

Safeguarding for Trustees of Charities – An Overview

1. What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is about creating a safe and welcoming environment, where everyone is respected and valued. It's about making sure our organisation is run in a way that actively prevents harm, bullying, harassment, abuse and neglect. Whilst it might be unlikely that we will ever have a significant issue at our Village Hall we must be prepared to respond safely and well if there is a problem.

Much of the thinking around safeguarding stems from the Jimmy Saville case and subsequent enquiry. Every organisation that delivers charitable activities has a duty to safeguard volunteers, staff, participants and donors. And everyone in the organisation has a role to play in safeguarding. It should become part of Trustee's day to day activities.

2. Five reasons to do safeguarding well

- Abuse, harassment and harm can happen to anyone – people we work with, staff or volunteers. It's not always visible and often not spoken about.
- Abuse, harm and neglect are wrong. We have a duty to do something about it.
- When everyone understands safeguarding and their right to be safe, people who have nowhere else to turn are protected.
- An organisation that does safeguarding well is an organisation that is trusted.
- The Charity Commission expects every charity to make safeguarding a priority.

Village Halls must, as a matter of good practice and risk management, make safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults a priority. To do safeguarding well Trustees need to develop habits, practices, rules and procedures which keep people safe whilst they are taking part in your activities. They also need to know how to recognise and report abuse or harm affecting people the organisation has contact with, wherever that abuse has occurred, so that they can help them speak up and take action. Even if Trustees don't interact with people directly, they still need to think about their safeguarding responsibilities and how to respond to them.

3. Five areas of activity

The Charity Commission references ten principles and gives additional descriptions of what they expect to see. These can be summarised as five main areas of activity.

3.1 Understanding and managing the risks

As Trustees we must understand, manage, record and review the safeguarding risks in the organisation, thinking about everyone we come into contact with. We must consider the types of harm, abuse and neglect that are most likely to affect people our organisation comes into contact with and which people are most at risk. We must adopt a safeguarding policy and ensure that any risks are properly recorded in a risk register and we must, from time to time, review procedures to check that procedures to reduce risk are working well.

Anyone can be at risk of abuse. People are at risk at different times and in different situations.

Children and young people: all organisations and individuals have a responsibility to safeguard children. A child is anyone under the age of 18.

Adults at risk: any adult may experience abuse or harm. However, certain people are considered to be at greater risk so are given more protection by law. An adult at risk is anyone aged 18 or over who has needs for care and or support, as a result of care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from abuse or is currently experiencing or is at risk of abuse.

Adults at risk may have a mental or physical illness, have a learning disability, have addiction problems or be frail. Whether an adult is at risk or not is something which changes with their circumstances – it's not fixed.

Staff or volunteers: protecting staff and volunteers is not necessarily safeguarding – but you do have a duty to keep them safe. This means paying attention to the particular types of harm that can develop within an organisation. Trustees need to be aware of several types of harm:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Psychological
- Neglect
- Radicalisation
- Discriminatory
- Financial

Empowerment and self-determination: everyone has the right to make decisions for themselves. When safeguarding adults, this right must be understood. Otherwise, it can accidentally cause a different kind of harm by removing a person's freedom of choice.

3.2 Policies and procedures

As Trustees of a Village Hall we must have in place policies and procedures for safeguarding. We need to make them public, make sure they are used and we must review them regularly. We must make sure that everyone, no matter what their role, understands the documents and uses them appropriately.

Our safeguarding policy must clearly explain how people can make their worries known and how issues raised will be handled. The reporting procedure needs to set out:

- who to speak to
- how issues should be reported
- where information will be stored and shared internally
- how we'll share this with police, social services or regulators if necessary.

The policy should include a code of conduct which sets out expectations of Trustees and volunteers. It should include clear expectations of what people should do and say, and what they must not. This will help raise awareness of illegal, unsafe, unprofessional and unwise behaviour. Being clear about standards of behaviour is an important part of safeguarding.

We should deal with our code of conduct as follows:

- Involve Trustees and volunteers in creating the code so we can make sure people feel it protects everyone.
- Make sure everyone in the organisation is aware it applies to them and they must follow all its standards.
- Be clear about what will happen if someone doesn't follow it.
- Include specific standards or expectations for roles with particular responsibilities if necessary.
- Keep a record to show that all Trustees and volunteers have seen and understood it and agree to follow it.
- Make sure the code allows participants to question Trustees and volunteers if they think they're doing something wrong.

As Trustees we must regularly review what risks the organisation faces, and it's no different when it comes to safeguarding. We must have a plan showing how we'll manage those risks. This should be done by keeping an up-to-date risk register which demonstrates thought has been given to how likely and severe risks are. It also covers how we plan to reduce those risks and helps Trustees see how safeguarding sits alongside other risk management.

Although it is not a legal requirement for small charities to include a risk management statement in their annual report to The Charity Commission, it is good practice to do so. The risk statement should state all major risks the charity faces and how it controls those risks.

3.3 Making safeguarding a priority

As Trustees we need to make sure that safeguarding is a key priority for their organisation as part of good governance. This includes having the right roles in place and adopting the right practices.

- Is there a lead trustee for safeguarding? Does the committee make sure they are not left to deal with safeguarding on their own?
- Do individual Trustees feel confident they understand enough to challenge or support their advice?
- Are safeguarding decisions made collectively and does the committee receive regular safeguarding reports?
- Is there a code of conduct and does everyone know where to find it?
- Is the code of conduct followed?

We should provide appropriate training to Trustees.

3.4 Handling and reporting concerns

Everyone involved in the organisation should understand how to recognise, respond to, record and report a safeguarding concern. The Charity Commission requires any registered charity to report 'serious incidents'. The responsibility for reporting serious incidents rests with Trustees so we all must understand what safeguarding is about.

3.5 Your culture and values

We must make sure all Trustees, volunteers and people we work with understand safeguarding and their right to be safe. Everyone should know how to speak up and feel comfortable raising concerns. We must review whether we have got this right and make changes if not.

4. Actions for the Village Hall Committee

4.1 Appoint a Lead Trustee for Safeguarding (or designated safeguarding lead as it is often known). Clare Feasby has volunteered to take on this role.

4.2 Prepare appropriate policies and procedures for safeguarding. Clare Feasby and Doug Allan will undertake this action and report to the next committee for approval.

4.3 Develop a recording form to record any incident or disclosure that we need to act on. This can be done alongside 4.2

4.4 Display an appropriately worded safeguarding poster in a prominent position in the Village Hall. We can make use of a template poster on the Community First Yorkshire website.

4.5 Offer safeguarding training to all Trustees and committee members. Community First Yorkshire provide access to short courses, or we could ask Clare Feasby to design a training session.

4.6 Review policies and procedures annually or when something materially changes.

4.7 Consider adding safeguarding to our existing risk assessment checklist.