SPIN is an unincorporated association, voluntary peer support group. SPIN operates as an information and signposting organisation for single parents of all ages. Volunteers are usually single parents and members of SPIN.

SPIN is committed to providing a confidential service which means that no third party will be given any information directly or indirectly without the SPIN member’s permission. By providing an assurance of confidentiality, single parents may disclose a problem that they previously have been unable and or afraid to disclose. SPIN recognises that any breaches of confidentiality will be damaging for the SPIN member and the organisation and if this takes place, a complete record should be made in case of complaint, using SPINS concerns/complaints procedure document.

SPIN considers that an assurance of independence is important to single parents who are experiencing problems and prefer to talk to someone unconnected to statutory agencies, local authorities, police etc SPIN considers it is important to be able to discuss issues and courses of action that will benefit the parent and the child. Face to face meetings must take place in locations that satisfies both the member and volunteer in relation to confidentiality and privacy. Where there are conflicts of interest, SPIN volunteers will discuss this with the parent.

Whenever an agency is contacted after discussion and with the parent’s consent, this should be recorded and notes kept in a location that maximises confidentiality and will be kept in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation of 2018. SPIN will maintain information and in written and electronic format and record anonymous statistical information to enable SPIN to monitor use of services and to identify policy issues.

Members are supported to make their own decisions based on awareness of choices available and SPIN will attempt at all times to represent the member’s best interests (Capacity, Consent and Best Interest and Mental Capacity Act 2005). Every single parent who accesses our services has a right to a life free from fear, to be treated with dignity and respect and to have their choice respected and not be forced to do anything against their will. People have the right to decide how they live and the risks they take in their lives without outside intervention, provided they do not harm others and provided there is no evidence to suggest they are the victim of a criminal offence or are putting themselves in danger because they do not have the mental capacity to make that decision.

SPIN recognises the need to promote the welfare of all and protect those who are vulnerable. *Being a single parent does not automatically make them vulnerable*. Individual members of SPIN will be assumed to have the capacity to make informed decisions unless there is clear evidence to the contrary and therefore could be considered ‘vulnerable’.

We base our practices on the principles laid out in the **Care Act 2014** ie

1. EMPOWERMENT – people being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions with informed consent.
2. PREVENTION – taking action before harm occurs
3. PROPORTIONALITY – the least intrusive response appropriate to risk presented
4. PROTECTION – support and representation
5. PARTNERSHIP – local solutions through services working with communities as SPIN plays a part in preventing, detecting and supporting single parent families where there is neglect and abuse
6. ACCOUNTABILITY – transparent safeguarding activities

Legal definitions of vulnerable adult are: -

**Police Act 1997 definition of a vulnerable adult**

Described as a person “aged 18 or over who has a condition of the following type:

1. a learning or physical disability
2. a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs; or
3. a reduction in physical or mental capacity

**Department of Health (2000) definition of a vulnerable adult**

Described as someone who may be in need of community care services by reason of disability, age or illness or may be unable to take care of/or protect, him/herself against significant harm of exploitation.

Vulnerable people may be exposed to abuse and this could be: -

* Physical
* Sexual
* Psychological
* Emotional
* financial and material
* discriminatory by race, class, sex or disability

Other interpretations of vulnerability are: -

* People with low self-esteem
* Socially excluded
* People with an offending history
* People who are homeless
* People who have suffered domestic abuse

SPIN members capable of making informed decisions having been made aware of options, will be supported and this will include taking *reasonable risks* as long as these do not threaten, harm or put at risk other adults or children involved. If risk or harm is likely and the SPIN member is unable or unwilling to respond to suggested actions, SPIN volunteers will consult with SPIN’s Directors at the earliest possible opportunity. SPIN will always seek to work with the individual and take actions acceptable to the member. Any interventions must be proportionate to the risk and where intervention is necessary to reduce risk, SPIN will pursue action which disrupts the individual and their family’s way of the life the least.

**IMPORTANT**

Agencies such as social services, health services, educational welfare, and police must NOT be contacted without the parent’s consent or knowledge. In all situations it will be assumed that a person can make their own decisions. If SPIN is legally compelled to provide access and information, this would still be done with the full knowledge of the parent. Enquiries from ex-partners, children, relatives etc can only be responded to with the consent of the parent.

**Exceptions when action may be taken in the absence of a member’s consent: -**

1. ***A member identified as being a high risk for suicide, threatens to take their own life (suicide) or another’s (murder) and it is likely to be carried out imminently***
2. ***A member who threatens serious physical harm to themselves or another and it is likely to be carried out imminently***
3. ***A member or others in physical danger of some sort***
4. ***After seeking advice, the Directors of SPIN believe the vulnerable adult is unable/incapable of making informed decisions\****
5. ***Suspected acts of terrorism***

*\*The SPIN Director may contact organisations for advice in relation to any evidence of abuse. The SPIN member will not be identified by name.*

*SPIN has referred to legislation, professional and government guidance to develop this policy.*

*These include: -*

* *The Children’s Act 1989*
* *The Protection of Children Act 1999*
* *The Human Rights Act 1998*
* *Sexual Offences (Amendments) Act 2000*
* *The Care Act 2014*
* *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*
* *General Data Protection Regulation*
* *Fraud Act*
* *Rehabilitation of Offenders Act*
* *Prevention of Terrorism Act*

**APPENDIX A - VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers may come into contact with single parents by phone, face to face and may interact with single parents via online forums, social media and other written communication. Volunteers or members may sometimes observe directly, infer from conversations or statements or hear information that raises concern about the welfare of the single parent. SPIN recognises that everyone running the group in a voluntary capacity, should do all they can to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of the children of these single parents. Volunteers should consider when it is appropriate to send information by post/ email/leave answerphone messages in case of difficulties with ex-partners, family members etc

Evidence of distress and picking up cues of abuse is everyone’s responsibility. SPIN’s volunteers and members will take seriously allegations of abuse by anyone and will refer to the Director of SPIN who is the Safeguarding Lead to determine the appropriate action. Volunteers need to know the basic definitions & signs of abuse (see **APPENDIX B**)

Volunteers need to maintain records of observations (a confidential record of any information/evidence that may be shown to agencies and used in court) on the concerns and complaints procedure document. If the child needs attention for physical injury, this should also be recorded on the concerns and complaints procedure document. A written record will be kept of relevant concerns and passed to SPIN’s Director. The following will be recorded: -

**Volunteer recruitment (working face to face with SPIN families)**

* Application/self-disclosure form with information about spent/unspent convictions
* Identity check eg passport/driving licence, interview, references
* Disclosure and Barring Service checks may be made and if this is done it will be an Enhanced Disclosure
* induction period that includes understanding safeguarding policies and procedures. supervision and periodic monitoring & review
* Appropriate training in relation to adults & children at risk