

Safer Culture North East

SAFEGUARDING FOR VOLUNTEER-LED COMMUNITY GROUPS DURING COVID-19

Who is this factsheet for?

This factsheet is for volunteer-led community groups, including mutual aid groups, who are operating to support their local community during the Covid-19 outbreak and UK lockdown.

Keep it local

Our advice is to think local first. Check up on the people in your surrounding street/ estate who might need a hand.

If you wish to do something more long term then please contact one of the many hundreds of organisations that already exist across our communities to support people – they are in a great position to let you know what is a priority.

What is safeguarding and why is it important?

- Safeguarding means keeping people – children and adults – safe from abuse.
- Anyone can be at risk of abuse.
- We all have a duty of care to keep people safe from harm.
- Types of abuse and harm include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, neglect, radicalisation, discriminatory, financial.

Safeguarding is important for your group because you care about your neighbours and local community. Safeguarding helps us to do that better, to care for the most vulnerable in our communities, and to avoid accidentally putting them and you at risk.

Key things to consider when creating safeguarding practices

Follow government guidance

- Follow the up-to-date government guidance to stop the spread of the virus, including hand washing and keeping two metres away from people being helped.
- If volunteers must leave the house, they should spend as little time away from home as possible and follow government advice on social distancing.

The structure of your group

- Your group may have a clear hierarchy, for example, a group of people coordinating volunteers across an area, or it could be a shared messaging group for your street with people volunteering to help neighbours when the need arises.
- The format and size of your group will mean that the ways you keep people safe may need to be different to what other groups have done, because your resources will be different.

Reporting system for incidents

- Who to speak to if you are concerned will depend on the structure of your group.
- In a typical organisation the process would be to report incidents to the safeguarding lead, who then takes the appropriate action. This may work for groups where there is a clear leader or group who are coordinating volunteers.
- On a more local level, i.e. street groups, a collective approach to safeguarding may need to be taken.

- Think through the risks of any plan you make, use your common sense and ask for support if you need it. You can find out more about safeguarding contacts in the FAQs section.

Keeping a record

- Consider how you will record any safeguarding concerns. Having a record of the issue will make it easier if you need to report your concern.
- Store all recorded data securely and do not share personal information unless necessary. For instance, do not tell other members of your group but, do give details if reporting a concern. For more information on data protection, please see the useful links.

FAQs

Do we need DBS checks?

Informal groups or networks of people (such as mutual aid groups) who don't have a process for recruitment decisions do not need to carry out DBS checks, however they should make clear to people receiving support that volunteers have not been checked.

If you think a role carries a higher level of risk that requires these checks or additional support, it is often best to work through an established organisation.

Who do I report safeguarding concerns to? Where can I ask if something is a safeguarding issue?

All safeguarding concerns should be reported to your local authority contact. It's a good idea to look up your local safeguarding children and adult teams, read their guidance on reporting safeguarding concerns and keep their contact details somewhere handy.

They will be able to help you identify whether something is a safeguarding concern or not, it is better to ask for advice if you are not sure.

If a safeguarding concern is **an emergency**:

If a **child** is in immediate danger or left alone, you should **contact the police or call an ambulance on 999**.

If a **vulnerable adult** is in immediate danger, you should **contact the police or call an ambulance on 999**.

Where to get more information

Links to all North East local authority safeguarding partnerships and boards www.vonne.org.uk/safer-culture-north-east-resources-and-training

Links to NCVO safeguarding resources and DCMS tool knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding/

NCVO: 'Involving volunteers' – information on safeguarding and data protection

<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/coronavirus/involving-volunteers#section-7>

Government guidance: 'Safeguarding Factsheet: Community volunteers during COVID-19 outbreak'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19-outbreak/safeguarding-and-dbs-factsheet-fags>

Safeguarding awareness for volunteers video

www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHQ8CJROhU&feature=youtu.be

NSPCC What is Child Abuse? learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1188/definitions-signs-child-abuse.pdf



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