

What can an organisation do to safeguard the interest of children?

Every organisation involved with children and young people has a responsibility for their protection and well being – a duty of care. There are a number of measures that organisations should put in place to safeguard children from harm. Parents are encouraged to check when they are entrusting their children to the care of others that these essential safeguards are in place. How ready is your organisation to answer these questions?

Does your organisation have the following?

1. A **Safeguarding Children & Young People policy** and a **procedure** for what to do if there are concerns about a child's welfare. This should include having a **designated person** for dealing with concerns or allegations of abuse and step by step guidance on what action to take.
2. A rigorous **recruitment and selection** process for paid staff and for volunteers who work with children. This should include interviews/informal meeting, references and vetting for those in regulated positions. Checks should be made through the Access.
3. A **written code of conduct** which outlines good practice when working with children. An environment, which allows bullying, shouting, sectarianism, racism, or sexism, is not acceptable. There should be clear guidance about what behaviour is inappropriate in a relationship of trust between an adult and a young person. Specific guidance should be given where personal or intimate care tasks are carried out, for example with very young or disabled children.
4. A **training** plan and regular opportunities for all those in contact with children to learn about child protection and about health and safety. Unless all staff/volunteers have an awareness of signs and symptoms of abuse to children, the harm it can cause and how to act on concerns, policies, however good, will not be acted upon. In Northern Ireland Child Protection training for sports clubs is available by contacting Sport NI on 028 9038 1222
5. **Information** for young people and for parents about the organisations Safeguarding protection policy and where to go for help.
6. **Ways of making sure** that the safeguards that have been put in place are working. This can be through the day to day supervision of staff and volunteers and through periodic monitoring and review.
7. A **protective culture** that puts children's interest first. Children must feel confident that if they have concerns someone will listen and take them seriously.

Your organisation should also have policies on bullying and on health and safety. You will need processes for dealing with complaints and for taking disciplinary action where necessary.

Organisations that have put these safeguards in place are taking their responsibilities seriously and are doing what they can to minimise the risks of children suffering harm while in their care.