

Safeguarding

This Information Sheet provides guidance on processes, policies, and procedures for safeguarding for village hall management committees.



Department for
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Information Sheet

Safeguarding

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Introduction

Safeguarding is the action taken to promote the welfare of children or other vulnerable groups and protect them from harm. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Hall Management Committees have a duty of care as trustees of the charity to all those using the village hall. This includes all volunteers, staff and contractors undertaking work etc. All reasonable steps need to be taken to prevent harm and to respond appropriately when harm does occur. Safeguarding policies and procedures that everyone has read and understood must be in place and used in the day-to-day operation of the hall.

There are several important pieces of legislation that promote and safeguard children and adults at risk. The Care Act 2014 sets out the processes and definitions and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 provides the framework for The Vetting and Barring Scheme and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. The Children Act 1989 and 2004 is also key but there are many other important pieces of legislation.

This Information Sheet is intended to guide and signpost village hall committees, so they are aware of their responsibilities and can take initial steps towards developing their safeguarding practices.

Details of other resources and information can be found at the end of this Information Sheet.

ACRE would like to acknowledge ACRE Network members for their support in developing this Information Sheet with thanks to Cambridgeshire ACRE and ACTION with Communities in Cumbria for their input to this revised version.

ACRE welcomes comment and feedback on their Information Sheets. A word version of the policy at Appendix A is available from your local [ACRE Network](#) member.



Charity Commission

The Charity Commission expects that safeguarding should be a key governance priority for all charities, village halls included. They have produced detailed guidance on [Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees](#).

There are 9 actions for charities operating in the UK recommended by the Charity Commission that trustees need to take to ensure good safeguarding governance. These are:

1. Ensure your charity has an adequate safeguarding policy, code of conduct and any other safeguarding procedures. Regularly review and update the policy and procedures to ensure they are fit for purpose.
2. Identify possible risks, including risks to your beneficiaries or to anyone else connected to your charity and any emerging risks on the horizon.
3. Consider how to improve the safeguarding culture within your charity.
4. Ensure that everyone involved with the charity knows how to recognise, respond to, report, and record a safeguarding concern.
5. Ensure people know how to raise a safeguarding concern.
6. Regularly evaluate any safeguarding training provided, ensuring it is current and relevant.
7. Review which posts within the charity can and must have a DBS check from the Disclosure and Barring Service.
8. Have a risk assessment process in place for posts which do not qualify for a DBS check, but which still have contact with children or adults at risk (You will know which posts these are having carried out 7. above)
9. Periodically review your safeguarding policy and procedures, learning from any serious incident or 'near miss'.



What is expected of a village hall committee?

The committee itself may not work directly with children or adults at risk but it is responsible for the contracts it makes with hirers, and is expected to understand what the relevant safeguarding law is and how it applies to their building and users of the hall (volunteers, staff, contractors). Local ACRE Network members can assist hall committees in assessing what is most appropriate for their hall and in signposting to further information.

There are a range of hirers using village and community halls. Some will have their own governing bodies with specific requirements and expectations for safeguarding, e.g., OFSTED, The Scout Association, Age UK etc. Other local groups and individual hirers may not have their own policies, in which case they must be made aware of the hall's policies and procedures and understand that by hiring the hall they are agreeing to adhere to the hall's safeguarding principles and procedures.

Of key importance to both smooth operations, and to meeting any challenges, is good communication between the activity providers and the village hall management committee.

1. All the committee should be aware of:
 - a. The legal responsibilities of the committee in relation to safeguarding.
 - b. Charity Commission expectations.
 - c. The contact details of their local Safeguarding Board/Partnership and other local agencies that can offer support and advice on safeguarding in their respective County.
2. All committee members need to ensure their committee takes the following actions:
 - a. Sign the hall's Declaration of Acceptance of Office (an example can be found at Appendix B).
 - b. Appoint a person (or two) to be the safeguarding lead(s) responsible for ensuring safeguarding practices and procedures are in place.
 - c. Understand actions to be taken should it be necessary to report an incident and, most importantly,
 - d. Support the responsible person(s) so they can carry out their duties. Appointing a lead person does not mean that committee members can abdicate their responsibility with regard to safeguarding at the village hall.



There may be reluctance by a volunteer(s) to be appointed as the safeguarding lead and concern about taking responsibility, but there is support available from your local ACRE Network member and other professional agencies.

The lead person will be the main point of contact for hirers or anyone regarding safeguarding at the hall. They will ensure that safe recruiting practices are in place, that relevant DBS checks are carried out, that all trustees have signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and that the hall's Hiring Agreement is in line with safeguarding principles and procedures. The appointed person will also remind the committee about regular review of the hall's safeguarding policy.

The safeguarding lead could be a volunteer with experience of safeguarding such as a preschool leader or an employee of the hall such as a manager or booking secretary.

Hiring Agreement

Whenever a village hall management committee hires out any part of its premises, a written hiring agreement should be in place so that both the management committee and the hirer know their rights and responsibilities. This hiring agreement ensures that both parties fully understand their responsibilities in relation to the hiring, establishing a clear contract between two parties which could be used as evidence should legal action become necessary.

It is a key document because it passes responsibility for the hall to the group or individual for the period of hire. This includes compliance with all the hall's principles and procedures for safeguarding. It is therefore reasonable for the committee to expect hirers be able to provide evidence of that compliance on request. The evidence could be a paper copy of a policy or the group may be able to share a link to their website for an online copy.

A Model Hiring Agreement is available from your local ACRE Network member. See **Appendix D** for the safeguarding clause in the Standard Conditions.



Disclosure and Barring Service

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with children and adults at risk. It replaced the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). DBS is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Home Office.

The DBS is responsible for:

- processing requests for DBS checks (previously referred to as CRB checks)
- deciding whether it is appropriate for a person to be placed on, or removed from, a barred list
- placing or removing people from the DBS children’s barred list and adults’ barred list for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The DBS searches police records and, in relevant cases barred list information, then issues a DBS certificate to the applicant. Information released on DBS certificates can be extremely sensitive and personal and notice should be taken of the code of practice for recipients of a DBS check.

There is no legal requirement for anyone to have a DBS check. However, employers are legally obliged to ensure, by way of a DBS check, that any employee working in a regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults has not been barred from doing so. Further information on checks and eligibility can be obtained from your local Safeguarding Board.

Charges

The standard charge for employers applying for a DBS check either direct to DBS or through an umbrella body (an umbrella body is a registered body that has access to DBS checks) is £23.00. No charge is made by DBS for checks on volunteers, but the umbrella body may make an administration charge. Further information on charges can be found on the gov.uk website [here](#).

Individuals can apply for a ‘basic disclosure’ from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to obtain a copy of their personal criminal record. Further information can be found on the gov.uk website [here](#)



Safe Recruitment

Village hall committees must have thorough recruitment processes in place. This will include self-employed cleaners and caretakers and may also include volunteers or anyone working for, or on behalf of, the village hall committee and having unsupervised access to vulnerable users e.g., organising a lunch for older people, running an activity for children or volunteers undertaking a task at the village hall.

Your processes must relate to the level of risk involved. A one-size-fits-all approach for all staff and volunteers may not be appropriate. A volunteer may be supporting a staff member and may be supervised at all times.

Where the hall committee are employing staff, who will work directly with children or adults at risk they must:

- Complete an application form which shows their employment history.
- Provide at least two references, one being the most recent/latest employer/school/college.
- If working directly with children or adults at risk, one of the references should come from someone who has supervised them working with children or adults at risk before. This should confirm that in their opinion they are suitable to work with children/adults at risk.



Developing your policies and procedures

The Charity Commission defines a safeguarding policy as being a 'statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children and adults at risk from harm'. Where small groups and individuals do not have a safeguarding policy, they are required to understand and adhere to the Hall's policy.

An example of a policy for village hall management committees can be found at **Appendix A**. It is a combined policy for children and adults at risk. It explains the purpose of the policy, provides definition of some of the terms and sets out the hall committee's principles. The procedures (Paragraphs 4 A-J) set out the actions the committee will collectively take to ensure compliance with their policy.

Most of the procedures can easily be put in place by the committee or may require adjustment of policies and procedures that are already in place. ACRE Network members can assist hall committees should they have any queries or need additional support. There are many other models and examples available in the useful resources section.



Sources of further advice and information

ACRE and ACRE Network members provide an information and advice service for village hall management committees through its network of village hall advisers. For further information and to find your local village hall adviser visit the ACRE website: www.acre.org.uk ACRE produces a range of village hall publications and information sheets to support this service which may be of interest:

Model Hiring Agreement 2016 Edition

Model Occupational Licence

Information Sheet 21, Overnight accommodation in village halls

Information Sheet 15, Health & safety legislation and village halls Information

Sheet 37, Fire safety in village halls

Information Sheet 42, Equality in village halls



Useful resources

Disclosure and Barring Service

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

This link provides the Government statutory guidance, definitions, and responsibilities (A useful reference guide)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-supportstatutory-guidance#safeguarding-1>

ACRE Network member Community Action Suffolk provides lots of useful information and resources on their website <https://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk/organisation-support/safeguarding/>

NCVO Safeguarding information

<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding>

NSPCC child protection guidance

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/voluntary-community-groups/>

Safeguarding concerns: practice example – hiring out space

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/safeguarding-concerns-practiceexamples/>

Safeguarding guidance for disabled children and adults at risk

<https://www.anncrafttrust.org/resources/>

Voluntary and community groups' guidance from NSPCC

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/safeguarding-concerns-practiceexamples/>

Safeguarding concerns: practice examples – hiring out space

<https://www.anncrafttrust.org/resources/>

Guidance on handling safeguarding allegations in a charity

The portal at <https://safeguarding.culture.gov.uk/> offers a step-by-step guide to help charities correctly manage their concerns, identify the right people to contact if needed and access helpful resources and advice. Every organisation that delivers charitable activities has a responsibility to safeguard people from harm or abuse, whether they are staff members, volunteers, or other people who encounter your charity through its work. This tool will help charities in England to handle the reporting of safeguarding allegations about the behaviour or actions of a person in their charity.



APPENDIX A (Model Policy)

1. Purpose

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk from abuse or neglect.

This policy defines how Village Hall operates to safeguard children, young people, and adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

We have a duty of care and are committed to the protection and safety of everyone who enters our premises including children, young people and adults at risk involved as visitors and/or as participants in all activities and events. We also have a duty to safeguard and support our trustees, volunteers, and staff.

2. Definitions

Children and young people are defined as those persons aged under 18 years old. This policy will apply to all staff, contractors and volunteers and will be used to support their work.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health and development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.



Adult at risk of abuse or neglect

For the purposes of this policy, adult at risk refers to someone over 18 years old who, according to Section 42 of the Care Act 2014:

- has care and support needs
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect
- as a result of their care and support needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

If someone has care and support needs but is not currently receiving care or support from a health or care service, they may still be an adult at risk.

Persons affected

- All trustees, volunteers, and staff.
- All those attending any activity or service that is being delivered from the village hall charity property.
- All visitors and contractors.

3. Policy principles

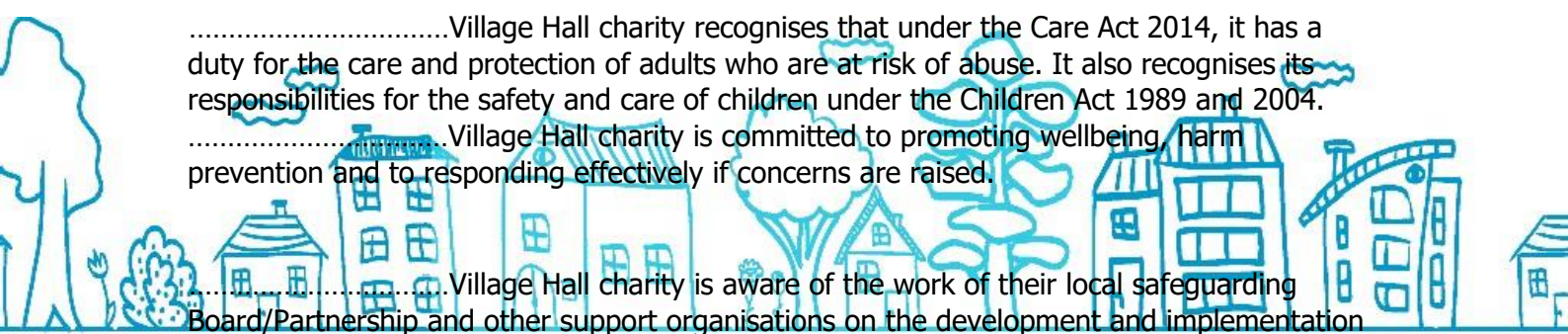
There can be no excuses for not taking all reasonable action to protect children and adults at risk from abuse or neglect. All citizens of the United Kingdom have their rights enshrined within the Human Rights Act 1998. People who are eligible to receive health and community care services may be additionally vulnerable to the violation of these rights by reason of disability, impairment, age, or illness.

.....Village Hall charity has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.

.....Village Hall charity recognises that under the Care Act 2014, it has a duty for the care and protection of adults who are at risk of abuse. It also recognises its responsibilities for the safety and care of children under the Children Act 1989 and 2004.

.....Village Hall charity is committed to promoting wellbeing, harm prevention and to responding effectively if concerns are raised.

.....Village Hall charity is aware of the work of their local safeguarding Board/Partnership and other support organisations on the development and implementation



of procedures for the protection of children and adults at risk. The policy is about stopping abuse where it is happening and preventing abuse where there is a risk that it may occur.

.....Village Hall Committee is committed to the following principles:

- The welfare of the child, young person or adult at risk is paramount.
- All children, young people and adults at risk have the right to protection from abuse.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse must be properly reported to the relevant internal and external authorities and dealt with swiftly and appropriately.

4. Procedures

- A. All members of the committee will sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office for trustees which includes a declaration that they have no convictions in relation to abuse.
- B. All members of the committee will familiarise themselves with safeguarding responsibilities, undertake training where appropriate on safeguarding issues including whistleblowing where it is available and offered by their local safeguarding board/partnership or other local support organisation **and** ensure that they understand the principles set out in this policy at 3 above.
- C. All members of the committee will work together to promote a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting welfare to be addressed.
- D. All members of the committee, helpers or other volunteers will not have unsupervised access to children or adults at risk unless appropriately vetted.



- E. The hall committee will follow safe recruitment practices.

- F. A member of the committee will be appointed to be responsible for child and adult at risk safeguarding matters. This person will have responsibility for reporting concerns that arise, as a matter of urgency, to the relevant safeguarding agency.
- G. The named person isuntil
.....
- H. All suspicions or allegations of abuse against a child or adult at risk will be taken seriously and dealt with speedily and appropriately. The appointed person will know who to contact and where to go for support and advice in relation to an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice or a complaint. An allegation may relate to a person who works with children or adults at risk who has:
- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or adult at risk or may have harmed a child or adult at risk.
 - Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child or adult at risk; or
 - Behaved towards a child (or children) or adult at risk in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children or adults at risk.
- I. The hall committee will ensure that all hirers of the hall have signed a hiring agreement. This will require all hirers who wish to use the hall for activities which include children and adults at risk, other than for hire for private parties arranged for invited friends and family, to either produce a copy of their Safeguarding Policy and evidence that they have carried out relevant checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) when requested to do so or, confirm that they have understood and will adhere to the hall's principles and procedures with regard to safeguarding.
- J. The village hall management committee will carry out an annual review of this policy.



Appendix B (Declaration of Acceptance of Office)

Trustee Statement of Eligibility **

Name of Charity:

Charity Registration No:

Declaration by Charity Trustees

I have received and studied the governing document of the charity and support its purposes.

I realise that as a member of _____ committee I am one of the organisation's managing or charity trustees, and I understand the duties and responsibilities as explained to me and indicated in the Charity Commission Leaflet CC3a: Responsibilities of Charity Trustees.

I am not under 18 years of age and am not disqualified from serving as a member of the committee, and in the event of my becoming disqualified, will take no further part in the affairs of the charity whilst such disqualification lasts.

Trustee eligibility and responsibility

By completing and signing this form, you declare that you:

- are willing to act as a trustee of the organisation named above
- understand your organisation's purposes (objects) and rules set out in its governing document



- are not prevented from acting as a trustee because you:
 - have an unspent conviction for one or more of the listed offences,
 - have an IVA, debt relief order and/or a bankruptcy order,
 - have been removed as a trustee in England, Scotland, or Wales (by the Charity Commission or Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator)
 - have been removed from being in the management or control of a body in Scotland (under relevant legislation)
 - have been disqualified by the Charity Commission or are a disqualified company director,
 - are a designated person for the purposes of anti-terrorism legislation,
 - are on the sex offenders register or have been found in contempt of court for making (or causing to be made) a false statement,
 - have been found guilty of disobedience to an order or direction of the Charity Commission.

Name (please Print):

Home Address:

Date of Birth:

Date:

Signature:

** The Charity Commission Declaration of Eligibility and Responsibility can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/confirmation-of-charitytrustee-eligibility>



APPENDIX C

(Apologies for the blurring we are endeavouring to access a better copy)



10 actions trustee boards need to take to ensure good safeguarding governance
Safeguarding should be a key governance priority for all charities

- Ensure your charity has an adequate safeguarding policy, code of conduct and any other safeguarding procedures. Regularly review and update the policy and procedures to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- Identify possible risks, including risks to your beneficiaries or to anyone else connected to your charity and any emerging risks on the horizon.
- Consider how to improve the safeguarding culture within your charity.
- Ensure that everyone involved with the charity knows how to recognise, respond to, report and record a safeguarding concern.
- Ensure people know how to raise a safeguarding concern.
- Regularly evaluate any safeguarding training provided, ensuring it is current and relevant.
- Review which posts within the charity can and must have a DBS check from the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- Have a risk assessment process in place for posts which do not qualify for a DBS check, but which still have contact with children or adults at risk.
- Periodically review your safeguarding policy and procedures, learning from any serious incident or 'near miss'.
- If you work across sites or in different geographical areas of operation.

 **CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**



Appendix D

Standard Conditions of Hire – Model Hiring Agreement

9. Safeguarding children, young people, and adults at risk

You must ensure that any activities for children, young people and adults at risk are only provided by fit and proper persons in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and any subsequent legislation. When requested, you must provide us with a copy of your Safeguarding Policy and evidence that you have carried out relevant checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). All reasonable steps must be taken to prevent harm, and to respond appropriately when harm does occur. Relevant concerns must be reported.

