

Practices to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone of the local partners, the SSPD senior committee member or the child's parents or next of kin. For example, a child or vulnerable adult sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent / carer fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session

- Avoid spending time alone with children or vulnerable adults away from others.
- Avoid taking or dropping off a child or vulnerable adult to an event or activity.

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should never:

- Cause direct physical, including purposely hitting, hurting, or physically assaulting a child or vulnerable adult.
- Cause direct emotional harm, including acting in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or vulnerable adults, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional harm.
- Use language that could be abusive, offensive or inappropriate.
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child or vulnerable adult.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reduce a child or vulnerable adult to tears as a form of control.
- Condone or participate in behaviour which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.



SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

- Discriminate against, show differential treatment or favour to the exclusion of others.
- Fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult
- Do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults, that they can do for themselves
- Spend anytime outside specified programme hours with a child or vulnerable we work with;
 - Invite or allow children or vulnerable adult to stay with you at your home unsupervised
 - Sexually exploit any child, vulnerable adult or any person
 - Non-consensual sexual contact

For further detail on some of the definitions above refer to the General Sexual Misconduct and Inappropriate Behaviour Definitions document.

This list is not exclusive therefore our members and participants should avoid any other activities that may be considered to constitute poor practice.

N.B. It may sometimes be necessary for committee members or participants to do things of a personal nature for children and vulnerable adults, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents, care workers and local partner staff, SSPD senior committee and staff and any other relevant parties and should be avoided wherever practical. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child or vulnerable adult to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained and wherever possible, ask local partner staff or parents to complete the task and work to ensure the task is not required of SSPD Org. members and participants in the future.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the appropriate officer and record the incident. You should also ensure the local partner staff and parents are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a child or vulnerable adult
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner



SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

- If a child, vulnerable adult or any other person appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a child, vulnerable adult or any other person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC/FILMING EQUIPMENT

There is evidence that some people have used volunteering as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children and vulnerable adults in vulnerable positions. All committee members and participants should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the SSPD senior committee members.

There is no intention to prevent committee members or participants from taking photos of program activities, however, local partner organization staff should be made aware of the reasons for the photographs, the intended use of the photos, and their consent obtained. There should be project guidelines for participants and staff regarding photography of people on the project, which should be managed and enforced by SSPD Org. members. All SSPD Org. photos should be stored and used appropriately.

Recruitment and training of staff and participants

SSPD Org. recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure potential offenders are prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults.

- Through all stages of recruitment, for all committee members and participants, including promotion, application, interview, acceptance and booking and pre-departure, SSPD Organisation's Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy should be referred to, including reference to identity and background checks as appropriate, and SSPD Org senior committee members, as barriers to application from potential offenders.
- All committee and participants should be referred to the Policy



SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

- Safer recruitment practices during the selection process for all SSPD Org. committee members and participants, including background checks for all SSPD Org. committee members, and additional enhanced criminal record checks or equivalent, wherever possible, for all staff and participants working on community development projects must be applied.
- Avoid use of promotional materials including text, photos and videos that suggest opportunities for offenders
- All staff must supply evidence of their identity (passport).
- A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full (including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures).
- They need agree GVI's Terms and Conditions, which includes agreeing to follow our safety procedures, Risk Assessments and Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.

Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help committee members and participants to:

- Understand their requirements and responsibilities
- Understand SSPD Organisation's Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and identify areas where further explanation or training are required.
- Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is not likely to result in allegations being made.
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or vulnerable adult.
- Work safely effectively with children and vulnerable adults.



SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in SSPD Org., in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to a SSPD senior committee member who will decide the next steps.

SSPD Org. will assure all staff/participants that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child or vulnerable adult.

Where there is a complaint against a committee member or participant, there may be three types of investigation:

- a criminal investigation
- a child protection investigation
- a disciplinary or misconduct investigation.
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The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

REPORTING CONCERNS ABOUT POOR PRACTICE

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice as opposed to a suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse, the SSPD senior committee member will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by the SSPD Org. senior committee member(s), or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the SSPD President who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.



SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

REPORTING CONCERNS ABOUT SUSPECTED ABUSE

Any suspicion that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused by either a member of staff or a participant should be reported to the SSPD senior committee, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child or vulnerable adult in question and any other person who may be at risk.

All suspicions, allegations and incidents should be recorded.

If after consideration, the SSPD senior committee member(s) is/are concerned, they will refer the allegation to the local social services department.

If the SSPD senior committee member(s) the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the SSPD Org. President.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a **need to know** basis only. This includes the following people:

- the SSPD Org. senior committee members
- the parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- the person making the allegation
- social services/police
- the SSPD Org. President

The SSPD senior committee members should be contacted in the first instance and they will advise as to who needs to know and who should inform them, normally through liaison with local social services.

Social services will decide who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).



SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

ENQUIRIES AND FURTHER ACTION

Internal enquiries and possible suspension

The SSPD senior committee members will make a decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries. Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the SSPD senior committee members will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of committee member, participant or any person working on behalf of / representing the SSPD Org. should be re-instated and if so how this can be sensitively handled.

This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the SSPD senior committee members must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse

Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents, participants and members of staff may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an

Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff or participant who is still currently working with children or vulnerable adults within SSPD Org. or elsewhere).

Where such an allegation is made, procedures as detailed above should be followed, the matter should be reported to the SSPD senior committee member(s) who will decide the next steps and, if relevant, report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children or vulnerable adults may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children.



SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

BULLYING

Every child and vulnerable adult has the right to experience a safe environment free from abuse and bullying.

SSPD Org. plays an important role in creating a positive ethos that challenges bullying by empowering people to understand the impact of bullying, how best to deal with it and agree standards of behaviour.

REPORTING CONCERNS OUTSIDE THE IMMEDIATE GVI ENVIRONMENT (E.G. A PARENT OR CARER)

Report your concerns to the SSPD senior committee member(s), who should after consideration, contact social services or the police as soon as possible.

If the SSPD senior committee member(s) is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact social services or the police immediately.

Social Services and the SSPD senior committee member(s) will decide how to involve the parents/carers.

Maintain confidentiality on a **need to know** basis only.

PROVIDING INFORMATION TO POLICE OR SOCIAL SERVICES

Information about suspected abuse must be accurate and a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. It should ideally include the following, where possible:

- The child's or vulnerable adult's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's or vulnerable adult's home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.



Sydney St. Patrick's Day Organisation

ABN 72 613 986 380

SYDNEY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

EST. 1795

- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's and vulnerable adult's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents or next of kin been contacted?
- If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- If the child or vulnerable adult was not the person who reported the incident, has the child or vulnerable adult been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

It is important to remember that as SSPD Org. committee members and participants our responsibility is to report all suspicions, allegations and incidents to the SSPD senior committee members, who have been trained to advise as to the next steps to be taken.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD OR VULNERABLE ADULT,
PARTICIPANT, STAFF/COMMITTEE MEMBER, OR LOCAL PARTNER
STAFF, CONTACT ONE OF SSPD ORGANISATION'S SENIOR COMMITTEE
MEMBERS**

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