

8. Working Safely with Children and Young People in the Voluntary and Community Sector

Youth Focus (Buckinghamshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services) is the first point of contact for enquiries from voluntary and community organisations regarding issues relating to policies and procedures for working safely with children and young people.

Contact:

Youth Focus
Green Park Centre
Aston Clinton
Aylesbury
Bucks
HP22 5NE

Tel: 01296 631911

Email: office@youthfocus.org.uk

Why is guidance needed when working with children and young people?

Child Protection covers these main areas:

- how to identify if a child or young person is being physically, emotionally or sexually abused or subjected to neglect
- how to report and pass on suspicions or allegations of child abuse to the appropriate authorities
- how to recruit and select staff and volunteers to work safely with children and young people
- how to ensure adults working with children and young people are aware of good practice guidelines to avoid placing themselves in situations where they may be accused of abusing a child or young person

For the purposes of this information pack, the guidance is divided into two sections.

- 1. Information for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations that might wish to involve volunteers under the age of 18**
- 2. Information for VCS organisations that intend to work directly with children and young people, e.g. voluntary youth clubs, playgroups, theatre groups, sports clubs, dance schools, arts groups etc. Also VCS organisations that provide specialist targeted services.**

1. Information for Voluntary and Community Sector organisations that might wish to involve volunteers under the age of 18

It is strongly advised that all VCS organisations that wish to involve young people in their activities, **at an absolute minimum**, must ensure that their staff and volunteers understand and follow the Good Practice Guidelines listed below.

These general Guidelines will help towards protecting adult staff/volunteers when working alongside young people. (Adapted from the Scout Association and the National Association of Clubs for Young People)

- Do** treat everyone with respect
- Do** provide an example you wish others to follow
- Do** ensure that a qualified/experienced adult worker, as appropriate to the activity, provides supervision
- Do** provide opportunities for young people to talk with others about any concerns they may have
- Do** encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes and behaviour they find unacceptable
- Do** remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned
- Do** recognise that caution is required even in sensitive moments of counselling, such as when dealing with bullying, bereavement or abuse

- Do not** work alone with either groups or individual children or young people
- Do not** engage in any inappropriate physical or verbal contact
- Do not** make derogatory or suggestive remarks or gestures
- Do not** jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts
- Do not** exaggerate or trivialise child-abuse issues
- Do not** allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour such as tantrums or crushes
- Do not** show favouritism to any individual
- Do not** rely on just your good name to protect you
- Do not** believe that “it could never happen to me”
- Do not** take a chance

2. Information for Voluntary and Community Sector organisations that intend to work directly with children and young people, e.g. voluntary youth clubs, playgroups, theatre groups, sports clubs, dance schools, arts groups etc. Also VCS organisations that provide specialist targeted services

Affiliation

It is strongly recommended that your club or organisation be affiliated to the appropriate voluntary sector infrastructure organisation in Buckinghamshire. This will most likely be Youth Focus or Action4Youth. These organisations can provide

guidance on the relevant policies, procedures and practices that are required to protect both the children and young people that you work with and your staff and volunteers.

The Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB)

The Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board has been set up under the requirements of the Children Act 2004. It recognises that voluntary organisations play an important role in delivering services for children and young people. Many voluntary organisations are skilled in preventative work and may be well placed to reach the most vulnerable children, young people and families.

The BSCB publishes a number of helpful documents including “What to do if You’re Worried a Child is Being Abused” and “Safer Recruitment and Selection of Adults Who Work with Children – Buckinghamshire Employers Guidance”.

Further information can be obtained by contacting:

Safeguarding Children Board
County Hall
Walton Street
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
HP20 1UA

What is required by voluntary organisations

Organisations in the voluntary sector that work with children and young people need to have arrangements in place in the same way as organisations in the public sector and need to work effectively with the local Safeguarding Children Board.

The following policies and procedures are required:

1. You **MUST** have a Child Protection Policy
2. You **MUST** carry out enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks on all staff and volunteers (Link: CRB Checks section in this Information Pack)
3. You **MUST** ensure that staff and volunteers access the appropriate training to equip them to carry out their responsibilities effectively
4. You **MUST** ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the organisations arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

A generic Child Protection Policy is not included in this pack because before any organisation adopts such a policy it is strongly advised that staff and volunteers receive the relevant level of training appropriate to their responsibilities. Adapting a generic Child Protection Policy is not of value unless all of the issues have been thought through properly. This includes the responsibilities of line managers and the responsibilities of a designated person for Child Protection.

Training and additional information can be accessed through the organisations listed under Contacts at the end of this Information Sheet.

Action4Youth

Child Protection is just one of the issues that must be considered when setting up a voluntary youth club or similar provision. Action4Youth can provide a full breakdown of all aspects that must be covered and will visit you to assist in this process. Action4Youth also publishes a booklet entitled “Baseline – Starting a Youth Club” which gives good practice guidance on everything that must be put in place before starting a voluntary youth club.

Other Relevant Policies

Youth Focus is a member of the Policy, Planning and Development Group chaired by Buckinghamshire County Council Youth and Community Service. This is a multi-agency group that ensures that policies are robust and up to date and, where possible, applicable to voluntary organisations. Two front line voluntary youth organisations also sit on this group.

Present Youth and Community Policies are:

1. Purpose, Standards and Values of the Youth Service
2. Quality Assurance Policy
3. Staff Development Policy
4. Volunteer Management Policy
5. Curriculum Policy
6. Policy and Guidance on Educational Visits
7. Health and Safety Responsibilities
8. Outdoor Education
9. Relationships and Sexual Health Education
10. Counselling and Issues Regarding Policy/Legislation
11. Working with Young People around Drug Issues
12. Citizenship
13. Lone Working
14. Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People.

Policies under development include:

15. Schools Work Policy
16. Managing Confrontation and Aggression Policy
17. Rural Youth Work Policy
18. Street Work Policy (Detached and Outreach Work)
19. Healthy Lifestyle Policy

If you would like help in developing a policy on any issue relevant to youth work, please contact Youth Focus to discuss this further.

Contacts

- BSCB Inter-Agency Training for Safeguarding Children Programme
Tel: 01296 382742/387915
- Buckinghamshire County Council Youth and Community Training Unit
Tel: 01296 633810

- Youth Focus
Tel: 01296 631911
- Action4Youth
Tel: 01296 631319

Questions and Further Information:

If you need to discuss any of the information contained in this pack in more detail or would like to ask for clarification on any of the issues raised, please contact Youth Focus:

Tel: 01296 631911

Email office@youthfocus.org.uk

Youth Focus can also provide information on the appropriate contacts for work with all age groups of children and young people from pre-school up to 25 years of age.

Remember:

This is a complex area of work that includes legal obligations as well the adoption and implementation of good practice guidelines. Always seek advice and guidance from one of the organisations listed before assuming that you have everything covered.

Further Information:

Charity Commission Publications

Safeguarding Children – Protecting Children in Your Organisation

Community Matters Information Sheets (available from Community Matters and Community Matters Bucks)

27. Drug Misuse in Community Organisations and Centres

30. Safeguarding Children and Young People

81. Community Organisations and Criminal Records Bureau

81A. Vetting and Barring Scheme: The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Village Hall Information Sheets (available from ACRE and Bucks Community Action)

5. Village Halls, Children and Young People

There may be a charge for information sheets, which are available to members and non-members from the above organisations

