


Safeguarding - getting it right for youth clubs and groups

There is no doubt that clubs, community groups and organisations run principally by parents and volunteers for children and young people, particularly those that focus on skills, activities and team work offer immeasurable benefits for the people who take part.

 27 March 2019

There is no doubt that clubs, community groups and organisations run principally by parents and volunteers for children and young people, particularly those that focus on skills, activities and team work offer immeasurable benefits for the people who take part. These organisations help build young peoples' confidence, and enable them to create and develop broader friendship circles beyond homes and school.

It follows that these clubs, along with scouting and guiding groups are a valuable part of our society, and that everything should be done to support the volunteers and participants for the benefit of future generations.

It has to be acknowledged, however, that historically a small but significant minority of volunteers, often apparently upstanding respectable members of the community, have taken advantage of clubs and the young people they serve to engage in sexual exploitative behaviour. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was set up to look at the historical failings of state and non-state institutions to respond properly to allegations of sexual harm of children.

As part of the Inquiry's work it has invited people who were sexually abused to come forward as part of the Inquiry's Truth Project. [Some of the accounts can be found here.](#)

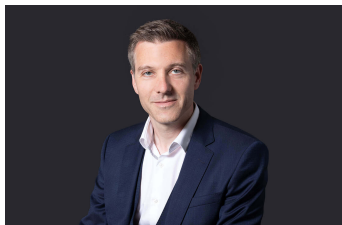
They make upsetting reading. But if nothing else, victims of abuse come forward because they want to make sure that the risk of their experience happening to people in the future is minimised as much as possible. With that in mind, and to honour all of the experiences of those who have gone before, it is essential that all clubs working with children and young people have robust safeguarding policies in place for the future, and a clear insurance history relating to both the past and the future.

Key safeguarding factors clubs should look at are:

- Safeguarding practices relating to the recruitment, appointment and training of volunteers.
- A transparent training programme for all volunteers working with young people.
- A clear and unambiguous reporting policy linking into the Disclosure and Barring Service. See the '[Disclosure application process for volunteers](#)' [here](#).
- Document retention and information sharing policies which are compliant both with each club's safeguarding requirements, and with GDPR and data protection law.
- Appropriate policies of insurance covering public liability. An essential focus for clubs is to ensure that good policy cover is seamless, with no gaps. This is because it is common for people who were the victims of sexually inappropriate behaviour to come forward not at the time of their being abused but years, maybe even decades, later. Inappropriately drafted liability policies, or policies that provide insufficient cover, could be financially disastrous for some clubs and may also prevent victims from being able to access reparations for abuse. See our previous article '[Do you know what your insurance history looks like? We recommend you find out](#)' [here](#).

Together a great set of policies, well disseminated and regularly reviewed, will enable each club to provide experience to their members that simply would not be achievable elsewhere, confident that lessons from the past have been properly listened to and learned. This, in turn, protects organisations, their officers, workers and volunteers and, importantly the children and young people they serve.

Contact



James Arrowsmith

Partner

james.arrowsmith@brownejacobson.com

+44 (0) 330 045 2321

Related expertise

Abuse and social care claims

Children's services

Employers and public liability