

Introductory guide to safeguarding and child protection for the voluntary and community sector

2019 UK edition

NSPCC





Thanks and acknowledgements

Many people have helped to develop this introductory guide to safeguarding and child protection (previously known as *Are They Safe?*), but there are some groups who deserve a special mention. They are:

- Young people and staff members from Out and About, sadly no longer in operation, but which was an Ipswich-based charity that enabled disabled children and young people to have fun and enjoy their choice of everyday leisure activities throughout the East of England.
- Young people and staff members at Stonewall, a charity that works for the equality of LGBT people across the UK and internationally.
- Parents and representatives from black and minority ethnic (BME) voluntary organisations, working with staff members at the Race Equality Foundation.
- Parents, volunteers and staff members from Home-Start schemes across England. Home-Start is a parent support charity working with families of young children in their own homes and via the delivery of group work and specialist support.
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Introduction and welcome

Welcome to the NSPCC's introductory guide to safeguarding and child protection for the voluntary sector. It is written for leaders of voluntary, community and faith groups and organisations working with children and young people aged 0–18.

Users of this guide may provide a range of activities, support or services – from arts activities and hobbies to faith-based education or community work. Whether your focus is on babies and pre-school children, after-school care for 5–11s or clubs and activities for teenagers and young people, we hope you will find this resource useful.

This guide will be most useful to groups and organisations that are in the early stages of thinking about how to keep children and young people safe, or who want to start again from scratch.

If your group already has safeguarding and child protection measures in place, you may find the NSPCC safeguarding and child protection standards for the voluntary and community sector, and/or the complementary Safeguarding checklist more relevant to your needs. These are both available from [nspcc.org.uk/vcs](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/vcs). Those working in a faith setting may also like to view our web-based resources on safeguarding and child protection in faith communities at [nspcc.org.uk/faith](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/faith).

This guide covers best practice for safeguarding and child protection for those working with 0- to 18-year-olds. But the responsibility to safeguard and protect does not, of course, stop when a young person reaches 18. Adults can still be at risk of abuse.

Ann Craft Trust provides a range of information and advice about safeguarding adults. This is available from [anncrafttrust.org](https://www.anncrafttrust.org). UK Youth also provides information and resources for those working with young adults over the age of 18. For more information, visit [ukyouth.org](https://www.ukyouth.org)

What is meant by child protection and safeguarding?

There are various types of abuse and neglect that may be experienced by children and young people. These are commonly broken down into physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect.

In addition, there are other variations of abuse, such as sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and abuse associated with culture and belief.

Experiencing abuse and neglect can have a serious and long-term impact on a child's wellbeing.

Further information about the definitions and signs of abuse can be found at nspcc.org.uk/childabuse.

Information about the prevalence of child abuse can be found at nspcc.org.uk/statistics.

Safeguards are measures that an organisation should put in place to help reduce the risk of children, young people and adults being harmed.

Child protection is a part of safeguarding. It refers to the action taken to protect specific children from abuse or neglect.

A child protection response may be necessary in any case where a child or young person under the age of 18 may have been abused or may be at risk of abuse.

This should include policies, processes, procedures and measures to guide staff and volunteers in what to do if they are concerned that a child or young person may be at risk, and to empower children, young people and/or their families to seek help if they are worried about anything.



Contextual safeguarding

As young people grow and become more independent, they are exposed to new environments outside their family homes. These may include digital and online environments as well as the wider offline world. Gaining independence is a vital part of growing up, but it can also mean children and young people are exposed to a greater range of risks.

Organisations have an important role to play in helping make sure children and young people are safe in all the spaces they spend time. This might include helping them learn online safety skills, making sure they understand the difference between a healthy and unhealthy relationship and making sure they know who they can talk to if they are ever worried about anything.

This concept is often known as contextual safeguarding.

Legislative framework

Each UK nation has its own framework of legislation, guidance and best practice to identify children who are at risk of harm, take action to protect those children and prevent further abuse occurring. The framework in each nation is slightly different, but they all work together across the UK. Make sure you understand the legislation and guidance that is relevant to your sector and nation.

More information about this is available from nspcc.org.uk/childprotection.



How can I use this guide with my organisation or group?

The guide offers a simple, step-by-step approach to developing and acting on a plan for putting safeguards and child protection measures in place. We describe this as ‘a pathway to safer practice’.

How to use this guide

- Read through the nine steps in the guide.
- Begin working through the steps one by one. Take your time, and make sure you get the help you need.

This might be from NSPCC Learning (nspcc.org.uk/vcs); from the NSPCC’s safeguarding and consultancy service (nspcc.org.uk/consultancy); or from another agency, such as your local authority’s child protection services.

We have provided links to helpful resources throughout this guide.

If you are working from a hard copy of the guide:

- Use the wallchart that comes with it to note down the aspects of safe practice you already have in place, and to record your planned actions from each step.

- The wallchart can act as the written record of your plan. Display it in a prominent and convenient place, and tick off the planned actions as you complete them.
- If you prefer to use visual images or symbols rather than text to record actions and planned actions on the wallchart, then that is fine – as long as everybody knows what the images and symbols mean.
- Use the wallchart stickers to plot your progress along the pathway.
- As you create new documents (such as new policies and procedures), make sure you keep them on file and share them with everyone who needs to see them.

You are ready to start!

The nine steps along your pathway to safer practice

1

Assessing the risks

Use the exercises to understand the needs of the children and young people in your group or organisation, and any risks they might face.

2

Identifying leaders

Decide who is going to be your nominated child protection lead and understand their role.

3

Getting support

Make sure your child protection and safeguarding measures have support from the highest level in your organisation.

4

Writing a child protection and safeguarding policy statement

Make sure you have a written policy for child protection and safeguarding that includes everything it needs to.

5

Writing procedures

Create procedures to help everyone in your group or organisation respond appropriately to child protection and safeguarding concerns.

6

Setting a code of behaviour

Write a code of behaviour for your group or organisation so that everyone knows what is expected of them.

7

Selecting the right staff and volunteers

Make sure you have the best people working or volunteering for your group or organisation, and that they are safe to work with children and young people.

8

Getting informed and staying up to date

Make sure everyone in your organisation has up-to-date knowledge of child protection issues.

9

Making sure your child protection and safeguarding arrangements are effective

Put checks and reviews in place so that you can assess how well your group's safeguarding and child protection arrangements are working.

A young girl with blonde hair, wearing a bright yellow raincoat, is sitting at a table and painting. She is holding a paintbrush and looking towards the camera with a smile. The background shows a large window with a view of a cityscape. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Step 1: Assessing the risks

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Step 1

Assessing the risks

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Every group or organisation that includes children in its work needs to take steps to keep them safe. This is the same whether your group focuses solely on children and young people or whether you only provide a few activities that involve children.

Try this four-part exercise to help you get a real picture of the needs of the children and young people who take part in your activities and the ways in which you can keep them safe. Make sure you write down your thoughts and ideas.

1

Part one – mapping your contact with children and young people

Think about the main activities or services that your group or organisation provides for children and young people, and the other ways in which you make contact with them.

It might be helpful to draw a mind map to show the different ways that children and young people have contact with your group (for example, face-to-face, via email or internet), how often this happens (every day, once a week, occasionally or rarely) and the different activities they relate to.

2

Part two – children and young people's needs

Make a list of the needs of the children and young people who use your services. Think about groups of children and also specific children with extra needs. Things to consider include:

- age or stage of development
- gender identity
- religion
- cultural and/or ethnic background
- sexual identity
- language needs, including different communication methods, such as Braille or sign language
- whether the child has a disability, and, if so, the impact of this.

The clearer you can be about the needs of the children and young people involved with your group, the better your safeguarding and child protection arrangements will meet the needs of your group members.

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Part three – what you do well

Voluntary and community groups are usually very committed to protecting children and young people. There are likely to be many things that you already do that keep them safe, and you will need to build these into your safeguarding and child protection arrangements.

Think about the strengths of your group and write them down.

You could include:

- the way your organisation, its staff and volunteers value children and young people
- the way you welcome and include children and young people from many different backgrounds or who have different characteristics
- your understanding of children's and young people's specific needs (as you identified in part two of this exercise)
- the way you communicate with all children and young people and ask them what they think
- your contact with the local community
- the way your group or organisation is managed
- existing policies and procedures that you use to keep children and young people safe
- the training you provide for staff and volunteers
- the way you recruit and select your staff and volunteers.

4

Part four – what are the risks and how do you currently manage them?

Now think about the child protection and safeguarding risks that children and young people might be exposed to. Take into account the things you identified in part one and two and consider what risks might be present to all or some of the children and young people you work with, during all your interactions with them.

For example, you could think about:

- the physical environment in which you run the group
- staff and volunteers (including freelance workers, agency staff and those from other organisations involved on an occasional basis)
- other people who use the same venue as you
- specific activities that you undertake in the group and any equipment you use
- other children and young people in the group
- risks that might take place outside your group, for example online
- risks faced by children and young people in the group in their everyday lives, for example a family situation or risks within the community.

As well as thinking about each risk individually, consider how they might impact upon one another. Make notes of how you try to manage each of the areas of risk you have identified and where you feel the gaps might be.

This guide is an introduction to the safeguarding and child protection measures you need to put into place to mitigate the risks you have identified. The following steps will help you get started. More detailed resources are available from NSPCC Learning – see nspcc.org.uk/vcs.

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Step 2: Identifying leaders

Step 2

Identifying leaders

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Every organisation that works with children and young people should have someone who:

- leads the development of safeguarding and child protection arrangements
- is the nominated child protection lead.
- Organisations that have charitable status should, in addition, identify a lead trustee for safeguarding and child protection.

One person could undertake both of these roles in your group or it could be shared. Either option is fine, but the most important thing is that someone takes on the responsibilities and that they are given the full backing of the most senior people in the group – including the trustees or management board members if you have them. You also need to identify a deputy to cover absences. This section will help you decide who will take the lead and make sure arrangements are in place to keep children and young people safe.

A nominated child protection lead

It is good practice for all groups, however small, to identify at least one person (the 'nominated child protection lead') to be responsible for dealing with concerns or worries about children and young people, and with allegations of abuse against staff or volunteers. Everyone in the group should know who this is and how to contact them. In many smaller groups, this person is often the leader, manager or officer-in-charge. Having a nominated person is an essential element of our Safeguarding and child protection standards for the voluntary and community sector.



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The nominated child protection lead's role is to:

- make sure all safeguarding and child protection concerns involving children and young people who take part in your group's activities are responded to appropriately following your policies and procedures
- receive and record information from anyone who has concerns about a child's welfare
- take the lead on responding to information that may constitute a child protection concern
- liaise with and make referrals to statutory child protection agencies as necessary (for example, the local authority child protection services or the police).

It is not the nominated child protection lead's responsibility to decide whether a child or young person has been abused. This is the task of the child protection agencies, who have the legal responsibility, or of the NSPCC, which also has powers to help with child protection concerns. It is, however, everybody's responsibility.

The nominated child protection lead should know who is responsible for child protection in their local area. This means they should be in contact with:

- the local authority child protection services
- police
- education and health authorities.

The nominated child protection lead needs to know the relevant contact numbers and addresses of the statutory agencies in their area. This includes out-of-hours/emergency contact details. These should be available wherever the group is carrying out activities.

The nominated child protection lead should know what their responsibilities are, and have good awareness of child protection. They need to complete relevant child protection training, and understand the relevant legislation and guidance.

We provide information and support to help all nominated child protection leads gain the skills they need, whether or not they have previous experience of safeguarding and child protection. This is available from NSPCC Learning – see nspcc.org.uk/vcs.

A role description for the nominated child protection lead

A role description for any job or role is important. This means that the person doing the job, and the group or organisation asking them to do it, are clear about exactly what the responsibilities of the role are.

The role description should also cover the boundaries of those responsibilities (what the person is not responsible for). It should name the person or committee that the nominated child protection lead reports to.

An example role description for a nominated child protection lead is available from our Safeguarding and child protection checklist for voluntary and community organisations.

You may find it useful to adapt it for your group, or you could insert it into the person's wider job description if they have other duties as well as acting as the nominated child protection lead.

The NSPCC helpline is available to anyone who has a concern about a child. Email help@nspcc.org.uk or phone 0808 800 5000.





Step 3: Getting support

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Step 3

Getting support

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Thinking about putting arrangements in place to keep children and young people safe can seem like a big task, and it helps greatly if the job is not all down to one person.

You may be part of a large and busy organisation, or you may run your group by yourself, or with other volunteers who are all pressed for time. However, whatever your situation, it is important to get the right people involved. If you are in a large group, make sure you talk to representatives from every section, as child protection and safeguarding procedures affect everyone, and everyone needs to be committed to them.

Depending on their size, some organisations may decide to form a working group. It will meet to discuss what needs to be done, or to read and comment on draft documents.

The working group might include:

- trustees or the management committee
- managers or leaders in the group
- people in direct care of children or young people
- people responsible for health and safety in the building
- people responsible for organising events, outings or residential trips.

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There may be people in your group who know about child protection through their job or experience. If they can become involved, it will be a great help. There are also other local people you could ask to help.

They might include:

- local safeguarding agencies, your safeguarding board or child protection committee
- child protection professionals in education, health or the police
- a commissioning, funding or grant-making body you work with
- your local council for voluntary service or member organisation
- another voluntary sector group or organisation with whom you could develop a peer mentoring arrangement.

They may not always be able to help, but the important thing is to keep asking. A range of support is available from NSPCC Learning – see [nspcc.org.uk/vcs](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/vcs).

Support from children, young people and families

If at all possible, it is also very important to involve the children, young people and families using your group when you start to work on your child protection and safeguarding arrangements. They will have views on what makes them feel safe already, and on what may need further work. Some of their ideas may be things that your leaders and trustees will not have thought of.

It is not possible to develop a fully supportive culture in the group and make the child protection and safeguarding arrangements work properly if the children, young people and families involved do not contribute and do not understand the reasons for things being done in a certain way.


There are lots of methods you can use to consult with children, young people and families. Conversely, there are also ways of doing it that are unlikely to work well or could be intimidating. Asking an individual young person or parent to attend a meeting full of ‘official’ people and to give their opinion is one example of an approach that should be avoided.

Some ideas of what could work well include:

- working with another local project or national organisation that specialises in participation work, such as UK Youth (see [ukyouth.org](https://www.ukyouth.org))
- using resources like those developed by Kidscape (see [kidscape.org.uk](https://www.kidscape.org.uk))
- designing questionnaires that ask for people’s views
- running a participation activity that asks children and young people to talk about, draw, make a film or video diary, or show by some other means what being safe in the group means
- running a focus group for parents and carers on the same topic.

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**Step 4:
Writing a child
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Step 4

Writing a child protection and safeguarding policy statement

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A written child protection or child safeguarding policy statement makes it clear to staff, parents, children and young people what the group thinks about keeping children and young people safe, and what it will do to ensure that this happens.

The purpose of a child protection and safeguarding policy statement

The purpose of the policy statement is to show clearly that the group takes the safety of children and young people seriously, and that it expects its staff, volunteers and trustees to do so too. It sets out the overarching principles that underpin the group's child protection and safeguarding procedures and systems.

A child protection and safeguarding policy statement states:

- your commitment to keeping children and young people safe
- how, in broad terms, the group is going to meet this responsibility
- why the group is taking these steps
- who the policy applies and relates to (for example, all staff and volunteers, children and young people up to the age of 18)
- how the group will put the policy statement into action
- how this policy statement links to other relevant policies and procedures (such as procedures for taking photographs and videos, internet use, and recruitment of staff and volunteers).

It should be no longer than one or two sides of A4 paper.

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The policy statement should also:

- identify the group or organisation, its purpose and function
- recognise the needs of all the children and young people who are involved in your organisation (you can use the work you did in Step 1 to help with this)
- briefly state the main legislation and guidance that supports the policy (see [nspcc.org.uk/childprotection](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/childprotection) for help with this)
- include a commitment to making sure that everyone, including children and young people, is aware of and understands the safeguards and child protection arrangements
- include arrangements for the regular review of the policy statement and related procedures
- contain the contact details for the people responsible for child protection in the organisation.

All children and young people have the right to be protected

Children and young people who have a disability, come from a different ethnic or cultural group or are perceived as 'different' in any way may be at risk of becoming victims of discrimination and prejudice. Any discrimination is harmful to a child's or young person's wellbeing, and may mean that they are less able to access the services they need to keep them safe.

Your group needs to make sure that all children and young people have the same protection, and your policy statement needs to say that this is your belief. It is important not to make the wrong assumptions about a child's wellbeing because of prejudice or ignorance. You, your staff and volunteers know the children and young people you work with and must make sure any discrimination is challenged.


An example of a child protection or safeguarding policy statement

Having a child protection or safeguarding policy statement is an essential element of our Safeguarding and child protection standards for the voluntary and community sector. You can find the Standards and an example policy statement at [nspcc.org.uk/vcs](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/vcs).

You can adapt this example to the needs of your group or organisation.

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A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing glasses and a white blouse, is sitting at a desk in an office. She is looking down at a computer keyboard. The background shows office cubicles with glass partitions and a yellow door. A red banner is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

Step 5: Writing procedures

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Step 5

Writing procedures

Child protection and safeguarding procedures are detailed guidelines that tell everyone what to do in situations where there could be a concern about a child's or young person's safety or wellbeing. It is very important to have clear instructions to ensure that there is a speedy and effective response for dealing with issues around the safety of a child or young person.

Think about the ways in which concerns may be raised, as this will help the procedures to work well.

For instance:

- a child or young person may tell you about something that has upset or harmed them, or that has happened to another child or young person
- an adult might report that a child or young person has told them something concerning, or that they are worried a child or young person has experienced harm
- a child or young person might show signs of injury or neglect, for which there appears to be no satisfactory explanation

- a child's or young person's behaviour may suggest he or she is being abused
- the behaviour or attitude of one of the adults involved in your organisation may worry you or make you feel uncomfortable in some way
- someone might make an allegation that a worker or volunteer has harmed a child or young person or behaved inappropriately towards them
- you may witness worrying behaviour from one child or young person to another.

Bullying between children and young people

Bullying can have a serious impact on a child or young person's wellbeing. It is vital that groups and organisations have clear guidelines about bullying, its consequences and the support available to those involved. There are times when bullying can reach the threshold where children or young people are being abused or at risk of being abused. It is your group's responsibility to act appropriately to ensure that this is dealt with effectively.

More information is available from [nspcc.org.uk/childabuse](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/childabuse).

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Making sure everyone can access your procedures

You will need to make sure that everyone is able to understand and use your safeguarding and child protection procedures, regardless of the language they use or whether they have a disability.

This may mean providing the procedures in different languages for anyone whose preferred language is not English, or in other formats for disabled people, such as Braille or large text.

What procedures should you have?

We recommend that every organisation working with children should have the following procedures in place:

- a procedure for responding to concerns that a child may be at risk of abuse or neglect.
- an anti-bullying procedure
- a procedure for reporting accidents
- a procedure for managing concerns or allegations against a member of staff or volunteer in your group
- a procedure for managing concerns or allegations that a child or young person in the group is harming another child or young person (this is often known as 'peer-on-peer abuse')
- a whistleblowing and complaints procedures.

More information about all of these is available from NSPCC Learning – see nspcc.org.uk/vcs.

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Some general guidelines to writing procedures

- Make sure that you state the purpose and aim of each procedure.
- Be clear about who the procedure applies to. For example, this should include all those in contact with children and young people, even if it is not their main job to look after them, such as the building caretaker.
- Provide a summary of useful information relevant to the procedure. For example, you may want to include a description of the different categories of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect). The procedures could also contain examples of signs and indicators that might give cause for concern.
- Provide clear directions on the steps you expect people to take when following each procedure. Flow charts and diagrams can help make the procedure clearer. Ask people in your group to check the procedure while it is still in draft form. You may think that you are being clear, when in fact there may be something confusing or contradictory in what you have written.
- Include details of key agencies who should be informed, including their contact telephone numbers. State whose job it is to liaise with other agencies (the nominated child protection lead) and the timescales for doing so. It is important that staff and volunteers do not feel on their own when dealing with a worrying situation. The procedures should encourage them to get advice and support even if their concern turns out to be nothing to worry about. Parents, children and young people also need to know who they should talk to if they are worried.
- Make sure that the procedure states how, when and what information needs to be recorded. State whose job it is to make and keep the record, explain how to distinguish between fact and opinion, and state how and where records should be stored confidentially.
- Be clear about confidentiality.

The legal principle that the “welfare of the child is paramount” means that taking action to safeguard and protect the best interests of the child or young person is more important than anything else.

You should respect a child or young person’s privacy whenever possible. But if you have concerns about a child’s welfare or think they may be at risk of serious harm, you must follow your child protection procedures and share this information with people that can help. This is the case even if a child or young person has asked you not to tell anyone what is going on.

The introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 does not affect this principle. However, you should only share information with people who need to know, for example child protection

professionals. This respects a child’s and their family’s right to privacy while simultaneously protecting the child. If a child needs confidential advice and support, direct them to Childline (childline.org.uk or telephone 0800 1111).

- What should people do if they are concerned about a child but are not sure if it is a child protection issue? Everyone who works or volunteers with children has a responsibility to share any concerns they may have about a child’s wellbeing. It is not your organisation’s responsibility to decide if a concern is a child protection issue. Although you may think something is an isolated incident, it may be part of a wider pattern of abusive behaviour. By sharing information with the relevant child protection professionals, you are enabling them to build up a picture of the support the child and their family need. The NSPCC helpline is available to anyone who has a concern about a child. Email help@nspcc.org.uk or phone 0808 800 5000.

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Step 6: Setting a code of behaviour

Step 6

Setting a code of behaviour

You should decide how you expect everyone in your organisation to behave towards children and young people. This includes staff, volunteers, parents and the children and young people themselves. A code of behaviour can help to ensure that these expectations are accepted and understood.

It is important that your behaviour code reflects the child-centred principles of the group. It should be made known to all children, young people, staff and volunteers, and, where possible, it should be prominently displayed, perhaps as a poster.

Involving children and young people

Children and young people should be given every opportunity to learn that they have the right to be treated with respect, and that others have the right to be treated respectfully by them. They should be taught and encouraged to speak out if they experience any behaviour from adults or other children and young people that makes them feel threatened, and to avoid behaving in this way themselves. This includes face-to-face contact and also online behaviour.

Involving children and young people in writing the behaviour code is really important. It can help develop a clearer understanding of the reasons why the code is helpful, ensure their views are heard, and provide an element of shared ownership. Children and young people are much more likely to stick to the code and to help each other do so if they have helped create it.

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What to include

It may be best to have a separate code of behaviour for staff/volunteers and children and young people, as your expectations may be slightly different for each group. However, the ethos and values underpinning each document should be the same and should include positive statements about:

- listening to each other
- valuing and respecting others in the group
- involving others, including children and young people, in decision-making as appropriate
- offering praise and encouragement
- respecting differences
- cooperating with each other.

There should also be a clear statement about promoting an anti-bullying environment and dealing firmly with bullying in all its forms.

Some groups have a separate policy on bullying, and we recommend that you work towards this if you do not already have it – see nspcc.org.uk/vcs for more information.

Breaches of the behaviour code

As well as developing a behaviour code, you need to think about what the consequences will be if someone breaches it.

For staff, you should have a disciplinary process.

For volunteers, you should have a separate process to deal with concerns, such as a volunteer resolution process to recognise the legal distinction between these roles.

If the breach raises a child protection concern, then you will need to use your procedure for managing allegations against an adult, regardless of whether the person is a member of staff or a volunteer.

For children and young people who breach the code, you should also have a disciplinary system. Try to use a system that promotes good behaviour rather than punishing inappropriate behaviour. Using a traffic light system is often helpful.

If a child's behaviour is of such concern that it may constitute a child protection or safeguarding risk to others (peer-on-peer abuse), you need to follow your procedure for managing concerns or allegations of abuse against a child, as well as your procedure for dealing with concerns that a child may be at risk of abuse.

These various procedures are mentioned in Step 5 of this guide, and you can find examples of them and of codes of behaviour via nspcc.org.uk/vcs.

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**Step 7:
Selecting the
right staff and
volunteers**

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Step 7

Selecting the right staff and volunteers

Whatever activities your group or project provides for children or young people, you will want to make sure that you have the best people for the role. A good recruitment process that incorporates safer recruitment practices will help you to choose the right people, those who are well suited to your group or organisation and who are less likely to harm children or young people, intentionally or accidentally.

Good recruitment and induction processes help to show staff, volunteers, contractors, children, young people and their families how much you value the safety and wellbeing of those who use your facilities or services.

Below are some tips to help you recruit safely – they apply to recruiting both paid and unpaid people of all ages, including young people themselves. By taking these steps, you are aiming to build as complete a picture of each applicant as possible and to identify and eliminate unsuitable applicants. You are also helping to ensure a fair and equitable recruitment process.

You can find more information on safer recruitment by visiting nspcc.org.uk/vcs.

You may also find our safer recruitment elearning course and face-to-face courses helpful. For more information, see nspcc.org.uk/saferrecruitment.

Planning your recruitment activity

To attract the right people to your setting, it is important to ensure the whole recruitment process is accessible and attractive to potential applicants. Potential recruits should feel valued throughout the whole recruitment process, not just at the interview or face-to-face meeting. Developing a plan for your recruitment that considers the complete process from start to finish can help you to achieve this.

Taking a planned and structured approach to recruitment will help you to:

- reduce the risk of appointing someone unsuitable
- ensure all relevant steps have been followed
- ensure there are records of the process for future reference
- select the right person for the right role.

Planning is the first step towards safer recruitment practice and your commitment to safeguarding should be clear and explicit at every stage of the recruitment process.

Work out your timetable for the different stages in the process and make sure the right people are available to shortlist and interview – it helps to have a minimum of two people.

Defining the role and developing selection criteria

Consider the tasks and skills necessary for the job and what kind of person is most suited to it. Decide how the person should behave with children and young people, and what attitudes you want to see. Ensure you have these written down in the form of a role profile for volunteers or a job description for paid positions. You should also include a person specification.

From this you can develop a list of essential and desirable qualifications, skills and experience to select against when you receive your applications.

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The application pack

You will need to prepare the application pack in advance, so it is ready for potential applicants. Decide how you will make this available – will you send it out on request or publish it online?

The application pack should include the following:

- A standard application form. Use this to obtain the applicant's full identifying details, information about their education and training and a full history of past and present work and/or volunteering experiences. It should also give them the opportunity to provide a personal statement.
- The role profile or job description. This should include information about the role and about your group or organisation.
- A copy of your safeguarding and child protection policy statement and procedures.
- Information about your vetting and barring procedures. If the role requires a criminal record check, include your policy on recruiting ex-offenders to make it clear you recruit people fairly.
- A confidential self-disclosure form (if appropriate). This allows an applicant to disclose any relevant information about their past, such as information about a criminal record or past conduct issues. It should be submitted in a sealed envelope and only opened if the applicant is successful. Before asking applicants to fill in a self-disclosure form, you must check that it is appropriate for the role you are recruiting to.

More information about self-disclosure forms, as well as a template form, is available from NSPCC Learning – see nspcc.org.uk/vcs.

- A reference form. The applicant should provide details of people who will be able to provide suitable references. You should give an overview of the questions you will be asking the referee so that the applicant can give their consent to you obtaining this information.

Advertising the vacancy

Circulate details of all vacancies widely using a variety of methods to ensure accessibility. Include a statement about your commitment to safeguarding and child protection.

Reviewing applications and creating a shortlist

Use your selection criteria to help you make a shortlist of suitable candidates.

Make a note of any gaps in employment or volunteer history or any questions or concerns you will need to follow up with the applicant at interview.

Setting interview questions and tests

Make sure that your interview tests whether the applicants have the necessary tasks, skills and attitudes that relate to the role.

Conducting interviews

Always include a face-to-face meeting as part of the selection process. This gives you the opportunity to: test that the applicant has the right skills for the role; explore their values, attitudes and motivation for working with children and young people; and check their

commitment to safeguarding and child protection.

To give you a better picture of each candidate, it can be helpful to include a number of different selection methods, such as role-play or a presentation.

Carrying out the necessary checks

There are a number of checks that you should carry out, whether the person is applying for a paid or voluntary role:

- Identity checks. You have a legal obligation to check a person is who they say they are when applying for a role with you. Ask for photographic documentation to confirm identity and be aware of how to verify identity and authenticity of the documents you receive.
- Right to work. You need to check the candidate has permission to work in the UK, unless they meet the definition of 'a volunteer'. Some voluntary roles may be deemed to be 'working under a contract as a voluntary worker' (the contract is not necessarily written). These roles still require a right to work check.
- Qualifications. Ask to see original documents and certificates if they are relevant to the role.

- References. Ask for written references from at least two people who are not family members and, ideally, who have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's experience of work or contact with children or young people. If there are doubts or you have any questions resulting from the reference, follow up with a telephone call to the referee.
- Criminal record checks. You need to carry out the relevant criminal records checks to make sure the person applying for your role is eligible to work with children. If the role involves work that is classed as 'regulated activity', (or 'regulated work' in Scotland), you need to carry out an 'enhanced with barred list' criminal records check (or Protecting Vulnerable Groups check in Scotland). If the role is not classed as 'regulated activity' or 'regulated work', a different form of check might still be necessary.

More information this is available from [nspcc.org.uk/vcs](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/vcs).

- Overseas checks. If the person has previously lived abroad, you may need to carry out checks in the relevant country. More information about when this is necessary and how to do it is available from [nspcc.org.uk/vcs](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/vcs).

What is 'regulated activity' ('regulated work' in Scotland)?

In England, Northern Ireland and Wales, regulated activity with children means carrying out any of the below activities frequently or with intensity (more than 3 days in a 30 day period or overnight).

- Unsupervised activities: teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children; providing advice/guidance on wellbeing, or driving a vehicle only for children.
- Working for a limited range of 'specified places' with the opportunity for contact with children and young people, for example schools, children's homes, childcare premises.

These are also examples of regulated activity if unsupervised:

- engaging in intimate or personal care of children.
- health care (including by a registered health care professional).

In Scotland, regulated work with children can be paid or voluntary. The frequency and intensity requirement does not apply. It usually involves:

- working directly with children
- teaching or supervising children
- providing personal services to children
- caring responsibilities.

It can also apply to certain positions of trust within organisations, for example being a trustee of a children's charity.

More information about the definitions of regulated activity and regulated work is available from [nspcc.org.uk/vcs](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/vcs)

Third party suppliers

Where children and young people are likely to have contact with people supplied by third party contractors, ensure that you have a written agreement requiring the contractor to comply with your safeguarding and child protection requirements.

When using an agency (such as a recruitment agency) to provide workers or volunteers, you should ask to see written confirmation that the relevant checks for the role have been undertaken.

It is your responsibility to check that the person the agency sends is the person who arrives for the work or activity.

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A woman with dark hair and red-rimmed glasses is shown in profile, looking down at a desk. The desk is cluttered with various papers, including a white document with a black brushstroke graphic, a yellow document with a black brushstroke graphic, and an orange document. A blue pen is in her hand, and she appears to be writing or reviewing the papers. The background is a blurred office setting.

Step 8: Getting informed and staying up to date

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Step 8

Getting informed and staying up to date

Everyone who works or volunteers with children should understand how to recognise and respond to situations where children might be at risk of harm. Ensuring your staff and volunteers are competent, knowledgeable and well trained about safeguarding and child protection needs to be an important feature of your ongoing training and development.

Inducting staff, volunteers and management board or trustee board members

New members of the team need to be provided with essential information about your approach to safeguarding and child protection and know what is expected of them. It is up to you to decide how best to inform new staff, volunteers and board members about what they need to know – it could be on a one-to-one basis; by asking them to read documents and then discussing them; by shadowing other staff members; or by more formal briefings or training sessions.

Whatever methods you choose, we recommend that the following matters are covered as a minimum during the induction period of a staff member, board member or volunteer:

- your safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures
- your behaviour code for adults and children and young people
- your whistleblowing procedures

- a detailed discussion of the new person's duties and responsibilities
- information about any training they are expected to undertake (including training about child protection).

For more information, see nspcc.org.uk/vcs.

Ongoing training and development

Child protection and safeguarding training is not a 'one-off' experience. The law, our society, and our understanding of good practice changes and develops all the time, and so refresher training should be provided at regular intervals.

Everyone who works or volunteers with children should have regular basic child protection training and keep their knowledge up to date.

The nominated child protection lead should make sure they keep updated on key issues in child protection and are able to share this information with others in your organisation as appropriate.

Those responsible for recruitment of staff and volunteers should undertake safer recruitment training.

We offer a range of face-to-face and online safeguarding and child protection training at introductory and more advanced or specialist levels. More information is available from nspcc.org.uk/training.

Taking responsibility for your own learning

Those working with children and young people also need to take responsibility for keeping themselves up to date outside of formal training or learning sessions. For example, they can sign up to our weekly or monthly email alerts at nspcc.org.uk/services. We update the information on NSPCC Learning regularly so make sure you use all the resources available via nspcc.org.uk/vcs.

A photograph of children sitting on a blue mat, playing with various LEGO bricks and assembled pieces. The scene is brightly lit, and the children are focused on their activity. A pink text box is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**Step 9:
Making sure
your child
protection and
safeguarding
arrangements
are effective**

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Step 9

Making sure your child protection and safeguarding arrangements are effective

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Keeping policies and procedures up to date

Policies and procedures need to be looked at regularly to make sure that they are up to date and relevant to the work of your group or organisation. Set timescales to review your child protection and safeguarding arrangements, and make sure you know who is responsible for taking the lead in the review process. It is best to conduct a review on an annual basis if you can.

Audit the ways in which your safeguards are used

Safeguarding and child protection is an ongoing process. Your policies and procedures will only keep children and young people safe if they are used effectively. Here are some questions you can use to check the effectiveness of your safeguarding and child protection measures:

- Does everyone know what to do if they are worried about a child or young person? How can you be sure?
- Do children and young people and their families know who to talk to if they are worried? Do they feel safe in your group or organisation? How do you know?

- Is everyone happy with the procedures and clear about what they are?
- Have they been used and did they work well?
- Are there any trends or patterns emerging in how they are being used?
- Could they be improved? If so, how?

You should get other people to help you with the audit, and seek the views of children, young people and families.

For more information about auditing and measuring the effectiveness of your safeguarding and child protection arrangements, see NSPCC Learning – nspcc.org.uk/vcs.

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Where to go from here

Congratulations! You have completed the nine steps and your group has moved forward a long way in terms of putting robust child protection and safeguarding arrangements in place.

It will take time to make sure your child protection measures are comprehensive but by using this guide you have made a good start.

Safeguarding and child protection is an ongoing process and you should always be looking for new ways to keep children and young people safe from harm.

Once you have set up the safeguarding and child protection arrangements described in this guide, you can move on to our Safeguarding and child protection standards for the voluntary and community sector and Safeguarding checklist. These will help you develop and improve your organisation's child protection response even further.

These resources are available from NSPCC Learning – see nspcc.org.uk/vcs.

If you are worried about a child, even if you are unsure, contact our professional counsellors for help, advice and support. Call us on 0808 800 5000 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

For the children and young people you work with, make sure that they know about Childline (childline.org.uk or telephone 0800 1111). This service offers free, confidential advice and support whatever the child or young person's worry, whenever they need help.

You can also use learning@nspcc.org.uk to seek further advice or information based on the information in this guide to our Standards.

All of us at the NSPCC wish you well in your work with children and young people.







NSPCC

Everyone who comes into contact with children and young people has a responsibility to keep them safe. At the NSPCC, we help individuals and organisations to do this.

We provide a range of online and face-to-face training courses. We keep you up-to-date with the latest child protection policy, practice and research and help you to understand and respond to your safeguarding challenges. And we share our knowledge of what works to help you deliver services for children and families.

It means together we can help children who've been abused to rebuild their lives. Together we can protect children at risk. And, together, we can find the best ways of preventing child abuse from ever happening.

But it's only with your support, working together, that we can be there to make children safer right across the UK.

nspcc.org.uk/learning

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EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR