

Here are some sample questions for parents/carers to ask when they are considering sending their children to sports clubs or activity groups.

1. Is the youth group / club affiliated to a larger organisation like the Scouts, Guides, Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade, Youth Scotland, sports council or out of school network? If so, does it have good contact and a good relationship with the umbrella organisation?

These umbrella organisations provide the group/club with access to professional support, training and advice. Not all youth groups/clubs belong to an umbrella organisation or network and not all umbrella organisations have control over the practices of affiliates. In either case you should ask for details about who runs the club, are they local parents/teachers; do they have any contact with other youth group or the local council, and if so what type of contact.

2. Can the group/club give a named contact within the local council's community education or community services department who is aware of the group's operational practices?

Not all groups will – it should be sufficient to be satisfied in relation to either questions 1 or 2.

3. Is the group/club subject to regulation and inspection by an outside body?

The majority of groups and clubs will probably not fall within this category, however, some groups such as after school clubs may require registration with the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care.

4. Is there a leaflet which gives basic information about the youth group/club, its aims, leaders, nature of the activities, cost, meeting day(s) and times of meeting (start and finish) including holidays?

5. Is it established practice that parental consent is sought for outside visits, adventure activities etc?

6. Does the youth group/club have set procedures on the recruitment (eg vetting arrangements such as Criminal Record checks), training and management of workers / volunteers including training on protecting children and personnel?

These may have been established by the national organisation but local workers / volunteers should be aware of the criteria, have the recruitment standards, have access to relevant training and have documented evidence.

7. Are there adequate numbers of leaders / adult helpers (volunteer / paid staff) and is there a clear policy that there should be a minimum of two adult leaders / helpers for an activity / meeting to operate safely?

Safe practice required that there should always be at least two adults present to ensure that no adults find themselves working alone with children. It is desirable that there are adults present of the same sex as the young people involved in the club.

8. Are there clear procedures and guidance for staff and volunteers in respect of behaviour towards children?

This could be in the form of a written Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers so that parents know what standards of behaviour to expect – this might cover such things as the appropriateness of physical contact with children, comforting children and accompanying children to toilets.

9. Does the club / organisation have a formal consultation setting out its aims, management and financial policy and procedures?

Most youth groups and clubs have a management committee which meets on a regular basis with local parents among its members and an annual rotation and membership with nominations invited from parents of the young people involved in the group. This ensure a degree of parental supervision and input into the group's activities.

10. Are parents encouraged and welcomed to visit the club, to meet those in charge and to view activities?

If not, you as a parent, should consider whether this gives cause for concern.

11. Does the youth club / group have a health and safety policy, a First Aid kit, a First Aider and adequate procedures for recording and notifying accidents? Is it insured?

12. Does the club have a policy to ensure the protection of children and young people and is the policy made available to parents? Is the policy maintained and reviewed?

Leaders should have a clear understanding of the organisation's criteria for recruiting and selecting staff and guidance on planning work to minimise opportunities for abuse.

13. Does the organisation have established procedures to handle complaints?

This may be through a nominated member of the management committee or an independent party who is not directly involved in the running of the activity but there should be a named person within the organisation who can be contacted.

14. Is this complaints procedure made clear to club members?

Parents should encourage their children to tell them if there are any occurrences about which they are unhappy or uncomfortable.

15. Have you asked other parents about the group / club and the leaders?

Any concerns about the group / club will often be picked up by talking to other parents with first-hand knowledge.