

Summary of plans for the National Safeguarding Unit for the Third Sector

The establishment of a national safeguarding unit for the Third Sector in England, was one of the government's commitments in the Staying Safe: Action Plan. The NSPCC and Children England (formerly NCVCCO) have been commissioned to set up and jointly manage this Unit. We will do this by working closely with and through a number of delivery partners, umbrella groups and existing national, regional and local networks and infrastructures.

All children and young people have the right to feel safe. They should be able to enjoy participating in activities outside the home and to take proportionate risks, which are an essential part of growing up. The majority of the estimated eight million children taking part in out of home activities do so safely, yet a minority are at risk from those responsible for their care.

Our vision

Our vision is for all children and young people taking part in organised voluntary activities to be safe from harm.

Our mission

Our mission is to build on the strengths of the voluntary and non-profit organisations in England, helping to keep the safety of children and young people at the heart of what they do.

We do this by sharing reliable advice and support with groups working with children. We will empower parents to ask questions of organisations to whom they entrust their children's care.

Key outcomes

There are five key outcomes for the Unit:

1. Third Sector organisations have effective safeguards in place to prevent the abuse of children and young people.
2. Recruitment practices for paid staff and volunteers in the Third Sector reflect best practice and are demonstrably safer.
3. Organisations have in place effective and proportionate arrangements for assessment and management of risk in all their activities involving children.
4. The safeguarding arrangements of Third Sector organisations are integrated into local inter-agency safeguarding arrangements.
5. Parents and carers of young people are able to identify the basic safeguarding arrangements that organisations involved with their children should have in place and to reassure themselves that this is the case.

Our understanding of Third Sector needs

The Third Sector is large and diverse, providing a wide range of services and activities for children, young people and their families, guardians and carers. There is much good practice within the sector which can be shared and built on. In order to provide effective safeguarding support to the sector the Unit will:

- Provide reliable, accessible and timely safeguarding information and advice and support, free at the point of delivery
- Provide support at national, regional and local levels throughout England
- Be sufficiently flexible to address the needs of organisations with very different infrastructures, capacity and cultures tailoring its approach for different audiences and services
- Take a strategic approach based on agreed standards and an analysis of priority needs and existing strengths within the sector
- Maximise ownership, engagement and reach through partnership working with key stakeholders and umbrella organisations
- Involve children, young people and parents in developing its focus and thinking
- Recognise the role and contribution of volunteers and trustees as well as that of paid staff

- Take a proportionate and enabling approach to keeping children safe
- Provide an independent and informed voice representing the safeguarding needs and contribution of the sector to government, to the ISA and to LSCBs
- Provide a link with workforce development initiatives and bodies such as CWDC to ensure a consistency of approach.

Safeguarding priorities for the next three years

We consider the following to be key safeguarding priorities for the sector over the next three years:

- Increasing awareness that safeguarding all children is everybody's responsibility.
- Implementing the new vetting and barring arrangements being introduced in response to the Richard Inquiry.
- Ensuring there are appropriate safeguarding measures in place to prevent abuse within an organisation and that there is not an undue reliance on criminal records and vetting checks.
- Ensuring a proportionate approach to activities and events that does not stop children taking healthy risks.
- Contributing to a wider safety net and early identification of children who are in need of additional services to prevent harm.
- Helping overcome barriers preventing groups serving BME children and families getting safeguarding advice and training.
- Being able to meet the expectations of insurers and commissioners in relation to safeguarding.
- Having effective anti-bullying processes in place
- Enabling children's voices to be heard.

Proposed role and approach

The new Unit will establish an agreed framework of safeguarding standards (drawn from and building on existing frameworks, such as the *Safetycheck* standards endorsed by Lord Filkin as safeguarding minister) and then support, enable, resource and challenge the sector to meet these standards through:

- Acting as a one-stop-shop for information and authoritative safeguarding advice, through a flexible, high-quality website and a telephone helpline. This would include signposting to other expert sources of support and information.
- Providing or commissioning high quality information materials tailored to the needs of different parts of the sector and for different audiences
- Working with and through intermediary delivery partners who have well established networks and credibility, to reach and ensure the relevance of services to different parts of the Third Sector. This would include working with and through established parenting organisations to reach parents (see below)
- Working closely with, but independent of the ISA. Working closely with the CPSU in relation to sport and with the CWDC on safer recruitment and workforce development
- Reaching out to organisations that serve groups that are particularly disadvantaged or that face discrimination, especially through the use of the Safe Communities toolkit and safeguarding resource for BME groups.
- Being a voice for the sector, able to interpret and advocate for the safeguarding needs of the sector with government and key organisations such as the ISA and LSCBs
- Disseminating good practice and endorsing work that meets agreed standards, so parents and young people are better informed about how to choose activities and empowered to assess risks appropriately.
- Linking closely with key statutory agencies such as ADCS and with Safeguarding Advisers in Regional Government Offices to ensure consistency of message and approach at national regional and local levels.

The new Unit will **not** offer case advice in relation to individual children and young people but have clear referral processes and protocols in place to deal with any such inquiries.

Audiences

The services of the Unit will be provided to:

- Local voluntary and community organisations providing activities and services for children and young people
- Third Sector organisations which have frequent contact with children and young people but which are not primarily or solely child care agencies (e.g. faith groups, BME groups, cultural and leisure activities)
- Large and medium sized national child care organisations
- Trustees and funders of the above organisations
- Parents and carers, primarily through intermediary organisations

- Children and young people, through accessible information on the website and their participation in planning and development of materials. Organisations will be able to use the newly revised NSPCC *Kidscheck* standards to involve children in assessing how safe they feel within their organisation.

Governance arrangements

Accountability for the Unit and for ensuring contract compliance rests with the NSPCC and Children England, who are accountable to the DCSF.

The Unit will be hosted within the NSPCC which will be responsible for line management of the Unit Director. Strategic management and co-ordination will be the responsibility of a management board, comprising senior managers of the NSPCC and Children England. The Unit will be guided and steered by an Advisory Group, with representatives of the DCSF, key stakeholders and strategic partners.

The central Unit

The Unit will consist of a director, responsible for overall operational management and performance, strategy, policy and strategic relationships; and a small team comprising: a senior consultant; a safeguarding adviser; two enquiry and information officers to respond to enquiries from Third Sector organisations: a part-time communications officer and administrative support. Children England will host the National Partnerships and Outreach Manager, responsible for coordination and delivery of work with delivery partners and the Children England regional development managers. The whole team will work together to develop standards and training materials and to produce information for the website and printed materials.

The Unit will be located in the NSPCC National Training Centre in Leicester, a purpose-built child protection training and conference venue, where it will benefit from the use of high quality training facilities, an audio visual unit, an experienced team of safeguarding trainers, consultants and administrators with co-location with the Child Protection in Sport Unit.

Regional networks

Support, training and coordination through regional and local networks, will be coordinated via the nine Children England regional development managers. The National Partnerships and Outreach Manager, will have overall responsibility for this work and coordinating the contributions of delivery partners across different parts of the sector.

Delivery partners

Our approach seeks to build on and respect the existing relationships and mandates of Third Sector umbrella, membership and infrastructure organisations, in order to create an effective and efficient delivery web, which provides two-way communication channels about needs and good practice. We believe this is the most sustainable option since it will embed safeguarding expertise within these intermediary bodies for the long term benefit of the sector.

There will be between 6 and 8 delivery partners who have strong access to different networks and expertise in different areas of work. The following organisations have agreed to be delivery partners and discussions are underway with other organisations:

- Parentline plus
- National Association for Voluntary and Community Action
- National Children's Bureau
- Community Service Volunteers
- Women's Resource Centre
- British Youth Council

Delivery partners will be resourced and supported by the Unit to fulfil the following roles:

- Use their established networks and methods to communicate key information and distribute materials about safeguarding to particular parts of the sector (e.g. youth, early years, play, BME sector) tailoring information and materials provided by the Unit to meet particular needs
- Assist with developing the safeguarding strategy for the Third Sector and with identifying priority needs, strengths and existing resources and sources of information and support
- Advise the Unit on the specific needs and issues of particular parts of the sector, for example in relation to safer recruitment and safer activities.

Initial milestones

- Unit established and launched in June 2009
- Website developed and launched June 2009
- Brand and communication strategy for Unit developed April 2009
- Information service provided from June 2009
- Safe Communities Toolkit distributed free of charge to community organisations from March 2009
- Training provided free of charge through the Educare online programme from June 2009
- Networks and partnerships established by March 2009