Safeguarding young people during the Covid-19 pandemic

A guide for designated safeguarding leads in voluntary youth organisations

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Introduction

During the pandemic, youth organisations are facing unprecedented challenges to how they work. Staff and volunteers may be unavailable; they will be working in new and uncomfortable ways or facing significant stress. There are new demands and requirements, pushing us all to work in different ways.

At the same time, there are new and emerging risks faced by young people and our communities. People experiencing or at risk of harm may be less visible to you. Those with an intent to cause harm may take advantage of the situation to find new routes to access those at risk. Existing safeguarding policies and procedures may not have been designed for the ways your activities will have changed.

As three consultants all with experience in working with voluntary organisations in safeguarding, we wanted to do what we could to help you during this time. We have collaborated in different ways over many years.

Your fundamental responsibility as a youth organisation to ensure that your staff, volunteers, young people you work with and others connected to your activities are proactively protected from harm, remains. We want to help you meet those duties and think about what effective safeguarding means for you.

Together we have drafted some key advice to help navigate the main risks, issues and considerations in safeguarding practice. We hope you, our safeguarding colleagues, find it useful in keeping young people safe during this unprecedented time.

We would like your feedback, comments or ideas about this guide. If you want to get some support or discuss how any of us can help you with your safeguarding practice,
[read our profiles.](#)

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Who is this guide for?

This guide is for voluntary community and youth organisations in England. It is primarily aimed at designated safeguarding leads with a good knowledge of essential safeguarding requirements.

How can you use this guide?

It helps you design and deliver effective safeguarding practices with young people (aged 13-25 years old) during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As we are addressing Covid-19 specific issues, you will need to check existing resources for underpinning safeguarding principles, and we have provided some links to assist with this.

The guide is designed so that you can dip into sections as needed – you don't need to read the whole document, but there may be some sections that relate, so click the hyperlink to check. Each section gives you a short introduction on its purpose and the issues it can help you address.

Each organisation and the young people they work with is unique. This guide is provided for general information purposes which you should adapt to your specific context and the risks you face. This guidance is not intended as a substitute for your professional judgement or specific legal advice. Remember, your organisation may have additional forms of laws and regulation to comply with; especially if it delivers regulated services for children or adults at risk.

Remember: the situation is evolving fast; always check latest available guidance

The pace of change is rapid. In this fast paced situation with regulation, Government guidance and expectations evolving. We have therefore focused on setting out guiding principles. We have worked to ensure this is accurate and relevant on day of publication and wherever possible, we have provided live links, but you should use these to check up to date information at the source.

The legal and regulatory context

This section looks at changes to laws and regulations around safeguarding during the Covid-19 pandemic. Use it to understand and effectively meet your organisations' legal responsibilities and the Charity Commission's expectations.

Need a reminder of the basics?
- For an introductory guide to the law and regulation, look at the NCVO guide to safeguarding laws, rules and duties.
- For more detail, see the NSPCC guide to child protection law in England and Safeguarding Essential by the Ann Craft Trust.

Child protection laws and responsibilities remain in force
Public bodies still have their legal duty to promote the welfare and safeguarding of children and young people. Local authorities must receive and manage safeguarding concerns about a child and should continue to follow the immediate protection procedures set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children.

- To learn more about local authorities safeguarding duties see the guidance Coronavirus (Covid-19): guidance for local authorities on children's social care (published 3rd April 2020).
- Read our advice about handling concerns and disclosures.

Laws and responsibilities on safeguarding adults at risk of harm remain in force...
Local Authorities retain their statutory duty to keep adults safe from abuse or neglect. Local Authorities must offer safeguarding oversight and enquiries where there is a concern that an adult has care and support needs (whether met by the local authority or not) and are experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect and they are unable to protect themselves because of their care and support needs.

...however, wider care and support for adults may be eased or reduced
The Coronavirus Act 2020 allows local authorities to not comply with some duties under the Care Act 2014, such as undertaking assessments or fulfilling requirements in care plans. For example, when their workforce is significantly depleted, demand is high and urgent or acute needs may not be met, local authorities may disapply their social care duties. This is known as making an 'easement'.

Local authorities should comply with their Care Act duties for as long and as far as possible and only make changes where this is "essential in order to maintain the highest possible level of services". Local authorities can not block, restrict or withdraw whole services. Rather they must make and apply person-centred decisions about who is most in need of care and who might need to have care and support temporarily reduced or withdrawn. In doing so they should prioritise those with the highest need. Any change resulting from such a decision should be proportionate to the circumstances in a particular Local Authority.

However, even with this, local authorities remain under a duty to meet needs where failure to do so would breach an individual's human rights under the European Convention on Human Rights and must always comply with the Equality Act 2010.

Any decisions on an easement should be made locally, with the involvement of the relevant lead member (councillor with responsibility for social care) and with the Health and Wellbeing Board

informed. This decision should be communicated to all providers, service users and carers, and the Government must also be told.

What you can do
As a voluntary youth organisation, if you work with young people over 18 who rely on social care provision, you should:

- Actively engage with the local authority while they consider any easement and actively consider alternatives to the easement.
- Local Authorities' duties relating to prevention and providing information and advice also remain in place. Push to ensure that the local authority is informing service users of their decisions in an accessible manner
- Advise individuals to continue to access advocacy support to support them in informing any decision.
- Ask that there is a timetable for how the easements will be reviewed regularly and that this is done with insight from voluntary organisations
- All assessments and reviews that are delayed or not completed need to be followed up and completed in full once the easements are terminated. Check that these are being carefully tracked.

Learn more in the Government guidance: [Care Act easements: guidance for local authorities](#) and other guidance on [Coronavirus and adult social care](#).

Other key changes for specific groups of children and young people
The Coronavirus Act removes local authorities' duties to make certain assessments of needs, including:

- Children who are likely to have care and support needs after they turn 18;
- Young carers who are likely to have support needs after they turn 18; and
- Carers who are likely to have support needs after the child they care for turns 18.

However, young people who are leaving care retain other rights under the Children Act 1989.

The Act replaces the 'absolute duty' on schools to make provision in an Education and Health Care Plan with a temporary amendment that the schools just make 'reasonable endeavours' to make this provision. This is likely to mean that with disruption to staffing, schools and local authorities have more flexibility in how they meet their duties.

- Learn more from the Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSEA) about [the impact on EHC plans and SEN provision](#).
- Learn more in the Government guidance on [EHC needs assessments and plans: guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)](#).

The [Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020](#) make a series of changes to services and care of children and young people. This removes several duties on providers of services to children in care, relating to fostering and adoption, to children's homes and the inspection of services. This includes reducing duties to have independent reviews of children's in care and for them to see their social worker.

Learn more from Article 39 about [the reduction of safeguards for children](#).

You still must continue to follow data protection laws and share information as appropriate
GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information to keep children and young people safe. That was the case before Covid-19 and remains true now.

Learn more from the Information Commissioner Office about [data protection and Coronavirus](#).

Health and safety laws apply, but Health & Safety Executive has relaxed duties on first aid
While your organisation must still comply with their general health & safety duties, the HSE advises that you review your first aid needs assessment, reducing cover needed or share the cover with others in the same building.

If you hold a first-aid certificate that expires on or after 16 March 2020 and cannot access requalification training because of Covid-19, you may qualify for a 3-month extension linked to certain requirements.

Learn more about on the HSE website [Coronavirus and first aid cover](#).

Reassessing your organisations' risks, revising policies & continuing your support

This section looks at how to identify and manage emerging risks facing your organisation and those you seek to support. With this information, you can revise key policies and procedures. Use it to quality check your risk management and decision making about your policies.

Need a reminder of the basics?
- The Charity Commission has guidance on risk management.
- The NSPCC has guidance on developing a child-specific safeguarding policy.
- NCVO has guidance on essential policies and procedures for any organisation.

You must manage risks
The Charity Commission expects all trustees to regularly review and assess the risks faced by their charity in all areas of its work and plan for the management of those risks.

- If you have a risk register, review this. If you do not have one, your trustee annual report should include a risk statement and details of the key risks facing the organisation. Check whether these remain fit for purpose.
- You may consider it necessary to do a specific risk assessment for your organisation activities during the pandemic. Ideally, you should keep a written record of the key issues and decisions on mitigation measures.

Gather evidence to inform your risk assessment
- **Consider live safeguarding issues:** are there live safeguarding concerns that need to be managed, such as concerns raised before the pandemic or since? Do you have a plan for managing this? Who will deputise for roles in managing this concern? Do you have effective record keeping ensuring continuity, actions are not missed, young people do not have to share information with different workers repeatedly.
- **Consider how you will continue to support young people you are working with:** Ask yourself:
    - How will you continue to support a young person if their allocated worker/volunteer is off sick or furloughed?
    - How will you keep young people and their parents/carers informed about how you are managing during the pandemic and what will happen if their allocated worker is absent?
    - Do you need to maintain a chronology and/or summary on file so that managers and those covering can quickly pick up the essential information?
    - Have you sourced partners and relevant contact details of services where you can signpost young people if needed. You may want to prepare a list of relevant organisation names, numbers and websites and publish this?
- **Consider the groups that you work with and the risks they face:** below we have listed some of the groups especially at risk during the pandemic. You should consider the groups you seek to work with and identify any additional or increased risks that you need to be aware of? Are their priority needs going to change? What level of service do you usually provide to them and how does this contribute towards keeping them safe?
- **Consider the data about your workforce:** do you have up to date and complete information on the status of your staff and volunteers? How many are available? How many are 'shielded'? Do you have accurate information on those with caring responsibilities or pre-existing health

conditions? If you are a larger organisation, can you estimate the expected peak absenteeism rate and how this is likely to develop and subside? How will you manage this?

- **Consider how partner organisations are impacted:** How have other organisations you work with, receive referrals from or regularly refer onwards been affected? Have key staff in partner agencies – including their Designated Safeguarding Leads – been furloughed? Do you have details for how they may manage concerns during this period? How are you and your partners keeping each other up to date about how to contact and work with each other effectively?
- **Consider your legal obligations:** do you have contracts with funders or public services which you are obliged to fulfil? Have you had contact with them to manage these expectations? Learn more about meeting your legal obligation in this [Bates Wells article](#)**.**
- **Consider how the pandemic is impacting your area:** What are the infection rates of Covid-19 in your area? Have local health services changed and new facilities opened?
- **Consider your current policies and procedures:** Are any current policies and procedures no longer fit for purpose or suitable due to the changes to how you work? Who will deal with whistleblowing or allegations about your staff/volunteers?
- **Consider your blind spots? W**hat are the issues you don't know enough about yet? How will you find out more about them?

Prioritise your actions and what new or changed activities you will be undertaking
After considering the risks facing your organisation and those you seek to work with, you will need to make decisions on your activities going forward. You may find you have limited funds, staff/volunteer capacity and an increase in demand for your service. You should decide what you are prioritising during the pandemic. This will impact on your operations and what you expect from staff and volunteers.

For any new or changed activities, ask yourself:
- **Is it in line with your organisation purpose?** Your organisation should be primarily driven by meeting its existing charitable objects as they have been articulated through your current strategy. You may need to consider how the activities you want to deliver further these organisational goals; even if the way you deliver this may be different during the pandemic.
- **Is another responder better placed to help?** Before undertaking new activities, always check if others are working and/or be better placed to deliver the activity. You should always consider a partnership with existing work rather than trying to start something new so that gaps in service and unnecessary duplication are minimised.
- **Is Covid-19 the right focus for your organisation?** Whilst the focus of many public services and charities may be on the Covid-19 response; this can sometimes draw focus away from other risks of harm. If you have expertise in specific issues or community of young people, consider if the existing risks they face remain or would have been exacerbated by the pandemic. You may be more effective by focussing on other issues which could be neglected through this time.
- **Can you do no harm?** Any new ways of delivering your work should do no harm. It is essential that you consider the potential risks in new ways of working. Your activity – no matter how well-intentioned it is - is not neutral. How it is delivered risks causing harm, facilitating the spread of Covid-19 and potentially cause further demand on health and social care services.

Check if you are currently or likely to undertake regulated activity
It is an offence to employ a staff member or allow a volunteer to do this 'regulated activity' if they are barred from doing so. Therefore, you should require people doing any role with 'regulated activity' to get a higher level of criminal record check.

Ask yourself:
- Are you clear whether your usual activities include regulated activity?

- Where you are delivering regulated activity, is it essential currently?
- Have any new ways of working either introduced regulated activity where previously it was not, or vice versa?
- If there is a change to a role and the individual is now doing a regulated activity, you should seek an enhanced with barred list criminal records check. They need to be informed and agree to the changed activity and the level of any new check before they commence the regulated activity.

Check and, where necessary, amend policies and procedures

Re-read your Safeguarding policy and procedures. Consider whether any changes are needed for working safely when delivering any changed or new activities.

Involve your staff, volunteers, service users and other stakeholders in this review as much as possible. It will help you to come up with a better assessment, workable solutions and keep everyone up to date with how you are working

Make sure your expectations are realistic but be cautious of relaxing conditions or expectations. Safer working practice should be at the heart of everything you do. The pandemic does not remove your safeguarding responsibility and remains more vital due to increased risks. **Everyone in your team must be consistently following approved ways of working.**

Depending on what must be changed, you may reissue the policy or an annex to the policy.

When making changes at speed, ask yourself:
- Are statutory and key internal requirements continued to be met?
- Is the change going to make you more efficient or better able to meet risks? If you are not sure, should you make the change?
- How long will the change last: Is it change temporary or a likely long term? Is the planned approach durable for that expected period of change?
- Have you got adequate approval for the change?
- If any role and responsibilities are different, are you confident the new postholders have the time, skills and experience for the new role? Has this been verified?
- Are all contact details for Safeguarding Officer/Lead correct?
- How do you plan to embed within and across your organisation? Is a training or reorientation session needed?
- Who might be impacted by any change? Will this affect other services?
- How will it be monitored? What internal systems are in place to check that procedures are set and measured in such a way that it can be evaluated by both internal and external users and verifiers?
- How will you gather feedback on any issues with the changes and that they are not adding or causing concerns?

Record your decisions

You may be working at pace and under pressure, but you should keep records of decisions including:
- Your rationale
- other options considered and rejected
- who authorised the decisions
- any conditions on their implementation
- any expiry or review date

This can help protect you should there be any claims of liability for actions down the line or to answer any queries from the Charity Commission or statutory services. It also will help you evaluate how effective your new ways of working are and understand why you made changes at the time.

Communicate your changes

You must communicate any changes to your staff and volunteers. These documents form the basis of the legal contract (for staff) and agreement (for volunteers).

Consider what changes are relevant to young people, trustees, parents, partner organisations and other supporters. Let them know how they can continue to work with you. If possible, put the relevant information on your website or have a Frequently Asked Questions sheet that you can refer to, so your messages are consistent.

As you are communicating changes, ask yourself:
- Are all your team aware of the specific changes have been made and what you are expecting from them?
- Are all your team aware when the changes come into force?
- Do all your team understand their role and responsibilities in safeguarding and what they must do to keep everyone safe? Does this include any changes in how to report any safeguarding concerns, allegations and disclosures?
- Does everyone in contact with young people know how to recognise a safeguarding concern and how to support someone to tell their story safely?
- Does your team know when these will be reviewed?
- Does your team know who and how they can contact you and have input on any challenges with implementing the changes?

Remember to keep everyone suitably informed as and when you make any further changes.

Monitor implementation of any changes

Risks can change: you need to stay informed. Identify and stick to trusted and established sources of information that will help you understand emerging risks or changes. This will include the gov.uk website, umbrella bodies such as NCVO, NAVCA and sector-specific bodies. Make sure you designate someone in the organisation to monitor/lead this and be clear how and what key issues they will be looking for.

Young people at risk of harm during the pandemic

This section helps you consider those who are particularly affected by the pandemic or at increased risk of harm during this period. Use it to inform your decisions about who you are working with and where to find out more about supporting that group.

Need a reminder of the basics?
- See NCVOs guide to understand different types of harm and abuse, and how people may be affected.
- See NSPCC guide to different types of abuse of children.

Many groups will be particularly by Covid-19 directly or the impacts of the pandemic on our communities. For ease, we have grouped these in categories, but it is essential to remember the diverse and overlapping experiences of young people at risk. Many may be in affected by multiple issues, and a holistic approach is needed to respond and offer them appropriate support. In addition, these specific issues overlap with their own identity shaped by their culture, family support networks, experiences, health and medical needs and previous access to support.

While any young person can experience abuse, neglect or harm; the pandemic is exacerbating existing inequalities in accessing services and support. Those with the biggest barriers to support are likely to be most disadvantaged. You should consider which young people you work with are most at risk in your area and which you are best placed to support.

- Learn more in the NYAs Out of Sight report which details the scale and prevalence of young people's needs that are amplified by the pandemic.
- The Children's Commissioner for England has published 'We're all in this together?' about children 'vulnerable' during the crisis. This includes profiles of local areas.

Statutory services remain responsible for most services for children and young people. Schools remain open to what the Government has defined as 'vulnerable children'. This includes:
- those who have a social worker; including "children in need"; those who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after by the local authority
- those up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Others that schools and other education providers may also want to support if they wish to do so.

Cross-cutting groups

Those in contact with perpetrators of harm
The National Crime Agency believes there are a minimum 300,000 individuals in the UK posing a sexual threat to children, either through physical 'contact' abuse or online.

Children and young people experiencing neglect
Evidence from Government is that nearly half of children with a child protection plan were initially categorised as experiencing neglect (48%) in 2018-19. Approximately 3 out of every 100 children in England will be known to children's social care as being a child in need of support in 2018-19. These families will likely be under significant stress at this time. Many more children will be experiencing harm and will not be known to children's services.

Children and young people in poverty

Statistics show that before the pandemic, 30% of children live in poverty. Lone-parent families and Children in large families are at a far greater risk of living in poverty. 70% of children growing up in poverty live in a household where at least one person works. Many of these children will be at increased risks of poverty due to parents being furloughed on a reduced wage or no wage due to self-isolation or redundancy. Some will face higher risks of food insecurity with the demand for food banks escalating. You should check whether the family's circumstances have changed and if they know how to access support.

BAME young people

CharitySoWhite has compiled evidence of how Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic people may be particularly adversely affected by Covid-19. For example, the disproportionate burden experienced by BAME people of poverty, overcrowded housing and unequal access to health services.

Disabled people

Many disabled children and young people – or those with disabled parents or carers – will be particularly affected by the pandemic. Government statistics show that nearly two-thirds of disabled people said coronavirus-related concerns were affecting their wellbeing, from loneliness and problems at work, to worsening mental health. Many disabled people will be "shielded" and been advised not to leave their homes for many months. Barriers to accessing information, care and support can be particularly affected as rights to access statutory services are removed or services change how they operate. There is a huge variety of care, support and information needs amongst disabled people and these can often be condition or impairment specific. There are also significant changes in support available in each local area and local disabled people-led groups being heavily hit.

Specific groups of children and young people at risk of harm

Below we have highlighted some of the specific issues and risks which groups of young people – and those that care for them – may be experiencing due to Covid-19. **Click to follow the link.**

Individuals with underlying health conditions	Individuals in abusive households	Those with poor mental health; including those experiencing first psychotic episode
Young carers	Children facing sexual or criminal exploitation	Children in care
Children leaving care and care experienced young people	Refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants	Those with or affected by drug, alcohol or substance misuse issues
Young people in or affected by debt	Young people gambling or affected by household gambling	Young people at risk of extremism and radicalisation
Survivors of abuse	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans young people	Individuals experiencing bereavement

Group	About this group and the issues they face during the Pandemic	Where to learn more
Individuals with underlying health conditions	• The government have advised people at very high risk of severe illness from Covid-19 because of an underlying health condition to be 'shielded'. This includes may who are immuno-suppressed or have repository conditions. This means they should not leave their homes.	Government guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable
Individuals in abusive households	• Social distancing will place young people in households with perpetrators of harm, such as childhood maltreatment (abuse and/or neglect) or they may witness or experience domestic and/or intimate partner abuse. • Social distancing may exacerbate or initiate child to adult abuse. This can include physical, emotional or financial abuse as well as property damage. Adults may be reluctant to report or seek help due to feelings of shame or fear of consequences. • Social distancing may exacerbate or initiate peer to peer abuse. This can include physical, emotional or financial abuse as well as property damage. • Being under stress, in close contact and without other distraction mechanisms may lead to perpetrators being abusive more regularly or with greater severity. • Other services and community members will not be able to see those experiencing harm as regularly or at all. • Children known to the local authority as being "in need" or have a child protection plan should attend an educational setting, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk • The government expects multi-agency child protection conferences to go ahead, using communication technology where appropriate.	NSPCC guidance on keeping children safe from abuse during Covid-19 Safelives guidance on domestic abuse and Covid-19 Refuge information for survivors SCIE guidance on domestic violence Government guidance on children's social care and coronavirus Government guidance on vulnerable children to attend education settings GALOP – the LGBT+ anti-violence charity ManKind

Group	About this group and the issues they face during the Pandemic	Where to learn more
Those with poor mental health; including those experiencing first psychotic episode	• CAMHS services may be changing or reduced, and regular therapeutic services may need to be undertaken online. • There is a risk of poorer access to medication or longer prescriptions being given. • Increased stress may lead to lower adherence to medication or self-soothing through additional use of medication and/or illegal/illicit drugs. • An individual's first significant poor mental health or psychotic episode can be triggered by facing trauma and stress. Services may be stretched to respond or identify the early signs. • Laws on responding to severe mental health distress have been amended by the Coronavirus Act 2020. • Anticipate a spike post lock down of all mental health issues e.g. self harm, OCD and socialising difficulties	Guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak Children & Young Peoples Mental Health Coalition Covid-19 Protecting Children & Young People's Mental Health Briefing YoungMinds has links for additional support Rethink have guidance of supporting someone in a mental health crisis and how Covid-19 is affecting mental health laws.
Young carers	• Given the increased time at home, young carers may take on additional responsibilities for caring for and/or administrating medication and toileting support. • Young carers may miss out on accessing school work because they are unwilling to go to school for fear of getting Covid-19 and giving to family members. Parents may deny access to school for same reason. May be home schooling siblings and not have time to do own work • Local authority care services and/or voluntary groups services may be reduced. • Young carers may be entitled to additional financial support due to changes to benefits. • Young careers often have limited or reduced social circle so may experience a greater sense of loneliness and abandonment than others	Government guidance for those who provide unpaid care to friends or family Carers Trust information on coronavirus Carers UK information on coronavirus

Group	About this group and the issues they face during the Pandemic	Where to learn more

Children facing sexual or criminal exploitation	• Reduced income of family and/or young person, may put some young people at risk of being recruited by "gangs", offering a place to hang out, money and status.
	• Online exploitation may mean being persuaded or forced to:
	    o send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
	    o film or stream sexual activities
	    o have sexual conversations.
	• Once an abuser has images, video or copies of conversations, they might use threats and blackmail to force a young person to take part in other sexual activity. They may also share the images and videos with others or circulate them online.
	• Children being on the web longer with potentially limited parental engagement may increase the access to young people, especially if they offer a space to chat and befriend.
		The Children's Society more information on risks, staying safe and spotting the signs.
		
		ThinkUKnow advice for professions during coronavirus and advice for parents; including an emoji dictionary
		
		CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command) reports of online exploitation.

Children in care	• Children who are in care and/or have a social worker are classed as 'vulnerable' by the Government and should be attending an education setting, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk. • Those in residential or foster care may face additional stress as placements are changed due to other illness and/or reduction in staffing. • Children may have reduced contact with their families and kinship carers. Professionals and foster carers are encouraged to be flexible and find new ways to allow contact to continue.	Government guidance on guidance on isolation for residential educational settings Government guidance on vulnerable children to attend education settings Family Rights Group has guidance for families with children in care The Fostering Network information on coronavirus

Group	About this group and the issues they face during the Pandemic	Where to learn more
Children leaving care and care experienced young people	• Government guidance allows local authorities to have discretion to assess whether care leavers should continue to transition into suitable accommodation and/or independence or remain in their placement during the pandemic. • Care experienced young people may have limited or no familial support when isolating. • Care leavers in university may have to remain on Halls as they have no familial home to self-isolate in during the lockdown. • Young people may not be able to meet their Personal Adviser or others professionals supporting them.	Government guidance on care leavers and coronavirus Become information on coronavirus
Refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants	• Many of the immigration enforcement measures have been paused • Those who would ordinarily have their support stopped because their asylum claim or appeal has been rejected, will remain accommodated until the end of June 2020. • Young people and their parents may be fearful of accessing health or other support or face barriers to accessing support (due to language, availability or lack of access to internet) • Increased risk of isolation, lack of access to correct information/in own language and increased risk of exploitation	Government guidance on asylum and coronavirus Government guidance on modern slavery and Coronavirus Freemovement information on coronavirus Refugee Council information on coronavirus
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans young people	• LGBT young people may be in self-isolating in homophobic, biphobic or transphobic households • Many LGBT young people may not be able to access usual LGBT support groups or have regular contact with LGBT peer • Those with an intent to cause harm may use LGBT focussed platforms and apps to contact young people. • Those currently transitioning may find Gender Identity Services may be closed or reduced. Trans* young people may not be able to access their usual support channels.	Stonewall advice on coronavirus and LGBT inclusive support Gendered Intelligence advice on coronavirus MermaidsUK advice on coronavirus GALOP – the LGBT+ anti-violence charity

Group	About this group and the issues they face during the Pandemic	Where to learn more
Those with or affected by drug, alcohol or substance misuse issues	• Members of a household may be at increased risk of either developing or increasing dependency on drugs or alcohol. • Young people with parents/carers or other household members who have a dependency may be at risk of harm or abuse such as neglect, violence or criminal behaviour to attempt to access substances during lockdown • Drug users may take greater risks to access drugs; both breaking lockdown rules or needing to travel in different ways • Drug users may struggle to maintain safe storage of drugs or opioid substitution treatments, get access to clean works or remove dirty works and other equipment. • Those that drink regularly or use some drugs can experience dangerous withdrawal symptoms if they stop or cut down suddenly. • With drug supplies may be reduced and dealers may cut or mix them with other substances.	Wearewithyou information on coronavirus (formerly AddAction) Addfam information on coronavirus The National Association for Children of Alcoholics online resource pack on coronavirus Talktofrank information on coronavirus for young people
Young people in or affected by debt	• Many families and young people themselves may be struggling financially, seeing their own or household's income severely reduced • There have been a series of changes to the benefits systems and new financial support introduced (the job retention "furlough" scheme and for self-employed people). These may be confusing for many young people. Some will not be protected. • Many young people are already in debt – a 2016 survey of 2042 18-24 year olds by Money Advice Trust found 37% were in debt on average nearly £3k (excluding student loans). Whilst there have been a series of schemes to support people in debt ("forbearance schemes" such as payment holidays or rights to delay payment) these may be confusing or unclear. • Debt can lead to further risk to young people seeking money. They may be at greater risk of being groomed (criminal or sexual exploitation) or turning to risky coping mechanisms such as drug or alcohol misuse or gambling.	Stepchange advice on debt and coronavirus Money Advice Service information on coronavirus Citizens Advice Service information on what to do if struggling with paying bills National Debt Line information on coronavirus National Homeless Advice service on supporting young people

Group	About this group and the issues they face during the Pandemic	Where to learn more
Young people at risk of extremism and radicalisation	• Extremist groups are beginning to recognise the scale of the Covid-19 pandemic, seeing opportunities to exploit fears, exacerbate tensions and mobilise supporters while governments are occupied with trying to address Covid-19. • Conspiracy theories circulating online are beginning to translate into offline violence. • The number of referrals to Channel panels and for additional support under the prevent duty has significantly reduced. • Young people currently involved in inclusion or de-escalation activity may be undersupported.	Educate Against Hate Lets Talk About It
Young people gambling or affected by household gambling	• 2019 Gambling Commission found 11% of 11-16 year olds had spent their own money on gambling in last 7 days. • Increased time online with no supervision may increase risk of gambling • Young people may be drawn to gamble in order to try to fix problems of debt for themselves or household, heightened by many households experiencing furloughing, reduced hours and /or unemployment • Those with a history of addiction or problematic gambling may not be able to access usual support groups or treatment.	GambleAware information on safer gambling and coronavirus GamCare information on coronavirus Betting and Gambing Council (trade body) steps on responding to coronavirus BigDeal – the GamCare information site for young people on gambling
Survivors of abuse	• Those who have faced abuse may not be able to access usual support groups or treatment. • They may feel "triggered" by the changes in their circumstances, reminding them of the harm they faced such as not being able to leave their home as easily. • Many will have been abused by those close or caring to them. At this time, they may need to rely on others for care and support and trigger feelings of mistrust or worry. • For some, this time may exacerbate anxiety or depression	National Association for People Abused in Childhood advice on feeling safe during coronavirus SurvivorsUK – for survivors of male rape and abuse Women's Aid Survivors Handbook

Group	About this group and the issues they face during the Pandemic	Where to learn more
		Victim Support The Survivors Trust - umbrella agency for specialist rape and sexual abuse services in the UK
Individuals experiencing bereavement	• Tragically, there has been a sharp rise in deaths in the UK –from Covid-19 and for other reasons • Many young people will have lost those close to them but have had limited or no contact with them due to isolation and may not have been able to hold or attend a funeral • Social distancing would have reduced opportunities for usual support • In circumstances where the death is not linked to Covid-19 individuals may feel their grief is not acknowledged • Discussion of death and dying are more visible and can be traumatising.	Cruse Care advice on coronavirus Hope Again – the Cruse Care website for young people Childhood Bereavement Network guidance on Coronavirus

Communication to, with and for young people during a pandemic

This section helps you design and implement effective communication about safeguarding during the Covid-19 pandemic. Use it to understand what and how to communicate.

Need a reminder of the basics?
- For an introductory guide to talking about safeguarding visit the NCVO website.
- Read the Information Commissioners Office guide to Children & GDPR.
- See the TACT guide to Language that Cares.

What we express and how we share it are vital in a crisis

During a pandemic, voluntary organisations are especially relied upon to provide accurate information. Prioritise any communication with your team so they have the information they need to act safely. You will be a trusted voice for young people, and they will be seeking quality advice from you. If you implement poorly thought through communication, you risk endangering others.

- Check who has responsibility for social media and communications and how this may be backfilled should they be unavailable. Who else has login details or admin rights?
- Ensure that only trusted, verified official courses are shared. Never share information which is unclear, unverified or could be misconstrued.
- You may want to repeat general messages to help those underserves by others. However, try to focus on messages which link to your organisational focus.
- State how people can contact you and any reduction in contact hours/response time. Where possible share alternative, in case of emergency contact details.

Actively promote people sharing safeguarding concerns

As an organisation, you must ensure you inform all young people, parents/carers of how they can report concerns. This is usually done through direct contact with a person they trust or have a good relationship with. Covid-19 has made this very difficult for young people, as they may not have the private space to ask for help or access workers on their own.

Suggestions to consider:
- Send them regular electronic updates that remind them that you are there and listening.
- Ensure you have a clear mechanism somewhere prominent on your website that can be clicked on to alert you or an appropriate body to a concern (i.e. a logo to click on or in a footer)
- Share clear messages about how others can seek help if they are worried about an individual or have a safeguarding concern. You can remind people how to report any concern or allegation to you (i.e. phone line or email account) or signpost to CEOP or NSPCC.
- Ensure you have trained staff/volunteers regularly checking the emails or phone line to ensure you are responding quickly. Make a record of what is said and advice/guidance given.
- Contact young people you are concerned with, ask how they are, look for behavioural changes or responses that are out of character.

Think about framing
The way we discuss issues of keeping young people safe can strongly affect how it is understood and resonates. This is often considered "framing":

- Focus on shared responsibilities to one another: *we can all keep each other safe when we look out for one another.*
- Remember, people can think 'neglect' is just about poor parenting. Avoiding stereotype of poor parenting parent or caregiving and focus on their need for additional support: *Today more than ever, families can struggle. With the right support we can work with them to stay safe.*
- Stress people's individual responsibility to act: *if you're worried, speak out*
- Avoid stigmatising those at risk and focus on the moral need to support everyone. Avoid talking widely of "the elderly" or "the vulnerable". Focus on the explicit moral argument for addressing specific populations' needs.

- Learn more about framing Covid-19 and keeping people safe by the Framing Institute.
- Learn more about why wording like "vulnerable" can be unhelpful in this blog by Neil Crowther.

Speak up with and for young people
Young people's voices are too often lost. You could:

- Ask young people their experiences and platform this.
- Gather ideas of how they are looking out for one another and share these online.
- Promote youth-led groups and opportunities for young people to be heard.
- Ask local decision makers how they are engaging with young people during the crisis?

- See the 'Young People Matter' in the pandemic materials.
- Learn more in the NSPCC report on what Children are saying to Childline about Coronavirus.

Consent is key
Don't forget that if you feature the experiences of a child or young person, you will still need to follow any consent procedures and recording. Where these cannot be done in the same way (eg. storage, filing, etc) try and keep as accurate and close to those details records as otherwise.

- See this NSPCC Example Consent Form.

A time to stand up for young people
During this pandemic, there will be a number of statutory services which are under immense pressure. Many may struggle to meet their duties to young people and their families. As voluntary organisations seeking to keep people safe from harm, you play a key role in monitoring how well statutory agencies meet their duties and to be able to speak out for when they risk significantly failing. The young people at greatest risk of harm during this period need allies more than ever to ensure their rights are fulfiled and they receive the support they deserve. Measured, pragmatic and evidence-based advocacy for people with power with and for young people is essential now than ever. Always place the best interests of the young people, families and communities at the heart of your decision making and say loud and clear where they face unacceptable risks. Speaking up for young people early can protect many others from harm.

Safeguarding and your team members

This section helps you consider how you ensure that your team – staff and volunteers – are recruited and supported safely through this period of change. Use it to inform your decisions about how you recruit, induct, manage and support your team.

Need a reminder of the basics?
- NCVO has guidance on safeguarding considerations when choosing staff, volunteers and trustees and having the policies and systems in place to support managing behaviour and probation of staff/volunteers.
- See the NCVO specialist guides for volunteer managers and HR Managers.

You must have checks and measures so that you have the right people join your organisation. Sadly, there are a minority who have an intent to cause harm and who may seek to capitalise on the current situation. Most youth organisations will have guidelines on safer recruitment. You should keep the same standards for recruitment of staff and volunteers as much as possible.

Recruitment
Make sure any recruitment you do keeps pace with and reflects any risk assessment and re-prioritisation of activities.
- For new and existing roles you need to fill, think about what the priorities are that you want new staff/volunteers to focus on. This will help you to identify what skills, experience and personal attributes might be especially important for a role right now and help you to attract the right candidates. If it is an existing role, you may have created the job description before the pandemic so review this
- Be realistic about what the person can achieve in the next weeks and months.
- Whether you decide to interview in person (with social distancing) or online, give plenty of time and scope for you and the candidate to explore if this is the right role for them. This is especially important now as they will likely be working remotely.
- Always ask about gaps in employment or address history and find out what their interest is in your organisation and your service users. Get a sense of them as a potential member of your team and how you could supervise and support them in their role, if successful. Make sure you are familiar with guidance on interviews and exploring motivation and always include questions in the interview that help you to assess someone's values, attitudes and commitment to safeguarding.

Criminal record checks
You need to consider whether your access to criminal record checks may be altered. Ask yourself:
- How will you verify identification given the social distancing measures?
- How you will manage if your counter signatories are off sick or on furlough. It may be necessary to add counter signatories to your account. These can be changed later if you wish.
- Where you use an umbrella body, whether that body is continuing to offer all their services?

You should always decide for any new and pre-existing roles where you may have temporarily adapted duties – whether for individual staff or volunteers - what level of criminal record check is necessary and appropriate. Always conduct a risk assessment for the specific role and never assume that a role does not require a criminal record check.

Where you determine a check is necessary, recognise that some checks may take longer than usual.

In England & Wales, the Disclosure and Barring Service have introduced a range of temporary arrangements:
- An emergency fast track service is in place for health & social care roles. This does not include key workers. DBS state that their "service standards show that 96% of enhanced DBS applications are completed within 42 days, and this is still the case, with many applications taking significantly less time to process." Where you are applying for enhanced checks, we recommend you be prepared for a longer turn around due to potential impact on police forces
- There is a temporary change to ID checking. For urgent applications, ID documents may be viewed over a video link and scanned images may be used in advance of the DBS check being submitted. DBS state that the change should only be implemented for urgent cases where it is not possible to follow the normal identity checking guidelines. The applicant must present the original versions of these documents when they first attend their employment or volunteering role.
- The fingerprint route for those who cannot meet the three routes for ID has been temporarily suspended
- Contact centre times are temporarily amended to Monday – Friday 9-4pm

- The Disclosure and Barring Services have a range of information and fact sheets about obtaining a DBS check during the pandemic.
- There is additional guidance on conducting Right to Work checks.

Note that there are different roles if you work outside of England. Both Disclosure Scotland and Access Northern Ireland have specific guidance for checks during this period.

References
- Allow longer for references to come back due to others illness or furlough.
- An employer will be able to confirm dates of employment and role held, but you will also want information from a reliable and recent source about the person's suitability for the role.
- You may need to either wait for a more detailed reference or consider how else you can get this information eg. a line manager on furlough may be prepared to give a personal reference.

Induction
You may need to get more creative about how you induct new team members into their role.
- Training: prioritise the training that is essential to and at the right level for the duties that the person is carrying out. For example, you may previously have provided face to face safeguarding or health & safety training. Are you able to arrange suitable online training? Depending on how suitable the course is to your need, you might choose to supplement by setting up online sessions with an experienced member of your team or partner organisation.
- Be prepared to offer more frequent supervision and 1-1's to help someone settle in and learn the role. Is there someone in your organisation who can be a "buddy", so they know who to talk to for non-line management/supervision questions.

Probation
- It may be that you are not able to fulfil the usual training requirements you would like during the induction period. Make sure that this is reflected in the objectives and be clear how you will facilitate core training for safe practice
- Objectives must reflect what you have decided the role needs to focus on during the next weeks/months that is realistic. You may need to revisit and amend the objectives more frequently than you usually would to keep pace with any changes

- It's especially important if the new person is remote working that you take time to understand any additional support needs or adjustments that they might need to succeed in their role. For example, find out how they best assimilate information like policies, systems etc. This may be by reading on their own or by talking. Check-in with them and ask questions so you can establish that they are getting to grips with the information they need.
- During this time of uncertainty, it's especially important that the probation period is treated equally by employer and employee/volunteer as a period for seeing whether this is working. It may take longer to settle in/for you to see how the person is performing.

Standards of behaviour
This will be set out in your code of conduct, policies and procedures.
- This is a good time to revisit your expectations with staff and volunteers. You will be more dependent on people knowing and following your organisation's standards
- You will need to consider what may need to be strengthened, set aside or added during this time. For example, are your protocols for home working or virtual/digital contact with young people sufficiently detailed and robust?

Management & supervision of staff/volunteers
It's important to remember that you'll be managing and supporting people during a time when they may feel additionally anxious. Do not underestimate the impact on people's physical and emotional wellbeing as they deal with their own experience and those of their colleagues and young people they are supporting.

Ask yourself:
- **How are we helping the team to manage professional boundaries?** They may be worried about young people and families and be tempted to take phone calls out of hours, work longer hours and/or give themselves unrealistic targets. Encourage team members to express their concerns and agree on how you will manage these.
- **Have we found out how staff prefer supervision in this context?** It may not always be possible to do online if the broadband signal is unreliable. Whatever means you use, check that you are following best practice and that the platform is secure.
- **Do we need to revisit how we do reflective supervision?** Does this need to be more frequent or offer additional group supervision? Staff may find it useful to write notes beforehand and/or send you questions/issues so that you can plan before you speak
- **How do we manage the working day/week?** Do you need to consider introducing or increasing opportunities for group or individual de-brief at the end of the day or week.
- **Does the supervision agenda need to be amended?** You must still manage performance and check progress against targets, but ring-fence adequate time for both personal wellbeing and performance management. For example, give more time for a check-in on someone's wellbeing and any concerns they have.
- **Are targets and objectives still right and realistic?** They should be reviewed more frequently, especially if the organisation's priorities, capacity and risks change.
- **Are you proactively considering the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and volunteers who may be affected by the pandemic?** Some may have existing conditions or have had the virus; this may have some long term effects. It's good practice to have risk assessments in place but where staff may now be working at home, make sure you cover if someone falls ill or has an accident whilst working at home. This may be as simple as them having someone at home or who they will check-in with at the end of the day. For those with health conditions, you may need to put in place reasonable adjustments.
- **How will you support staff coming back from illness and/or a period of furlough?** It can be daunting coming back to work and especially so in an environment where things may change at

a rapid pace. It would be good practice to arrange some sort of handover between staff when going on furlough and a mini induction when staff return after an unscheduled absence such as sickness.

- **How are you supporting the heightened anxiety people may experience during this pandemic?** This is normal, and you should follow the above points to help monitor and support. Occasionally, anxiety levels may put someone at risk. Be aware that this can happen suddenly or more slowly over a period of time, so be mindful of this. It's good to have a plan in place such as a list of organisations and contact numbers that staff/volunteers can be referred to and disseminate information about how people can look after their wellbeing during this time. Encourage people to seek help and make sure managers have sources of support and advice if they are concerned about someone.

Recognise the changes to ways of working

Many people are working from home during the pandemic rather than the office. Working away from the office and direct supervision is known as remote working. This may or may not be a new way of working for your team.

It's important to consider how remote working in the current circumstances may impact on your usual ways of working and any risks associated, both to your staff/volunteers and those they provide support to or come into contact within their role. This is because remote working generally involves a greater degree of decision making on the part of staff/volunteers because they are away from supervision, line management and colleague support. Likewise, supporting young people remotely and online has implications for what is safer practice.

To learn more about working remotely, see this guide and collections of links by NCVO.

Keeping young people safe online during the pandemic

This section gives you practical tips and checklists on what to consider when using online resources and promoting online resources to young people. Use it to inform how you plan, deliver and review your work with young people online.

Need a reminder of the basics?
- The NSPCC has guidance on best practice and policies and procedures for online safety and model consent forms for use with children and young people.
- The Child Protection in Sport Unit offers an example Online Safeguarding and Social Media Policy
- The NYA, The Mix and UK Youth have produced some online youth work guidelines.

Supporting young people digitally
If you are using digital media (mobiles, social media, online meetings including Skype, Zoom, Face Time) you must make sure you do this safely and securely. We know that young people will potentially be faced with an increased risk of harm and abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly online. This is a great time to role model for them how adults should behave online and digital contact.

As it is likely that contact with young people and other professionals online will become the norm, start planning how staff, volunteers and young people can prepare and adapt to this.

When planning an online activity, ask yourself:
- **Does your indemnity insurance cover online activity?** Where you deliver online sessions, like talking therapies, make sure you follow your regulatory body guidance
- **Have you asked young people their views?** Harness all that knowledge and experience from young people and invite them to help you develop new ways of contact and working together. You'll want to make sure you use methods they are comfortable with and feel safe.
- **Does your digital and/or social media policy and procedure specify what acceptable use and protocol for the types of digital contact/platforms that you use?**
- **Do you have young people's - and depending on their age and the kind of interaction you intend to have - consent for participating online?**
- **Are young people aware of your approach to safeguarding online?** To keep young people safe, and help them make the right choices, appropriately share your digital standards. Make sure young people are aware of how staff and volunteers will and will not contact them. Ask them to agree to follow relevant standards and protocols for their behaviour.
- **Have staff and volunteers had the training and support to understand how to use the platform?** Just as you would induct your team on the risk assessment for your physical space; you need to ensure they understand how to prevent harm and manage risks in the online space proactively. They need to:
  - Be confident in how to use the platform
  - know how to use it safely
  - be clear how it supports their practice and can develop and innovate their practice
  - understand how the standards and protocols line up with your safeguarding policy, your organisational values, code of conduct and professional boundaries
  - know what to do if they have a concern or there is a breach of security

Working safely with young people online in groups
You might be leading group sessions via video calls, audio conference calls or broadcast video to connect multiple young people at one time.

As staff and volunteers to consider:
- the room they are in and what might be visible in the background – decoration, objects or even other people.
- If you're calling from home and have other people around, make sure they are dressed appropriately and know how to behave when you are talking to young people. Think about asking them to stay out of the background of your chat. Some tools allow you to blur out the background of your call.
- If people are using mobile data rather than Wi-Fi connection, video can use up a lot, so be careful to make sure you and young people don't end up spending a lot of money on extra data.

What to consider when using online resources
When using online resources, you should always check:
- **Who has produced and funded the resource?** Is it connected to other resources not suitable for the age range you want to use it for?
- **Have you checked that there are no inappropriate references or language used throughout the resource?** With videos, you should watch them all the way through before sharing them, so that you can be confident that all the content is okay
- **How are you going to promote the resources to young people?** Do you need to seek permission to share the resource?

Learn more about working online
There is a wide range of guidance for you to follow

- The Department for Education has published safeguarding advice on remote learning
- Professionals Online Safety Helpline (POSH) is free helpline supporting professionals working with children and young people with any online safety issues they may face.
- The Association of Adult and Child Online Safety Specialists (AACIOSS) has produced a helpful guide for charities and other smaller organisations to help them to think about safeguarding implications of putting their offer online: http://aacoss.org/professionals/.
- Get safe online offers free expert advice website that is full of very useful information on how to keep yourself safe when online.
- The National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection command offers advice on reporting online abuse. They help young people (up to age 18) who have been forced or tricked into taking part in sexual activity with anyone online or in the real world. The site you decide to make a report; what happens when you make a report; and it leads to a direct reporting page.
- The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) is the UK internet Hotline for anyone to report online child sexual abuse imagery and non-photographic child sexual abuse images anonymously.
- Law firm Farers has issued guidance on safeguarding and wellbeing in remote learning environments.

Managing allegations, concerns and disclosures during the pandemic

This section gives you practical tips and checklists on what to do when managing ongoing cases or where concerns have been raised. Use it to check and inform how you respond to any allegations, concerns or disclosures.

Need a reminder of the basics?
- All organisations that work with or come into contact with children and young people should have safeguarding policies and procedures. Setting up and following good safeguarding policies and procedures.
- If you have never referred to the Local Authority before, then first find out who your Local Authority is, by putting your postcode into this gov.uk website.

Continue to record safeguarding concerns

During this time, you may find that your staff/volunteers who normally deal with safeguarding are furloughed or not available. Staff at the local authority may be stretched or on different duties. Over time there is a potential that several different people may deal with the concern from your organisation. It's vital that amongst the potential staff changes your records are complete and accurate

All organisations should have a record of known safeguarding concerns for future reference and to aide referrals with Local Authorities. Ask yourself is this remains fit for purpose with new ways of working:
- Are we still backing up all correspondence and relevant documents?
- Do we have clear records as to decisions made? Are they sufficiently detailed (eg who made the decision and why) if staff dealing with this later are absent?
- Is your log of referrals or diary notes accessible to key people? Are they safe and secure?
- Is the mechanism to make sure they are followed up fit for purpose?
- IF you decide NOT to inform the parent/carer of your concerns before referring, ensure you have a clear rationale as to why e.g. it may place the child at risk of more harm if informed. This is the usual process, so what is different? Young people may have less opportunity to be apart from family and tensions may become violent e.g relationship violence. You may need to re-assess your usual decision due to the reduced contact that children currently have with other agencies such as school.

You should continue to refer safeguarding concerns to the local authority

Local authorities must receive and manage safeguarding concerns about a child and should continue to follow the immediate protection procedures set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Government guidance recognises that local authorities may struggle to meet their duties. All decisions must be child-centered and risk based focussing on the child's best interests. Voluntary youth organisations should continue to make referrals to local authorities and pressing them to take action. Always be clear about the risks of harm to a child and how immediate the danger is.

Many authorities are currently risk-assessing and reviewing their thresholds and capacity, so referrals will take time during Covid-19 and beyond. Think about how to enable quick and efficient assessment and decision making:

- be very clear at the beginning of a referral why you are making it – what is your rationale (e.g. I am referring because), referencing trigger words such as harm/significant harm and wherever possible, reference the local authority thresholds and wording
- ensure the information you give is easy to follow to assist the duty safeguarding officer who will triage your concern (e.g. use bullet points; detail events in date order; put the most serious concerns at the top, type if you can).
- Distinguish between what you have seen or been told and, if you need to give your opinion, be clear about the facts use have used to form that.
- Make sure you keep your handwritten notes in case they are needed later in the process.

Be prepared for changes in child protection conferences and multi-agency investigations
Government coronavirus guidance asks local authorities to ensure that as far as possible, multi-agency support to children experiencing or at risk of harm should continue, whilst being mindful of changes in how this is offered, for example, offering telephone or online support rather than face-to-face meetings where it is safe to do so. As far as possible, child protection conferences, multi-agency front door assessments of referrals and other forms of multi-agency conferences should be going ahead.

As a voluntary youth organisation, this may mean:
- There may be delays delay to usual processed. This could be due to parents/carers hindering or prevent access to homes based on declaring they are self-isolating and/or have Covid-19 or a shortage of social workers.
- The administration serving required for managing multi-agency investigations may not be able to collect and collate any reports or evidence, therefore slowing the process down significantly
- You may need to dial in from home. You will need to consider issues of confidentiality and not being disturbed.
- Other partners (for example working in health care) may not be prioritising investigations or meetings or have been redeployed from usual roles
- Staff may be furloughed in the voluntary sector, and this may break the 'story line' for the young person. This means they may not have the support they need. You should consider whether how specific staff could be involved.

Be prepared for delays to Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
In instances where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and where a child has died or been seriously harmed, a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (formally called Serious Case Reviews) would normally be completed within six months. Government coronavirus guidance states that this may not be possible at this time but that the local area should inform them of any decisions on this. Where a voluntary organisation has been engaged in support to a child who has died or seriously harmed they should be transparent with the local authority (and other safeguarding partners) about their capacity to participate in any review at this time.

Charities must still report serious incidents, including safeguarding concerns, to the Charity Commission
The Charity Commission expects registered charities to continue to report serious incidents using the current guidelines. This would continue to include where there are (alleged or actual) incidents of abuse or mistreatment linked to the activities or someone connected to the charity and breaches of procedures or policies at the charity which has put people who come into contact with it through its work at significant risk of harm. Remember that this includes incidents resulted in or risk of significant harm to trustees, staff or volunteers as well as young people or wider community members.

As a voluntary youth organisation, think about how you would meet this requirement during the pandemic:

- Your trustees remain ultimately responsible for decisions on reporting to the Charity Commission. Are they still meeting regularly? Are you following the Charity Commission guidance on governance during the pandemic?
- Do judgements about what incidents are serious and significant for your organisation need to change due to the pandemic? Have you got maintained clear records of decision making as to what is and what is not reported and why?
- If staff have delegated authority to report to the Charity Commission, have you reviewed deputising and who will do this if posts are furloughed, or an individual is off sick? Are they aware of the online forms and any previous reports where updates are needed to be made?
- If you had an incident before the pandemic, have you updated the Charity Commission of any issues and how you are managing this considering the pandemic?

Learn more

- The Charity Commissions How to report a serious incident in your charity guidance and wider guidance on Coronavirus. For more detail, see the NCVO guidance on governance and coronavirus.
- If you are undertaking an investigation, see this guidance from law firm Farers & Co
- Law firm, Bates Wells is offering a free 30 minutes consultation for charities.

About us

We have worked together as three independent consultants to develop this guide.
Each of us delivers a wide range of services supporting voluntary organisations.
This includes:

- Training for staff, young people, volunteers and trustees
- Developing policies
- Quality assurance

- Undertaking safeguarding audit and quality assurance
- Public speaking
- External supervision and practice reviews
- Developing safeguarding resources

Clair Cooke

Clair is a practice improvement consultant and trainer with over 30 years' experience in the youth sector. She is committed to supporting organisations to engage safely, effectively and to role model values for young people to be inspired and motivated by. With a former background in law and youth work, she brings a fusion of analytical and pragmatic approach to her work. With prior senior management roles including The Children's Society and Girlguiding, Clair has a breadth of operational management and service improvement experience across a variety of service user groups and organisational structures.

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Isabelle has over 30 years of experience in capacity building within the youth sector at senior management level. She specialises in organisational learning and development building and is a notable leader in the safeguarding arena. Isabelle currently chairs the National Safeguarding Youth Forum (NSYF) and is a member of the NSPCC's Communities Advisory Board. She has worked in the voluntary and public sector and most recently as a subject matter expert for the Voluntary Police Cadets and before that as Head of Safeguarding at the Girlguiding Association.

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Tom is a leading authority on safeguarding in voluntary organisations working under the amplify.org.uk platform. Having grown up engaged youth organisations, he moved from service user to professional, he now regularly delivers training, consultancy and public speaking on safeguarding law, policy & practice. He previously worked at the Children's Rights Alliance for England, held senior roles at Y Care International, the international development agency of the YMCA and led the implementation of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations Safeguarding Training Fund. He recently co-authored Safeguarding & the Law with BWB (forthcoming).
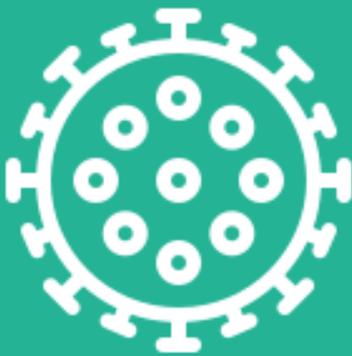
Email: tom@amplify.org.uk   Connect on LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/tomwburke
Website: www.amplify.org.uk   Follow on Twitter: @tomwburke

Safeguarding young people through the Covid-19 pandemic:
A guide for designated safeguarding leads in voluntary youth organisations

This guide is for voluntary community and youth organisations in England. It is primarily aimed at designated safeguarding leads with a good knowledge of essential safeguarding requirements.

It helps you design and deliver effective safeguarding practices with young people (aged 13-25 years old) during the Covid-19 pandemic.