

Child protection

group action pack

Voluntary organisations have a duty to care for any children they provide services, events or activities for. Safeguarding the children is not an optional extra and needs to become integral to the planning and activities of the group. It makes good sense to think through issues of child protection before problems arise. By putting organisational-wide measures in place you will protect children and also safeguard your staff and volunteers. You may also find that opportunities for joint working or funding are dependent on you having a policy and procedures established. If you are not already a registered charity you will need to put a policy in place before your organisation can register.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse can take many forms: it can be a deliberate act or an omission e.g. a lack of care. Abuse can be broadly defined in four categories:

Physical abuse: when children are hurt or injured by hitting, kicking, beating with objects or shaking etc.

Sexual abuse: when children are forced or persuaded into sexual acts or situations e.g. looking at pornography, being harassed by sexual suggestions or comments, being touched or forced to have sex etc.

Emotional abuse: when children are not given acceptance, love and approval. Instead they may be subject to constant criticism, blame, shouting and swearing, and be rejected by those they look to for affection.

Neglect: when children are not provided with the food, warmth, shelter, clothing, care and protection that they need. This can include a neglect of medical care, missing appointments and mismanagement of treatment etc.

(Taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children, HMSO, 1999)

Commonly children who are being abused are subject to more than one type of abuse.

contact a family
for families with disabled children

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Tel 020 7608 8700 Fax 020 7608 8701

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Freephone Helpline 0808 808 3555 (Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm)

Textphone 0808 808 3556

incorporating
The Lady Hoare Trust

Your support group and child protection

Within your group, child protection measures will need to start from the adoption of a policy. The right procedures must then be put in place to enable staff, volunteers and trustees to implement this policy. These procedures will be different for each support group, depending on the nature of the group and the activities which it arranges or would like to arrange in future. You will need to tailor the provisions of your policy and procedures to ensure that each aspect of the work of the group is covered.

Child protection policy

This should be a brief written statement setting out the group's commitment to:

- the welfare of all children who have any connection to the group
- the prevention of abuse of these children
- take concerns over the welfare of any child seriously
- respond quickly and appropriately to any such concerns

The policy should also make clear that it is the duty of all trustees, staff and volunteers to be vigilant about child protection issues and take appropriate action in response to any concerns they have.

Once you have a policy in place it should be brought to the attention of all existing and new staff and volunteers.

Child protection procedures

These should make it clear how the group's commitment to safeguarding children will be implemented in the work of the group. The procedures should cover:

- good practice for staff and volunteers involved in the group's work
- unacceptable practice and behaviour
- the selection process for trustees, staff and volunteers
- identification of a named person to deal with allegations or suspicions of abuse
- how to respond to circumstances of actual or possible abuse. This should include how to respond where there is concern for a child's welfare, where there has been an incident of abuse or where a child has confided in a member of staff or volunteer.
- ensuring confidentiality
- when and how staff and volunteers should disclose information to a third party
- systems of regular review and monitoring for all staff

By reading the procedures all staff and volunteers should know how what is expected of them, how the activities of the groups safeguard children and how to react appropriately if they have concerns over a child's welfare.

Writing the policy and procedures

This guide is very far from exhaustive and aims only to point you in the right direction when you consider child protection issues. There are many easily accessible guidelines and resources available to help you to write the policies and procedures for your group. Start by thinking about the nature of the activities your group carries out. From there use the *Useful resources* section at the end of this guide to progress. Many of the resources listed are downloadable.

Contact a Family has a Child Protection Policy which is available as an example. If you would like a copy please contact the Group Development Team on 020 7608 8700 or email: info@cafamily.org.uk. Your local Council for Voluntary Service may also have an example of a policy or be able to help you to write yours.

Criminal Records Bureau checks / Disclosure

As part of your procedures you will need to ensure that any staff and volunteers are safe to work with children. We would recommend that until a disclosure check is complete no volunteer, staff member or trustee is allowed unsupervised access to children.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland checks on people are carried out by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). In Scotland equivalent checks are carried out by Disclosure Scotland. There are two ways by which you can request disclosure checks.

1. Register directly with the CRB and request your checks. There is a one-off registration fee of £300 followed by a fee for each staff disclosure (check). An enhanced disclosure is £33.00, a standard disclosure is £28.00. Checks on volunteers and trustees are free.
2. Go to an umbrella body who have registered with the CRB/ Disclosure Scotland, who will do the check for you. They may charge more than the fees above per individual.

For more information for groups in England and Wales, including a list of umbrella bodies, check the CRB website at: <http://www.disclosure.gov.uk> or phone the Information line on 0870 90 90 811.

For groups in Scotland, for information go to Disclosure Scotland at: <http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk> or helpline 0870 609 6006. For an umbrella body go to the CRBS (Central Registered Body in Scotland) at <http://www.crbs.org.uk> or Tel: 01786 849777.

Useful resources

Criminal Records Bureau: for information about the disclosure process.

Customer Services, CRB, PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 3EF Tel: 0870 90 90 811 Welsh language line: 0870 90 90 223, Textphone: 0870 90 90 344, Disclosure application line: 0870 90 90 844 web: <http://www.crb.org.uk>

Central Registered Body in Scotland: for information about the disclosure process in Scotland. Unit 55 Stirling Enterprise Park, Stirling FK7 7RP Tel: 01786 849777 Fax: 01786 849767 email: info@crbs.org.uk web: <http://www.crbs.org.uk>

Safe from Harm: A Code of Practice for Safeguarding the Welfare of Children in Voluntary Organisations in England and Wales (Home Office, 1993) Official government guidelines on child protection issues including information on criminal checks and employment procedures and how to manage an organisation in a way to protect children. web: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/harm.html>

NSPCC, Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH
Tel: 020 7825 2500 Fax: 020 7825 2525 Child Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000
Cymru/Wales Child Protection Helpline: Freephone 0808 100 2524 Textphone: 0800 056 0566 Bengali: 0800 096 7714 Gujurati: 0800 096 7715 Hindi: 0800 096 7716
Punjabi: 0800 096 7717 Urdu: 0800 096 7718 Asian/English: 0800 096 7719
email: help@nspcc.org.uk web: <http://www.nspcc.org.uk>

NSPCC is a national charity specialising in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children. A free 24 hour child protection helpline provides information, advice and counselling to anyone concerned about a child's safety. It also runs a bilingual Welsh helpline, an Asian helpline in five Asian languages, and a textphone service for people who are deaf. The organisation also offers child protection training for organisations involved in the care, protection and education of children. The consultancy service exists to help all agencies and organisations providing services or activities for children to prevent abuse and to safeguard children.

Stopcheck: an NSPCC resource for small organisations providing a step-by-step guide to safeguarding children. Available from NSPCC Consultancy Services, National Training Centre, 3 Gilmour Close, Beaumont Leys, Leicester LE4 1EZ. Tel: 0116 234 7227
email: consultancy@nspcc.org.uk
web: <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/Training/Stopcheck.asp>

NSPCC inform: a free, online, specialised child protection resource developed specifically to share information with practitioners, researchers, trainers and other professionals working to protect children. web: <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform>

Safeguarding Children Project: Safeguarding is a preventive approach to protecting children from potential harm or damage. The project provides training, information, events and publications. For further information on the Safeguarding Project or would like to subscribe to the Safeguarding Children Project e-news bulletin, please contact: Rebecca Edwards, Training & Information Officer, email: rebecca@ncvcco.org.uk,
web: <http://www.ncvcco.org.uk>

volunteering-ni.org: The Volunteer Development Agency provides support, training and information on volunteering, volunteer management, child protection and voluntary management committees. The site includes downloadable documents on various aspects of child protection. <http://www.volunteering-ni.org>

Child Protection Policies for your Community Group: guidance on child protection and the Disclosure Scotland checking procedures for groups in Scotland.
web: http://www.highland.gov.uk/cx/pdf/child_protection_policy.PDF

This guide is part of the Contact a Family Group Action Pack. For more information please visit <http://www.cafamily.org.uk> or telephone 020 7608 8700.

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