

Safeguarding young people in youth clubs

Children and young people have the right to be safe and enjoy the activities that they take part in, and parents and other guardians have a right to know that organisations provide a safe environment for this.

High quality safeguarding practices in youth clubs should:

- promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of young people;
- be young people-centred and reflect their views;
- reduce the incidence of harm and poor practice;
- contribute to enabling all young people to participate and enjoy, whatever their circumstances or abilities;
- promote anti-discriminatory and equitable practice;
- ensure adults with responsibilities know what to do in the event of any concerns arising and have the confidence in intervening;
- make clear expectations in relation to duty of care;
- provide adults with the confidence to work with children and young people;
- be subject to monitoring and evaluation.

All organisations should be able to demonstrate the steps they are taking in order to establish and maintain safeguarding practices.

The term safeguarding is now widely used to describe an organisation's approach to ensuring the safety of young people. Child protection is a term that now describes what procedures need to be followed in the event of a concern, suspicion or allegation of child abuse.

The following sets out some simple steps to make sure that young people are safe and staff are aware how to respond in the event of a concern arising.

Safeguarding Policy

The starting point for high quality safeguarding practice in a youth club is to have a written policy, adopted by the management committee, which makes clear the commitment to safeguarding young people and everyone's responsibility to adopt and promote best practice. The policy should also provide clear guidance on standards of practice that should be adopted within the club and outline what to do in the event of a concern arising.

Help in developing a safeguarding policy can be found in a number of places. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) has developed Keeping it Safe which provides a practical guide to writing and developing policies and practice around safeguarding. Some local Council for Voluntary Youth Services (CVYS) or Council for Voluntary Services (CVS), also offer support to clubs to develop good practice. Every local authority has a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and some offer support in developing safeguarding policies.

There are six steps to achieving good safeguarding practice in a club:

Step 1: Policies and procedures

Safeguarding policy

A safeguarding policy is a document that details how a club promotes the welfare of children and young people and is proactive in keeping them safe. Every club should have a safeguarding policy that clearly shows the commitment to safeguarding children and young people.

The policy should give definitions of the four categories of abuse – physical, sexual, emotional and neglect – with examples of how this could occur within a youth work setting. The policy should give examples of possible indicators of harm or abuse and clearly set out procedures for dealing with any concerns, allegations and suspicions.

Code of conduct

It is important to have a code of conduct for staff, volunteers and young people. Everyone needs to understand what is acceptable and what is not when working with young people. The code of conduct should be clearly linked to complaints, discipline and grievance procedures so that everyone knows what will happen in the event of a complaint being made. Codes of conduct are also important for young people using the youth club; a good code of conduct or set of ground rules will show them what to expect from others and what is expected of them.

Step 2: Reporting concerns, suspicions and allegations

Reporting procedures

Staff and volunteers need to understand 1) what child abuse is, 2) how to recognise it and 3) what to do if they suspect that a young person is at risk of harm or a young person discloses a concern to them. It is not the responsibility of staff or volunteers within the club to decide if a young person is being harmed. However, everyone involved in a youth club should understand what to do in the event of an incident being identified. The four steps to take are:

- **recognise** the concern, notice a problem or receive a direct disclosure;
- **respond** by reassuring the young person and telling them what you will need to do;
- **refer** the concern to the designated person within the club or externally to children's services or the police;
- **record** who, what, where and when.

Designated person

All members of staff need to know what to do and who to contact if they are concerned about the safety of a child. Within a youth club there should be a designated member of staff or volunteer who will be the primary point of contact for any matters relating to safeguarding. Their role is to act as a source of advice on safeguarding and protecting children, promoting good practice, co-coordinating and reporting any issues or concerns raised and ensuring advice is subsequently followed.

In the event of a concern about a young person or an allegation or suspicion about an adult, advice can be provided by a Local Authority Designated Officer, contactable through your LSCB. You can also call the NSPCC's helpline service (0808 8005000).

Step 3: Safe recruitment

As good practice and to prevent unsuitable people from working with young people, it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that all individuals working with young people, either paid or unpaid are suitable. This can help to:

- protect both the young people and adults at the club, and in so doing, protect the club itself;
- help to ensure that the club offers opportunities for young people to participate in a safe and enjoyable environment;
- demonstrate the club's commitment to protecting young people to potential members and to their parents or guardians;
- help deter the small minority of people who are unsuitable to work with young people from using youth work as a means of gaining access to young people;
- demonstrate to partners the club's commitment to safeguarding and protecting children. These might include distributors of public funds, potential sponsors and others;
- demonstrate a commitment to open, fair and consistent selection processes.

Under the Protection of Children Act 1999 all those working with young people should be treated as employees whether paid staff or volunteers. As such, clubs should adopt and implement recruitment and selection procedures, providing consistency when appointing staff, members and volunteers.

It is important to have clear roles and responsibilities for all paid and voluntary positions. A job description should list the duties for the position, and a person specification can be used to highlight the skills and experience that are needed. Anyone who shows an interest in filling a vacancy needs to complete an application form. Applicants should be required to complete a self-disclosure form, declaring any convictions or cautions when applying to work with children or young people. All convictions, spent or unspent, must be declared. Applicants will need to be made aware that they will need to complete a CRB disclosure, if appointed.

Before a position is offered, at least two references should be requested from individuals who are not related to the applicant. One should be work related and the other demonstrating previous involvement of working with young people, ideally in a youth work or related setting. It is also essential to check references to confirm identity using appropriate official documents, ideally photographic identification. It is recommended that all references should be in writing and followed up by telephone.

Criminal Records Bureau disclosures

Applicants who have significant access and or responsibility for working with young people must complete an enhanced CRB disclosure. However CRB disclosures should not be used in isolation, but as part of the overall recruitment process. It is good practice that CRB disclosures should be completed every three years.

Clubs should use the following definition to determine which roles require a CRB check:

"A person who regularly cares for, trains, supervises or is in sole charge of young people under the age of 18."

From 2010 the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) will require any person working with children and young people to be registered with them. Accessing both the CRB and ISA checks can only be done through organisations registered with the CRB. A number of national youth bodies, including Clubs for Young People, are able to process applications on behalf of clubs.

Step 4: Managing staff and volunteers

All staff or volunteers should undergo an induction (formal or informal) that includes signing up to the club's policy on safeguarding, good practice guidelines and any codes of behaviour that are appropriate. The induction should also confirm and agree roles and responsibilities and identify any training needs that are required. It is good practice to establish an initial period of supervision or mentoring that will support the new member of staff or volunteer in their role.

Step 5: Child protection procedures and training

Safeguarding awareness training should be provided to support the individual to fulfill their role. Appropriate Child Protection training will enable an individual to recognise their responsibilities with regard to good practice and reporting poor practice or concerns regarding young people. There is a range of awareness training resources available.

Step 6: Safe activities

There are a number of important steps that clubs should undertake to ensure the safety and welfare of young people. The club should ensure that it has adequate public liability insurance in place to cover the full range of activities that are undertaken.

All aspects of the club's operation should be risk assessed in accordance with the Health and Safety Executive guidance and records of the assessment completed. When activities take place away from the club it is important that these are also risk assessed. It is good practice to have in place a welfare plan for events or activities that take place away from the club which contains guidance and information on all aspects of the activity, including venues and contact details of key personnel.

There is specific guidance and regulations that apply to adventure activities and these are available from the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority.

There are a number of resources available that provide guidance and examples of the type of guidance that is appropriate for the safe planning and delivery of activities.

Clubs for Young People, with additional information from National Council for Voluntary Youth Services.