

Safeguarding and Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy

Background

Scottish Love in Action (SLA) harnesses the compassion and generosity of people in Scotland to support the poorest and most vulnerable children and young people in India. We have a duty of care to ensure the safety of:

- the children and young people in India we serve i.e. beneficiaries. We must hold our partners to account, supporting them to uphold standards and work towards best practice.
- our staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and supporters in Scotland, and while they visit our partners in India. We are responsible for upholding standards and working towards best practice.

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework for interactions with vulnerable groups in India and Scotland.

Vulnerable groups include all children under the age of 18, and individuals aged 18 and over who are provided with a type of care, support or welfare service, as specified in more detail by the [Disclosure \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#)

1. Introduction

Vulnerable children and young people are the core beneficiaries of projects supported by SLA. Through improving welfare and education opportunities, we improve the lives of children and young people who suffer from poverty and inequality, and we recognise their vulnerability. We are committed to the rights of children in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and strive to ensure that the needs, dignity and safety of vulnerable groups regardless of gender, faith, ability, caste or culture are protected in any project we support.

This policy has multiple purposes. It is intended this policy:

- will guide staff, Trustees and volunteers working in the UK and while on overseas visits
- will be a reference for Indian partners, beneficiaries and the public
- will provide protection from harm, primarily to vulnerable children and young people, and to SLA staff, Trustees, and volunteers and SLA itself.

This policy is guided by the principles below and is reviewed regularly and the procedures and their implementation are regularly monitored. A report on safeguarding, in particular referring to any incidents relating to vulnerable children and young people, is made to the Board of Trustees annually, normally at the December Board meeting.

Staff, trustees and volunteers must agree with this policy. Any organisation we work with will be expected to have an equivalent policy.

2. Principles

- 2.1** Vulnerable groups have an equal right to development and their welfare is always promoted.
- 2.2** Vulnerable groups are protected from any form of sexual, physical, verbal or emotional abuse or exploitation, including from young people or other children.
- 2.3** Vulnerable groups' health is always paramount.
- 2.4** Vulnerable groups are empowered to participate freely in decisions which affect their lives, recognising the importance of parents, families and other carers in their lives.
- 2.5** Vulnerable groups are treated with respect and valued as individuals and equals with respect to the context of their own culture, religion and ethnicity.
- 2.6** Vulnerable groups are empowered to raise and discuss any concerns and are always listened to.
- 2.7** Any allegation of abuse is treated seriously and dealt with appropriately and promptly. Victims and other involved parties are supported and perpetrators held to account.
- 2.8** Investigation of any safeguarding concern is conducted with reference to the national laws and employment rights and immediately referred to the relevant authorities where appropriate.
- 2.9** Staff, Trustees and volunteers visiting projects abroad are recruited, trained and supported with respect to this Safeguarding and Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy.

3. Raising Awareness

- 3.1** This Safeguarding and Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy can be viewed in the [Resources](#) section of the SLA website and on request from the SLA office.
- 3.2** This policy applies to SLA staff, Trustees and volunteers. They are expected to be familiar with this policy. This can be demonstrated by regularly acquainting themselves with this policy, especially in light of any updates. From time to time, they may be required to participate in training on this policy.
- 3.3** SLA staff, Trustees and volunteers are required to follow SLA's Safeguarding and Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy at all times.
- 3.4** SLA engages with overseas partners on the protection of vulnerable groups, explaining our commitments and requiring partners to develop safeguarding and protection of vulnerable groups' policies and procedures, which are relevant to their local context and compatible with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. SLA will help Indian partners if required.

4. Recruitment

- 4.1** SLA staff, Trustees and volunteers will not routinely require to be members of the PVG scheme unless their role meets the Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020 definition of a "regulated role" in which case PVG membership is required prior to commencement of the role.
- 4.2** The recruitment process for volunteers includes;
 - Completion of an Application Form (or CV plus covering letter for trustees) with two referees, preferably one of which is not associated with SLA.
 - When relevant undergoing the application process for PVG membership (see 4.1)
 - Being made aware of SLA's Safeguarding and Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy and undergoing any related training
- 4.3** Where staff and volunteers work with groups of children such as schools or a uniformed youth organisation, responsibility for these children remains with their teacher/leaders who will have PVG membership

5. Guidelines for Staff, Trustees and Other Volunteers

- 5.1** Treat everyone with respect and never use discipline which frightens or humiliates children and/or young people. Always use positive reinforcement rather than criticism.
- 5.2** Avoid singling out a child or young person for special treatment or developing a personal relationship with an individual.
- 5.3** Avoid situations where a staff member or volunteer is alone with a child or young person.
- 5.4** Staff members or volunteers in India may find themselves in situations where they have physical contact with children; be careful to avoid any contact which might be seen as inappropriate.
- 5.5** Always listen to vulnerable children and young people and their concerns.
- 5.6** Avoid giving personal details to any child; do not communicate with individuals through social media.
- 5.7** At SLA-funded projects, staff and volunteers should not smoke, use illegal drugs, consume alcohol, or use inappropriate language.

6. Reporting of incidents

- 6.1** SLA staff, trustees and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that the SLA guidelines are adhered to throughout the organisation.
- 6.2** A Safeguarding Incident Report is freely available to all staff, Trustees and volunteers, and is available in appendix one.
- 6.3** SLA will ensure that all parties are aware of the reporting procedures for actual or suspected incidents or concerns
- 6.4** SLA has a named Safeguarding Officer with clearly defined duties roles and responsibilities. We will inform staff, Trustees and volunteers of their identity and how to contact them.
- 6.5** SLA staff, Trustees and volunteers should respond sensitively to any Safeguarding issue that they witness or is disclosed to them and treat the issue confidentially. If a vulnerable child or young person discloses that they are being abused, SLA staff, Trustees and volunteers should;
 - Stay calm
 - Listen carefully and take the allegation seriously
 - Not promise to keep it secret but explain that they need to tell someone else
 - Stress that the individual was right to tell them, that they have taken it seriously and that they have understood what they have been told.
 - Only ask questions to clarify and not ask for explicit details
 - Reassure the individual that they will take steps to help them and tell them what will happen next.
 - Not undertake an investigation independently.
- 6.6** Any volunteer in India who has concerns about the conduct of a colleague should inform their Group Leader immediately, or the SLA office in the absence of a Group Leader. The volunteer will be required to complete a Safeguarding Incident Report. The Group Leader (or SLA office) will inform the SLA Safeguarding Officer and the Chief Executive, who will consider appropriate action. The Safeguarding Officer and Chief Executive will agree on how the investigation should be conducted and what the subsequent steps should be. Each will keep the other informed of ongoing progress.
- 6.7** Where the alleged incident relates to individuals not connected with SLA, the matter should be reported to the Group Leader, who will refer it to the agreed point of contact in India. In this case, it is expected that the Indian partner will follow the procedures set out in their policy, and

taking into account the requirements of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. They will be expected to report to SLA the outcome of their investigations.

6.8 SLA will expect its partner to inform SLA of any safeguarding issues which occur within projects that SLA funds.

7. Communications and Media

7.1 SLA ensures that the welfare of vulnerable groups is paramount.

7.2 The impact and possible consequences of any material which involves a vulnerable child or young person is considered carefully before and after publication and broadcast.

7.3 SLA endeavours to ensure that images and/or stories about vulnerable children or young people will not be misused or exploited.

7.4 Any material featuring SLA is suitable for a general audience including children.

7.5 Communications about vulnerable children and young people always respects the individual's dignity and identity and is never degrading.

7.6 SLA staff, trustees and volunteers in UK and overseas will:

- seek consent of parents or guardians (in the SLA funded projects permission is granted by project leaders in loco parentis) before interviewing, filming or taking photos and for their use in publicity and fundraising for their projects.
- seek consent of the vulnerable child or young person for their participation and respect their refusal to take part.
- obtain permission from the Head Teacher/Principal for any filming or interviewing on school premises during school time.

8. Safeguarding Officer

8.1 SLA's Safeguarding Officer can be contacted at safeguarding@sla-india.org

9. Document History

Distribution	This policy will be made available to all Trustees, all staff, Indian partners, and to funders (where relevant)
Original Policy Date	Historically, we had 2 policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safeguarding Policy, and• Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy These were combined into a single policy in 2022
Date of Approval	This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees in July 2025
Date of next scheduled review	This policy is due to be reviewed by the Board of Trustees in June 2028

Scottish Love in Action



Safeguarding Incident Report

If possible, this form should be completed within 24 hours of the Incident and submitted to SLA's Safeguarding Officer (safeguarding@sla-india.org) or the appropriate Team Leader for staff and volunteers.

Information about people involved in the Incident			
Full Names (if known, or as much information as possible) 1. 2. 3. If more people involved add these names on separate sheet			
Where do they live?			
Are they a..... Pupil <input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher <input type="checkbox"/>	Visitor <input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

Information about the Incident	
Date of Incident	Time
Location of incident (please provide as much detail as possible, i.e. what classroom, dormitory etc.)	
Description of Incident (what happened, how it happened, factors leading to the event e.g.) Be as specific as possible (attach additional sheets if necessary)	
Were there any witnesses? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (if so, please provide contact details)	

Was the anyone injured? If so describe the injury? (cut, sprain, etc.) the part of the body injured, and any other information known about the injury(ies)

Reporter Information

Individual Submitting Report (Print name)

Signature

Date Report Completed

For Official Use Only

Report Received by:

Date:

For Official Use Only

Document any follow-up action taken after the receipt of the incident report

Date	Action Taken	By Whom

Any other comments

Signed:

Dated: