



# What do you need to do to ensure young people and workers are kept safe?

The most important building block before opening the doors to the young people, is to ensure you do all that you can to keep them and you safe, and protected from harm. However, this needs to be happening all the time not just at the point of you first opening your doors. Therefore, it pays to spend some time on this section thinking about how you manage safety and safeguarding. The following are key areas that you need to have in place and give ongoing consideration to:

- Health and Safety (including risk assessments)
- Safeguarding (including confidentiality)
- Safer Recruitment, Induction and Management of Volunteers
- Boundaries and Expectations of Behaviour
- Registration and Consent Forms



# Health and Safety - being prepared?



## Summary

Possibly the three most attacked and yet most misunderstood words in the English language - Health and Safety. Being aware of Health and Safety, trying to anticipate and reduce risks is actually a good thing. It means you care about what you are doing and that you are going to do your best to keep everyone safe and in good health. Good health and safety awareness does not stop you from doing activities but it does mean you are careful about what you do and when. For example you don't get in a car and drive it without being aware of the risks, and yet driving a car can be a very dangerous activity. Therefore you should do your best to ensure your group manages risk, and the health and safety of all who come into contact with it.

**“Risk assessments are important to ensure all the young people will be safe, and if any risks come up during the assessment you have time to fix them.”**

Jordana, 14

## Principles

- Health and Safety is a legal requirement of which risk assessments are one aspect.
- The committee needs to lead on health and safety but everyone needs to have responsibility for it including the young people.
- Risk assessments do not eliminate risks but they do help you to think about what could happen, how you could avoid it and what to do if the worst does happen.
- You need to identify the hazards; consider who might be harmed and how; evaluate the risk and decide on the precaution; record and implement these findings.
- Health and Safety is not just about managing the physical environment e.g. mopping a puddle up off the floor, it is also about managing the group and yourself e.g. being aware of arguments and resolving them before they turn very nasty.
- The Health and Safety policy with accompanying risk assessments needs to be reviewed on a regular basis.
- Make sure you have communicated health and safety implications to all involved, this means doing things like telling the young people the rules of a game before you start and refereeing the game fairly, so that you don't have arguments.
- Don't forget the basics e.g. First Aid and fire drills.

## Things to do/consider

- Having a named person on the committee who takes overall responsibility for ensuring the health and safety requirements are in place.
- Thinking the worst, that way you can prepare and do all that you can do to stop it from happening.
- Seeing Health and Safety as one part of the overall Safeguarding responsibility that you have (see Safeguarding section).
- Getting young people involved in assessing risks e.g. spend an hour assessing the venue you are using.

## Useful links



- The NCVO KnowHow website has a useful page on Health and Safety -  
<https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/employment-law-and-hr/policies-and-templates/healthsafety>
- Obviously the Health and Safety Executive have lots of general information -  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/index.htm>
- The St John Ambulance website has an online tool that can help assess what your first aid requirements -  
<https://www.sja.org.uk/sja/training-courses/requirements-calculator.aspx>  
this is a good way of demonstrating how you have considered risks.

## Resources

- An example of a risk assessment template can be found in the Resources section.

# Safeguarding - promoting welfare and protecting from harm



## Summary

Safeguarding is about promoting the welfare of children and protecting them from harm, it is more than 'child protection'. The work to ensure safeguarding is informed by the statutory guidance 'Working together to safeguard children (2015)' and this states that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility - so that includes you and everyone involved in your group. Trustees of charities must always act in the best interests of any vulnerable groups they serve e.g. children, and must take reasonable steps to prevent harm to them. It should be noted safeguarding principles applies to anyone under 18 and for those with additional needs up to the age of 25, so don't think that just because your group are teenagers that safeguarding does not apply to you.

## Useful links



The Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) provides the Safer Programme to help and support community and voluntary organisations with the safeguarding requirements. Safer, amongst various services, provides training, a resource pack, policy checking and informal advice and guidance. Find them at - <http://www.norfolkscb.org/people-working-with-children/safer-programme/>

Obviously Momentum can give guidance and support.

The NSPCC also has lots of online information and support - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/safeguarding/>

## Principles

- Safeguarding is more than having a policy and procedure (although you must have these), it is about the way you work with young people. It is fundamental to your work with young people; your values and approach are important.
- Don't see safeguarding as something you have to do, you should want to ensure that you protect young people from harm and promote their welfare. If you don't want this, then running a youth group is not for you.
- You must have a named committee member who takes responsibility for safeguarding.
- Getting basic awareness training is essential for all volunteers and workers.
- You need to use the Disclosure and Barring Service - see Safer Recruitment section.
- When in doubt - talk! Talk to each other and talk to experts. If you are not sure about anything, it is better to ask questions than to do nothing at all.
- This is also about protecting adults, in that clear policies and procedures, will ensure that adults do not put themselves or the young people in compromising situations.
- Be alert and be prepared.

## Things to do/consider

- Who can help me? Momentum has a partnership with the Safer Programme (see below) and between these two organisations you have a considerable knowledge and experience base to draw from.
- Thinking about all potential issues e.g. managing relationships, handling disclosures, managing the physical environment, and practical aspects such as what happens if a young person is not collected as expected by a parent.
- What do you know of other organisations that may be able to support and help young people who perhaps may need something extra?



# Safer Recruitment and Working Practices - making sure you are all safe to work with young people

## Summary

Safer Recruitment is not just for organisations who have employees. Safer recruitment practices apply to everyone working with young people - paid or not. Because as Lord Bichard wrote:

*“the harsh reality is that if a sufficiently devious person is determined to seek out opportunities to work their evil, no one can guarantee that they will be stopped. Our task is to make it as difficult as possible for them to succeed.”* Richard Report, 2004, p12, para 79.

You need to have an approach that ensures, as best as is possible, that the adult volunteers and workers are suitable to work with young people.

“Young people need a safe environment in which they can trust people, so that’s why it’s important to make sure all volunteers and staff are DBS checked.”

Aidan, 15

## Principles

- You should never just accept a person as a volunteer without doing checks, willingness does not equal suitability.
- Being clear about your commitment to safeguarding deters unsuitable people from wanting to work with you - so be very loud about it.
- Ensure you carry out the appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service checks - if in doubt as to who is eligible ask Momentum or Safer to give guidance.
- You will need a robust policy and procedure that covers recruitment and code of conduct including use of personal phones and social media.
- Use the guidance and support available to you.
- No process or procedure can eliminate all risk, you must be vigilant, not let bad practices creep in and more importantly challenge inappropriate behaviours (adults or young people).
- You must be prepared to think - ‘it could happen here’.
- All information must be stored safely and confidentially.

## Things to do/consider

- Who will be responsible for checking the suitability of all adults working and volunteering, you need to ensure that this does not just fall to one person - that is also an unsafe practice.
- How will you ensure new volunteers know what to do and when - what will your induction process include?
- Having an informal, closely supervised trial period so you can assess the individual and they can see if this is right for them.
- How will you approach turning people away even if you are desperate for volunteers?
- Getting young people involved in selecting volunteers.

## Useful links

- The Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board has lots of useful information for safer recruitment and safer working practices – <http://www.norfolkscb.org/people-working-with-children/publications-research/>
- Don’t forget to ask Momentum about DBS Checks - they are an official registered body for the Disclosure and Barring Service, and they have lots of experience in managing safer working.



# Managing Young People - expectations of behaviour



## Summary

Often people fail to recognise the importance of managing behaviour when considering keeping everyone safe. If you manage behaviour both for individuals and the group as a whole, then the risks of people getting hurt; emotionally or physically, are considerably reduced. It is important to recognise that an essential part of running a club is managing behaviour and every adult involved has a part to play in this. Having clear boundaries and expectations makes sure everyone feels safe at the group.

**“It is important to have rules because then we know there are boundaries in what we can do and can’t do”**

**“I think it is important for rules to keep us safe and to respect each other”**

## Principles

- Be clear about what behaviour is acceptable and what isn't.
- Have a behaviour management system e.g. red card/yellow card.
- Every adult needs to ensure they apply the rules consistently and fairly - you cannot have favourites.
- You are not there to be their friend - you are a role model and must have professional boundaries, therefore do not be afraid of applying the rules even if you think they might not like it.
- Stay calm if a situation is escalating.
- You may have to raise your voice to get the group to pay attention but you should not have to do this with individuals.
- Never use physicality to enforce the rules.
- Make sure management is also about the good things and not just the bad - praise the good stuff, encourage respectful behaviour.
- Always start with the little things - praise a 'thank you', appropriately challenge a negative comment. Managing little things means managing the big things becomes easier.

## Things to do/consider

- Having the young people help to formulate a code of conduct and the rules for attending the group, and then everyone signing up to it.
- Getting newcomers to sign the code of conduct before they start.
- What activities can you do that encourages respectful and friendly behaviour? This helps set the standard.
- You are always risk assessing when delivering to the group - how aware are you of the temperature of the group, are they happy, are they tired, what might you need to do to mitigate against possible problems?
- How will you deal with individuals who present particularly challenging behaviour?
- Remember - not all challenging behaviour is 'bad' behaviour, some young people have difficulties that may not always allow them to understand or do what you are asking. How will you deal with this?

## Useful links

Somerset County Council have a concise two page guide to managing behaviour -

<http://www.somersetyouth.co.uk/UserFiles/File/running-your-own-club/Managing%20behaviour%20guide.pdf>





# Consent Forms and Registration - knowing your group

## Summary

It is important that you know who is attending and any possible issues that may arise so that you can keep everyone safe. For example, you may decide to sell salted peanuts as part of your tuck shop, but do you know which of your young people is allergic to nuts?

Do you know who to contact in an emergency? Therefore, membership and consent forms provide you with essential information on the young people attending your group.

In addition, you need to keep a record of who attends each week, so that you know who you are taking responsibility for.

## Resources

See the Resource section for an example membership and/or consent form.

## Principles

- There is a difference between membership forms which are signed by young people, and consent forms which are signed by parents/carers - the difference may depend on whether you want a completely open access group or not. However, it is recommended that you have either one or both for anyone attending your group.
- The forms will contain personal information; ensure that they are filed in a confidential and secure place between sessions. Do not disclose information to others unless there is a child protection concern.
- Simple is best - don't make them too complicated.
- Ensure every young person attending has a corresponding form.
- If a form identifies a risk, then ensure you complete a risk assessment and put safeguards in place.
- Always have the forms on site when a session is taking place.
- If you do off-site activities, then you will need an additional parent/carer signed consent form - see the Off-site Activities section.

## Things to do/consider

- Who will have responsibility for ensuring forms are completed and on site each week?
- Having an annual update of forms, so that information stays relevant.
- Which form do you want; a membership form signed by young people will ensure open access, however a parent/carer signed consent form will ensure that you have correct contact information (you will be surprised at the number of young people who have trouble with phone numbers, even with mobile phones).