

Safeguarding Principles and Community Foundations



The rights of children and vulnerable adults are self-evident for us. A significant part of the work of community foundations affects children and vulnerable adults. We consider it of utmost importance that children and vulnerable adults feel safe and are being protected from harm.

As support organisations for the development of community foundations we encourage community foundations to grow and to play a significant role on the local level. We provide knowledge and promote learnings. Are safeguarding guidelines and processes part of our activity?

An online meeting on April 27 2023 primarily for support organisations in the field of community foundations provided the opportunity to consider: WHAT safeguarding principles are; WHY we should start or improve working on safeguarding measures; HOW we can develop guidelines (for policy and practice) and promote them among our constituency.

The majority of those who registered for the online meeting indicated that as an organisation they are either in the process of finding the right solution for this question OR have not yet addressed this issue.

The discussion between the 18 participants from 12 different organisations and 8 countries showed the high level of interest in the topic but as well the challenge of adding another burden to the workload.

The following report summarises the presentations from 3 speakers to the questions of WHAT, WHY and HOW:

1. What are safeguarding principles and why do they matter for the field of community foundations? - **Mary Hallay-Witte, IPA Institute**
2. Insights from the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland approach as a community foundation in United Kingdom to the why, the how and their learnings - **Adam Lopardo, Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland**
3. Insights from Trag Foundation's approach as a support organisation in Serbia to the why, the how and their learnings - **Ivana Markovic, Trag Foundation.**



WHAT ARE SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES?

Mary Hallay-Witte, CEO Institute for Prevention and Reappraisal, IPA Institut e.V., introduced the safeguarding principles.

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, well-being and human rights so that everyone - especially children and adults at risk - can live free from abuse, harm and neglect.

Safeguarding principles define the measures which are taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people at work in an organisation, and those they engage with and / or support. They provide mutual understanding of how organisations deal with abuse and ensure there are comprehensive and effective strategies for protection from harm, violence, and boundary violation and that there is appropriate action taken if this occurs.

Implementing safeguarding principles is an organisational development process. It is part of ensuring high quality work. The process fosters team development and changes communication and reflection.

Community foundations are places where people interact with each other. Community foundations are important actors in the field of social engagement, social and ethical responsibility. They stand for social transformation in a democratic society, and accordingly should set standards for good practice. The application of safeguarding principles therefore relates to structures, hierarchies and dynamics within the foundation themselves. Community foundations should see safeguarding principles as a central component of responsible and future-oriented, high quality work.



Mary's PowerPoint presentation is available [here](#).



WHY SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES?

Adam Lopardo, Director of Community Relations for the Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, is the current designated safeguarding lead.

Adam gave insights to the foundation's approaches. The community foundation's safeguarding policies as well as a number of other policies are all available on the foundations website ([Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland Safeguarding](#)).

Community foundations need safeguarding principles because:

“the law and the regulator in the UK say so”

Even if there is one designated safeguarding lead within the organisation, all trustees are responsible for safeguarding of:

- staff, trustees and volunteers;
- children and adults at risk with whom they have direct and indirect contact, including through funding;
- members, donors or potential donors.

The community foundation feels responsible for only funding organisations that have adequate safeguarding arrangements.

“Trustees should proactively promote and safeguard the welfare of the charity's beneficiaries. They must take reasonable steps to ensure that their beneficiaries and others who come into contact with their charity do not, as a result, come to harm. This should be a key governance priority for trustees.”

“It is part of the community foundations values”

The community foundation aims to make a difference and wants to see their area thrive. They tend to work with people directly and support local organisations, that work with people that have lived experience of disadvantage and discrimination and may be at higher risk of neglect, abuse and exploitation.

They don't want to see:

- bullying, harassment, unlawful discrimination or other forms of abuse within our staff, trustee or volunteer team;
- anyone experiencing harm from people in organisations or from projects they fund.

When implementing safeguarding this means:

- A commitment to protecting trustees, staff, volunteers and beneficiaries from harm;
- Practices that ensure everyone in the organisation is aware of safeguarding;
- Policies that are publicly available, regularly reviewed and put into practice;
- Suitable health and safety, conduct, welfare and discipline arrangements;
- Procedures so people can raise concerns or complaints.

Barriers mainly come as push back from grantees who are from small charities and organisations with many volunteers that don't want extra work. But over time barriers get fewer!

One simple answer to the question of why the Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland has safeguarding principles? - Because they want to live in a fair equal and safe society.



Adam's PowerPoint presentation is available [here](#).



HOW TO DEVELOP CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY?

Ivana Markovic, designated Safeguarding Officer at Trag Foundation highlighted the way of working with safeguarding policies since 2015.

Trag foundation is a support organisation, established in 1999, that focusses on community development, philanthropy and civic participation - mainly in Serbia but as well in Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro. They do not work directly with children, but they support and fund organisations that do so. And they recognize responsibility and duty of care to the safeguarding and protection of children and vulnerable adults.

In 2015 Trag developed a Child Safeguarding policy with support of [Oak Foundation](#) and [Keeping Children Safe](#). This included a check on internal policies and practices like HR procedures, organisational structure, capacity building programmes, grant making programmes, fundraising and communication. Next to this there was a need to learn about national legal requirements which are based on UN conventions, the rights of children and international safeguarding standards.

The implementation plan how to integrate procedures into practice within Trag and its grantees needed team capacity building. Mainstreaming the policies into reality remains a challenge. In 2020 an external consultant helped to review their policy implementation and to develop a pathway for moving forward (e. g. gap analysis and risk assessment). A follow up review will take place in 2025.

What is needed for effective safeguarding are:

- organisational culture and leadership;
- the understanding of staff and associates of their responsibilities;
- effective communication on safeguarding and regular training for staff and associates.

The challenges in this process include the resistance to change, the lack of awareness and knowledge and the limitation of available resources (funds/budgets, time, training).

Trag learned that Safeguarding policies require:

- Commitment of the management and the whole organisation;
- Motivation;
- Opportunity to develop;
- Resources (time, knowledge, money).

Additionally, Trag learned that not only children are protected, but as well the organisation's staff and associates, and the organisation itself and its reputation are protected.



Ivana's power point presentation is available [here](#).

A video recording of all three presentations is available [here](#).

The discussion among participants reflected the challenges of developing safeguarding policies as a long-term process within a community foundation and community foundation support organisations. But summarised: Child / vulnerable adult protection costs money. But child / vulnerable adult abuse can cost lives! And as community foundations we all should feel responsible and not be afraid of the effort!

ECFI will ensure to help raising awareness and knowledge in the field of community foundations and support organisations in Europe with further offers to peer learning exchange.

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