



Safeguarding Matters April 2009

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Taken from the NSPCC Creating a Culture of Safety EduCare Programme

The Waterhouse inquiry into abuse of C&YP in residential homes in Wales stated that 'Vigilance by everyone who has contact with C&YP is all important'. This means that all organisations providing services for C&YP must put safeguards in place and **create a culture of safety and vigilance**; a culture in which the safety and welfare of C&YP is paramount.

Minimising risk, maximising safety

An organisation that has actively developed a culture of safety will deter people from trying to abuse C&YP within, or through, the organisation. How far does your organisation measure up to this list of essential safeguards?

1. There should be a written **child protection policy** and **procedure**. Check if your organisation has one and make sure you know what it says. The procedure should tell you exactly what to do if you have concerns about a child's welfare. The policy should be in line with Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) procedures and Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 2006).
2. There should be a **designated person** who can deal with concerns or allegations of abuse. The organisation should arrange for them to be properly trained and supported, and should ensure they know what to do when there are concerns or allegations.
3. A rigorous **recruitment and selection** process is needed for all paid staff and volunteers who work with C&YP.
4. There should be a written **code of behaviour**, which provides guidelines on accepted behaviour when working with C&YP. This should include clear guidance on personal and intimate care tasks, for example with disabled or very young children. It should also address '**positions of trust**' covered by the Sexual Offences Act 2003. People in a position of trust have a role with C&YP that gives them power and influence over them. If they misuse these they may be committing an offence.
5. **Induction and training**. All those in contact with C&YP should learn the essentials about child protection and health and safety.
6. Adults and C&YP should know how to voice concerns or complain about abusive or unethical behaviour, and should have access to an independent person who can deal with complaints. **Information** should be provided for C&YP and parents about the child protection policy and where they can go for help.
7. There should be a **child-centred ethos** where C&YP are listened to by adults and taken seriously.
8. There should be a **culture of vigilance**, which means that staff, volunteers and other individuals should be aware of who is accessing your organisation's premises and activities. They should be particularly alert to anyone spending excessive time alone with C&YP and to any changes in, or anxieties about, a child's behaviour.
9. Child protection issues can provoke a range of feelings and emotions for staff, and it is essential that organisations provide effective **support and supervision** for all paid staff and volunteers.
10. As far as possible, the work of the organisation should be planned in a way that minimises situations where abuse can take place. Opportunities for one person to have unsupervised access to C&YP should be minimised.



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Good practice in recruitment, vetting and selection

Some people in England and Wales are banned from working with C&YP. These are people whose names are on lists held by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). One is known as Information held under s142 of the Education Act (formerly List 99) and contains details of teacher considered unsuitable or banned from working with C&YP in education. Another is the Protection of Children Act 1999 (POCA) list of people banned from working with C&YP. **New legislation in 2006** was planned to combine these lists.

It is a **criminal offence** for people who are banned from working with C&YP to apply for such work and for organisations to knowingly employ anyone who is banned from work that involves regular contact with C&YP.

Since 2001, the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) has been responsible for making criminal record checks on individuals seeking work the C&YP and vulnerable adults. For guidance see the CRB website www.crb.gov.uk.

Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) The CRB and the Independent Safeguarding Authority will deliver the new scheme as laid down by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. From July 2010 all new entrants to roles working with vulnerable groups and those switching jobs within these sectors will need to register with the **VBS** and be checked by the Independent Safeguarding Authority. More information is available at: <http://www.isa.gov.org.uk/>

This form of vetting is important, but remember it cannot be relied onto screen out all abusers. These checks must be implemented alongside good recruitment policies and practices.

- Candidates, including volunteers, **should complete a written application form for all posts**. Ask on the form for details of any convictions, cautions, reprimands and final warnings, as well as any pending cases. Ask if they have ever had any complaints of abuse against them.
- When interviewing new staff and volunteers, **explore their attitudes to C&YP and childcare**. Find out their views on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour with C&YP.
- **Take up at least two references**. One referee should have knowledge of the applicant's work with C&YP. Do not rely just on references. It is unlikely that an abuser would identify a referee who has knowledge of their abusive behaviour.
- **Talk personally to one of the referees**
- **Always ask for proof of identity**, preferably a document that includes a photograph – for example, a passport.
- **Ask for a signed declaration** that there is no reason why they should not work with C&YP.
- **Verify qualifications wherever possible**
- **If they do not have a relevant professional qualification**, ask them to complete the NSPCC Keeping Children Safe EduCare programme, and/or a similar safeguarding / child protection awareness programme (see OCVYS training calendar for the many safeguarding courses in Oxfordshire) as part of their induction.



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Policy review

What should you do immediately about your current child protection policy?

Organisations should ensure that their current policies, guidelines and procedures provide adequate safeguards for C&YP.

For example:

- Are staff and volunteers within your organisation taking C&YP to their own homes and so creating the potential for abuse to occur?
- Are members of your organisation working unofficially with C&YP, taking C&YP on unofficial trips or seeing C&YP outside club activities? This is risky practice for both C&YP and staff
- Do staff or volunteers regularly spend unsupervised time alone with C&YP within your organisation? If so, under what circumstances? Are all possible safeguards in place?
- Do staff and volunteers know what is acceptable and unacceptable physical contact with C&YP? Can they physically comfort a child in distress? Are there clearly policies on physical discipline?

Possible indicators of inappropriate behaviour

People who pose a threat to C&YP can be very skilled at avoiding detection. Continued vigilance is important and there are some behaviours which may alert you to the possibility of abuse. You should be particularly vigilant if someone:

- Pays an unusual amount of attention to C&YP or provides them with presents, money or favours
- Seeks out vulnerable children
- Seeks opportunities to spend significant amounts of time alone and unsupervised with a child or C&YP regularly spends a significant amount of time alone with a single child or a small group of C&YP
- Encourages secretiveness about their activities and time spent with C&YP
- Takes a child or C&YP to their own home
- Is vague about previous employment
- Has an unusual amount of physical contact with a child or C&YP
- Touches C&YP in an inappropriate manner
- Talks to C&YP in an inappropriate manner
- Avoids close supervision and management of their work



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Dealing with your concerns

All concerns regarding children's welfare must be taken seriously and dealt with immediately. If you or any member of staff has a concern about a child's welfare or a strong suspicion about abuse, you should:

- Record the reasons for your concerns, what you have seen/heard, when, where etc in writing
- Consult your manager and your designated safeguarding person, but not the individual who is the cause for concern, and take expert advice as appropriate – the NSPCC Helpline or children's social care (children's social services) can provide expert advice
- Follow your organisation's child protection policy, which should clearly state when and how to make a referral to children's social care

Individuals and organisations do not always want to hear concerns about abuse. It may be necessary for a member of staff to raise the concern on more than one occasion before anything is done. You should not let the matter drop until it is clear that it is being dealt with – a child's safety may be at risk.

If you feel that you are not being listened to, you should contact your local children's social care office, the police or the NSPCC Helpline. (All contacts numbers supplied at the end of this paper).

What not to do

If you have concerns that someone maybe abusing a child or C&YP, you should **never**:

- Do nothing
- Give up
- Conduct the child protection enquiries yourself
- Confront the alleged abuser as this may jeopardise any criminal investigation – the alleged abuser may deny the allegation or threaten C&YP to cause them to retract their allegation and prevent others from telling, or they may react violently or flee the area, causing risk to C&YP in a new area.

Whistle-blowing

The majority of adults find working with C&YP rewarding and would never abuse C&YP in their care. This paper is about the few who do and voicing your concerns, or whistle-blowing, should be encouraged and handled professionally by your organisation.

Listen carefully to the concerned person and follow the procedures outlined in your child protection policy. Any individual about whom concerns have been raised should be treated fairly and honestly. They should be provided with support throughout any investigation process, as should the person or persons who raised the concerns.

If a problem is substantiated, your organisation must consider what lessons can be learnt and make the necessary changes to the child protection policy.



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False allegations

False allegations can sometimes be made against a member of staff, perhaps because of a genuine mistake or misunderstanding. A false allegation may be made for reasons of malice, jealousy or revenge, or it may even be a cry for help from a child

If allegations are made against you which you know to be false:

- Stay calm
- Follow your manager's instructions
- Co-operate with questions and enquiries
- Seek advice and support from you union, friends and family, and any appropriate professional advisor
- Do not confront your accuser

False allegations are usually recognised as false once sufficient enquiries have been made.

National Safeguarding Unit for the 3rd Sector

The new National Safeguarding Unit for the Third Sector in England was launched in 2009 as one the government's commitments in the Staying safe: action plan (DCSF, 2008). The NSPCC and Children England (formerly NCVCCO) have been commissioned to set up and jointly manage this Unit. For more info:

http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/nsu_wda63026.html

Important Contacts – Information correct at time of writing April 2009

- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board: 01865 810563
- NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0800 800 5000
- Asian Child Protection Helpline: 0800 0967719
- Oxfordshire County Council Safeguarding Pupils: 01865 815186
- Oxfordshire Schools Safeguarding Team: 01865 815956 01865 815186 or 01865 815554
- Oxfordshire Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit: 01865 335200
- Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre: 01865 726295
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need & families: 0845 6022260
- Oxfordshire Children & Families Local Assessment Teams: Southern: 01235 549298
Northern: 01295 756517
Central: 01865 815489
- Oxfordshire Domestic Violence Unit: Central: 01865 335165
Southern: 01865 335165
Northern: 01295 754625/26 or 754548



Safeguarding Matters April 2009 Step by Step Guide and Audit Tools

Firstcheck

Firstcheck is a step-by-step guide to help you develop your **child protection policies** and **procedures** and provides advice on developing a code of good child protection practice and is supported by professionally qualified NSPCC staff who can assist you if you have any difficulties.

Firstcheck promotes best practice in all areas of your work with C&YP. All organisations working with C&YP need to have sound child protection policies in place. Using **Firstcheck**, effective action to protect C&YP in your organisation won't be as daunting as you think.

C&YP have the right to be safe and happy in the activities they choose - and in most cases parents and carers can have confidence that the organisations to which they entrust their C&YP will look after them.

Unfortunately, sometimes people who work with C&YP pose a risk to them. **Firstcheck** is designed to help C&YP's organisations to take simple steps to prevent this happening and create safe and enjoyable environments for C&YP. Firstcheck **costs £20** from the NSPCC www.nspcc.org.uk

How well are your group/s doing from C&YP's perspectives?

Kidscheck is a simple 'free' audit tool that can be used by C&YP to help them assess the safeguarding activities of the organisations they use. Developed by a C&YP, **Kidscheck** is a companion publication to [Stopcheck](#). It is designed to enable C&YP to assess how well their club or group is doing in keeping them safe and happy. Download from www.nspcc.org.uk

NSPCC distance learning programme

You can undertake a short, distance learning training programme on many topics including; Creating a Culture of Safety and, Child Protection Awareness from the NSPCC EduCare programme and on completion receive a personalised NSPCC certificate. If you are interested go to: www.educare.co.uk and...

1. EduCare will send you full guidance notes on how to complete the programme, the questionnaires for modules and a pre-paid envelope for you to return the completed questionnaires for marking or you can do the any learning programme on-line.
2. If you score 70 per cent or more on each of the questionnaires, you will receive a personalised certificate, a feedback letter detailing your scores and a set of correct answers for each of the modules.

To find out the where the latest safeguarding / child protection training courses are being held and by whom please see OCVYS training calendar on our website: www.ocvys.org

**If you have any questions about this paper please contact OCVYS team on: enquiries@ocvys.org
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