8 Keeping Young People Safe

Before you begin working with young people, it is essential to develop a **safeguarding framework and policy**. This should be clearly communicated to all staff, volunteers and young people, and reinforced through a programme of education and training.

Your local Safeguarding Children’s Board and the NSPCC provide useful templates and guidance on implementing your policy.

**Safeguarding Checklist**

**Do you have a safeguarding policy? Does it contain…**

… a statement about your organisation’s commitment to safeguarding and safeguarding training?

… information on confidentiality, information sharing & record keeping?

… clear definitions of what constitutes Child Abuse?

… a designated lead person on safeguarding issues?

**Do you have safeguarding procedures? Is it clear what to do…**

… when a young person discloses that they are at risk?

… when you observe signs and symptoms that give cause for concern?

… if you have concerns about a staff member or volunteer (or an allegation is made against staff/volunteers)?

… to ensure all those working with children have current DBS checks?

**Other policies, procedures and training:**

How do you ensure everyone’s aware of the code of conduct and safeguarding policies?

Has someone in your organisation received training on Safer Recruitment?

How does your organisation keep up to date on safeguarding issues?

Do you have health & safety procedures for activities with young people?

Do you have guidance on how to manage children and young people’s behaviour?

Does the organisation have a system to record child protection concerns and actions, existing injuries, etc.?  

Do you have a complaints procedure?

Do you have an e-safety policy?

Does your management committee/board of trustees know their legal safeguarding duties?

How do you ensure the right staff:young person ratios for different activities?
Write a code of conduct

All staff and young people should be aware of appropriate and expected behaviour. A code of conduct also provides reassurance for young people who are nervous or anxious, especially new members. Include:

- how staff and young people should behave, treat each other, the group space (including online) and each other
- not accepting any form of discrimination, abusive language or behaviour
- no consumption of alcohol/drugs by young people and adults
- sanctions and procedures for managing conflict
- rules for day trips e.g. visit to Pride or overnight trips

Ask young people to create their own version of the code of conduct together.

We create group agreements with all of our groups so they have ownership over behaviour within the space and can be held accountable to a code of behaviour that they have shaped and agreed to. It’s a great activity to do in the early stages of your group forming and should be reviewed each term. The agreement is visible in each session. Creating it with the group ensures it addresses the needs of the whole group. It also helps it feel less like a mean or unfair rules system. Young people are more likely to respect the agreement if they’ve created it. The young people help decide what the consequences of breaking the code should be too.

Chloe, Youth Worker, Fusion BAME LGBT youth group, Manchester

Set boundaries

You should also take steps to set clear boundaries between staff, volunteers and young people.

- Have a separate youth group phone rather than staff using personal phones
- Inform the group when staff will be available/unavailable e.g. out of hours, staff holidays
- Provide a list of services that young people can access outside of the group

Confidentiality

All young people will feel differently about being LGBT and who they are ‘out’ to; some will be out to everyone; others to a few or just the group. Think carefully about whether parents/carers need to know that they are attending the group and how you can protect young people from being ‘outed’ to family, friends or peers.

Laws have changed but socially we are not there yet. We are not at a point of equality, so we need confidentiality and a safe space. Safe space means everyone in the room has some sort of shared experience and then they know not to tell other people and out you… They just get it. Young person, The Kite Trust
Avoid putting ‘LGBT’ on consent forms or publicity about residential trips

Set staff guidelines e.g. if a parent or carer calls, don’t mention LGBT unless they do and use the name of the child that the parents/carers know, even if different to the one they use in the group.

Let young people self-consent if they are over 16

Provide appropriate support without involving parents/carers, provided that the young person is aware of the implications of their actions

Remember you cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality to a young person – staff must pass on appropriate information if a young person is at risk.

Online Safety

Online spaces can be particularly useful as not all young people will be able to make it to sessions for practical or other reasons e.g. not being ‘out’, confidence or anxiety, transport, travel expenses or curfews. However, you should implement clear safeguards for online groups:

- Ensure staff and volunteers create a Facebook ‘worker’ profile separate from their personal profile
- Establish times that staff will/will not respond to posts
- Create private groups so that young people can be members without other Facebook friends knowing

Signposting and referrals

There is no way of knowing exactly what issues or concerns young people, or their parents, carers or teachers, may approach you with. Keep a list of local support agencies that you can refer to. Remember to seek confirmation from a young person that they are comfortable being referred to another organisation. See p32 for organisations you can contact for support and use Stonewall’s What’s in my area database.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Key Contact(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School bullying</td>
<td>School nurse/pastoral lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse in the family/at home</td>
<td>Social services, local authority safeguarding children’s team, Local Area Designated Officer, youth homelessness services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health issues</td>
<td>Young people’s mental health support organisations or CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual health issues</td>
<td>Young people’s sexual health organisations, Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinic or GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender identity and transitioning (social and/or medical)</td>
<td>National/local trans support groups and gender identity clinics (NHS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking asylum in the UK</td>
<td>Local or national asylum seeker support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate crime</td>
<td>Local hate crime/LGBT liaison officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Attend local youth network meetings to access information on young people, events in the local area, share information about your group and develop working relationships with local youth leaders. Some groups even offer briefing sessions or training on LGBT issues to empower other youth workers.