



Child Protection Policy

September 2013

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Child Protection Policy of Inclusion Ghana (IG) is applicable to all management and staff (paid, voluntary, permanent or casual) of Inclusion Ghana, consultants, contractors, member organisations and parents self help groups. The issue of child abuse is a complex problem that has an impact on all areas of society, more so for children with intellectual disabilities. Inclusion Ghana has taken a pro-active role in relation to child protection and is committed to ensuring that the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children with intellectual disabilities are maintained at all times during their participation in activities run by IG and its member organisations. Inclusion Ghana aims to foster a safe and positive environment for all children with intellectual disabilities.

Information contained in this document will create a framework and provide direction for staff, consultants, contractors, volunteers, member organisations and parents of children with intellectual disabilities. It will also help deliver a consistent approach to child abuse prevention at all levels of working with children with intellectual disabilities. Inclusion Ghana and all member organisations working with and for children and young people must ensure that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount
- all children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- all staff (paid/unpaid) working in sport have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer. Staff/volunteers are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT/AIMS

IG has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in IG from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. IG will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in IG through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines adopted by IG. The aim of the IG's Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of IG
- allow all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

3.0 PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE

Child 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 and social environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people or children in order to harm them. An instructor, teacher, staff or volunteer will have regular contact with children and young people 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.

3.1 Good Practice Guidelines

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice means:

- Always work in an open environment (eg avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with players (eg it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision making process.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults
- Securing parental consent in writing to act in loco parentis, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.

Practices **never** to be sanctioned

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- 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 to tears as a form of control
- fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child
- do things of a personal nature for children or adults with intellectual disabilities, that they can do for themselves
- invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

NB: It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they have intellectual disabilities or related disabilities. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and persons involved. 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. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

4.0 USE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC/FILMING EQUIPMENT

Photography/filming can be an effective aid in the work of IG but this must not be mis-used or used for other purposes. The performers and their parents/carers should be made aware that this is part of the IG work and their consent obtained, and such films should be stored safely.

5.0 SAFE RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

IG recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- All potential volunteers, paid staff, independent contractors or consultants should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Investigation Department of the Ghana Police.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.

5.1 Interview and Induction

All potential employees, volunteers and independent contractors / consultants will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. Only on receipt of satisfactory references will a formal offer of employment / contract be made. Copies of all returned criminal record checks and documentation pertaining to any child protection issues will be kept confidentially and securely locked within IG's secretariat.

All employees and volunteers should receive an induction, during which:

- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified.

6.0 RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in IG or member organisation, in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities.

IG assures all staff, volunteers, independent contractors / consultants and the general public that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a person is, or may be abusing a child. Where there is a complaint against a member of staff or a member of the public there may be three types of investigation:

- a criminal investigation
- a child protection investigation
- a disciplinary or misconduct investigation

6.1 Reporting concerns about poor practice

If following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor internal practice, IG will deal with it as a misconduct issue. If the allegation is about poor practice by IG, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the relevant authority who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

6.2 Reporting concerns about suspected abuse

All employees and volunteers should receive an induction, during which:

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by a member of staff, a volunteer, an independent contractor/consultant or a member of the general public, the issue should be reported to the IG National Co-ordinator, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The IG National Co-ordinator will refer the allegation to the social welfare department who may involve the police.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social welfare department.
- If the IG National Co-ordinator is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate Board member.

7.0 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 IG National Co-ordinator
- the parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- the person making the allegation
- social welfare department / police

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people (eg. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

8.0 ENQUIRIES AND FURTHER ACTION

8.1 Internal enquiries and possible suspension

- The IG National Co-ordinator will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social welfare inquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the IG Disciplinary Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff, volunteer or contractor / consultant can be reinstated and 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 IG Disciplinary Committee 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 should remain of paramount importance throughout.

8.2 Allegations of previous abuse

- Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (eg by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff, volunteer or contractor / consultant who is still currently working with children).
- Where such an allegation is made, Inclusion Ghana or its member organisations should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social welfare department or the police. This is because other children may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse should be automatically excluded from working with such children.

9.0 PROVIDING INFORMATION TO POLICE AND SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT

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

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child'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.
- 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 account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?

- If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child 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 within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

APPROVED BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Festus Buetey Longmatey', with a horizontal line underneath.

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