

The voice of the Voluntary Arts

Child Protection

Part II – Putting Child Protection into Practice

Briefing 82, *Child Protection: Part I – An Introductory Guide*, gives a broad overview of Child Protection, looking at the legislation and outlining the need for both a Policy and Implementation Procedures. This briefing takes this a step further by examining how to put these practices into action effectively.

It's not easy... but it is achievable

Promoting a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults¹ in your organisation can be difficult, but it is achievable. Through determined implementation, thorough recruitment, training and ongoing support of staff (volunteers and casual helpers alike), consistent reviewing and updating of your policies, attention to detail and a little patience you and your organisation can employ child protection practices to be proud of.

Implementing your policy and procedures

Now that you have written your Child Protection Policy and Implementation Procedures (see Briefing 82), you will need to make sure that they are put into practice by everyone in your organisation. This includes all staff, volunteers and casual workers (even those who might come in just to help for one day!).

Staff, volunteers and casual helpers

Your staff, volunteers and casual helpers will be the people carrying out your Child Protection Policy and Implementation Procedures. Below are a few issues to consider:

- never underestimate what someone will be doing or where they will be, especially on a busy day. Sometimes 'casual helpers' are as important as paid staff or a trusted regular volunteer, depending on the job they will be doing;
- often, volunteers without official disclosure are given jobs interacting with children because

they are the 'easy' jobs, while checked staff are in an office doing trained work. This is a common dangerous situation, and one to be aware of.

To avoid this happening:

- make a job list of all the tasks/jobs (on the day, during the event, etc.) to evaluate what will be needed;
- place volunteers and casual helpers without official disclosures in positions where they will have no direct contact with children. (NOT in the canteen, directing children to their seats, putting children on coaches, etc.)
- do everything reasonably practicable in your means to ensure child safety, like:
 - have name, address and two references on file of everyone working for you (even volunteers and casual workers);
 - be sure to check references, never take anyone on their word!
 - get a disclosure for anyone who is in contact with children (even volunteers and casual workers), if possible. When time restraints can make this difficult try to make other arrangements for the child(ren)'s immediate care. Don't be tempted to skip this process – be sure to build it into your timetable.

Remember: you can never be too careful when recruiting staff, volunteers and casual helpers – especially when your organisation has direct contact of children. Take the time to be cautious and thorough.

Disclosures

A disclosure is the official document containing information on working with children held by the police and government agencies, and as well as being a useful source of information it can also be very helpful in the recruitment process.

- At present, the **Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)**, which acts for England and Wales offers only 2 types of disclosure – standard and enhanced.

¹ Throughout the remainder of this briefing, when the term 'children/child' is used it also encompasses young people and vulnerable adults.



- **Disclosure Scotland** offers 3 types of disclosure: basic, standard and enhanced.

The descriptions of standard and enhanced given below apply to both agencies.

- **Standard disclosure** – this provides information of both spent and unspent convictions and states if the individual is banned from working with children.
- **Enhanced disclosure** – this provides all information in the standard disclosure as well as any information from the local police records which a chief of police feels is relevant. It would be prudent to obtain an enhanced disclosure for anyone in contact with children.
- **PECS**, which acts for Northern Ireland, offers one type of disclosure which provides criminal records and PECS register information as well as any relevant information held by other UK agencies.
- A copy of the disclosure is sent to the person involved and to the body who requested it. When you request a disclosure through an umbrella body², you should ask either to receive the umbrella body's copy of the disclosure certificate or a photocopy, and retain it on file.
- If someone already holds a disclosure certificate that has been obtained because s/he works with another organisation, you have the right to accept it or to ask them to apply for another disclosure for the work they will do with your organisation. If you decide to accept it, always make sure you see it. Photocopy the disclosure, date your photocopy and keep it on file.
- Seeing a copy of a teacher's disclosure may be difficult as many schools keep these on file. If you need to verify a teacher's disclosure, contact the school and ask them to send you a letter quoting the disclosure reference number.

Ensuring safe recruitment: As stated in Briefing 82, due to time constraints, disclosures may not always be a realistic option for volunteers and casual helpers, particularly if you need them to work with you at short notice. However, disclosures are only one part of careful recruitment, and when it is unrealistic to obtain a disclosure then you must use other ways to ensure safety.

- In particular, your Policy and Implementation Procedures must make it clear that anyone for whom you do not hold a disclosure (or copy of one) will not be placed in a situation where they will be in one-to-one contact with children.
- It is important to note that disclosures go back in the records for 5 years. (i.e. this will only tell you if the person has been convicted or questioned by the police in the UK in the last 5 years.)

- More ways to ensure safe recruiting are:
 - Request at least two references from all staff, volunteer and casual workers, and be sure to check them.
 - Question any time gaps in a CV.
 - Remember to obtain documentation of any qualifications.

Ongoing support

Offering ongoing support and training to your staff, volunteers and casual helpers is an important part of good child protection practice. Regular meetings of teams or individuals to voice concerns or discuss difficult situations will not only help people to learn but also encourage an environment of open communication, trust and respect.

Keeping your staff, volunteers and casual helpers informed about child protection, will benefit all involved. There are organisations that offer training and workshops geared specifically towards child protection at arts events. See 'Further Information' at the end of this briefing.

Lines of responsibility

Your Child Protection Policy and Implementation Procedures should also outline what to do in the case of an incident or suspected incident. Make sure that you have a clear system for reporting an incident or suspected incident. It must be easy to understand by all those concerned (e.g. staff, volunteers, casual helpers, children, parents and teachers). This will help to minimise confusion and keep the focus on safety.

Note: If an incident of abuse is reported, it is not up to you or your organisation to decide who, if anyone, is guilty. In this situation, it is the responsibility of social services or the police to determine if any abuse has occurred.

Having a 'named person'

- Many organisations have a 'named person' system, in which there is a dedicated, responsible member of staff who deals with all incidents, allegations and issues regarding child protection. This person will need to be fully trained in case of an incident (e.g. remain calm, know how to talk to the child, record the incident, contact the child's parents, etc), and have contact names and numbers for the relevant authorities (social services, police).
- If your organisation decides to implement a 'named person' policy, everyone (children, parents, staff, volunteers, casual helpers) needs to know who that named person is and how to reach them.

² There is a list of umbrella bodies registered with the CRB on the Disclosure website – www.disclosure.gov.uk



- Remember to have backup resources for when your 'named person' is unavailable.
- It is important to note that social services are normally only open Monday to Friday 9am-5pm. On evenings and weekends the police need to be contacted in the case of an incident.

Staffing during an event

During an event it can be difficult to organise and keep track of large numbers of staff, volunteers and casual helpers. Below are a few hints to help the process.

- If using badges to identify your staff at an event make sure that your Implementation Procedures have ensured that parents and children know what the badges mean, and that they know how to get to those people in case of an incident. Also, that the people wearing badges know what to do and where and who to go to in case of an incident, particularly if they are suspicious of abuse.
- Keep a signing in book whether you are meeting children daily, weekly or simply on one occasion. It is vital to keep track of all staff, volunteers and casual helpers who are under your direction on the premises. This may prove very useful at a later date if evidence is required from a member of staff or volunteer who was working during a busy event or project.
- Make a job list of all the tasks needed well in advance. This will eliminate the possibility of unchecked staff, volunteers, or casual helpers having direct contact with children.

Parents

Parents/guardians/carers³ are a crucial part of your organisation's child protection good practice. It is important that you encourage parents to participate in your activities (where appropriate) and familiarise themselves with your Child Protection Policy and Implementation Procedures.

- Get your Policy and Implementation Procedures out to parents so they can read them before their child attends your club, meeting, workshop or event. You cannot ensure that they will read it – but you will have done your best to ensure that they are aware of the environment into which they will be sending their child. This way, parents can make an informed decision as to whether or not they allow their child to attend.
- Outline what they can expect from your organisation and exactly what will happen when their child attends. This includes issues such as:
 - If there are changing rooms, what the conditions will be (i.e. separate rooms, who will supervise, etc...).
 - Whether or not their child will be moving between more than one venue.

- Whether photography/video recording will be allowed or banned.
- Whether there will be internet use, and if so, if it will be secure.
- If photographs or video recording takes place as part of your weekly club, meeting or workshop, then it is good practice to get written permission from parents when membership is first taken out.
- If you are organising an event and you know the press may attend, then you should let parents know by putting a statement in your Policy and phrasing it in a way that notifies them, but also leaves the responsibility up to them. (e.g. The press will be present and taking photographs of this event. This Policy brings this to your attention and informs you that where parents do not wish photos to be taken of their children, the responsible adult attending with the children should ensure they are not included in the photograph.)
- Parents who want to become involved should be welcomed, but be cautious if they are in areas such as dressing rooms where other children are present. Be clear that their parental rights extend only to their child.

Once you have passed on details to parents, you have done everything practicable to inform them of your organisation's child protection practices and what is happening at your event. It is then their decision whether or not their child attends.

Schools and teachers

Dealing with schools and school groups is normally quite straight forward, since the teachers will have been empowered by parents to act *in loco parentis*, i.e. taking legal responsibility for the children. Schools will (should) have already secured parental permission in regards to any matter requiring authorisation (e.g. photography, leaving school premises). You should always ensure that this is the case, i.e. that it is a school event, not a private outing arranged by a teacher when the same school provisions may not be in place!

Your Child Protection Policy will still need to be implemented during a school event. After all, the objective is to create a safe environment and teachers should not be solely relied upon when they are working outside their school environment.

Residential schools/events: When your organisation is hosting a residential school, you will be acting *in loco parentis*. This is one of the few cases where you will be taking legal responsibility for children and your Policy and Implementation Procedures must reflect this. Disclosures must be obtained for all who are in contact with children.

³ Throughout the remainder of this briefing, when the term 'parents' is used it also encompasses guardians and carers, unless otherwise stated.

Keeping up to date

Be sure to review your Policy and Implementation Procedures every year. This will not necessarily involve any changes or rewriting but it is good practice to check that your needs, the law and practices within the sector have not changed. The best time to review your policies is directly after an event or an activity where your organisation has had contact with children and you have had a chance to see your policy in practice. This way the strengths and faults of your practices can be established.

Final points to remember...

- Always date the policy. This will help to keep it from going out of date.
- Remember to put a contact name and address on the policy.
- If it is a two-sided document, remember to put (continued...) at the bottom of the page. This may seem obvious but it's been proven that many people do not read the other side of a document unless directed to it.
- Put your Policy and Implementation Procedures somewhere immediately visible, and draw parents' attention to them before they leave their child in your care.

Further information & resources

This briefing would not have been possible without the help of Liz Whitehead, Chief Executive of The British & International Federation of Festivals, who designed and runs (pending Arts Council approval) a series of Child Protection workshops for arts organisations. For further information on these workshops contact Liz at: Festivals House, 198 Park Lane, Macclesfield SK11 6UD. email: liz@festivals.demon.co.uk

Further reading

The NSPCC have published two helpful booklets, both 'step by step guide for organisations to safeguard children'.

- **stopcheck** – free download on website or £2 per copy on-line ordering. Free to individual organisations, telephone for details.
- **firstcheck** – £29.95 on-line, pack includes step-by-step guide.

Available from NSPCC Publications and Information Unit

T: 020 7825 2775

email: infounit@nspcc.org.uk

website: www.nspcc.org.uk/inform

Keeping Arts Safe: Protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in arts activities published by Arts Council England.

Order copies from Marston Book Services

T: 01235 465 500

email: direct.orders@marston.co.uk

Available in Braille, large print, on audiotape and in electronic version from:

T: 020 7973 6517

email: enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk

Useful contacts & websites

Criminal Records Bureau, England & Wales

T: 0870 90 90 811

www.crb.gov.uk

www.disclosure.gov.uk

Scotland Disclosure

T: 0870 609 6006

www.disclosurescotland.co.uk

PECS (Pre-Employment Consultancy Service)

download PECS guide, **Making the right choice:**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/publications/2003/Making_Right_Choice_mar03.pdf

Disclaimer: We have taken reasonable precautions to ensure that the information contained in this Briefing is accurate. However, the document is not intended to be legally comprehensive. We recommend you take legal advice before taking action on any of the matters covered herein.

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The Voluntary Arts Network is registered in Scotland as Company No. 139147 and Charity No. SC 020345. VAN acknowledges funding from the Carnegie UK Trust, the Arts Councils of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.