Introduction to safeguarding in museums

This resource is designed to help you to understand why safeguarding matters for museums and what your overall responsibilities as a museum are. It signposts you to a range of sources of relevant additional information.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is action taken to promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and prevent them from coming to harm.

Safeguarding is Everyone's Responsibility – this includes your organisation.

Although museums are not front line agencies for children and vulnerable adults, all museums will come into contact with children and vulnerable adults and may provide specific programmes for them too.

If your museum is run by a local authority, your activities fall under the local authority's statutory safeguarding duty – the duty to promote and safeguard the welfare of children and adults at risk.

If your museum is run by a charity, you will know that charities have a responsibility to ensure they don't cause harm to anyone who has contact with them. Trustees, as part of fulfilling their trustee duties, whether working online or in person, must take reasonable steps to protect from harm people who come into contact with your charity. This includes:

- people who benefit from your charity's work
- staff
- volunteers
- other people who come into contact with your charity through its work

What does safeguarding mean in practice? You need to:

- have suitable policies and practices in place
- assess and manage risks appropriately
- carry out necessary checks
- protect volunteers and staff – and all those who come into contact with the organisation
- handle and report incidents appropriately
- make sure staff and volunteers receive regular training on child protection or working with adults at risk
- appoint a safeguarding lead to liaise with your local authority safeguarding partnerships or boards

Taking these responsibilities step by step:

Raising awareness and understanding

Here are suggestions for good ways to build your awareness and understanding.

Introductory resources:

Charity trustees - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6V_-JcbKZA and https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees

Online introductory courses offered by https://artswork.org.uk/training-events/

Resources for trustees and for your Designated Safeguarding Lead – and for those working closely with children and vulnerable adults (as volunteers or service users):

NCVO has a really excellent suite of resources to help you to get to grips with safeguarding: https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding and https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding/steps-to-a-safer-organisation

Safe CIC is recommended as a provider by NCVO for information, training and support on safeguarding: https://www.safecic.co.uk/

Appointing a Safeguarding lead

Museums that work regularly with children, young people or vulnerable adults, including welcoming them as visitors, should have a designated safeguarding lead within the organisation.

As part of *Rebuilding the Foundations: Gloucestershire's Museums*, our specialist consultant Sarah Hickie developed this helpful guidance on what's involved – at operational **and** at governing body level:

The **Designated Safeguarding Lead or Officer (DSL or DSO) has operational oversight of safeguarding**. What does this mean in practice? The DSL/O will:

- Take on responsibility for escalating safeguarding concerns up to the relevant local authority safeguarding boards, either as a conversation to confirm if a referral is required or as a formalised referral. Where disclosures are made to other colleagues, or other colleagues raise a concern, the DSL will usually support said colleagues through the safeguarding procedure up to the point of contacting the relevant safeguarding board.

- Support managers, workers and volunteers to recognise the needs of children, and adults with vulnerabilities, including support to be protected from possible abuse, harm or neglect

- Ensure safeguarding policies and procedures address the need for accurate, confidential recording, storing and sharing of information and are used also as an opportunity to cascade information about what abuse and harm is, how it may present and how to respond to a disclosure that abuse and/or harm is taking place

- Develop a link between the local authority partnership boards, and/or local council, to promote a clear understanding of accountability and procedures

- Implement 'quality assurance' to ensure the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are understood and followed by all managers, workers and volunteers. This includes an audit of:
  - Operational delivery - ensuring delivery is in line with this Policy and Procedure
  - Safeguarding induction and training plans
  - Safeguarding logs as applicable
  - Learning from the audit informs the decisions and actions made in practice

The **strategic lead for safeguarding on the governing body has strategic oversight of safeguarding**, **and leadership responsibility for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements**, including:

- Ensuring that systems policies and procedures to safeguard are kept up to date, and regularly reviewed

- Championing safeguarding across the wider governing body
- Responding to any allegations against colleagues in the organisation

Deputies should be in place for each Designated Lead, at operational and governing body level, should the leads not be available.

The NSPCC has an example role description for the DSL here:
https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1587/role-description-for-child-protection-lead.pdf

Developing your policy and procedures

The NSPCC has a guide to writing a policy here: https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/writing-a-safeguarding-policy-statement

NCVO also has a straightforward practical guide: https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding/steps-to-a-safer-organisation/policies-and-procedures

Group for Education in Museums (GEM) has a comprehensive example safeguarding policy, which may help you as you develop or review your own: https://gem.org.uk/resource/safeguarding-policy-example/

Always consider the activities you carry out in your own setting when developing or reviewing your own policy.

Carrying out checks when welcoming new volunteers

This area can seem complicated. This guide from NCVO provides a good place to start:

https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding/steps-to-a-safer-organisation/choosing-staff-volunteers-and-trustees

Local authority-run museums will need to work with their local authority to apply their processes appropriately for their recruitment of volunteers.

The British Museum's Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy includes guidance as to when DBS checks are and are not required:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Safeguarding_Children_and_Adults_At_Risk_Policy_2020.pdf

This guide from Share Museums East is also helpful: https://sharemuseumseast.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Safeguarding-for-Museums-DBS.pdf

Training your team

Artswork, SafeCIC and NSPCC all offer options for different types and levels of safeguarding training, both online and in person. Your local authority may offer safeguarding training opportunities which are suited to non-statutory settings but this varies from area to area.

Artwork's training: https://artswork.org.uk/training-events/

Once key members of your team, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead, have received training, you will need to consider what safeguarding updates and awareness training the rest of the team will need. This could include safeguarding awareness inductions and training delivered in house by a trained person with experience of maintaining a safe environment. Find guidance and example training information, and exercises, within Appendix 4 of this example safeguarding policy from GEM:
https://gem.org.uk/resource/safeguarding-policy-example/

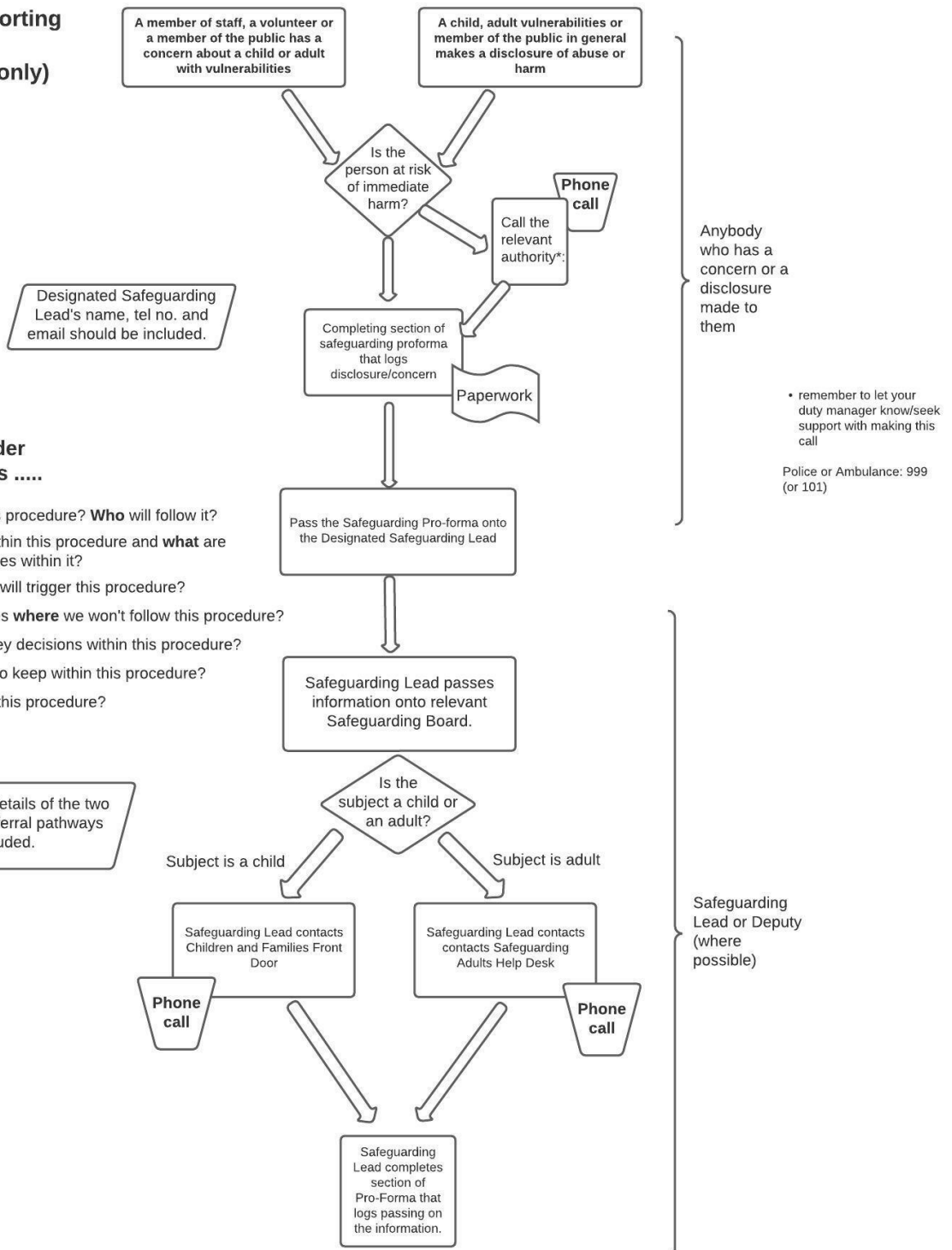**Handling and reporting incidents appropriately**

Your museum needs to commit to responding to safeguarding concerns where these may arise. You'll need to think through what this means in practice and share information about your agreed process. NCVO provides a useful overview:

https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding/steps-to-a-safer-organisation/recognise-respond-and-report

As part of Rebuilding the Foundations, museums took part in a peer learning session led by Sarah Hickie and, through collaborative discussion, worked out a generic reporting flow chart. You may find it useful to look at this as you develop or review yours.

Safeguarding Reporting Process Diagram (generic example only)

Safeguarding Reporting Process Diagram (generic example only)

A member of staff, a volunteer or a member of the public has a concern about a child or adult with vulnerabilities

A child, adult vulnerabilities or member of the public in general makes a disclosure of abuse or harm

Is the person at risk of immediate harm?

Call the relevant authority*:

Phone call

Designated Safeguarding Lead's name, tel no. and email should be included.

Completing section of safeguarding proforma that logs disclosure/concern

Paperwork

Anybody who has a concern or a disclosure made to them

• remember to let your duty manager know/seek support with making this call

Police or Ambulance: 999 (or 101)

Questions to consider when creating yours .....

Who is the audience of this procedure? **Who** will follow it?

Who are the key people within this procedure and **what** are their roles and responsibilities within it?

What set of circumstances will trigger this procedure?

Are there any circumstances **where** we won't follow this procedure?

Where and **what** are the key decisions within this procedure?

What records do we need to keep within this procedure?

How will we communicate this procedure?

Pass the Safeguarding Pro-forma onto the Designated Safeguarding Lead

Safeguarding Lead passes information onto relevant Safeguarding Board.

Links to and contact details of the two safeguarding board referral pathways should be included.

Is the subject a child or an adult?

Subject is a child

Subject is adult

Safeguarding Lead contacts Children and Families Front Door

Safeguarding Lead contacts contacts Safeguarding Adults Help Desk

Phone call

Phone call

Safeguarding Lead or Deputy (where possible)

Safeguarding Lead completes section of Pro-Forma that logs passing on the information.

Further resources from SWMD:

Volunteering: Your safeguarding policy and safe working procedures. Our guide to safeguarding policies and safe working procedures when working with young volunteers
https://southwestmuseums.org.uk/resources/safeguarding-policy-and-procedures/

Volunteering: Working with young volunteers – What to think about before you begin. Our guide to help you safely plan your work with young volunteers in your museum
https://southwestmuseums.org.uk/resources/young-volunteers-how-to-begin/