

We want to start a local project. What do we do about safeguarding?

First of all, think about who will be involved in the project.

If your project is for members (e.g. a Knit and Natter group making clothing for premature babies) there are no additional safeguarding concerns other than the overall well-being and pastoral care of the members.

But if your activity will involve children, young people or adults at risk, then you need to follow safeguarding procedures.

Recruiting volunteers

Mothers' Union dioceses are expected to follow the safer recruitment practices as required by the Anglican Church in Britain & Ireland for volunteers engaged in activities involving children or adults at risk.

Many Mothers' Union projects are carried out in conjunction with the local church and on church premises, such as running a Toddler Group. For joint Mothers' Union/Church projects, volunteers (including Mothers' Union members) should be recruited and, where necessary, have a criminal records check through the Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Anglican diocesan/provincial procedures.

Sometimes Mothers' Union members are involved with projects managed by another organisation – for example going into a local school to read with children. In these instances, members who volunteer will need to be recruited and checked through the managing organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures.

If you are unsure about the safer recruitment procedures, whether that is who is responsible, or whether the right procedures are being followed, please contact your Mothers' Union diocesan safeguarding contact for advice. Don't just ignore the need to recruit your volunteers safely.

Safer Recruitment procedures need to be applied uniformly to everyone – regardless of how long someone has been a member of Mothers' Union or of their church.

Remember that safer recruitment is not unnecessary paperwork – it is to make sure that the right people are volunteering to work with children and adults at risk and is an important part of Mothers' Union commitment to do everything possible to ensure that children and adults at risk are safe when involved in Mothers' Union activities. Mothers' Union insurance cover is also dependent on safer recruitment procedures being followed, so if you are unsure that the right steps are being taken, speak to your Mothers' Union diocesan safeguarding contact.

Knowing what to do

Safer Recruitment makes sure that the right people are involved in activities with children and adults at risk, but being aware of safeguarding and knowing how to respond to safeguarding concerns is vital as well. So the organisation that has taken responsibility for the recruitment of volunteers will also be responsible for providing access to safeguarding training appropriate for particular roles.

Whether it is basic awareness training for those making refreshments at a Toddler group through to leadership training to highlight the responsibilities of those in charge of a Lunch Club, developing our understanding of safeguarding will help bring about a safer environment for everyone.

What about a one off event?

Safeguarding is equally important for one off events, such as a Family Fun Day, a church service for residents of a local care home or running a baby change at a local show, even if any children or adults at risk are supervised by their own relatives or carers. For events on church premises, ask your Parish Safeguarding Officer for advice about the safer recruitment procedures to follow. Otherwise, speak to your Mothers' Union diocesan safeguarding contact about the appropriate steps to take.

All Mothers' Union members who are involved in any capacity at an event involving children and adults at risk should have completed basic safeguarding awareness training so they are able to recognise safeguarding concerns. They should also know how to respond and who to inform, as well as being aware of the boundaries of confidentiality.