

Have fun and be safe

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A guide to help parents and carers choose children's activities

Children and young people should be encouraged to participate in activities as it gives them many valuable benefits, including the development of physical, emotional, social and cognitive skills. There is a wide range of activities to choose from in local communities. **However, how do you know if they are safe?**

Organisations have a responsibility to be open and welcoming and to share information about themselves and their activities, even those organisations who are not required to register with the local Health and Social Care Trust. Many activities are supported by volunteers who generously give their time. You should expect the same standards from all organisations, regardless of whether or not the workers are paid.

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What should you check out?

Does the organisation have a safeguarding policy to keep children safe?

All organisations working with children and young people should have a safeguarding policy, supported by robust procedures and guidelines. The policy should outline how the organisation intends to keep children safe while they are participating. You should be advised how you can access this policy.

Are the staff and volunteers suitable to work with children and young people?

All staff and volunteers should go through a proper recruitment process which includes an application form, declaration form, interview, written references and an AccessNI disclosure check (where eligible).

How does the organisation manage staff and volunteers?

Everyone in the organisation should be clear about roles and responsibilities and should be supported to carry out their roles. All staff and volunteers should receive a thorough induction and be appropriately supported.

What safeguarding training has been provided for staff and volunteers?

Relevant training should be provided for all staff and volunteers, including basic awareness safeguarding training. Those with more responsibility e.g. the Designated Officer(s) should receive training at a higher level. Training should be updated regularly (at least every three years).

Who can you or your child talk to if you have any worries or concerns?

The organisation should have a Designated Officer or leader whom you can contact if you have any worries or concerns. The organisation should promote their contact details within their safeguarding policy and in other literature, or display them on their premises. A well-run organisation will listen to your concerns and take appropriate action.

Is there a written code of behaviour?

All organisations should have a written code of behaviour, outlining what is expected of staff and volunteers, and children and young people participating in activities. The code should include acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. It should outline zero tolerance to oppressive behaviour of any kind, such as bullying, shouting, racism and sexism.

How does the organisation provide for intimate care needs?

In the case of very young children, or those with a disability, you should check out routines for toileting, feeding and administering medication. Parents and carers should be given the opportunity to discuss any intimate care with relevant staff and volunteers before their child begins activities and their consent for intimate care must be sought. Staff and volunteers should receive appropriate training. The organisation should offer access to relevant policies.

How can you make a complaint?

You should be informed about the organisation's complaints policy. It should include a named contact and outline the steps that will be taken to deal with a complaint. Children and young people and their parents and carers should be given the opportunity to provide comments and suggestions on the organisation's activities. A good organisation will welcome feedback.

Does the organisation have a health and safety policy?

Find out if there is a leader qualified in first aid; that there is a first aid box; and that the premises have passed fire regulations. The ratio of staff and volunteers to children and young people should be appropriate. You should be asked to complete a registration form providing essential details about your child, including any health or medical details which staff and volunteers need to know about, and emergency contact numbers. The organisation should inform you about any accidents or incidents your child is involved in.

What are the arrangements for taking photographs/videos of your child?

You should be fully informed about who is responsible for taking photographs/videos, how they will be used, and your written consent should be requested.

How does the organisation communicate with you and your child?

The organisation should have guidelines for staff and volunteers about contacting your child via mobile phone, email and social media. Staff and volunteers should never give their mobile number to your child, befriend them on social networking websites or contact them directly through email unless the organisation has your written consent to do so. It is good practice for the staff member or volunteer to copy you into any message or email they are sending your child.

What should you be wary of?

- Activities where parents and carers are discouraged from staying to watch or become involved
- Behaviour or activities that encourage rough play, sexual innuendo or humiliating punishments
- Individuals who take charge and operate independently of organisational guidelines
- Individuals who show favouritism or personally reward specific children
- Encouragement of inappropriate physical contact
- Poor communication and lack of parental and carer involvement, leaving you feeling uneasy
- Children who drop out or stop going for no apparent reason
- Invitations for children to spend time alone with staff or volunteers (or even to visit their home)
- Poor record keeping in relation to concerns, complaints, accidents and incidents
- High turnover and/or poor motivation of staff and volunteers
- Low ratio of staff and volunteers to children and young people
- Activities which do not have a registration form requesting essential details about your child
- Parental consent not being sought for activities, day trips/residentials, photographs or videos.

The Our Duty to Care Project, Volunteer Now provides information about the standards of good practice that organisations are expected to meet.

Keeping Children Safe: Our Duty to Care is available on the publications page at www.volunteernow.co.uk

Teach your child the Kidscape Keepsafe Code

- 1. Hugs and kisses** – even those that feel good and that you like should never be kept a secret
- 2. Body** – all of your body belongs to you and not to anyone else
- 3. No** – if anyone tries to touch you in a way that you don't like or that confuses you, or which is supposed to be a secret, say 'No!' in a very loud voice
- 4. Run or get away** – don't talk to anyone you don't know when you are alone, or just with other children. If a stranger, or a bully, or even someone you know tries to harm you, get away and get help. Make sure you always go towards other people.
- 5. Yell** – wherever you are, it is alright to yell if someone is trying to hurt you. Practice yelling as loud as you can in a big, deep voice by taking a deep breath and letting the yell come from your stomach, not from your throat.
- 6. Tell** – tell a grown up you trust if you are worried or frightened. If the first grown up you tell doesn't believe or help you, keep telling until someone does. Who could you tell?
- 7. Secrets** – some secrets are fun like a surprise birthday party. But some secrets are not good and should never be kept. No-one should ask you to keep a kiss, hug or touch a secret. If anyone does, even if you know that person, tell a grown up you trust.
- 8. Bribes** – don't accept money or sweets or a gift from anyone without first checking with your parents or carers. Some people try to trick children into doing something by giving them sweets or money. This is called a bribe – don't ever take one!
- 9. Code** – have a code word or sign with your parents or carers, which only they and you know. If they need to send someone to collect you, they can give that person the code. Don't tell the code to anyone else!

www.kidscape.org.uk



How should you share your concerns?

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You may feel reluctant to voice your concerns in case you are wrong or worried about the impact on your child, but if you are concerned you must take action.

- Speak to other parents
- Speak to the Designated Officer or leader in charge
- If you are unhappy about the response you receive, speak to someone in a higher position of authority
- If you have a worry about a child at risk of abuse or just want to seek advice, please contact the NSPCC Helpline
- If you want to report a concern about a child at risk of abuse, please contact your local Health and Social Care Trust Gateway Team, or the PSNI.



Contact numbers:

Volunteer Now, 34 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DB
Tel: 028 9023 2020 Web: www.volunteernow.co.uk

NSPCC, Jennymount Business Park, North Derby Street, Belfast, BT15 3HN
Tel: 028 9035 1135 Web: www.nspcc.org.uk

NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000 or help@nspcc.org.uk
A free 24 hour service which provides information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse or harm.

Health and Social Care Trust Gateway Teams

Belfast Trust	028 9050 7000
Northern Trust	0300 123 4333
Southern Trust	0800 783 7745
South Eastern Trust	0300 100 0300
Western Trust	028 7131 4090
Regional Emergency	
Social Work Service (out of hours)	028 9504 9999

PSNI

PSNI Public Protection Units	0845 600 8000
Emergency	999



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