

Help...

How
will I... ?

What
happens
if... ?

When
should
I... ?



I'm a Safeguarding Co-ordinator

Help

I'm a Safeguarding Co-ordinator

Everyone has a responsibility to help safeguard children and vulnerable adults. No more so than in places of worship who, after schools, work with more children than any other institution. They are also more vulnerable because, like supermarkets, places of worship are open to all. It follows therefore that care is taken within places of worship, faith groups and organisations to appoint at least one person to undertake the safeguarding role. If this is you, congratulations! What you are doing is of great (and lasting) significance. You may at this point in time feel a bit unsure of what is expected of you, but hopefully this booklet will give you confidence, and help with the tasks that lie ahead.

What's in a name?

The different titles for the safeguarding role can be confusing. For some places of worship it may only mean being responsible for safeguarding children, with titles such as child protection co-ordinator or officer, children's advocate or representative etc. Increasingly, the role is becoming more than safeguarding children and can include safeguarding other groups such as vulnerable adults.

The title doesn't matter as much as the role and, for the sake of simplicity, the term 'safeguarding co-ordinator' is used in this booklet. By the way, it's advisable to have a deputy for when you are not around and perhaps share some of the responsibilities.

Training

Your denomination or group may provide safeguarding training but if this is not provided or is inadequate, training and resources are available from CCPAS (see back page). These could be particularly useful if you are just beginning to come to terms with the need for a safeguarding policy.

Whatever the situation, it is important the leadership understand the policy, are willing to follow it and never try to deal with safeguarding issues independently. It is the expectation that as co-ordinator, the leadership will give you their full support, though the detail of any situations that arise should be shared on a 'need to know' basis only, in accordance with an agreed procedure in your safeguarding policy.

What am I expected to do?

There are three main functions:

- Act as an advocate (i.e. someone who speaks for and on behalf of children and vulnerable adults).
- Act independently in reporting concerns of abuse to the statutory authorities, that is Children's or Adult Social Care (formerly Social Services) or the Police.

NB Children's Social Care is otherwise known as Children's Services in England. Other names will apply elsewhere in the UK.

- Oversee the preparation and implementation of the Safeguarding Policy (children and/or vulnerable adults), ensuring it is regularly reviewed.

We will now explain these in more detail.

Advocate for children and vulnerable adults

All those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults (including you as advocate) need to know how to respond appropriately if approached by someone wanting to share a safeguarding concern. Concerns may be expressed to a worker or directly to you (as the advocate) by the young person or vulnerable adult. The task is to get alongside the person concerned and try to establish what is troubling them. This should be done through sensitive listening, reassurance and acceptance of what they are saying. Don't ask questions and keep an open mind. Workers should pass any information on to you as safeguarding co-ordinator. The individual should not be further questioned. As coordinator your job is to initiate any appropriate action in accordance with your policy ie by referring to the statutory authorities or taking advice eg from your denomination or CCPAS.



Reporting concerns

You will obviously need to follow your safeguarding policy but remember that where there are concerns of child abuse, the following actions are essential:

- If deliberate injury is suspected, there is concern for a child's safety or they are afraid to return home, Children's Social Care should be contacted.
- Don't discuss with parents / carers – it could jeopardise an official investigation.
- Seek medical help if needed urgently, advising doctor of suspicions.
- If a child isn't at immediate risk (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent / carer to seek help themselves, but monitor the situation.
- Make careful notes of conversations and/or concerns – they may be required in an investigation.

Where sexual abuse is suspected or disclosed:

- Always contact Children's Social Care or the police immediately.
- Again don't discuss with parents or carers for the reasons stated above.

Referrals

Some Social Care Departments have specific forms to complete if making a referral. The government publication in England, 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (2003) advises that you follow up any telephone conversation with a written referral within 48 hours and request written confirmation of the action that will be taken. Children's Social Care should acknowledge a written referral within one working day of receiving it, so if you have not heard back within three working days, contact Children's Social Care again. Similar expectations apply elsewhere in the UK.

When the concerns are for a vulnerable adult the same principles apply. If reporting the matter to Adult Social Care the vulnerable adult's wishes, feelings, and their mental capacity must be taken into account. (See our Safeguarding manual or ring our helpline for advice.)



What happens next?

Sometimes, following a referral to Children's Social Care/Police Child Protection, you or a member of the leadership may be asked to attend meetings to give support to a child or family member. This may include a child protection conference. The conference brings together family members, the child where appropriate, supporters/advocates and those professionally involved with the child and family, to share information and decide what action is needed to safeguard the child and promote their welfare.

There may be instances when it is appropriate and/or helpful for a child or vulnerable adult to be accompanied to interviews at a police station. It doesn't have to be the safeguarding co-ordinator. It could be someone who has pastoral responsibilities. Either way, the leadership needs to support all those involved, particularly on the rare occasion a case goes to court.

If any adult discloses past abuse it is important to ensure pastoral care is available to them, even if it isn't you who gives it!



Teamwork

If your place of worship is part of a denomination or other organisation, there may be an expectation that you inform them of any allegation/concern e.g. Bishop's Adviser for child protection.

You may also be required, as a condition of your insurance policy, to inform your insurers of any safeguarding concerns, particularly if an allegation has been made that could result in litigation involving the church.

Safeguarding concerns within a place of worship can be emotionally and spiritually demanding. Whilst confidentiality is important, it is equally important that you also receive support. This is something that the leadership should understand and agree to provide.

The safeguarding policy

As Safeguarding Co-ordinator, consider:

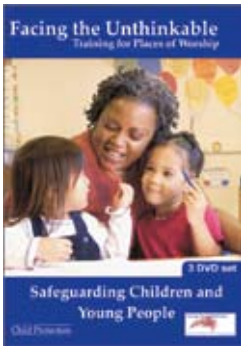
- Familiarising yourself with any existing safeguarding policy and denominational guidance, ensuring it is followed and regularly reviewed.
 - Establishing contact with local Children's / Adult Social Care and finding out the procedures of the local Safeguarding Children Board. This will give you confidence in reporting any concerns.
 - Maintaining accurate records relating to child / adult protection concerns. That means ensuring that workers write a full account of any safeguarding issues that arise and the report is stored in a secure place for future reference.
 - Being part of the interview panel when appointing workers to explain the responsibilities they would carry for passing on safeguarding concerns to you, giving assurances that appropriate training will be provided
- Occasionally attending the activities and meeting with workers so that you become a familiar face to the children, vulnerable adults and workers alike. It may then be easier for them to come to you with any concerns.
 - Promoting the needs of children and vulnerable adults and keeping the leadership informed on good practice. This may include making them aware of any person attending who could pose a risk. Someone in the leadership should be liaising with probation and/or police when a sexual or violent offender is part of the congregation. This could entail helping to establish clear boundaries for the offender through a written contract.

It is important to remember that as Safeguarding Co-ordinator, you are not expected to be an expert in child or adult protection - leave that to the statutory agencies and use CCPAS! By being vigilant however, having policies and procedures in place, and ensuring that only suitable people are allowed to work with these groups, you will be instrumental in making your place of worship or organisation a safer environment for all.

Remember CCPAS is here to help and support you. Helpline 0845 120 45 50

Helpful Resources

Facing the Unthinkable DVD Workpack



'Facing the Unthinkable'

is a comprehensive child protection distance learning course presented by David and Pauline Pearson for individuals and group study. As well as instruction in the essential areas, there are several in-depth sessions (specialist tracks) on topics covered within the basic training, plus group tasks and exercises. The pack comes with Trainer's notes, participants' handbook and the CCPAS safeguarding manual.



The Facing the Unthinkable child protection training DVD is also available in a version suitable for non-church

based organisations and groups. As above but includes non-church version of the CCPAS safeguarding manual.

Total Cost for either DVD:

Non-members £110.00 (includes a year's CCPAS membership) Members £80.00

Contact CCPAS on 0845 120 45 50 for more details.

Facing the Unthinkable Seminars

- » Could a child be at risk in our church/organisation?
- » *Are we using a child protection policy?*
- » Do we help children protect themselves?
- » *Do our children's workers receive proper support?*

Seminars are held all over the UK throughout the year. The latest details are always on our web site (www.ccpas.co.uk), or you can phone on 0845 120 4550

This seminar is especially designed to equip leaders and youth/children's workers who are in regular contact with children and young people.

This is one of an expanding series of Help... booklets published by CCPAS.

**Many of the booklets are particularly relevant to workers.
There are others for parents/carers, some designed to give
pastoral support and some specifically written for children.**

See CCPAS website for more details www.ccpas.co.uk

CCPAS

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CHURCHES'

Child Protection

ADVISORY SERVICE