

Safeguarding: Guidance for Applicants

Why safeguarding matters

Safeguarding is about protecting children, young people and adults at risk from harm, and making sure that organisations have appropriate arrangements in place to respond to concerns.

As a funder, the Heart of England Community Foundation (HOECF) needs to be confident that organisations we support understand their safeguarding responsibilities and have arrangements that are appropriate for the work they do.

We do not expect every organisation to have the same safeguarding policy or level of detail. Our approach is proportionate to the nature of your organisation, the activities you carry out and the people you work with.

For example, an allotment association applying for funding to purchase tools or equipment, where volunteers have no direct contact with children or adults at risk, would not be expected to have the same level of safeguarding procedures as an organisation delivering regular activities to children and young people or for vulnerable adults.

When reviewing safeguarding policies, we will therefore consider what your organisation does, who it works with and the level of safeguarding risk involved, rather than simply whether you have a lengthy or detailed policy.

What do we mean by a proportionate approach

A proportionate safeguarding policy should explain the arrangements that are relevant to your organisation.

At a minimum, organisations should understand:

- who has responsibility for safeguarding;
- how staff, volunteers or trustees should respond if they have a concern;
- when concerns should be reported to an appropriate external organisation;

- how safeguarding information and records will be handled appropriately; and
- how the organisation will make sure that people carrying out relevant roles are suitable and appropriately supported.

The level of detail needed will depend on your activities.

We may ask for further information or evidence where the nature of your work means that stronger safeguarding arrangements are necessary.

Tier 1 – Organisations with little or no direct contact with beneficiaries. No direct work with children or adults at risk. Minimal public contact.

This tier is generally appropriate for small community groups and organisations whose activities do not involve direct contact with children or adults at risk and minimal public contact.

For example, this might include a community group, residents' association or allotment association applying for funding for equipment, maintenance or improvements to a community facility.

What we would expect

We would expect the organisation to have a basic safeguarding policy or statement that is appropriate to its activities. It should identify who within the organisation has responsibility for safeguarding and explain what someone should do if a safeguarding concern arises.

The policy does not need to be lengthy or highly detailed. It should be clear, practical and relevant to the organisation.

We would expect trustees or committee members to understand their responsibilities and for volunteers to know where to find the organisation's safeguarding arrangements.

The policy should be reviewed annually and should include review dates.

How we will review it

We will look at whether the safeguarding arrangements make sense for the organisation's activities and whether they address any obvious risks.

We will not expect a small organisation with no direct beneficiary contact to have the same procedures, training requirements or recruitment arrangements as an organisation working directly with children.

Where the arrangements are broadly appropriate but there are some gaps, we may ask the organisation to make straightforward improvements rather than requiring a comprehensive safeguarding framework.

We will look for the following in a basic safeguarding policy:

Assessment Area
The organisation has considered whether safeguarding applies to its activities.
A safeguarding policy or safeguarding statement is in place (proportionate to the organisation's activities).
Definitions of abuse are included
A named person has responsibility for safeguarding concerns. Contact details are provided.
The organisation knows how safeguarding concerns would be reported to statutory agencies if they arose.
The policy is dated and reviewed annually

Tier 2 – Organisations with supervised contact with adults at risk children

This tier is generally appropriate for organisations that have regular contact with adults at risk or children.

Where projects involve supervised work with children or adults at risk, family activities or community programmes.

Examples might include organisations providing community activities, support, volunteering or services where staff or volunteers have regular contact with these groups.

What we would expect

In addition to the basic arrangements described above, we would expect the organisation to have a named Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or equivalent person who has responsibility for managing safeguarding concerns.

The organisation should have appropriate arrangements for:

- safeguarding training for the DSL and relevant staff or volunteers;
- responding to and recording safeguarding concerns;
- appropriate DBS checks where the role requires them;
- safe recruitment, including appropriate references;
- making sure staff and volunteers understand how to recognise signs of abuse or harm; and
- ensuring that there is someone who can take responsibility for safeguarding when the DSL is unavailable.

The exact arrangements should reflect the organisation's activities and the roles that people carry out.

How we will review it

We will look for evidence that safeguarding is actively managed rather than simply being covered by a policy document.

We will expect the policy to include details of the DSL, what training they have received, how concerns are recorded and how the organisation determines whether DBS checks are required.

We will consider whether the arrangements are appropriate for the actual contact the organisation has with people who may be at greater risk of harm.

Assessment Area
Current safeguarding policy provided.
Policy reflects the organisation's activities.
Policy reviewed within the last 12 months.
Signs and definitions of abuse included
Named Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy DSL with contact details.
Clear reporting procedures.
Responding to disclosures included.
Trustees/management team oversee safeguarding.
Safeguarding training has been provided.
Safer recruitment procedures.
DBS checks are undertaken where legally required.
Records are kept securely.
Details of external agencies included.

Tier 3 – Organisations working directly with children under 16 or in regulated activity

This tier is generally appropriate for organisations working directly with children under 16 or adults in regulated activity.

Where organisations undertake regular work with children or adults at risk, including one-to-one support, transport, residential activities or activities involving intimate care.

Examples might include organisations delivering youth activities, children's services, care or support services, or activities where staff or volunteers have significant or regular responsibility for children or adults in regulated activity.

What we would expect

These organisations need more comprehensive safeguarding arrangements because the nature of their work presents greater safeguarding responsibilities and risks.

In addition to the arrangements expected at stages 1 and 2, we would expect organisations to have appropriate arrangements covering:

- enhanced DBS checks where legally required;
- safer recruitment;
- safeguarding training for staff and volunteers;
- a clear code of conduct covering appropriate behaviour and professional boundaries;
- arrangements for managing issues such as lone working, physical contact and online communication;
- regular trustee oversight of safeguarding;
- clear procedures for escalating concerns to the relevant local authority, police or other appropriate agency; and
- regular review of safeguarding arrangements and evidence that this review has taken place.

Where an organisation works with children, we may expect its safeguarding arrangements to reflect relevant statutory and sector-specific guidance.

How we will review it

We will consider whether the organisation's arrangements are appropriate to the specific activities it delivers, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.

Assessment Area
Comprehensive safeguarding policy.
Policy reviewed within previous 12 months.
Signs and definitions of abuse included
Named DSL and Deputy DSL with contact details.
Trustee/management team member responsible for safeguarding oversight.
Robust reporting procedures.
Allegations against trustees/ staff members management process.
Whistleblowing arrangements.
Safer recruitment procedures.
DBS checks appropriate to roles.
Safeguarding induction for all staff and volunteers.
Refresher safeguarding training.
Online safety procedures (if relevant).
Secure safeguarding records.
Incident reporting and escalation process.
Appropriate insurance cover.

Risk assessments undertaken for activities.

What happens if there are gaps?

We recognise that smaller organisations may not have the same resources or capacity as larger charities.

If we identify gaps in your safeguarding arrangements, this does not automatically mean that your application will be unsuccessful. We will consider the nature and seriousness of the gap, the level of risk involved and whether the organisation has a realistic plan to address it.

We may ask you to:

- provide further information;
- update or strengthen your safeguarding policy;
- put additional procedures in place;
- arrange appropriate training; or
- provide evidence that an identified action has been completed.

Our aim is to help organisations develop safeguarding arrangements that are appropriate, workable and proportionate to their activities.

What are we looking for

When reviewing your safeguarding policy we will look for:

1. Who do you work with?

Do your activities involve children, young people, adults at risk or the general public?

2. What type of contact do you have?

Is contact occasional, indirect or incidental, or do staff and volunteers have regular responsibility for people?

3. What are the risks associated with your activities

For example, do your activities involve working alone with children, providing personal support, transporting people or having access to vulnerable individuals?

4. Are your arrangements appropriate to those risks? Does your policy explain what people should do if they have a concern, and are the relevant people aware of their responsibilities?

5. Is safeguarding reflected in practice?

Where the level of risk requires it, do you have appropriate recruitment, DBS checking, training, recording and oversight arrangements?

The Key principle

There is no expectation that every funded organisation will have a lengthy or complex safeguarding policy.

A good safeguarding policy is one that is proportionate to the organisation's activities, understood by the people responsible for delivering them, and effective in managing the risks that are relevant to the organisation.

We will take this proportionate approach when reviewing safeguarding policies as part of grant application process.