



Rural Kent Advice & Information

Safeguarding for village and community halls, March 2022

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)– and Rural Kent as the network member for Kent & Medway - are working to make sure that the voluntary management committees that run halls and community buildings have the knowledge and confidence to provide a safe environment for all.

Every organisation that delivers charitable activities has a responsibility to safeguard people from harm or abuse, whether they are staff members, volunteers, or other people who come into contact with your charity through its work. Volunteers and staff managing village halls have an important part to play in creating safe spaces for members of their community, particularly children, young people, and adults at risk.

Whilst the organisers of activities and events at village halls are responsible for ensuring people's safety and wellbeing during their time using the space, village hall committees also have a duty of care to those using the hall, as well as to trustees, volunteers and staff.

Five reasons to get safeguarding right:

- Abuse, harassment and physical harm are not always visible and not always reported
- We have a duty to do something about it
- If everyone understands the right to be safe, they know they are protected.
- An organisation that does safeguarding well is an organisation that is trusted.
- The Charity Commission expects every charity to prioritise safeguarding.

ACRE's recent [national survey of village halls](#) showed that village halls are a vital asset for many communities. 60% of halls provide the only meeting space in the local area, whilst 80% of respondents knew someone whose lives had changed for the better as a result of joining activities at their local hall. Village and community halls can continue to improve lives through adopting effective safeguarding practices and policies, to ensure that everyone is protected from harassment, bullying, abuse and neglect, and that people are respected. It's also about being ready to respond safely and well if there is a problem.

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Charity Number: 212796

What do halls need to do?

Hirers will be responsible for assessing risk and ensuring safeguarding of their own groups, particularly those most at risk:

- Children (those under 18)
- Adults at risk: anyone aged 18 or over who has needs for care and or support; is unable to protect themselves from abuse or is currently experiencing or is at risk of abuse. They may have a mental or physical illness, have a learning disability, have addiction problems or be frail.

However, hall committees also have a duty of care to hall users, volunteers, employees and each other.

Key steps for halls:

- You should ask all trustees to sign the declaration of eligibility. (I can provide you with a model in Word to use.) Through this, they are confirming that they do not have particular types of criminal records or judgements.
- The hall management committee is responsible for all employees (including self-employed, volunteers, trustees) who may have unsupervised contact with at risk groups hiring the hall. You should follow safe recruitment practices when recruiting your own staff/volunteers – see ACRE sheet on Safeguarding.
- You need to have your hall safeguarding policy in place (ACRE model available), with designated safeguarding lead, and give a copy to hirers or link to the website. It is advised that safeguarding leads have a basic DBS check.
- You need to make sure that hirers sign the hiring agreement, which includes a clause that they must show their safeguarding policy and any DBS checks needed on request, if their activity involves children, young people and/or adults at risk (unless a private party).
- Hirers need to have your name and contact number so that they can talk to you, eg if they have any concerns about other groups using the hall at the same time. Make sure there is a notice in the hall with this information too.
- You need to know who to report to in the unlikely event that there is an incident (see KCC link below)

Encourage hirers to be aware of use of shared spaces (mainly toilets but possibly also kitchens) and how these will be managed if for example adults and children are using the hall.

Users should have a plan in place to deal with this, eg escorting children to the toilets. You could discuss these kinds of scenarios with hirers if you think there might be an issue, but it

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should be covered in their safeguarding policy. Good communication with hirers should help reassure trustees – and hirers.

Running your own events

If the hall committee are running activities for children or adults at risk themselves, then they should have a specific safeguarding policy for those situations. Look at the NCVO link below, which gives guidance and resources on safeguarding requirements for different situations.

Further guidance:

ACRE Information Sheet no. 5 on Safeguarding (April 2021)

Please read the full ACRE guidance. You'll find it in the membership area of our website. Non-members can contact me for a free copy, thanks to National Lottery Community Fund and DCMS funding. There are some additional notes below.

Who to report concerns to (local links):

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/report-abuse>

[Report adult abuse | Adult abuse and safeguarding | Medway Council](#)

[Report a child safeguarding concern | Concerned about a child | Medway Council](#)

Other resources:

NCVO Safeguarding information

<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding>

NCVO membership is free to small charities and gives you access to all the resources on their website. Remember that it is catering to all types of charity, small and large, so not everything is so relevant for village halls.

They provide **online Safeguarding training**, at a cost of £55.

NSPCC child protection guidance

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/voluntary-community-groups/>

Safeguarding concerns: practice example – hiring out space

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/safeguarding-concerns-practice-examples/>

Safeguarding guidance for disabled children and adults at risk

<https://www.anncrafttrust.org/resources/>

Where to apply for a DBS check

[Basic DBS checks: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Find a DBS umbrella body company - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

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Guidance on handling safeguarding allegations in a charity

<https://safeguarding.culture.gov.uk/>

This portal offers a step-by-step guide to help charities correctly manage their concerns, identify the right people to contact if needed and access helpful resources and advice.



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