

why?

Fact sheet 8

Why safeguarding?

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is about more than child protection. Child protection is specifically about protecting children and young people from suspected abuse and neglect. Safeguarding is much wider than child protection. It includes everything an organisation can do to keep children and young people safe, including minimising the risk of harm and accidents and taking action to tackle safety concerns.

Safeguarding is also about being able to respond quickly and appropriately to concerns or allegations brought to the organisation, which means having the right policies and procedures in place to deal with difficult situations if they arise.

What does that mean for our organisation?

All children want to explore limits, try out new experiences and develop their skills and capabilities from a very young age, which often means taking certain risks. But children also need to stay safe and secure. Organisations that work with children and families will be familiar with the need to balance risk and safety; they need to be able to provide a dynamic and challenging environment while keeping the children in their care safe from harm.

Do we have to do it?

Clearly it is in the best interest of organisations and their service users to have effective safeguarding systems and practices in place. Additionally, Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on all agencies – whether they are public, private or voluntary – delivering services with public money to safeguard children. What this means is that Voluntary and community sector organisations will need to follow best practice in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and be able to evidence how they do it, if they want to receive any kind of public money.

How do we assess risk?

The people who carry out an activity on a regular basis will be the best placed to assess the associated risks. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides a very helpful guide that includes an example risk assessment and can be downloaded from www.hse.gov.uk. The five steps to risk assessment are:

- looking for the hazards;
- deciding who might be harmed;
- deciding the risks (high, low or medium) to see whether existing precautions are adequate or whether more needs to be done;
- recording your findings and what action might need to be taken; and
- review and revise your assessment.

How about safe recruitment?

Rigorous procedures for the recruitment, supervision and training of staff and volunteers will help make sure that your organisation is a safe place for children and families. When recruiting, ensure that the person responsible for recruitment has had appropriate training.

Why safeguarding?

Do we need a code of conduct?

In addition to rigorous risk assessments, having a code of conduct is key to creating a safeguarding culture within an organisation. It is essential that everyone involved in the organisation knows what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. Having a safe organisation is much easier if everyone is fully aware of the behaviour and conduct that is expected from all.

A code of conduct should make it clear what children and young people can expect and will help staff and volunteers avoid situations where they may make themselves vulnerable to false accusations. It will also encourage staff, volunteers and children and young people to become alert to potential situations of abuse or danger and to report concerns and unacceptable behaviour.

Are whistleblowing and complaining part of safeguarding?

Yes. Setting up systems where people are encouraged to speak out about concerns will help to make organisations safe and discourage bad practice. Rigorous whistleblowing and complaints policies are an important part of this.

Whistleblowing is when a staff member or volunteer raises a concern about potential danger or bad practice they witnessed through work. A whistleblowing policy should make it clear that reports of malpractice are taken seriously by the organisation and encourage workers to come forward should they wish to raise a concern, even if that eventually means having to by-pass senior management. An effective policy should protect both the whistleblower and the organisation by outlining a simple process for raising concerns.

A **complaint** is lodged by a worker, volunteer, member of the public, service user or a service user's advocate who feels personally wronged by the organisation and wants a resolution. People, users and workers of the service, have the right to raise concerns or complaints, not just about major issues, but also about day-to-day or service-related concerns.

No organisation is the same and one size does not fit all. Policies and procedures need to be relevant to the organisation applying them and should be clear and accessible to everybody – workers and beneficiaries. Policies and procedures work best when they are developed with and understood by the children and young people they are designed to serve.

Where can I find out more information?

Positively safe: A guide to developing safeguarding practices can be downloaded from www.childrenengland.org.uk

Check the website of the Independent Safeguarding Authority for updates to the Vetting and Barring Scheme www.isa.gov.org.uk

NSPCC's Safe Communities Toolkit is free to the voluntary and community sector and can be ordered from www.nspcc.org.uk

Contact your Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), which is responsible for identifying training needs and providing inter-agency and multi-agency training.