

CHILD PROTECTION

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What is child abuse?

Child abuse is when anyone under 18 is being harmed or isn't being properly looked after. There are different forms of child abuse:

- Physical abuse (when someone hurts a child on purpose)
- Sexual abuse (when someone under the age of 16 is told, asked or forced to take part in sexual activities)
- Emotional abuse (when a child is made to feel bad about themselves)
- Neglect (when a child is not properly looked after)

Voluntary and community groups have a duty of care

People and organisations that work with children and young people have a moral and legal duty to care for the children they come into contact with. As organisations, we should work in a way that reduces the risk of harm to children and young people, and have clear procedures for dealing with reports of child protection. As staff and volunteers, we should take all reasonable steps to keep children safe, and understand what to do if we have concerns about the safety or welfare of a child.

Do you run a “risky group”?

A “risky” group might be well-intentioned and enthusiastic. But staff and volunteers don't take child protection seriously, or don't think about it at all. According to the Safe Network, risky groups might:

- Have little or no supervision of children, staff or volunteers
- Work in unsafe buildings or activity areas
- Have no information for children about who to tell if they are worried or upset
- Have no understanding of the way a child communicates, and may not give them the time or attention they need



- Not allow parents or carers to get involved in activities, for example as a helper or accompanying adult
- Recruit new volunteers or staff without any checks
- Not have guidelines or procedures for dealing with concerns about children, or the behaviour of other volunteers or staff
- Have an out-of-date child protection policy (or not have one at all).

Policies and procedures

A safeguarding policy is a short statement of your organisation's commitment to keeping children safe. A safeguarding procedure is a detailed description of the practical things your organisation will do to protect children from harm.

What is a child protection policy?

A **safeguarding policy** usually describes your organisation's **commitment to safeguarding children**, the purpose of the policy, and how, in broad terms, your organisation will meet its responsibilities. There are lots of good sample safeguarding policies available on the internet. Which is handy, because it means you don't need to write your policy from scratch.

But don't be tempted just to copy another organisation's policy, and file it away. For a safeguarding policy to mean anything, it needs to have the support of your trustees, staff and volunteers.

For step-by-step information on how to write a child protection policy and procedures, [visit the Safe Network website](#)

What are child protection procedures?

Safeguarding procedures say in detail **what will happen in your organisation when there are concerns about a child**. Because every organisation works in a different way, it's better to write your own safeguarding procedure from scratch. The Safe Network recommends using the following as headings in your procedures, and writing your own responses under them.

- Purpose and aim of the procedures
- A description of the [different categories of abuse](#)
- How to recognise the signs of abuse
- How to respond to signs or suspicions of abuse
- How to respond to allegations of abuse
- How to respond to a child telling you about abuse: what to do, and what not to do
- How information will be recorded
- Confidentiality policy



- How to deal with other concerns about a child's welfare

Where to find sample policies and procedures

If you're writing a safeguarding policy and procedure for the first time, using a **sample policy** is a good way to get started. There are two things to remember. First, don't just copy; tailor everything to fit your organisation properly. Second, choose a reliable sample – there are plenty of badly written ones out there!

We recommend the **Are They Safe Guide** as a one-stop resource. Written by NSPCC specifically for voluntary and community groups, it's practical and proportionate.

[Download the Are They Safe Guide](#)

Reporting abuse

Everyone should play a part in protecting children from the risk of harm or abuse. If you are worried that a child is being abused or neglected, you need to report it.

Who to contact if you are concerned about a child

If you are worried that a child or young person is being harmed through abuse, or neglect please contact the **Access to Children's Services Team** at Westminster City Council on **020 7641 4000**.

If a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999

If you think there is an emergency situation, or are concerned about the immediate safety of a child please call the police on **999**.

NSPCC Freephone helpline

NSPCC is a national charity that campaigns to end child abuse and cruelty to children. If you're worried about a child, you can speak to the NSPCC Helpline on **0808 800 5000**.

Who needs to be DBS checked?

We are often asked for advice on DBS checks. Who needs to be checked? What is best practice?

In general, there are a couple of rules that you can follow:

1. First, and most importantly, anyone who has unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults must have a check done.
2. Second, trustees of organisations working with children or vulnerable adults should be checked.



In situations where it's less clear-cut, the first point of call should be your safeguarding policy and procedures. As a general rule, it's best practice to insist on checks for people who have regular close contact with children, even if that contact is supervised.

When to get a check: real-life examples

We thought it would be useful to share some “real-life” examples on who does, and who doesn't need to be DBS checked.

- Alison is a new trustee for a charity providing free after-school activities for young people. Does she need to have a DBS check?

It's not a legal requirement, but it's good practice for any organisation that works with children, young people and vulnerable adults to request a DBS check for all trustees. So in this case, it would be worthwhile getting a check.

- A group for the Bangladeshi community has just got funding for a one-week summer school. Now that the group is doing some work with children, do the trustees need to get CRB checks?

If an organisation works with children and vulnerable adults as only a small part of its work, it's not really necessary for the trustees to get checked. So if the summer school is a one-off event, there's no need for a check. Of course, anyone who is involved in running the school who has direct contact with children should have a check.

- A volunteer won't have any unsupervised contact with children, and is supported by staff who have been DBS checked. Should he be checked?

If this is an ongoing placement, we would advise that the volunteer does get checked, even though her responsibilities don't include unsupervised contact. If the placement was only temporary – a few days, or a week – it would be reasonable to decide that a check would not be necessary.

How to apply for a DBS check (formally CRB)

Contact One Westminster for DBS checks

The Volunteer Centre within One Westminster can do DBS checks on behalf of your organisation for members of staff, trustees or volunteers.

For more information

To find out more, please contact **Susan Moore** at One Westminster on 0207 604 8822 or email s.moore@onewestminster.org.uk

