



creating a *Child-Safe* environment

- Our Child Protection Policy commits us to creating and maintaining a safe environment for children and young people.
- Staff and volunteers are carefully selected and accept responsibility for helping to prevent the abuse of children.
- Our Child Protection Officer is responsible for child safety and is the main point of contact for parents and children.

Child-Safe – helping to make organisations safer for children.

Order line for Child-Safe Packs and Child Protection Seminars:

01275 810995

Email: childsaf@n-somerset.gov.uk

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child-Safe™

"reducing crimes against children..."

A Guide for Organisers

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I Introducing Child-Safe

It is with great pleasure that the North Somerset ACPC gives its support to this crime reduction initiative. As a Committee we have worked closely with the Avon and Somerset Constabulary to develop the 'North Somerset Child-Safe Partnership' initiative.

You will see that this pack draws good practice, assembled by child protection workers from a variety of statutory and voluntary backgrounds. The messages are simple and workable, and if you choose to operate the 'Child-Safe' recommendations in your club, then there is little doubt that it will help to reduce the likelihood of children being put at risk or exposed to harm. It will also help to alert you or your organisation to issues of child abuse generally and to the steps you should take if 'abuse' is discovered or suspected.

The protection of children in our community is everyone's responsibility. We want to help groups and organisations working with children and young people to do their part to keep children safe. I commend Child-Safe Protecting Young People in Sport and Organised Groups to you all.

Steve Tanner
Assistant Director – Child Care
North Somerset Council



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2 Creating a Child-Safe Environment

Keeping children and young people safe from abuse when they are at sports or other organised activities is the principal goal of the Child-Safe campaign. By raising general awareness of child abuse and providing parents and organisers with simple guidelines on how to spot abuse we aim to help you to deal sensibly and sensitively with it.

This handbook is designed for group organisers. It covers all the main areas of abuse and contains practical step-by-step advice on how you can develop and maintain an effective child protection policy. The *Guide for Organisers* forms part of a comprehensive information pack which includes a parents' guide, a video, posters and standard versions of child protection policy documents.

To be part of the Child-Safe campaign all you need to do is follow the Child-Safe Code:

- ✓ adopt a voluntary policy or mission statement
- ✓ appoint a child protection officer
- ✓ raise awareness of your volunteers and staff
- ✓ adopt good practice approaches
- ✓ let parents and children know what you are doing
- ✓ seek recognition for your efforts.

So, join us today and help make your organisation a safer place for children.



Think

- About basic preservation of evidence, particularly if this is going to be reported to the statutory or law enforcement authorities.
- About making some notes as soon as possible after the matter has been reported to you and do not contaminate their evidence by keep going over the detail of the story or incident
- About preserving the scene where a particular incident happened and do not interfere by contaminating it with your or others presence. If this has already happened, do not make it any worse!
- About not washing or destroying clothing or other items from which forensic recovery can be made at a later time. If a sexual assault is going to be reported, then it is best if the victim has not washed or bathed before reporting.

6 Developing a Child Protection Policy

The first step towards creating a Child-Safe environment in your organisation is to set out a formal Child Protection Policy. Once this has been agreed your next step is to appoint someone to be your Child Protection Officer.

How to write a Child Protection Policy statement


Your organisation needs a written statement of your commitment to child safety which should be displayed in a prominent position and made available to all existing and new members.

Everyone associated with your organisation should be familiar with the statement and should, ideally, be involved in drawing it up.

The specimen Child Protection Policy statement set out in this booklet can be used and adapted for your organisation.

“Everyone associated with your organisation should be familiar with the statement”

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT

(Insert name of your organisation):

is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for children and young people

We do this by:

- Recognising that all children have the right to freedom from abuse.
- Ensuring that all our staff and volunteers are carefully selected and accept responsibility for helping to prevent the abuse of children in their care.
- Responding swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse, and providing parents and children with the opportunity to voice any concerns they may have.
- Appointing a Child Protection Officer who will take specific responsibility for child protection and act as the main point of contact for parents, children and outside agencies.
- Ensuring access to confidential information is restricted to the Child Protection Officer or the appropriate external authorities.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of our Child Protection Policy and activities annually.

Our Child Protection Officer is:

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How to appoint a Child Protection Officer

- I. Choose a respected and committed person for the role of Child Protection Officer. That individual then becomes the point of contact for other members of staff, for parents and children, and for other organisations such as social services, the police or the local authority if a problem relating to child abuse should arise.

2. Ideally, following further awareness training in child protection issues (see Section 9. Running a Child-Safe Organisation) the Child Protection Officer will be able to inform the appropriate authorities if a complaint about possible abuse is made by a child or an adult.
3. The Child Protection Officer's name and contact details should be displayed prominently throughout your premises, and given to parents.

It is important to note that the Child Protection Officer is not an expert and is not there to sit in judgement on anybody - their principal task is to help a vulnerable child get the support and protection he/she needs and deserves, and to act as a link to the professional caring agencies.

Finally, being a Child Protection Officer should not take up too much of your time - you'll be able to devote most of your energies to participating in your club or organisation's other activities.

7 Getting the Child-Safe message across - to staff and volunteers

Once a Child Protection Officer has been appointed and familiarised himself/herself with the main issues (see Section 9. Running A Child-Safe Organisation) the next step is to let other staff and volunteers know what is going on.

Use the contents of this child safety pack to help you get the Child-Safe message across:

- the video explores some of the main issues and gives helpful advice
- the Guides for Organisers and Parents provide useful information on the "do's" and "dont's" of child protection
- posters and your Child Protection Policy/Mission statement should be displayed prominently on your premises

- stress how protecting children will also protect your organisation and promote you as a caring and responsible group.
- ensure all your volunteers and staff receive copies of the Guidelines for Safeguarding Children's Welfare.

You may also want some expert input to your discussions. Arrange for someone from social services, the police or a children's charity to talk you through the process of implementing an effective child protection policy.

Good practice - the Child-Safe Code

Once your staff and volunteers have been "educated" about the issues of child abuse it's time to introduce them to the Child-Safe Code of good practice.

The Child-Safe Code for Staff and Volunteers

Do:

- treat all children and young people with respect and take notice of their reactions to your tone of voice and manner
- always seek the parents' and child's consent if he/she is very young or disabled and needs help to go to the toilet
- remember that it is okay to touch children in a way which isn't intrusive or disturbing to him/her or to observers
- make sure that any allegations or suspicions are recorded and acted upon.

Do not:

- engage in rough physical games including horseplay
- touch a child in an intrusive or sexual manner
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even as a joke
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as helping them to go to the toilet or changing clothes
- ignore a colleague's behaviour if it causes concern, talk to someone about it.

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A Guide for Parents

*Some of the information contained in this booklet is sexually explicit.
Some parents may feel this is unsuitable to be read by children.*

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It is very difficult not to raise fears and anxieties when reading this booklet. Child abuse is a complex and sensitive issue for all those involved in children's activities. Some parents take the view it will not happen to their child, others fear for their child's safety every time he or she leaves the home. Whatever your own thoughts the club or organisation that has given you this information recognises that your child's welfare is extremely important. As part of the 'Child-Safe' Code of Practice, you are encouraged to ask questions of the staff and to call in from time to time to see what is going on. I urge you to do this.



If society is to be the way we all wish it to be in the future, the development of our children in a fear-free, nurturing environment is of the utmost importance.

Gabby Logan

1 Protecting your children from abuse

Many parents worry that their children may suffer abuse when they are out of their sight – playing sport or participating in activities away from home.

This guide has been written to help you protect your children when they are involved in organised clubs and groups. Developed by Avon and Somerset Constabulary, it is part of a child safety information pack which has been distributed to the organisers of sports clubs and children's activities.

The Child-Safe guidelines contained in this booklet are designed to help you feel more secure and to keep your children safe from harm. Like road safety, you can make these simple rules part of your family's life.

2 What is child abuse?

Most people who look after our children are safe. But sadly, some adults are very skilled at making friends with children with the intention of harming them

This situation can arise anywhere – in the family, at school, and at sports and other children's group activities. In fact, in the majority of cases children are abused in the family home or by someone known by the family and child. They can often be skilled in 'grooming' colleagues and parents, enabling their abuse to remain undetected.

There are many different forms of child abuse but they fall into four main categories:

Sexual abuse

Sex offenders, who are usually but not exclusively men, are found at all levels of society and come from every type of background. They will often take up positions and activities which give them easy access to children such as:

- leader of a children's activity group
- a coach or volunteer in children's sport
- a worker in a school

3 How do I recognise if my child is being abused?

Child abuse can manifest itself in physical, emotional and medical symptoms. Your child may also tell you about aspects of the abuse in order to test your reaction. They may, for example, talk about being asked to “keep a secret.”

Here are some of the most common signs you should look for:

- Unexplained or untreated bruising or injuries.
- Suffering continual stomach pains or other physical ailments without any medical explanation.
- Aggressive or withdrawn behaviour and refusal to talk about the injuries.
- Refusal to attend school or suddenly doing badly at school.
- Refusing to take part in their normal social activities.
- Unexpected fear of an adult and flinching when touched.
- Sexually explicit behaviour and language.
- Unaccounted for sources of money
- Changes over time in manner and appearance, such as losing weight, and becoming dirty and dishevelled.

It is important to be alert for signs of abuse. However, even where your child is displaying some or all of these signs it does not necessarily mean they are being abused – there may be other causes. Also, none of these signs may be present, but you may just feel something is wrong.

You should also be aware of any adult who pays too much attention to your child – this is a classic sign of a potential abuser. For example:

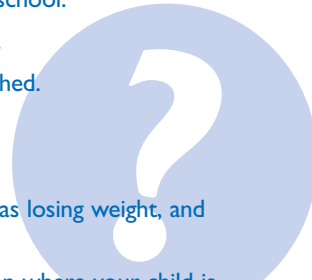
- giving gifts, toys or favours
- offering to take your child on holidays or outings
- looking for opportunities to be alone with your child.

4 What can I do to protect my children?

The Child-Safe rules for keeping your children safe are basically an extension of good parenting.

Always:

- know where your children are
- know who they are with
- know when they will be home



- be sure your children know where you are and how to contact you
- listen carefully to their concerns and reassure them they will be listened to.

You should also teach your children to:

- know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touching. Even if they are unclear encourage them to talk to you about it.
- know the difference between “safe” secrets which are fun to keep and “unsafe” secrets which they are concerned or unhappy about. A secret about a surprise birthday party is fine, but no one should ask them to keep quiet about secret touches.
- have a family codeword, you should consider the “kidscape code”, if someone tries to collect them – NO CODE, NO GO! Buying your child a travel pass and/or a phone card means they will always be able to contact you or get home unaided.
- feel confident about refusing to do anything they feel is wrong or frightening and to tell you if anyone – even someone they know – touches them in a way which alarms or confuses them. **Most abusers are not strangers.**
- always tell you if something bad has happened to them – even if they have broken a rule – and you will sort it out. Children often conceal abuse because they are worried about getting into trouble.
- make a fuss! Tell them that if someone tries to touch or to grab them to shout “NO” and run away as quickly as they can. Then to tell you or another adult.

Remember – keeping your child safe is the most important thing – breaking rules to keep safe is okay.

Joining clubs or groups

Before letting your child join any club or group, or sending them on any other kind of organised activity these points should be kept in mind:

- Talk to other parents about their experience of the group – are they confident their children are in safe hands?
- Ask the staff and volunteers if they have been police checked and how long they have been involved with the club/group.
- Ask the police or local authority if they have any links with the group.
- Is the club/group well-known in the local community? How long has it existed? Is it known to local schools, churches, health centres, youth and community services?
- Ask how many adults will supervise the children. Will your child always be with other children and never left alone with an adult or adults?