

Government to toughen child safeguarding requirements for charities

By Gabriella Jozwiak
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- Charities working with children and vulnerable people will be subject to tougher safeguarding requirements as part of government efforts to protect them from harm.

Youth minister Tracey Crouch said safeguarding changes will ensure charity leaders tackle poor behaviour head-on".

Government plans include developing digital solutions that will make it easier for all employees, volunteers and individuals being supported by any charity to report concerns, and give better access to clear and consistent guidance on reporting and whistleblowing.

Youth minister Tracey Crouch said up to £2m will also be invested in projects that raise awareness of safeguarding and improve incident handling, protecting more people from harm within the charity sector. This includes free training for charities to improve safeguarding standards.

Meanwhile, a steering group, the Safeguarding Programme Group, which will be chaired by former Youth Justice Board chief executive John Drew and featuring NSPCC, Scouts and the National Council Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), has been established to oversee the implementation of the changes.

However, the group will not manage the way the funding is awarded or spent, which is still a matter being decided by the government and the Big Lottery Fund.

The announcement comes after a safeguarding summit held by the [Department for International Development](#) and the [Charity Commission](#) last week - the latest stage of ongoing efforts to improve safeguarding in the aid sector after charity [Oxfam](#) was accused of covering up an investigation into its staff hiring sex workers in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake in February this year.

The [Department for Culture, Media and Sport](#) aims for the measures in UK charities to complement steps announced at the conference for global charities, which include asking them to join an international Disclosure of Misconduct Scheme, piloting background checks on aid sector staff carried out by the international criminal police organisation Interpol, and testing new passports for aid workers to provide background information and vetting status.

However, the government said measures for UK charities will not be as extensive as those announced for global organisations.

Crouch said the changes would "help protect and empower people to speak up and ensure charity leaders tackle poor behaviour head-on".

"Charities are widely trusted and we need to ensure an environment exists where everyone feels safe - from service-users to the employees and volunteers who dedicate their time and skills to benefit communities across the country," she said.

"We want to instil fundamental changes to help restore the reputation of the sector.

"These measures will help protect and empower people to speak up and ensure charity leaders tackle poor behaviour head-on."

Today's announcement follows a consultation held by NCVO on a new [code of ethics for the charity sector](#), which it is currently reviewing.