

Safeguarding Policy

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Libraries NI

Safeguarding Policy

Libraries NI is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children, young people and adults participating in public library services. Libraries NI recognises its responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect vulnerable people from harm, abuse and exploitation. Libraries NI will ensure that there are robust systems in place to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and adults and to ensure that staff are adequately supported.

Glossary

Abuse

The common denominator for all forms of abuse is that it makes a child, young person or adult feel bad or worthless. Guidance on the categories and recognition of abuse appears at Appendix One.

Adult

*A person aged 18 years or over whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect **may** be increased by their (a) personal characteristics and/or (b) life circumstances.*

***Personal characteristics** may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.*

***Life circumstances** may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.*

*An **'adult in need of protection'** is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by:*

- a) their personal characteristics*
- b) their life circumstances*
- c) their inability to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests*
- d) whether the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, them to be harmed.*

Child or Young Person

A child is defined as any person under the age of 18 by the Children (NI) Order 1995. This includes young people undertaking work experience in libraries as well as customers. When reference is made to a child/children or young people all children up to the age of 18 are included.

Customer(s)

A customer is any person regardless of age who uses any library service whether in a library building or mobile library, in their own home or any other setting, or online. Customers may also be people of any age who visit a library without using a service.

Designated Officer

Those members of library staff who have been designated as having responsibility for supporting staff in issues of child protection and safeguarding adults. This definition will cover the Adult Safeguarding, Appointed Person.

Lead Designated Officer

The Lead Designated Officer and Deputies support the Designated Officers, ensuring that training and procedures are adequate, report to the Chief Executive on safeguarding issues and report any issues to the Departmental Children's Champion. This definition will cover the Adult Safeguarding Champion.

Parent

Where reference is made to parent(s), carers are also included. It is assumed this is the person with parental responsibility for the child.

Safeguarding

Within the policy, the term safeguarding is intended to be used in its widest sense, encompassing the full range of promotion, prevention and protection activity. Effective safeguarding will promote the welfare of children, young people and adults; prevent harm occurring through early identification of risk and appropriate, timely intervention; and protect children, young people and adults from harm when this is required.

Source: <https://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/contents.html>

“Every child, young person and adult deserves to be happy and secure in their activities. Their carers, parents and families need to feel sure that the people in charge of these activities or providing a service are trustworthy, responsible and will do everything they can to keep them safe from harm.”

Source: [Safeguarding Guidance Document \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

Staff

This includes all Libraries NI employees, agency workers, volunteers and those undertaking work experience/work placement in the public library. It also includes short and long-term contract workers such as writers in residence and storytellers.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Libraries NI is committed to providing a safe environment for all its customers and to fulfilling its safeguarding responsibilities towards those who access library services, whether in a library, in their own home, online, or in any other environment, for example residential and nursing homes or educational settings.
- 1.2 Libraries NI is committed to practices which actively promotes the welfare and safety of children, young people and adults and protects them from harm. Libraries NI accepts and recognises its responsibility to develop staff awareness of the issues which can cause harm to children, young people and adults.
- 1.3 Libraries NI's policy on safeguarding is based on the following principles:
- every child and young person or adult has the fundamental right to be safe from harm and to have their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being promoted by those looking after them
 - the welfare of the child, young person or adult is paramount
 - children, young people and adults have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously
 - a proper balance will be struck between protecting children and young people and adults and respecting the rights of other library users. Where there is a conflict, the protection of the child, young person or adult will always come first
 - actions taken to protect the child, young person or adult should not cause the child or young person or adult unnecessary distress or further harm
 - staff will act in a way that supports the rights of individuals to lead an independent life based on self-determination and personal choice
 - staff will recognise people who are unable to take their own decisions and/or to protect themselves, their assets and bodily integrity.
- 1.4 Policy and practice is set in the context of the relevant legislation (an overview of this appears at Appendix Two) and Children and Adult Safeguarding Guidance for DfC sponsored Arm's Length Bodies (February 2023).
- 1.5 This policy applies to all library staff.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure:
- the safety of children, young people and adults when using physical and online library services and/or facilities
 - that staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the protection of children, young people and adults

- that staff are adequately supported in dealing with incidents of suspected or actual abuse
- structures and procedures are in place to protect both staff and the organisation from potential allegations of inappropriate behaviour towards children, young people or adults.

3. Policy

- 3.1 Libraries NI will establish and maintain a safe and enjoyable environment where children, young people and adults can participate in library services free from abuse, bullying and discrimination.
- 3.2 Libraries NI recognises that the welfare of the child, young person or adult is paramount.
- 3.3 Libraries NI recognises that all library customers without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexuality or beliefs.
- 3.4 Libraries NI is committed to safe recruitment, selection and appropriate vetting arrangements for employees and volunteers. These are reflected in the Human Resources Policy and Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection.
- 3.5 Libraries NI will provide effective management of staff (as in glossary) through appropriate levels of supervision, support and training.
- 3.6 Libraries NI will take seriously all concerns and disclosures of abuse and respond to these appropriately.
- 3.7 Libraries NI will inform customers of its Safeguarding Policy and procedures as appropriate.
- 3.8 Libraries NI will work with other agencies to safeguard children, young people and adults.
- 3.9 Libraries NI has a Safeguarding Code of Behaviour for staff. See Appendix Three.
- 3.10 In addition to the Safeguarding Policy, Libraries NI has in place structures, procedures and guidelines for the management of situations where abuse is suspected. This includes a network of Designated Officers, supported by a Lead Designated Officer and Deputies.
- 3.11 Libraries NI will ensure that information of a confidential nature is communicated on a 'need to know' basis and held securely as identified in the procedures.

4. Authority

Policy Sponsor: The Chief Executive is the Policy Sponsor.

Policy Owner: The Director of Library Services is the Policy Owner.

Policy Contact: The Lead Designated Officer is the Policy Contact.

5. Related Documents

Policies

- Code of Conduct for Staff
- Customer Feedback Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Digital Inclusion Policy
- Discipline Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Filming Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Information Technology Security Policy
- Library Computers Conditions of Use Policy
- Policy on the Code of Recruitment and Selection
- Raising a Concern (Whistleblowing Policy)
- Records Management Policy
- Room Hire Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Safe and Welcoming Libraries
- Staff Acceptable Use Policy
- Volunteer Policy

Procedures

- Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection
- Customer Feedback Procedures
- Data Protection: Procedure for Handling Requests for Personal Data
- Data Sharing Agreements
- Data Sharing Protocol
- Discipline Procedures
- Equal Opportunities Procedures
- Managing Filming Procedures
- Procedures for Children's Events (guidance for all events is available at pages 4-7 of the Safeguarding Guidelines 2021)
- Procedure for the Use of Closed-Circuit Television
- Records Management Procedures
- Safe and Welcoming Libraries: Exclusion Procedures
- Safeguarding Procedures

Guidelines

- Events Guidelines
- Guidance and checklists for the recruitment, training and management of volunteers
- Guidance for Staff's personal use of Social Media
- Guidelines for Approved Staff's use of Libraries NI's Social Media Sites.
- Guidelines for users of Libraries NI's Social Media Sites
- Information Requests: Staff Guidance
- Library Computers And WI FI Access Conditions Of Use For Adults
- Library Computers And WI FI Access Conditions Of Use For Children
- Library Computers – Conditions of Use – Staff Guidance
- Raising a Concern (Whistleblowing) Guidance
- Risk Assessment Guidance
- Safe and Welcoming Libraries Staff Guidelines
- Safeguarding Guidelines

GUIDANCE ON THE TYPES OF ABUSE AND RECOGNITION OF ABUSE

Recognition of Abuse – Children and Young People

Harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Evidence shows that babies and children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse.

Although the harm from the abuse might take a long time to be recognisable in the child or young person, professionals may be in a position to observe its indicators earlier, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Effective and ongoing information sharing is key between professionals.

Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm or significant harm. Harm can be caused by:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- bullying
- neglect
- exploitation.

Physical Abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

Sexual Abuse occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including online). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

Bullying in its more extreme forms can be regarded as abuse. Bullying can take many forms, including emotional, physical, racist, sexual, homophobic, verbal and cyber. Bullying can leave children with feelings of worthlessness and self-hatred, they can feel lonely and isolated. At its worst, bullying can result in a child or young person self-harming and even attempting suicide.

Source: [Keeping Children Safe: Our duty to Care, Volunteer Now 2022](#)

Staff should take steps to prevent all forms of bullying. If staff suspect that bullying is taking place, they should contact a Designated Officer who will contact either the school Designated Safeguarding Officer or parent/carer.

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It can include female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Source: [Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland Department of Health \(August 2017\)](#)

Abuse of Children and Young People

Categories of abuse are not mutually exclusive. Abuse seldom falls neatly into one category and it is rare for a child or young person to demonstrate all signs simultaneously.

Child abuse is a very complex phenomenon and, even for "experts", it is often very hard to decide if a child has been abused. If library staff notice injuries to children or young people, it is within their role to ask in an open, non-threatening way how the injury was received. However, staff should never physically examine a child or ask them to remove any article of clothing.

Only visible signs of possible abuse should be noted. Library staff do not have an investigative role and judgement about abuse must be left to the professionals.

Recognising the Signs of Abuse – Children and Young People

Abuse can be either deliberate or the result of ignorance, or lack of training, knowledge or understanding. Often if a child or young person is being abused in one way, they are also being abused in other ways. Library staff may not see all signs and indicators, but need to be aware that abuse can take many forms including the following:

Type of Abuse	Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scratches. • Bite marks or welts. • Bruising on both sides of the ear any symmetrical bruising is suspicious • Burns, especially cigarette burns. • Untreated injuries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-destructive tendencies. • Aggressive towards other children. • Fear of returning home. • Undue fear of adults. • Fearful watchfulness. • Clothing inappropriate to weather – worn to hide part of the body. • Behavioural extremes (withdrawn or aggressive).
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruises, scratches, bite marks. • Difficulty in walking and sitting. • Bruises on inner thighs or buttocks. • Anorexic/bulimic. • Itching in genital area. • Recurrent chronic ailments such as stomach pains or headaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawn, chronic depression. • What child tells you. • Inappropriate language, sexual knowledge for age group. • Making sexual advances to adults or other children or young people. • Poor self-esteem, self-devaluation, lack of confidence. • Wariness of being approached by anyone.
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden speech disorders. • Wetting and soiling. • Signs of mutilation. • Attention seeking behaviour. • Failing to thrive, poor hair and skin. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rocking, head banging, thumb sucking. • Inappropriate emotional response to painful situation. • Indifference to separation from family. • Indiscriminate attachment. • Poor peer relationships.
Bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained bruising. • Asking for/stealing money. • Missing school. • Being aggressive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawn. • Anxious. • Clingy.
Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks extra thin, poorly, and sad. • Constant hunger, lack of energy. • Inadequate, inappropriate clothing. • Poor hygiene – repeatedly unwashed, smelly. • Exposed to danger, lack of supervision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiredness, listlessness. • Withdrawn. • Lack of peer relationships. • Reports that no carer is at home. • Low self-esteem. • Exposure to violence, including violent films. • Untreated illnesses. • Repeated accidents, especially burns.
Exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained physical injuries such as bruising. • Self-harm or suicide attempts. • Regularly suffering from sexually transmitted infections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mood swings or being emotionally volatile.

Where might abuse occur?

Abuse can happen anywhere:

- in a child or young person's own home
- online
- at the home of a relative
- within a school, youth club, church or other organisation
- in rented accommodation or commercial premises
- in public places.

Who Abuses Children and Young People?

Children and young people are most likely to be abused or neglected by parents and/or caregivers. However, child sexual abuse may be perpetrated by a wider group of people, including parents, other relatives, siblings, friends, or others known to the child (e.g. youth workers, coaches, etc.)

- you can't tell by looking at a person whether they are an abuser they don't appear different from the rest of society
- abusers come from all classes in society, all professions and all races
- abuse of children and young people may sometimes be carried out by strangers but it is much more common that the abuser is known to the child or young person and is in a position of trust and/or authority
- it is not only adults who abuse children and young people. Children and young people may suffer abuse from other children and young people.

Children and Young People with a Disability

Safeguards for Children and Young People with a disability should be the same as those for other children. Special input may be required if the child has severe or multiple disabilities, as a number of studies and research shows that children who are disabled are at an increased risk of being abused. Libraries NI has a responsibility to keep all children and young people safe.

Jones, L. et al (2012) Prevalence and risk of violence against children with disabilities: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies. *The Lancet*, 380(9845):899-907. Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) (2022) [Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#).

Children and Young People who Display Sexually Harmful Behaviour

It is estimated that Children and Young People are responsible for about 1/3 of all sexual abuse against children (Hackett, S. (2014) *Research Review* Dartington: Research in Practice) and this may be an underestimate due to low rates of reporting and even lower prosecution rates.

Most young people with harmful sexual behaviours target victims known to them, in many cases members of their immediate or extended family. This can be an especially difficult issue to deal with, partly because it is hard for us to think of children doing such things, but also because it is not always easy to tell the difference between normal sexual exploration and abusive behaviour. Harmful sexual behaviour by young people must be taken seriously. Concerns

should be reported and responded to like any other potentially serious safeguarding concerns in line with safeguarding procedures including consulting local statutory services for advice.

Poor Practice

Poor practice can be viewed as the behaviour that can place a child or young person in a risky situation or leave staff vulnerable to allegations that they were acting inappropriately. The following are a list of some incidents of poor practice but is not exhaustive:

- working in a private or unobserved situations and encouraging an environment of secrets
- not treating young people with respect and dignity
- not following agreed guidelines if physical support is needed, or seeking the parents'/carers' views
- not being up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance for the activity
- banning parents or carers
- constantly giving negative criticism.

Adult Safeguarding - Recognition of Abuse

Adult safeguarding is based on fundamental human rights and on respecting the rights of adults as individuals, treating all adults with dignity and respecting their right to choose. It involves empowering and enabling all adults, including those at risk of harm, to manage their own health and wellbeing and to keep themselves safe. It extends to intervening to protect where harm has occurred or is likely to occur and promoting access to justice. All adults should be central to any actions and decisions affecting their lives.

Safeguarding adults is complex and challenging. The focus of any intervention must be on promoting a proportionate, measured approach to balancing the risk of harm with respecting the adult's choices and preferred outcome for their own life circumstances. The right of a person with capacity to make decisions and remain in control of their life must be respected.

Who is an Adult at Risk of Harm?

The definition of an 'adult at risk of harm' takes account of a complex range of interconnected personal characteristics and/or life circumstances, which may increase exposure to harm either because a person may be unable to protect themselves or their situation may provide opportunities for others to neglect, exploit or abuse them. It is not possible to definitively state when an adult is at risk of harm, as this will vary on a case-by-case basis. The following definition is intended to provide guidance as to when an adult may be at risk of harm, in order that further professional assessment can be sought.

An 'Adult at risk of harm' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- (a) personal characteristics and/or
- (b) life circumstances.

Personal characteristics may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.

Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

An 'Adult in need of protection' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by:

- (a) their personal characteristics and/or
- (b) their life circumstances and
- (c) their inability to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests and
- (d) whether the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, them to be harmed.

Consent

Consideration of consent is central to adult safeguarding. Consent is a clear indication of a willingness to participate in an activity or to accept a service, including a protection service. It may be signalled verbally, by gesture, by willing participation or in writing. No one can give, or withhold, consent on behalf of another adult unless special legal provision for particular purposes has been made for this.

For consent to be valid, it must be given voluntarily by an appropriately informed person who is able to consent to the intervention being proposed. In cases where the individual lacks capacity, decisions will usually be made on behalf of the individual in accordance with current legal provisions. A consent-driven approach to adult safeguarding will always involve:

- a presumption that the adult at the centre of a safeguarding decision or action is able to give or withhold consent unless it is established otherwise
- acknowledging that an adult who lacks capacity to make a decision cannot give consent but that they should still be involved in decision-making as far as possible and given appropriate support
- acknowledging that everyone who has capacity to make a certain decision has the right to pursue a course of action that others may judge to be unwise, but that sometimes a balance must be struck between an individual's human rights and the need to intervene to protect others
- providing support to an adult where they have withheld consent and this has been overridden
- ensuring consent/non-consent is informed through the provision of full and accurate information, making sure that the information is conveyed in a way which the adult fully understands and taking all practicable steps to help the person make and communicate the decision
- understanding that the choices and decisions made by the individual at any one time are not seen as irrevocable or non-negotiable
- Where there is a concern that an adult may be at risk of, or experiencing, harm and there are concerns about coercion or undue influence, this should be referred to the HSC Trust.

Recognising the Signs of Abuse for Adults

Abuse can be either deliberate or the result of ignorance, or lack of training, knowledge or understanding. Often if a person is being abused in one way, they are also being abused in other ways. Library staff may not see all signs and indicators, but need to be aware that abuse can take many forms including the following:

Type of Abuse	Description	Indicator
Physical	Including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, burning, misuse of medication, inappropriate restraint or disciplining a person in an inappropriate way.	Fractures, bruising, burns, pain, marks, not wanting to be touched.
Psychological	Including emotional abuse, verbal abuse, humiliation, bullying, or the use of threats.	Withdrawn, too eager to do everything they are asked, compulsive behaviour, not being able to do things they used to, not being able to concentrate or focus.
Financial or Material	Including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.	Having unusual difficulty with finances, over protection of money and things they own, not paying bills, and lack of normal home comforts.
Sexual	Direct or indirect sexual activity where the adult cannot or does not give his or her consent.	Genital irritation, sexually transmitted diseases, offensive language, recoiling contact, persistent sexually inappropriate behaviour.
Neglect or Act of Omission	Withdrawing or not giving the help that an adult needs, so causing them to suffer.	Having pain or discomfort, overly hungry, thirsty or untidy, deterioration in health, changes in behaviour.
Exploitation	The deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person; to take advantage of another person or situation usually, but not always, for personal gain from using them as a commodity.	May manifest itself in many forms including slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and abuse, or human trafficking.
Institutional	Abuse or mistreatment by a regime or by any individual within any building where care is provided.	Lack of personal clothing/possessions, no care plan, frequent hospital admissions, instances of unsatisfactory professional practice, ill treatment or gross misconduct.

Who might the abuser be?

It can be anyone:

- spouses, friends, family and neighbours
- people employed to provide care
- paid staff or professionals
- volunteers
- strangers.

Where might the abuse occur?

Abuse and neglect can occur anywhere: in their own home or a public place, while they are in hospital or attending a day centre, or in a college or care home. They may be living alone or with others.

How can you be alert to signs of abuse?

- you may see or hear something happen
- an adult may disclose an allegation to you
- a colleague, family member or somebody else may tell you something that causes you concern
- you may notice injuries or physical signs that cause you concern
- you may notice either the victim or perpetrator behaving in a certain way that alerts you something may be wrong.

Bullying of Adults

Bullying has been recognised and defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or sectarian remarks, threats, name-calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of his peer group). The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to adults, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm).

Staff should take steps to prevent all forms of bullying. If staff suspect that bullying is taking place, they should contact a Designated Officer who will contact either a carer, nominated care home manager or relevant Gateway Team.

Strategic and Legal Context

A number of statutes (Legal Context) set out the safeguarding framework and what responsibilities are on the state. These are supplemented by policies and procedures which governments have produced to support the implementation of safeguarding procedures.

Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership 2015

The aim of this policy is to improve safeguarding arrangements for adults who are at risk of harm from abuse, exploitation or neglect. It has been jointly developed and published by the Department of Health and the Department of Justice on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive. It sets out how the Northern Ireland Executive intends adult safeguarding to be taken forward across all Government Departments, their agencies and in partnership with voluntary, community, independent and faith organisations. A key objective is to reduce the incidence of harm from abuse, exploitation or neglect of adults in Northern Ireland; to provide them with effective support and, where necessary, protective responses and access to justice for victims and their families. The adult safeguarding policy document can be accessed on the Department of Health website.

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/adult-safeguarding-prevention-and-protection-partnership-key-documents>

Children and Young People's Strategy 2020 - 2030

The Strategy is designed to provide an overarching holistic structure to drive forward and monitor how departments are progressing the eight outcomes to improve the well-being of children and young people. [Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030 | Department of Education](#)

Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015

The Act was introduced to improve co-operation amongst Departments and a wide range of bodies including District Councils, Health and Social Care Trusts, Health and Social Care Board, the Education Authority, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Police Service for Northern Ireland and the Probation Board as they deliver services aimed at improving the well-being of children and young people.

The Act also outlines how the Children and Young Peoples Strategy should be monitored; requires the Programme for Government to take account of reports on the Strategy; and provides powers for statutory bodies to pool budgets to support services for children and young people.

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2015/10/pdfs/nia_20150010_en.pdf

Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2016)

This Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety document 'Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People' was originally issued in March 2016 and refreshed in August 2017. It provides the overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people in the statutory, private, independent, community, voluntary and faith sectors. It outlines how

communities, organisations and individuals must work both individually and in partnership to ensure children and young people are safeguarded as effectively as possible.

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland>

Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967

Section 5 of the Act outlines the responsibility of any citizen to report to the police an arrestable offence. This includes reporting of child abuse.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/58/contents>

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC)
The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted in 1989 and ratified by the United Kingdom in 1991 and in the Republic of Ireland in 1992. It contains over 40 articles that state some basic values about the treatment of children. Of particular significance are:

Article 2 – relates to the equality of all children

Article 3 – to the best interests principle

Article 6 – the child's right to survival and development

Article 12 – requires that children have a right to express their views and for those views to be respected

Article 19 – right to protection.

This underpins all the legislation in relation to children since then including the Children (NI) Order 1995.

This should translate into practice as:

- volunteers, children and parents knowing that your organisation is familiar with and promotes the rights of children
- UNCRC principles form the basis of your policies and procedures
- within your organisation children are:
 - kept safe from harm
 - listened to and heard
 - valued and respected
 - encouraged and praised
 - involved in decision making.

<http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/uncrc.asp#Two>

DfC Safeguarding Forum

The Safeguarding Forum was established to share best practice learning examples and ensure a consistent approach to safeguarding from Arm's Length Bodies across the culture, arts and leisure sector within the Engaged Communities Group.

- The Safeguarding Forum has representatives from ALBs, Department of Health, Safeguarding Board NI, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and Volunteer Now
- The Safeguarding Forum meets, twice a year, to review issues including practice, policy, procedure and training, bringing together all of those involved in safeguarding, across our Engaged Communities ALB's
- The Forum is empowered to meet on an ad hoc basis to address specific issues of concern, as and when they arise.

Keeping Adults Safe: A Shared Responsibility – Standards and Guidance for Good Practice in Adult Safeguarding (updated January 2022)

This publication contains the standards and guidance for good practice in working with adults. All organisations have a responsibility to ensure that adults are protected and this publication will help your organisation to do this. The publication contains eight sections each containing a standard and supporting

<http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/training-and-standards/keeping-adults-safe-a-shared-responsibility>

Keeping Children Safe: Our Duty to Care (updated January 2022) – Guidance for Voluntary Organisations

Child protection is everyone's business and the establishment of good practice continually minimises the potential for abuse and maximises the levels of safety for children in the community. The original 'Our Duty to Care', Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety guidelines were produced in 1995. They have been well-received by a wide range of voluntary and community organisations and have assisted them in developing their own child protection policies, procedures and good practice.

This revised edition was in response to changes in legislation and to developments in good practice. It provides information and more detailed guidelines to ensure that those organisations working with children and young people continue to meet three very important objectives:

- ensuring that children's safety is paramount
 - creating the right atmosphere for rewarding and enjoyable experiences
 - increasing the peace of mind for all concerned
 - investment in children is investment in the future health of the community.
- The 'Our Duty to Care' guidelines make a significant contribution to that investment.

<http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/training-and-standards/keeping-children-safe-our-duty-to-care>

Online Safety Act 2023 – Guidance

The Online Safety Act 2023 (the Act) is a new set of laws that protects children and adults online. It puts a range of new duties on social media companies and search services, making them more responsible for their users' safety on their platforms.

The Act's duties apply to search services and services that allow users to post content online or to interact with each other. This includes a range of websites, apps and other services, including social media services, consumer file cloud storage and sharing sites, video sharing platforms, online forums, dating services, and online instant messaging services.

[Online Safety Act 2023](#)

Draft Programme for Government 2024-27: 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'

The draft Programme for Government was published on 5 September 2024 with public consultation completed on 4 November. The focus is on three

core areas; Doing what matters most today, Building new foundations and Shaping a better tomorrow.

[Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most](#)

Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

From September 2012, there have been changes to safeguarding arrangements in relation to vetting in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, arising from the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, which amends the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order. This includes a new and more limited definition of regulated activity. This new definition is intended to reduce the number and scope of positions which are eligible for a criminal record check with Barred List information. The DBS decides whether it is appropriate for a person to be placed on or removed from a barred list and maintains the DBS children's barred list and the DBS adults' barred list for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/9/contents/enacted>

Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) co-ordinates, and ensures the effectiveness of, work to protect and promote the welfare of children. The Board includes representatives from health, social care, the police, the Probation Board, youth justice, education, district councils and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland is responsible for developing policies and procedures to improve how different agencies work together.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/7/contents>

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 - (SVGO)

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) (formally the Independent Safeguarding Authority) established as a single agency to make barring decisions on those not suitable to work closely with children or adults. Organisations have a legal duty to refer information to the DBS in certain circumstances. In all cases there are two conditions, both of which must be met to trigger a referral to the DBS by a regulated activity provider (organisation that arrange an activity for a vulnerable person). A referral must be made to the DBS when an organisation:

- (a) withdraws permission for an individual to engage in regulated activity, or would have done so had that individual not resigned, retired, been made redundant or been transferred to a position which is not regulated activity
- (b) Because they think that the individual has:
 - engaged in relevant conduct
 - satisfied the Harm Test
 - received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence.

If both conditions have been met the information must be referred to the DBS. The referral should be made to the DBS when the regulated activity provider has gathered sufficient evidence as part of their investigations to support their reasons for withdrawing permission to engage in regulated activity and in following good practice, consulted with their Health and Social Care Trust if appropriate.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2007/1351/contents>

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act aims to change the practices of government and public authorities so that equality of opportunity and good relations are central to policy making and service delivery. The Section 75 statutory duties aim to encourage public authorities to address inequalities and demonstrate measurable positive impact on the lives of people experiencing inequalities. Its effective implementation should improve the quality of life for all of the people of Northern Ireland.

These duties apply to government departments and agencies, local councils, health trusts, housing associations, colleges and universities, and education and library bodies.

[ECNI - Section 75 duties for Public Authorities - Equality Commission NI \(equalityni.org\)](https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI-Section-75-duties-for-Public-Authorities)

Sexual Offences Act 2003

Part 2 of the Act applies to Northern Ireland and as amended sets out notification requirements for sex offenders. These are augmented by new public protection arrangements as set out in Secretary of State's (now Minister of Justice) guidance under article 50 of the Criminal Justice Order. Public Protection Arrangements (NI) were established on 1st October 2008 and put in place structures to deal with sex offenders and other violent offenders. These arrangements are also supplemented by guidance published by the DHSSPS under HSC Circular 3/96 (revised) Sharing to Safeguard.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>

Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008

Brings Northern Ireland in line with legislation in England and Wales and introduces some new offences and increased tariffs for those who harm children. This Order also establishes the age of sexual consent for Northern Ireland as 16 to bring us in to line with the rest of the United Kingdom

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2008/1769/contents>

Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2024 – 2031

This is a seven year, cross-departmental Strategy that tackles domestic and sexual abuse. The Strategy has been developed by, and its delivery will be overseen by, the Department of Health and the Department of Justice in conjunction with the Department for Communities, the Department of Education and the Executive Office.

[Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy and Performance Framework 2024 - 2031 | Department of Health](#)

Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls

On 16 September 2024 the Executive launched a Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls. This framework intends to bring together the whole of society and government to address this issue resulting in investment in a range of voluntary and community sector projects.

[Ending Violence Against Women and Girls | The Executive Office](#)

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

The Children (NI) Order 1995 deals with the care, upbringing and protection of children. It aims to provide a comprehensive framework for the law relating to children in Northern Ireland. The central thrust of the Order is that *“the welfare of the child or young person must be the paramount consideration”* and it is this essential principle which guides the advice which follows.

This law had wide ranging impact on private law – the relationship of children to their families, and public law – the relationship of children to the state in terms of services and child protection.

The order redefined previous parental rights over children as parental responsibility. The order has widened the scope of being able to acquire parental responsibility to other carers such as grandparents, aunts, or local social services. The order sets the legal context for the state to intervene to protect children from significant harm.

These are the 5 cornerstone principles of good practice under the Children (NI) Order:

Paramountcy - The welfare of the child shall be the paramount consideration in any decision made.

Parental Responsibility - Parents have responsibilities towards their children rather than rights over them. A wider range of people can now have parental responsibility. **Prevention** - Preventing children from being abused and supporting them to promote their health and welfare.

Partnership - The best way of meeting children’s needs is to work with parents and carers, and for agencies to work together.

Protection - Duty to investigate where a child is at risk of significant harm because of a lack of care or actual abuse.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1995/756/contents/made>

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR STAFF WHEN DEALING WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

Code of Behaviour for Staff

Libraries NI is committed to practices which actively promote the welfare and safety of children, young people and adults and protects them from harm. Libraries NI wishes to establish and maintain an enjoyable, welcoming, safe environment where children, young people and adults can participate in library services, both physical and online, free from abuse, bullying and discrimination. Libraries NI accepts and recognises the responsibility to develop awareness of the issues which cause children and adults harm.

Staff will:

- act in a way which will promote, safeguard and protect the welfare of children, young people and adults with whom they come into contact
- ensure that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. They must at all times give careful thought to their attitudes, demeanour and language
- be committed to preventing any form of discrimination (direct or indirect) against any person on grounds of age, disability, race, gender, status, sexual orientation, religious belief or political opinion
- be committed to preventing any form of bullying against children, young people and adults and report any concerns
- listen to children, young people and adults and treat them with respect
- ensure their communication with children, young people and adults is appropriate to the age and understanding of the child or adult. Libraries NI recognises that this is especially important for children and adults with disabilities and for children or adults whose preferred language is not English.

Staff will never:

- use verbally abusive language to a child, young person or adult including demeaning or sarcastic remarks
- let disclosures that a child, young person or adult makes go unchallenged or unrecorded
- spend excessive amounts of time alone with a child, young person or adult away from others
- make sexually suggestive comments to or within earshot of a child, young person or adult
- do things of a personal nature for children, young people or adult that they can do for themselves or that their parent/carer can do for them
- engage in rough, physical games including horseplay
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind. Touch should always be in response to the needs of the child, young person or adult and should always be appropriate to the age and stage of development of the individual
- never handle money on behalf of service users of any age
- physically restrain a child, young person or adult unless the restraint is to:

- prevent physical injury to them or yourself
- prevent damage to any property
- prevent or stop the commission of an offence.

In all circumstances physical restraint must be appropriate and reasonable. Staff should have reasonable grounds for believing that restraint is necessary to justify its use. They should only use restraint where they consider it is necessary to prevent serious harm, including risk of injury to the child or young person or others. Staff should use their judgement to decide if restraint is necessary, reasonable and proportionate. This will involve assessing the risks reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention involved, taking account of the needs of the child or young person or others.

Staff (as in glossary) who breach the code of behaviour may be subject to Libraries NI's disciplinary procedures.