



## **Behaviour Support & Positive Handling Policy**

### **1. Purpose of this Policy**

The Special Lioness is committed to creating safe, joyful, and inclusive environments where disabled and life-limited children, their siblings, families, volunteers, and visitors feel respected and supported. This policy outlines our approach to behaviour support and the extremely limited circumstances in which positive handling may be considered. Our approach is rooted in compassion, understanding, and the belief that behaviour is a form of communication.

### **2. Our Principles**

We believe:

- All behaviour has meaning
- Children communicate through their actions, especially when they cannot express themselves verbally
- Positive relationships and predictable environments reduce distress
- Families are experts in their child's needs
- Physical intervention is a last resort and used only to prevent immediate harm
- Volunteers must never use restraint as punishment, control, or discipline

### **3. Scope**

This policy applies to:

- All volunteers
- Trustees
- Families and visitors attending our events
- Contractors or partners supporting activities

### **4. Understanding Behaviour**

Many children who attend our events have complex needs, sensory differences, communication challenges, or medical conditions that may influence their behaviour.

We will:

- Approach behaviour with empathy and curiosity
- Consider sensory, emotional, medical, or environmental triggers
- Work closely with families to understand individual needs
- Provide calm, predictable, and supportive environments
- Offer sensory-friendly spaces and quiet areas

### **5. Positive Behaviour Support Strategies**

Volunteers will use proactive, supportive approaches, including:

- Warm, respectful communication
- Clear, simple instructions



- Visual supports where appropriate
- Offering choices
- Redirecting to preferred or calming activities
- Allowing time and space to regulate
- Supporting siblings and parents with reassurance
- Encouraging co-regulation through calm presence

We aim to reduce distress, not control behaviour.

## **6. When Behaviour Presents a Risk**

Occasionally, behaviour may pose a risk to:

- The child themselves
- Other children or families
- Volunteers
- Property or equipment

In these situations, volunteers will:

1. Stay calm and supportive
2. Use de-escalation strategies (space, soothing tone, distraction)
3. Seek support from the child's parent or carer immediately
4. Remove other children from the area if needed
5. Prioritise safety above all else

Parents and carers remain responsible for managing their child's behaviour unless a specific arrangement has been agreed in advance.

## **7. Positive Handling (Physical Intervention)**

The Special Lioness is a volunteer-run charity. Volunteers are not expected to use physical intervention and should avoid it wherever possible.

Positive handling may only be used when:

- There is an immediate risk of harm to the child or others
- No other safe option is available
- The intervention is minimal, proportionate, and for the shortest time necessary
- The intention is solely to prevent injury

Volunteers must never:

- Use restraint as punishment
- Use force to control behaviour
- Hold a child in a way that restricts breathing or causes pain
- Act outside their competence or training

If positive handling is required, the parent or carer should take the lead wherever possible.

## **8. After an Incident**

If a behaviour-related incident occurs:

- Volunteers will ensure everyone is safe



- The child will be supported to regulate
- Parents/carers will be informed immediately
- An incident report will be completed
- Trustees will review the incident to identify learning or adjustments

We focus on reflection, not blame.

### **9. Volunteer Responsibilities**

Volunteers must:

- Treat all children and families with dignity and respect
- Follow this policy and related safeguarding procedures
- Use positive behaviour support strategies
- Avoid physical intervention unless absolutely necessary
- Report concerns or incidents promptly
- Ask for guidance when unsure

### **10. Working in Partnership with Families**

We recognise that families know their children best. We will:

- Listen to parents and carers
- Respect individual behaviour plans or strategies
- Encourage families to share triggers, calming techniques, and communication needs
- Support families without judgement

### **11. Safeguarding**

Any behaviour that raises safeguarding concerns will be handled in line with our Safeguarding Policy.

If a child or adult is at risk of harm, volunteers must act immediately.

### **12. Review of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees or sooner if:

- There are significant changes in activities
- New risks emerge
- Legislation or best practice changes