

Daycare activities, such as pre-school playgroups and crèches, are required to register with the local Health and Social Services Trust. But are you aware that not all organisations providing supervised activities - such as uniformed organisations, sports clubs and youth groups - are required to register? Yet they still have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for your child.

Many activities are supported by volunteers who generously give their time to provide regular activities for your child. However, whether or not workers are paid, you should expect the same standards from all organisations.

Organisations have a responsibility to be open and welcoming and to share information about themselves and their activities

Parents and carers have a right and a responsibility to ensure that children are safe at all times

How should you share your concerns?

You may feel reluctant to voice your concerns in case you are wrong or worried about the impact on your child, but if you are concerned you must take action.

- speak to other parents
- speak to the leader in charge
- if you are not confident that they are the appropriate person, speak to someone in a higher position of authority
- if you are unhappy about the response you receive, please contact one of the organisations below
- if you have a serious concern about a child at risk of abuse, please contact the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline or your local Social Services Department or Police.

Volunteer Development Agency, Our Duty to Care Project

The Volunteer Development Agency can provide information about the standards of good practice that organisations are expected to meet.

Volunteer Development Agency
4th Floor, 58 Howard Street,
Belfast BT1 6PG
Tel: 02890 236100 Fax: 02890 237570
(ask for the Our Duty to Care Team)
Email: odtc@volunteering-ni.org
Web: www.volunteering-ni.org

NSPCC Helpline

If you have serious concerns about a child, please call the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline; a free 24 hour service which provides counselling, information and advice, to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse.



NSPCC, Jennymount Business Park, North Derby Street, Belfast BT15 3NH
Tel: 02890 351135 Fax: 02890 351100 Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

Registered Charity Numbers: VDA XO115/92, NSPCC 216401



A guide to help parents and carers choose children's activities

VOLUNTEER
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

NSPCC
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.

© NSPCC 2000. Reprinted 2004. Designed by Greenleaf Communications. Illustrations by Robert Sayell.

There are so many activities to choose from in local communities and parents and carers want to encourage children and young people to participate. But how do you know if they're safe?



What should you check out?

A good organisation will welcome questions about their activities and the safety of their environment. All organisations should have a child protection policy; including a statement on, and guidelines about, keeping children safe.

Are the staff and volunteers suitable to work with children? all staff and volunteers should go through a proper recruitment process which includes interviews and references; and where appropriate, police checks.

Is there a written code of behaviour? all organisations should have a written code of behaviour, which outlines good practice when working with children. An environment which allows oppressive behaviour such as bullying, shouting, racism and sexism is not acceptable.

How does the organisation manage staff and volunteers? there should be someone in charge who supervises staff and volunteers.

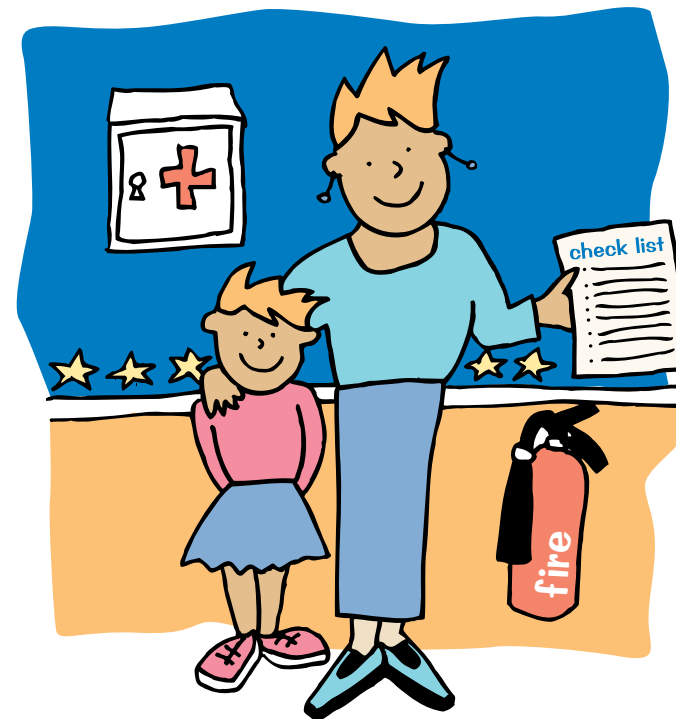
Do they offer regular training to staff and volunteers? apart from skills training, all workers should have training in child protection and health and safety.

How can children and their parents or carers voice their concerns? organisations should tell you where to go and what to do if you or your child have any worries. If you are unhappy about the way your concern is dealt with, contact any of the organisations listed overleaf.

How does the organisation provide for intimate care needs? in the case of very young children, or those with a disability, you should check out routines for toileting, feeding and administering medication.

Does the organisation have a health and safety policy? find out if there is a leader qualified in first aid; that there is a first aid box; and that the premises have passed fire regulations.

What are the arrangements when children go on outings? you should be informed of arrangements - including transport to and from - for every outing no matter how long or short, and your consent should be requested.



What should you be wary of?

- activities where parents are discouraged from staying to watch or become involved
- behaviour that encourages rough play, sexual innuendo or humiliating punishments
- individuals who take charge and operate independently of organisational guidelines
- individuals who show favouritism or personally reward specific children
- encouragement of inappropriate physical contact
- poor communication and lack of parental involvement, leaving you feeling uneasy
- children who drop out or stop going for no apparent reason
- invitations for children to spend time alone with staff or volunteers (or even to visit their home).

REMEMBER listen to your children and ask questions about the activities they take part in.