

## ***The Lancashire and Cheshire Photographic Union***

### ***Guidance notes to clubs on writing a Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policy***

#### **Introduction**

Child Protection is an important issue for anyone who works with children and this may be extended to clubs who, for example, have children as members, use children as models, run a children's photography group, or put photographs of children on the Internet. This document aims to give a brief overview of Child Protection and to offer basic guidance for clubs in writing a policy document. **It is not a model policy.** Each club committee must assess your own risks and decide on what Child Protection issues you should be addressing, then write your own policy. It is vital that any policy that you adopt applies directly to your own organisation, as not all clubs are the same.

New legislation, **The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006**, which received Royal Assent on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2006, will be phased in from autumn 2008. The Act will combine lists of people who are barred from working with children. Under the Act, there are a series of criminal offences, including employing, in a paid or **voluntary** capacity, a "barred" person. The Act will cover **children** and **vulnerable adults**.

#### **Child Protection Policy – The Purpose**

The purpose of a Child Protection Policy is to put in place an enabling process to provide, for photographic club committees, members and anyone associated with the club, a duty of care and to comply with any associated legislation with regard to the protection of children. For this purpose, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18.

#### **What should be recognised in a Child Protection Policy?**

- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Health and safety issues
- Protection of personal data

#### **Background Legislation**

You may wish to consult the following Acts:

- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Children Act 1989 (England and Wales) and The Children Act 2004
- The Data Protection Acts 1984 and 1998
- The Police Act 1997
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Protection of Children Act 1999

All legislation can be accessed at the Home Office [www.hmsso.gov.uk/acts.htm](http://www.hmsso.gov.uk/acts.htm)

#### **Don't panic! But also don't be complacent**

If you have children as members of your club, don't feel that writing a child protection policy needs to be complicated. It doesn't. Just consider where/how children might be put at risk and write down what you will do to protect children in your environment. Most clubs already have some kind of a policy but it isn't written down. For example, do you insist that a parent or carer accompanies a child at your club? If so, that is a policy (or part of one). Just write down what you do.

## **Before writing your policy**

### **Carry out a risk assessment**

- Think about all possible situations that might occur to put children at risk when they are in your environment and write a list.
- Think about the worst possible outcome of each situation.
- Think about what reasonable safeguard you need in place that could have prevented those incidents.
- Think about who interacts with children in your environment. Is this ever on a one-to-one basis? Will the parent be present at all times?
- Who checks the building to make sure everyone is out at the end of the meeting?
- Is the venue suitable? Is the building also open to members of the public?
- Are children going to be seeing inappropriate pictures?
- How will you use pictures of children on the Internet?
- Who is in charge of children who come as models to the club and may have to change outfits? Where will they change?
- Who is going to see personal information of children (e.g. email addresses, telephone numbers)? How will you protect that data?
- Will children (whether members or not) be taken on photographic outings or attend social occasions?

## **Writing a Child Protection Policy – the process**

### **1. Write a Policy Statement**

This should be a simple statement of intent to explain to parents, guardians and carers how (your organisation) will take all reasonable steps to ensure the protection of children in your environment. If the venue is also open to the public, this should be taken into account in your statement.

### **2. Write an Implementation Procedure**

- Use the list that you have made in your risk assessment to help you to structure your document. Cover all of the points in turn.
- Define responsibilities.
- Define guidelines (for example, you might stipulate (1) that no member will engage in one-to-one tuition with a child and (2) that a parent must accompany the child at all times at meetings and so on).
- Write a detailed procedure for dealing with reported incidents or suspected incidents of physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
- Define how allegations will be documented and who is responsible for record keeping.
- Deal with the confidentiality of personal information.
- Deal with health and safety issues (e.g. electrical safety, trip hazards). Electrical equipment should be PAT tested (portable appliance tested) and labelled.
- Photography. Consider including in your policy a procedure for taking, using and storing photographs of children. Get consent forms signed by parents/guardians/carers if you are going to publish pictures e.g. to the Internet. State on the form how the pictures will be used.

### **3. Circulate your policy**

Ensure that your policy document is available to all members and to the parents/guardians/carers of children in your environment. Make sure that everyone in your organisation is aware of the policy and is aware of their responsibilities.

### **4. Implement your policy**

Make any necessary changes to your practices to comply with your policy.

## **5. Review**

The policy should be reviewed from time to time. Reviews should also take place after any incident. If changes are required, change your Policy Document accordingly. Ensure that all members are aware of the changes you have made.

## **Protection of Vulnerable Adults**

There is now a growing awareness of the vulnerability of some adults to abuse or neglect. A vulnerable adult may be defined as a person over 18 “who is or may be in need of community care services by reasons of mental health or other disability, age or illness” and “is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.”

This may include someone over 18 who

- Is elderly and frail
- Has learning disabilities
- Suffers from mental illness
- Has physical disability
- Is a substance misuser
- Is homeless
- Is in an abusive relationship

For the purpose of Protection Policies, you may wish to acknowledge an awareness of issues associated with vulnerable adults and include them in your policy.

## **Additional notes**

### **(i) Reporting allegations/suspicions of abuse:**

- It is essential that all allegations or suspicions of abuse be taken seriously.
- Support must be given to the individual at all times.
- Questions should be kept to the minimum necessary to understand the nature of the allegation. Leading questions should be avoided.
- A full contemporaneous written record should be made, giving as much detail as possible.
- In the case of abuse allegations, these should be reported immediately to a committee member. A designated member (e.g. President or committee member) must report the incident without delay to the Social Services Department and the Police.
- Keep a copy of all written records, reports, notes and correspondence relating to any incident.

### **(ii) PAGB insurance scheme**

The PAGB insurance scheme, of which most UK photographic clubs are members, specifically excludes cover for costs arising out of allegations of abuse of children (persons under 18). Contact the L&CPU Treasurer for any information about your club insurance. Ensure that all club events are covered by insurance e.g. photographic trips, exhibitions etc. by reporting them to the L&CPU Treasurer, who will ascertain if any additional premium needs to be paid.

### **(iii) Additional Reading**

The Voluntary Arts Network provides lots of help and advice on Child Protection issues and other matters. Leaflets can be downloaded from: <http://www.voluntaryarts.org>  
Click on Publications>VAN briefings.