

Region Safeguarding Officer



My name is Carol McKeough and at the September Region AGM I was appointed Region Safeguarding Officer (RSO). It is a requirement that the incumbent has appropriate experience in safeguarding.

As a qualified social worker and practice teacher I have extensive knowledge and experience of safeguarding gained over 30 years working in social care, predominantly with adults, but also with children. I supported and directed adult safeguarding

work in practice and ensured that the development of safeguarding training supported practitioners to recognise abuse and enabled them to work to support victims and families.

The main purpose of the RSO is to protect all Soroptimist members/volunteers and the 'at risk' groups of children, young people and vulnerable adults when working in local communities. However, it is NOT the role of the RSO to investigate these safeguarding issues.

The Charities Commission has a regulatory role to ensure SIGBI Ltd complies with legal duties, manages any safeguarding incidents responsibly and takes prompt steps to protect people affected by it.

Since October 2018, there has been a safeguarding policy with procedures in place to ensure that members and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities when representing Soroptimist International.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and this means protecting people's health, well-being and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. This especially applies to children, young people and vulnerable adults we may encounter as part of our programme action work.

At Board level, SIGBI has appointed Shirley Jones as the Designated Safeguarding Officer and I will be responsible for regularly liaising with her on safeguarding matters. I am tasked with ensuring that within the South East England Region and across each of our clubs, we implement the measures required to meet the expectations of the Charity Commission where:

- members recognise their duty of care and prioritise safeguarding,
- safeguarding policies and procedures are in place,
- members know how to report incidents
- arrangements are reviewed annually to ensure they are effective.

As this role is a new one it will take time for all the safeguarding arrangements as presented at the November Regional meeting to bed in. I therefore see a key part of my role in offering club members advice and support in relation to safeguarding matters, particularly if you are unsure what to do, to ensure appropriate and prompt action is taken.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and SIGBI has developed a Policy so that there are procedures to follow if allegations or concerns are raised. If any member has concerns about abuse, they should only tell others on a "need to know" basis. Remember it is not your responsibility to decide if any allegations are true.

As Soroptimists, we aim to always behave in a professional manner as outlined in the SIGBI Code of Conduct. We often come across vulnerable people, therefore, treat everyone with respect, do not accept behaviour just because that is what they always do and look after yourself and do not put yourself 'at risk'.

CAROL MCKEOUGH, REGION SAFEGUARDING OFFICER