

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom

A General Guide to the Safeguarding of Children

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National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom
27 Rutland Gate LONDON SW7 1PD

telephone 020-7584-2566 fax 020-7584-9402 e-mail nsa@bahai.org.uk

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The Assembly also represents the Bahá'í communities of the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands

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A General Guide concerning the Safeguarding of Children



Why should we take safeguarding children so seriously?

First of all, the Universal House of Justice writes:

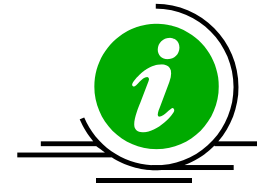
Among the signs of moral downfall in the declining social order are the high incidence of violence within the family, the increase in degrading and cruel treatment of spouses and children, and the spread of sexual abuse. It is essential that the members of the [Bahá'í] community . . . take the utmost care not to be drawn into acceptance of such practices because of their prevalence. They must ever be mindful of their obligation to exemplify a new way of life distinguished by its respect for the dignity and rights of all people, by its exalted moral tone, and by its freedom from oppression and from all forms of abuse.

(Universal House of Justice, 24 January 1993, to an individual believer quoted in Antidotes to Domestic Violence by Dr Michael Penn, an article in

The Bahá'í World: 2003-2004 (2005: page 148)

In addition there are three main groups of specific factors for taking very seriously indeed this concern to safeguard children.

- ❖ Firstly, there is a surprisingly large number of people who abuse children.
- ❖ Secondly, there is more than one kind of person who abuses children and they are not easily recognized even when they are involved in serious child abuse. As we shall see we cannot console ourselves with the thought that we are all Bahá'ís and therefore everything is safe.
- ❖ Thirdly, therapy is very uncertain in its effects.



The Essence of the Issue

If we have not taken what the public regard as reasonable steps to safeguard our children in this respect, not only do we expose our children to risk, but we will also open ourselves up to adverse publicity.

Potential abusers are on the look out for soft targets and, given our emphasis on working with children and young people, if we are not vigilant we will be picked out for exploitation by paedophiles, who will fake an interest in the Faith to gain access to young people.



How common do you think child abuse is?

It's commoner than most of us think.

Each year the NSPCC compile the most robust and up-to-date child protection data that exists in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Their most recent report on identifying trends and statistics can be found on the website:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-abuse/sexual-abuse-facts-statistics/>

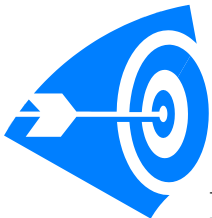
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What do I do if someone tells me they've been abused?

This all makes it very clear that any of us at any time could be told that someone has been the victim of abuse. What on earth should we do, particularly if we are acting in an official capacity for the Faith? The National Assembly has detailed procedures for this situation (*l. Responding to Allegations of Abuse*). What follows is a simplified summary. If you find yourself in the real situation, before you act consult the procedures or consult with someone who knows them well.

When a child or any vulnerable person wants to talk about abuse, it is important for the worker to listen carefully to what the child says without prompting or using leading questions. Also it is important to emphasise here that Bahá'í administrative bodies have no role in the **investigation** of allegations of abuse, which must be referred on to the appropriate authorities.



In general we should:

- ❖ Show acceptance of what the child says (however unlikely the story may sound).
- ❖ Keep calm.
- ❖ Look at the child directly.
- ❖ Be honest.

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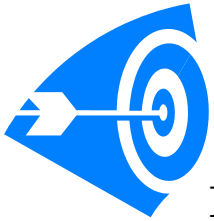
- ❖ Tell the child you will need to let someone else know - don't promise confidentiality. **This is extremely important.**
- ❖ Even when a child has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse.
- ❖ Be aware that the child may have been threatened or bribed not to tell.
- ❖ Never push for information. If the child decides not to tell you after all, then accept that and let them know that you are always ready to listen.
- ❖ Say “I believe you.” (Or in some way show acceptance of what the child says).
- ❖ Say “Thank you for telling me,” “It's not your fault,” and/or “I will help you.”



DON'T SAY

- ❖ “Why didn't you tell anyone before?”
- ❖ “I can't believe it!” or “Are you sure this is true?”
- ❖ “Why? How? When? Who? Where?”
- ❖ Never make false promises and never make statements such as “I am shocked. Don't tell anyone else.”

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In Concluding

- ❖ Again reassure the child that they were right to tell you and show acceptance.
- ❖ Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens (you might have to consider referring to the local authority or the Police to prevent a child or young person returning home if you consider them to be seriously at risk of further abuse – see further guidance below)).
- ❖ Contact either the National Spiritual Assembly or an agency such as *CCPAS on 0303 003 11 11 (Option 2), for advice or go directly to the local authority/Police/NSPCC.
- ❖ Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support if needed.
- ❖ **Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within one hour of the child talking to you), writing down exactly what the child said and when s/he said it, what you said in reply and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. a description of the activity). Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Keep all hand written notes, even if subsequently typed. Such records should be kept safely for an indefinite period.**

(Note: In July 2018 CCPAS changed their name to ‘thirtyone:eight’)

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What kind of things might they tell me about?

The Government's statutory guidance, in "Working Together to Safeguard Children Act (2015)", recommend certain definitions of child abuse. (See also *ll. Definitions & Signs of Abuse*). These are:

PHYSICAL ABUSE

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. This is commonly described using terms such as 'factitious illness by proxy' or 'Munchausen Syndrome by proxy' - see below.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children

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frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

NEGLECT

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

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MUNCHAUSEN'S SYNDROME BY PROXY

The Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry defines Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy as: "A form of child abuse in which the parents, or carers, give false accounts of symptoms in their children and may fake signs of illness (to draw attention to themselves). They seek repeated medical investigations and needless treatment for their children." The government issued guidance for professionals working in situations where Munchausen's is suspected in 'Safeguarding Children in whom Illness is Fabricated or Induced' (2002).

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Linked with emotional abuse, spiritual abuse could be defined as an abuse of power, often done in the name of God or religion, which involves manipulating or coercing someone into thinking, saying or doing things without respecting their right to choose for themselves. Some indicators of spiritual abuse might be a leader who is intimidating and imposes his/her will on other people, perhaps threatening dire consequences or the wrath of God if disobeyed. He or she may say that God has revealed certain things to them and so they know what is right. Those under their leadership are fearful to challenge or disagree, believing they will lose the leader's (or more seriously God's) acceptance and approval.

The issue of the exploitation of vulnerable young people and adults by people in positions of power within the church is covered in some detail in the report, "Time for Action", produced by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Home Office definition of domestic violence is "Any violence between current or former partners in an intimate relationship, wherever and whenever the violence occurs. The violence may include physical,

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sexual, emotional or financial abuse.” (Home Office Research Studies. Domestic Violence: Findings from a new British Crime Survey self-completion questionnaire.1999)

ORGANISED ABUSE

'Organised or multiple abuse may be defined as abuse involving one or more abuser and a number of related or non-related children and young people. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse'. (Government Guidelines: 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 1999).*

CHILD PROSTITUTION AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Children involved in prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation should be treated primarily as the victims of abuse and their needs require careful assessment. (Government Guidelines: 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 1999. See also 'Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation 2017' - Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015').*

* Note: 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (1999)' has been superseded by 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)'



So what signs should we be looking for?

The following signs may or may not be indicators that abuse has taken place, but the possibility should be considered.

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PHYSICAL SIGNS OF ABUSE

- ❖ Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- ❖ Injuries that occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- ❖ Injuries that have not received medical attention
- ❖ Neglect - under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care, etc
- ❖ Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- ❖ Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- ❖ Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc which do not have an accidental explanation*
- ❖ Cuts/scratches/substance abuse*

INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE SEXUAL ABUSE

- ❖ Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- ❖ Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- ❖ Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- ❖ Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults

*. These signs may indicate the possibility that a child or young person is self-harming, mostly by cutting, burning, self-poisoning. Approximately 20,000 are treated in accident and emergency departments in the UK each year

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- ❖ Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- ❖ Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- ❖ Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia*

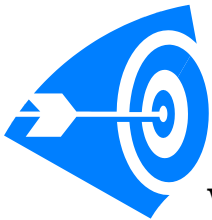
EMOTIONAL SIGNS OF ABUSE

- ❖ Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. Also depression/aggression, extreme anxiety.
- ❖ Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- ❖ Obsessions or phobias
- ❖ Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- ❖ Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults /Attention-seeking behaviour
- ❖ Persistent tiredness
- ❖ Running away/stealing/lying

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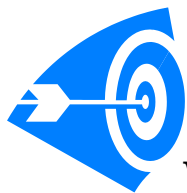
So I know what might be going on. Now what do I do?



Where a child has a physical injury or symptom of neglect:

- a. Contact the local authority directly (See the National Assembly's Guidance *III. What happens when you tell the local authority?* for a more detailed discussion of what this may involve and its long term implications) where there are serious concerns regarding the child or the parents, or where a child is afraid to return home. Do not tell the parents in such circumstances.
- b. In some situations where the concerns are not as great it may be appropriate to speak with the parent and suggest, for example, that medical help/attention is needed for the child. The doctor will then initiate further action, if necessary.
- c. If a parent is unwilling to seek help, then offer to accompany them. If they still fail to acknowledge the need for medical attention you may need to seek help yourself, e.g. via the local authority.
- d. Where emergency medical attention is necessary it should be sought immediately, informing the doctor of any suspicions you may have.

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Where there are allegations/concerns of sexual abuse:

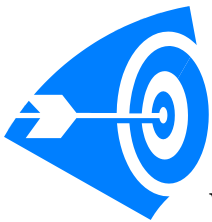
- a. **DO NOT** tell the parents. You must put the child's welfare first. Parents could be involved and allegations of sexual abuse are usually denied and often difficult to prove.
- b. Contact the local authority. **DO NOT try to investigate the matter yourself.** Your job is to relay information in order for the local authority and the Police, working together, to take appropriate action.
- c. Contact the police direct in order to facilitate a medical examination by a police surgeon in the case of very severe sexual assault (such as rape) which you believe has occurred over the last few hours and you have not been able to get an immediate response from the local authority. Do not tamper with any evidence, such as stained clothing.
- d. Keep information on a 'need to know basis' so that any alleged perpetrator is not 'tipped off.' The child or young person also has a right for their privacy to be respected as much as is possible.



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What do I do if the person I'm talking to says someone else has been abused?



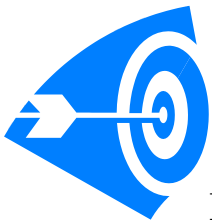
Where allegations are made by a third party, your role is to elicit as much information as possible from the referrer.

Unless the person wishes to remain anonymous this should include

- ❖ the referrer's details (name, address, telephone number) and
- ❖ as much factual detail as possible about the child and family concerned (names of family members, addresses, name/date of birth of subject, child's ethnic origin etc).
- ❖ Information as to the cause of concern or nature of the injuries/observations should be included.

It would be advisable for you to inform the referrer that information relating to any child at risk, or potentially at risk, will be shared with the child protection co-ordinator and may result in referral to the local authority, and in this event the local authority may wish to interview the referrer (if known) as part of their investigations.

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If allegations are made by adults (i.e. people over the age of sixteen) about past abuse as a child, it is for the victim to decide whether or not to report the matter to the local authority or the police.

- ❖ The only exception is where there is a possibility that the alleged perpetrator still has close contact with children.

In such circumstances, we advise that the allegations should be reported to the child protection authorities (police/the local authority/NSPCC) so that children who may be at risk now can be protected. Sexual abuse of children is often addictive behaviour and perpetrators can continue to abuse for many years.



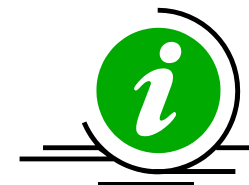
If I'm still not sure what to do, where do I turn for help?

All of us will often experience difficulty in making appropriate judgements.

- ❖ The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service is available to any of us who are seeking advice on how to handle such disclosures. They are also available to provide follow-up support at each stage in the process and always confirm their advice in writing.
- ❖ The National Spiritual Assembly has created an Office for Safeguarding Children (OSC) who ought to be contacted at osc@bahai.org.uk as part of the Safeguarding Children procedure.

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- ❖ However, there are times when individuals may prefer to take up certain matters outside the Faith by contacting either CCPAS or the local authority directly. The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service is an independent organisation with no denominational allegiance, though it encourages people to work through agreed procedures wherever possible.



Do we also have to be careful how we treat children and youth?

In short, yes. Most of the rules immediately below apply most strongly at residential events but should be borne in mind everywhere. We have to be careful when applying sanctions of any kind.

It is a violation of the 1989 Children Act to punish young people in the following ways:

- ❖ Corporal punishment (that is any intentional application of force as punishment)
- ❖ Deprivation of food and/or drink (this also includes forcing a young person to eat food against their will)
- ❖ Restriction or refusal of external communications
- ❖ Requiring a young person to wear distinctive or inappropriate clothing
- ❖ Use of, or withholding of, medication or medical or dental treatment
- ❖ Use of accommodation to physically restrict the liberty of a young person



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- ❖ Intentional deprivation of sleep
- ❖ Imposition of fines (though in cases of willful damage or misappropriation of monies or goods belonging to others, the matter will be referred to the responsible body and they may require the perpetrator to make good the loss)
- ❖ Intimate physical searches (This includes 'frisking'. In the event that an individual is believed to be in the possession of stolen goods, drugs or other illegal substances, the police must be called to search the individual).

If we're running **residential events**, we must also be sensitive when going into sleeping areas. The dormitories are places of privacy and access by staff should only take place under certain conditions:

- Staff should always enter the dormitory in pairs - it is preferable that both are the same sex as the occupants, although in emergency one may be of the other sex.
- One member of staff should hold open the dormitory door (this should always be the staff member of opposite sex in the event of a mixed staff team) whilst the other staff member enters the dormitory.
- In the event of youth requiring staff assistance during the night, two members of staff must always be present.



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Are all abusers the same?

Definitely not.

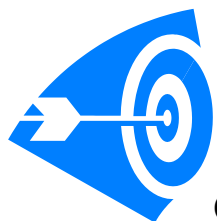
Three main groups of abusers have been identified. These are:

- ❖ **Aggressive/Sadistic:** The express desire of offenders in this group is to harm their victims physically. The child is usually a stranger. They stalk their victims and will often abduct them. They simply take a child by force with no grooming or seduction. They inflict pain and often kill. They are a small minority of offenders.
- ❖ **Regressed:** These offenders have had apparently normal sexual relationships. Usually it takes some change in their situation to trigger sexual acts with a child or children. They generally prefer children they do not know. This type of offender has the best chance of not reoffending especially if the trigger situation(s) can be found and altered for the better.
- ❖ **Fixated:** This type of offender has usually started his interest in children in adolescence. His interest in children is persistent and compulsive. Male targets are generally preferred. He is not interested in physically harming the child. Grooming and seduction are typical. He is often good at grooming the community into believing he is not a risk. This group illustrates why it can be very hard to spot an abuser who has not already been identified.

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This list is not exhaustive but is sufficient for most practical purposes. Other kinds of offenders exist. For example, people with brain damage or dementia may behave inappropriately with children without necessarily harbouring sexual intentions or being aware of the meaning of their actions.

The fixated and regressed offenders are the commonest and are the reason why we have to have some way of screening people who, on our behalf, spend significant amounts of time with children.



Official Disclosure Procedures

This is why we have Obligatory Disclosure Procedures. One form of this, in Scotland and England and Wales is an Enhanced Disclosure.

- ❖ Enhanced Disclosures are for people with substantial access to children at Bahá'í events.
- ❖ Basically, substantial access means:
 - you are regularly caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of a child or children. This means that you alone are responsible for that child, even if only for a minute or two.
 - you are routinely in a position of authority in relation to that child. For example, as a children's class teacher, or a Junior Youth Animator, a tutor, a project coordinator etc.

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- ❖ Bahá'í events in this context includes, amongst other things, children's classes and camps, junior youth groups and camps, summer schools and other residential events, activity weekends, Training Institute courses, study circles, conferences and conventions.

The National Spiritual Assembly/the OSC/Bahá'í Councils/Regional co-ordinators keep lists of those known to be competent and safe to work with children (Accredited Tutor Lists – ATL).

- ❖ Those organising events **must** contact a list holder to confirm that those who will have “substantial access” to children are on such a list.
- ❖ Those who will have substantial access but are not on list will have to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure (ask your Bahá'í Council or Training Institute co-ordinator for details: in Northern Ireland and Scotland the system is different and believers there should ask their Bahá'í Council for details).

There are no exceptions to some variation of this process anywhere in the U.K.

- ❖ The terms “children” and “young people” cover people up the legal age of majority i.e. 18 years.
- ❖ If there is any uncertainty about what constitutes a “sexual offence”, then you should seek clarification. Earlier in this pamphlet there are definitions that may help you.
- ❖ The Safeguarding Children Policy explains in more detail the circumstances and procedures for obtaining a Disclosure. These are also available as a separate document on the National Assembly's UK Bahá'í Resources website: <https://bahaidata.com>.

At Bahá'í events in public places care must be taken dealing with strangers.

If an unknown adult seeks access to the building, or is already in the building, they should be challenged and escorted immediately to the organisers. If the adult is unco-operative the situation must be reported at

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once to the organisers, who may call the police. Any stranger on the grounds should be reported immediately to the organisers.



Why do some people become abusers?

Theories about the cause of such abusive behaviour in adults should be treated with caution.



Does therapy “cure” sex offenders?

Good treatment programmes have not yet been evaluated in terms of their ability to reduce long term recidivism.

Offenders typically deny their offences or at least their responsibility for them.

- ❖ One way they sometimes do this is by saying that their offending is no longer a problem because they have converted to a religion.
- ❖ Some conversions may even be motivated by a desire to avoid treatment.



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- ❖ Genuine converts will not resist treatment, and may even benefit from their new found faith during treatment.
- ❖ There is no evidence that religious conversion alone does anything to reduce the risk of sexual offending.

This is why we must take precautions within our own community. Abusers are addicted to abuse and for the most part faith alone is not enough to stop them.

It is unwise to rely on offenders' being sufficiently motivated on their own to successfully avoid relapse. Relapse prevention is most effective where it can be supplemented by external supervision, in addition to self-management techniques. The National Assembly can give advice on how to manage the spiritual and community end of this kind of situation should the need arise.

We can never assume that offenders are cured. What is clear is that recovery is a lifelong process.

- ❖ Taking proper care to protect our children is not only best for the children but is also the best way of facilitating the recovery process of an offender.
- ❖ Restrictions should where possible be discussed with an offender in a spirit of co-operation: where there is no co-operation they must be imposed.
- ❖ There are National Assembly Guidelines to help with this where an Assembly has to deal with a convicted abuser.

Effective measures for safeguarding children will assist in this process of protecting our children from unidentified as well as identified offenders. That is why such care has to be taken in implementing them to the letter.



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What is the bottom line?

In short all this indicates that, because abuse is fairly common, offenders are deceptive and treatment is of uncertain efficacy, we have to exert ourselves to protect children in our care. Potential abusers are on the look out for soft targets and, given our emphasis on working with children and young people, if we are not vigilant we will be picked out for exploitation by paedophiles, who will fake an interest in the Faith to gain access to young people.



If I'm running a Bahá'í event such as a school what kind of things should I bear in mind?

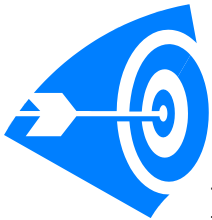
The general guidance from the Home Office is a good place to start. This is contained in a document called *Safe from Harm*. It has been superseded by ***Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)*** but still contains much useful practical guidance for those organizing events. There is also guidance in the National Spiritual Assembly's *[VI. Guidance for Residential Schools](#)*.

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What kinds of guidance does it give?

It makes 13 recommendations which are very relevant to our situation within the Bahá'í community.



Planning the Work

The work of volunteers should be organised so as to minimise those situations where it may be possible for children to be abused.

- ❖ For instance, adults working alone with a child should only do so in an area that can be observed (Guideline Two).
- ❖ Organisations need to plan the work of all staff members so as to minimise situations where they might be tempted or able to abuse (Guideline Four).
- ❖ Volunteers should be given a clear and unambiguous idea of their role, including accountability, a supervisor and a description of their work. They should also be clear about their duty to prevent the abuse of all children in contact with the organisation (Guideline Five).
- ❖ The availability of good management supervision is crucial. For example, if any child appears to be receiving exceptional treatment, the supervisor should explore the relationship further. Supervisors

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should also take or create opportunities for observing the member of staff while (s)he is working with children. Notes should ideally be kept of all supervision meetings.



Appointing an independent person

They also recommend that programmes should designate an “independent person” to whom children may go with any concerns of any kind - this person should be trained in how to deal with allegations of abuse should they occur. This might simply involve explaining to any child who comes into contact with the organisation for more than just the odd occasion their right to talk with an independent person, and then giving them the name and contact arrangements. For smaller local organisations it may be possible to persuade a respected figure in the community, who has demonstrated his trustworthiness, to undertake this task (Guideline Three). See: *Guidance for Prospective Independent Persons – Bahá'í Residential Schools*



Selecting staff

The general principle they suggest is:

- ❖ To treat all would-be volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children (Guideline Seven).
 - This includes obtaining at least one reference from a person who has experience of the applicant's volunteering work with children. Where



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there is no prior experience they suggest obtaining a character reference (Guideline Eight).

- They argue that previous experience should be explored, and where known, should be analysed carefully (Guideline Nine), for example for significant gaps that might indicate a prison sentence and (Guideline Ten) to find out whether an applicant has any convictions for criminal offences against children.¹



What if I'm just looking after children?

If it's in your own home, apart from screening yourself as an individual and anyone else on the premises likely to come in contact with the children, it's no big deal. The OSC has asked the advice of the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) which is outlined below:



As long as the adults in the home, where the children's class is held, are not involved with the children's

¹ Please note: 'On the 29 May 2013, legislation came into force that allows certain old and minor cautions and convictions to no longer be subject to disclosure. In addition employers will no longer be able to take an individual's old and minor cautions and convictions into account when making decisions.' [source: DBS Information for employers and applicants v2.3]. Please read **Appendix F. Policy on the Recruitment of Individuals who have a Criminal Record** on pages 24-25 in the National Assembly's Safeguarding Children policy.

The following website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-filtering-guidance> directs applicants to the guidance and criteria which explains the [filtering of old and minor cautions and convictions](#) which are now 'protected' so not subject to disclosure to employers.

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class - that is they do not come into contact with the children in anyway, they do not come into the room and they do not greet the children then they do not need to obtain a DBS as they do not qualify for one. However the CCPAS said that the DBS adults present need to be 'mindful' of any concerns about other adults present who are not involved and if so then it would be preferable to not hold a class in that home but move it to another place. If you're working in hired premises some other rules and regulations do apply (see also *VIII. Guidance for Day Care*).



Who must register?

A carer providing day-care or supervised activities on non-domestic premises for one or more children aged under eight. Registration is required where the day-care provider is offering a service for children aged under eight for a period or total periods of more than two hours in a day. Even if a child attends for less than two hours, if the facilities are available for more than two hours then the facilities must be registered.



What if it's only now and again?

The obligation to register does not apply to occasional day-care facilities.

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Occasional day-care facilities are those which are used on less than six days in a year. This covers conferences and other occasional events.

However, in ALL cases, before using the premises to provide day-care for the first time, the organiser has to notify the relevant local authority that a day care facility is being provided. (S)he should give information about its location, the numbers and age range of the children, numbers of staff and opening hours. Local authorities have to keep a record of such notifications. It is unnecessary for them to visit the premises on each occasion but this should be done from time to time, so that the local authority can satisfy themselves about the suitability of the premises.



Who is a fit person to be a Day-care Provider?

Various criteria are given that the local authority will take into consideration. These include previous experience of working with children, ability to provide warm and consistent care, an understanding of multi-cultural and racial issues, commitment and knowledge to treat all children with respect and equality, as well as good physical health, mental stability and no known involvement in criminal cases involving child abuse.



How do I know if the premises are suitable?

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There are detailed specifications relating to amounts of space and room organisation. These are available on request, the most crucial being that

- children from 3-5 years of age require 25 sq feet per child,
- no room should accommodate more than 26 children,
- there should be a minimum of one lavatory per ten children,
- there should be outside play space, preferably adjacent to the building and exclusively for the use of the children. (Where not possible, children should be taken regularly to local parks, playgrounds or the equivalent.)

In addition, several other stipulations apply:

- children should be unable to leave the premises unsupervised,
- safety of outside play space and indoor equipment,
- there are ratios which set out how many adults are needed for what number of children (see below for details),
- safe glass doors,
- arrangements for arrival and departure,
- safety of fires, electric sockets, windows and floor coverings, cleaning arrangements, rest facilities, and
- if more than one floor is used, there should be proper arrangements for safeguarding access to stairs.



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What are the appropriate adult-to-child ratios?

Below are suggested ratios of adult to child, recommended for a specific indoor/outdoor activity or holiday event as on the NSPCC website: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/safeguarding/recommended-adult-child-ratios-working-with-children-guidance/>.

	Adult : Children		
0 to 2 years	1	:	3
2 to 3 years	1	:	4
4 to 8 years	1	:	6
9 to 12 years	1	:	8
13 to 17 years	1	:	10

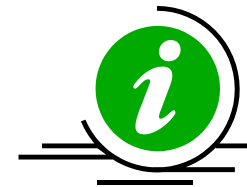
When young people are helping to supervise younger children, only people aged 18 or over should be counted as adults when calculating adult to child ratios.

Youth aged 16-17 year olds must be DBS checked and have their details on the National Assembly's register of accredited tutors before helping to supervise younger children.

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NB. Day Care regulations (OFSTED) cover activities which last for six days or more, for children up to eight years of age where there is no one with parental responsibility with them and where the activity lasts for two hours or more in a day.

It may not, in practice, be possible to achieve the same standards as for registered activities, but it is vital to ensure there are sufficient adults for child supervision¹.



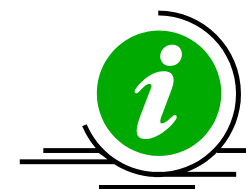
¹ For children over 8, there is no official guidance. A suggested ratio is two adults (preferably one of each gender) for up to 20 children, with an additional leader for every 10 children. Following a risk assessment, this ratio would need to be increased for outdoor activities and more so if that activity is considered high risk or dangerous, or when catering for children with disabilities/special needs.

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How do I find out more?

The full regulations applying to registration are longer and more complex. If you feel that your facilities need to be registered please contact the National Office or the Office for Safeguarding Children. They will advise you.



Is there guidance from the National Assembly on a dedicated adult to child ratio for events with those in the age group 11 to 18?

Yes there is in the following extract in a letter from the National Assembly (dated 4 February 2016 – reference SRL-23356) to the Office for Safeguarding Children.

'After careful consideration, the National Assembly has decided that the dedicated adult to child ratio for events with those in the age group 11-18 should be 1:10, and that those resources serving as a guardian at an event should henceforth not serve in any other capacity. Other adults serving at these events would be called upon to act as a guardian if there were any significant issues raised, or if a risk assessment identified a need to slightly increase in the number at the outset...a risk assessment should take place for all events.'

Please contact the Office for Safeguarding Children for further guidance on ratios including risk assessments: osc@bahai.org.uk

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I suppose that's it then?

Not quite. There's the issue of the Internet.



What do I have to do about the Internet?

Unfortunately this is an area where those who prey on young people do operate. While not wishing to stop Bahá'í participation there is a need for observing elementary precautions. See also [VII. Imagery, the Internet & Mobile Phones](#).



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What should children who use chatrooms do?



- ❖ Never tell anyone you meet on the Internet your home address, your telephone number or any other identifying information e.g. community name or youth group name, unless your parent/carer gives you permission.
- ❖ Never send anyone your picture, credit card or bank details, or anything else, without first checking with your parent/carer.
- ❖ Never give your password to ANYONE! (Even your best friend!)
- ❖ Never arrange to meet anyone in person without first agreeing it with your parent/carer or children's/youth leader, and get them to come along to the first meeting, which should always be in a public place.
- ❖ Never stay in a chat room or conference if someone says or writes something which makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, and always report your concerns to your parent/carer or children's/youth leader.
- ❖ Check that any chat room you enter is regulated and run by a reputable company or organisation that monitors activity.

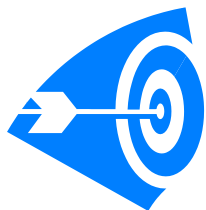


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- ❖ Remember that Chat Rooms are public places and that you may not know the true identity of anyone you meet in a chat room. Many people “disguise” themselves in Chat Rooms, using a different name, even one of the opposite sex, giving a false age etc. There are many cases of paedophiles masquerading as young people in Chat Rooms, getting to know youngsters and trying to set up meetings.
- ❖ Never respond to nasty, suggestive or rude e-mails or postings in Usenet Groups.
- ❖ Always be yourself and do not pretend to be anyone or anything you are not,
- ❖ Always remember if someone makes you an offer that seems too good to be true, it probably is.
- ❖ When receiving e-mails delete attachments from strangers without opening them. They may contain viruses that can damage your computer. Make sure you know where files are from before you download them. They may also have viruses.
- ❖ Don't be surprised if your parents take an interest in what you are doing in the Chat Room, and do co-operate with them, they are acting for your protection.



What should we do if we're making a website?



The following is for those building/maintaining Bahá'í community and other Websites; Secretaries and others holding this document should make sure it is shared with them.

The times we live in make it necessary to exercise some caution when featuring information about children on Websites. Following this guidance should not affect your having a high-quality Website, one that will help attract people to the Faith.

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DO:

- ❖ Seek parental permission before including a photograph of a child or group of children.
- ❖ Use a group photograph in preference to that of an individual child.
- ❖ Ask yourself – “Can a child in this photograph be identified by a stranger, by their name or location?” – and if the answer is “Yes” don’t use that photo.



DON'T:

- ❖ Use pictures of children without seeking permission beforehand.
- ❖ Use pictures of individual children.
- ❖ Provide names, addresses, location information, personal details, etc., that could lead to a child being identified by a stranger.
- ❖ Give personal contact details that could lead to a stranger making contact with a child.
- ❖ We believe that these sensible precautions will minimise risk of placing our young people at risk, while not interfering with your having a good Website.

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Is this all I need to know?

For most practical day-to-day purposes this is all most of us will need to know. However, if you are going to undertake certain specific activities such as running children's classes and/or junior youth groups open to all, if you are attending residential or other events in an official Bahá'í capacity where there are children present or if you are on an Assembly where these kinds of issues are confronting you, then you really need to obtain and study the appropriate National Assembly Safeguarding Children Policy. This, along with other information about other documents, is available on the National Assembly's UK Bahá'í Resources website at <https://bahaidata.com>.

To obtain a copy as a PDF file please e-mail osc@bahai.org.uk. For a hard copy contact the National Office.

