

NSPCC and Children England launch Safe Network for voluntary groups

A new £2.2m unit managed by the NSPCC and Children England to help protect eight million children taking part in voluntary activities was launched today in London (June 5).

Safe Network is funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The Department recognised the need for a tailored safeguarding support for the Third Sector following its Staying Safe consultation with charitable and voluntary organisations.

Safe Network, based at the NSPCC's National Training Centre in Leicester, aims to build capacity of third sector organisations in England to safeguard children by:

- assisting organisations to put policies and procedures in place to prevent abuse within their activities or services
- equipping staff and volunteers to recognise children who may be at risk within their home or wider community and to take appropriate action
- helping organisations introduce safer recruitment arrangements to ensure they have the right people working with children. This will include advising them on the implementation of the new Vetting and Barring arrangements coming into force next year
- providing information on effective anti-bullying policies
- helping organisations reduce avoidable accidents to children when they take part in trips or activities
- providing information for parents and carers so they will know if organisations their children are involved in have sound safeguarding arrangements in place

Safe Network will provide authoritative information and advice through a high quality website - www.safenetwork.org.uk - and telephone helpline - 0116 234 7217. It will also develop information and training materials for different audiences.

Safe Network will work with delivery partners with established networks – including parenting organisations – to reach as wide an audience as possible. Agencies such as the Independent Safeguarding Authority and Children’s Workforce Development Council will advise on safer recruitment and workforce development. It will reach out to disadvantaged groups and advocate for its safeguarding needs with government and key organisations.

Safe Network’s services will be provided – primarily through its website - to a wide range of third sector organisations that involve children in their activities or services including: local voluntary and community organisations; faith and black minority ethnic groups, cultural and leisure activities; large and medium sized national child care organisations; trustees and funders; parents, carers and children.

The NSPCC and Children England are responsible for the strategic management and co-ordination of Safe Network. They will be guided by an advisory group including representatives of the DCSF, key stakeholders and strategic partners. The NSPCC is contributing to recruit two extra members of staff and will also contribute to the costs of producing training and information materials.

Speaking at the launch at Church House, Westminster, Safe Network’s Director John Brownlow, who until now has been the NSPCC’s Head of Consultancy, said: “We believe all children and young people have the right to feel safe. They should be able to enjoy participating in activities outside the home and to take proportionate risks, which are an essential part of growing up.

“Our vision is for all children and young people taking part in organised activities with voluntary groups to be safe from harm. We aim to achieve this by offering information, training, high quality materials and tailored advice through our website and a telephone helpline.

“We will work with partners who have expertise in these areas and use their networks to reach third sector organisations so they can introduce safeguards that are effective and sensible.

“All of these things coming together will help keep children safe when they are taking part in local voluntary and community activities.”

Children's Minister Delyth Morgan said:

“Keeping children safe is a top priority for this Government and I am very pleased that the NSPCC and Children England will be running this new unit. Safe Network is a one stop shop for all charities and voluntary sector organisations, no matter how big or small, to get advice on the best way to ensure the safety of the children and young people they come into contact with, tailored to their specific needs. There are already examples of excellent practice across the third sector and through Safe Network this good practice can be collected and shared so that it becomes common practice. Every child has the right to be safe and protected so they can take full advantage of all the advantages charities and voluntary organisations can offer them.”

Maggie Jones, Chief Executive of Children England said: “At Children England we know from our contacts with voluntary groups across England that keeping children safe is a top priority for them. We are pleased and proud to be working with DCSF and our partners NSPCC, giving the advice and help volunteers, parents and organisations need to provide safe environments for children and young people to learn and have a great time.”

Safe Network is funded by the Department for Children Schools and Families and was announced in the Government's Staying Safe Action Plan, part of the Every Child Matters agenda. The context for the Safe Network is provided by a range of legislation and guidance, in particular the UN Convention on children's rights, the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act and Working Together. Safe Network supports the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people, in particular staying safe and enjoy and achieve.

The NSPCC is the UK's leading children's charity specialising in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children. The NSPCC's purpose is to end cruelty to children FULL STOP. The NSPCC runs projects and services across the United Kingdom and Channel Islands, including ChildLine, the UK's free, confidential 24-hour helpline for children and young people.

Children England is the leading membership organisation for the children, young people and families voluntary sector. Children England provides capacity building, support and information to its members and to the wide range of voluntary sector organisations working with children, young people and families. For more information visit www.childrenengland.org.uk or contact Joe Levenson, Children England's Director of Policy and Communications on 020 7833 3319

The delivery partners with which Safe Network has established agreements:

British Youth Council (BYC) is led by young people for young people, aged 25 and under, across the UK. BYC connects with a community of member organisations and network of Local Youth Councils to empower all young people, wherever they are from, to have a say and be heard. The BYC take on training and volunteering and BYC's powerful campaigns, both local and global, inspire young people to have a positive impact and make their voices count.

Chief Executive James Cathcart said: "We're looking forward to bringing the voice of children and young people to influence this work and our network of youth-led organisations will help to get the 'Safe' message out to young people through their peers."

Community Service Volunteers (CSV) was founded in 1962 by Mora and Alec Dickson. The aim of CSV is to get young people aged 16-35 involved in voluntary

service and to enrich the lives of volunteers and those they help to generate social change. They are the UK's largest volunteering and training charity.

National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) works with 164,000 local third sector groups and organisations that provide community services, regenerate neighbourhoods, promote volunteering and tackle discrimination in partnership with local public bodies. NAVCA support organisations to engage with the ECM agenda and the five outcomes.

Chief Executive Kevin Curley said: "I am delighted that NAVCA is closely involved with the Safe Network as a delivery partner. The Safe Network will provide local infrastructure organisations with expert help and advice on safeguarding issues and improve the support our members can give to local groups."

National Children's Bureau (NCB) mission is to advance the wellbeing of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. NCB is a membership organisation with members from local authorities, health bodies, schools, nurseries, universities, the private sector, the voluntary and community sector and individuals.

Parentline Plus supports parents to help their children to succeed and achieve. Parentline Plus works towards preventing children being harmed, improving adult relationships, promoting positive behaviour and enabling parents to support their children to make the most of their education and their community.

Women's Resource Centre (WRC) is a charity that provides training, information, resources and one-to-one support on a range of organisational development issues to help women's organisations to be more effective and sustainable. WRC lobbies decision makers on behalf of the women's not-for-profit sector.

Chief Executive Vivienne Hayes said: "We are really pleased to be part of this project, which we hope will help women's organisations understand their responsibilities around safeguarding children and ensure best practice."