



Safeguarding and charities

Safeguarding for charities roundtable report: April 2019

This report summarises a meeting of senior UK charity trustees that discussed safeguarding issues, solutions and ways of working together. It will be of interest to volunteers, staff and board members working in voluntary sector organisations who wish to understand more about safeguarding. SCIE offers support and training to help charities keep children and adults safe, as well as to improve how they respond to safeguarding concerns.

Introduction

Charities across the UK play a role in the lives of many children, young people and adults with care and support needs. Many are household names, and are seen by the public as providing vital support to the most vulnerable members of society. Charities need to be able to respond effectively and appropriately when someone comes forward to share concerns or disclose abuse.

However, there have been a number of recent, high-profile cases of safeguarding incidents in charitable organisations such as Oxfam. We have also seen ineffective responses with a lack of appropriate support for victims and survivors.

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) is working with a number of charities to enable them to improve their understanding of safeguarding and subsequent practice. This report provides a summary of a recent charity trustees roundtable, hosted by SCIE that brought together senior charity leaders to talk about safeguarding adults and children.

The purpose of this roundtable was to identify what is hindering effective safeguarding, what good practice looks like and how we can work together to remove the barriers to delivering the highest quality safeguarding to keep all children and adults with care and support needs safe.

SCIE Chair, Paul Burstow, set the tone on the day by introducing the attendees to SCIE's work and discussing the importance of safeguarding. He said:

“ Good safeguarding practice is more than just a tick-box exercise, it’s about culture and behaviour. ”

Background: Charities and safeguarding

Much of the practical guidance on safeguarding in charities comes from the [Charity Commission Strategy for dealing with safeguarding issues in charities.](#) link

1 The introduction to this guidance clearly states the importance of safeguarding, and that it is a priority for trustees:



“ Protecting people and safeguarding should be a governance priority for all charities, regardless of size, type or income, not just those working with children or groups traditionally considered at risk. It is an essential duty for trustees to take reasonable steps to safeguard beneficiaries and to protect them from abuse. ”

The Care Act 2014 provides the legal basis for safeguarding adults. Under it, adults with care and support needs at risk of or experiencing abuse and unable to prevent it themselves must be supported.

Children’s safeguarding is shaped by the Children Act 1989, but the key statutory guidance for charities is [Working together to safeguard children](#) link 2 , which states:

“ Voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) and private sector organisations and agencies play an important role in safeguarding children through the services they deliver. ”

It’s important to remember that safeguarding applies to both adults and children, and that while the focus in the media has largely been on sexual abuse or bullying, there are many different types of abuse which charities have a huge role to play in identifying and preventing. These include:

- physical abuse
- domestic violence or abuse
- sexual abuse
- psychological or emotional abuse
- financial or material abuse
- modern slavery

- discriminatory abuse
- organisational or institutional abuse
- neglect or acts of omission
- self-neglect
- exploitive use of technology
- spiritual abuse.

The safeguarding roundtable allowed charity leaders to explore the opportunities for and barriers to good safeguarding practice relating to these different types of abuse.

Key note speakers

Richard Macintyre, Director of Quality and Innovation at Friends of the Elderly (FotE) opened the morning by summarising FotE's safeguarding journey. He gave the context of an inadequate CQC-rating at a particular care home and viewed it as an opportunity to improve. He described a whole-organisation approach to improvement based on openness, information sharing and a culture of learning that resulted in the service achieving a rating of 'good' at the follow-up inspection. Richard also highlighted SCIE's contribution to the process including regular reviews of safeguarding policies and procedures as well as establishing a Safeguarding Adults Sub-Committee.

Kristiana Wrixon, Head of Policy at Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), discussed the importance of trustees playing a part in safeguarding. She touched on issues around charities without a 'morals-led' culture and stressed that boards of charities need to be diverse, committed, and willing to invest in the workforce.

Danielle Oakford from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Stakeholder Engagement & Research Hub talked about the openness of DBS to working with charities. Danielle asked charities to consider how DBS can work in collaboration with them to promote and measure practice that supports an outcome focus for safeguarding adults and/or children.

Discussion – barriers, good practice and working together

As part of the activities for the morning, we asked the trustees to discuss a set of questions. We wanted to know:

- [What are the barriers to safeguarding?](#) [link 3](#)
- [What does good safeguarding practice look like?](#) [link 4](#)
- [How can charities work together on safeguarding?](#) [link 5](#)

The following bullet points were raised by trustees on the morning.

What are the barriers to good practice?

- Boards may not see safeguarding as a priority
- A view that safeguarding takes care of itself
- High turnover of workers and short-term volunteers means safeguarding training is often seen as a wasted investment

- Wide range of roles within charities – not a case of abuser and abused – different people are vulnerable depending on the context
- Abuse and safeguarding is such a broad topic, it's hard to understand what falls under the remit for charities to deal with
- Conflicts with stakeholders – examples being especially keen volunteers or wealthy donors who are committing abuse but seen as too valuable to the charity to lose
- Lack of time to review or implement good safeguarding practice
- Lack of money to purchase safeguarding training and invest in reporting systems
- Lack of diversity on the boards of charities encourages 'groupthink' complacency and an inability to see issues from different perspectives
- There can be a disparity between local authorities and different thresholds for safeguarding issues
- Complexity and scale of reporting makes it hard to spot issues and patterns

“ When I was a trustee, I was concerned that safeguarding was often the last thing on the agenda, and that sometimes we didn't spend enough time discussing that issue. I think it needs to be positioned at the front of agendas if it is to be taken as seriously as it needs to be. ”

Ewan King, Chief Operating Officer, SCIE

What does good safeguarding practice look like?

- A 'values-led' safeguarding practice
- Make sure safeguarding is on every agenda as a priority
- Have a board which is diverse and that has a wide range of life experiences
- Co-produced work, with those who have experienced safeguarding issues and families of those people
- Clear communication about safeguarding issues with all involved
- Prioritise funding for safeguarding training
- Understand that 'zero' safeguarding complaints is not ok – it means people don't know how or when to come forward
- Data-driven approach to dealing with safeguarding complaints
- Putting policies in place for assurance, monitoring and managing risk
- View any safeguarding failure as an opportunity to improve

“ Safeguarding should be seen in the wide context of equalities and diversity. If we have a more diverse board, with service user involvement as well, I think we can have a safer organisation. ”

Attendee

How can charities work together on safeguarding?

- Share information about what worked in terms of safeguarding practice, and what didn't work so well
- Encourage each other to identify safeguarding 'blind spots'
- Work together to think about where your safeguarding responsibilities begin and end
- Encourage diversity and share good examples of co-produced work

Conclusion

The trustees that attended the roundtable agreed that safeguarding should be a huge priority for charities, that it was not impossible to do well, and that any leadership team should be committed to this.

A key message from SCIE's roundtable event is that charities need to seek support and opportunities to learn from others. They also need to focus on:

- getting the foundations right – having good and well-understood policies and procedures in place
- creating a diverse, 'values-led' leadership team with co-production at the heart of what they do
- learning from any past mistakes and viewing them as an opportunity to improve
- ensuring staff and volunteers are trained and confident, so that they understand what to be aware of and how to respond to concerns or issues.

Useful links and resources

- [Safeguarding adults resources, policies, guidance and videos](#) [link 6](#) (SCIE)
- [Safeguarding adults e-learning](#) [link 7](#) (SCIE)
- [Safeguarding adults and children training courses](#) [link 8](#) (SCIE)
- [Working together to safeguard children](#) [link 9](#) (Department for Education)
- [Strategy for dealing with safeguarding issues in charities](#) [link 10](#) (Charity Commission)

Support from SCIE

SCIE's knowledge and experience of safeguarding means that we are well placed to support your organisation on your safeguarding journey. Our collaborative approach provides organisations with the tools to learn from safeguarding incidents and put in place the right measures to improve safeguarding in the future. Over 100 organisations have commissioned SCIE to carry out safeguarding reviews and deliver programmes of learning and development.

Why work with SCIE?

- SCIE has worked with a range of charitable organisations and has developed a deep understanding of the context, sensitivities, issues and concerns relating to safeguarding
- SCIE has a team of nationally recognised subject experts who have worked on the development of safeguarding policy and supported organisations to understand and embed good practice
- SCIE knows that safeguarding applies to both adults and children and that abuse can take many forms
- co-production is fundamental to what we do and we understand the importance of involving survivors, families and people who use services in that safeguarding journey.

link 1 | <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-for-dealing-with-safeguarding-issues-in-charities/strategy-for-dealing-with-safeguarding-issues-in-charities>

link 2 | <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

link 3 | <https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/charities/roundtable-2019-04#discussion-barriers>

link 4 | <https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/charities/roundtable-2019-04#discussion-good>

link 5 | <https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/charities/roundtable-2019-04#discussion-work>

link 6 | <https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/preventing-abuse-neglect>

link 7 | <https://www.scie.org.uk/e-learning/safeguarding-adults>

link 8 | <https://www.scie.org.uk/training/safeguarding/>

link 9 | <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

link 10 | <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-for-dealing-with-safeguarding-issues-in-charities/strategy-for-dealing-with-safeguarding-issues-in-charities>

link 11 | <https://www.scie.org.uk/myscie/register>

link 12 | <https://www.scie.org.uk/myscie/login>