Safeguarding

What is "safeguarding"?

The government guidance on "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2010) defines safeguarding children and promoting their welfare as:
- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- enabling those children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully

Local authorities use this guidance to produce their own procedures, which should be followed by practitioners and professionals who come into contact with children and their families in that particular local authority area.

What does it mean for museums?

Although museums are not front line agencies providing services for children, our sector works with children and needs to take safeguarding seriously. Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility, whether your museum is independent, or Local Authority funded and therefore under a statutory duty under section 11 of the Children Act (2004).

Museums also have responsibilities towards their staff and volunteers, to ensure that they have confidence dealing with children and young people and can follow appropriate procedures if a difficult incident occurs. Just as a museum should have an emergency plan in place, policies and procedures on child safety should enable a professional approach to always be taken.

The MLA's "Safeguarding Guidance for Museums, Libraries and Archives" (2008) states that museums are therefore expected to have:

1   Safeguarding policies and procedures that recognise safeguarding children is a key priority for your organisation.
2   A commitment by senior management to safeguarding children.
3   A clear line of accountability for safeguarding children.
4   Safe recruitment and human resources procedures that take account of safeguarding, including arrangements for making appropriate checks on staff and volunteers.
5   Procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff.
6   Safeguarding training and awareness-raising in place to enable all staff to carry out their responsibilities effectively. This should include induction and refresher training.
7   Arrangements in place to ensure museums, libraries and archives work effectively with other organisations to safeguard children.
8   A culture of listening to, and engaging in dialogue with, children.
9   Appropriate whistle-blowing procedures.

But isn't it all changing?

The main thrust of safeguarding policy has not changed. Organisations still need to have policies and practices in place that keep children safe. The previous government planned to introduce a new Vetting and Barring scheme through the Independent Safeguarding Authority. On 15th June however the Home Secretary announced that the coalition Government is to review Vetting and Barring Scheme registration and the Independent Safeguarding Authority to ensure that they are scaled back to "common sense levels".

What this means in practice is as yet unclear. Currently, the existing guidance is still in force and you should continue to carry out appropriate pre-recruitment checks, including CRB (Criminal Record Bureau) checks where appropriate or required by law.

Where can we get reliable information?

www.safenetwork.org.uk
The Safe Network is run by NSPCC and Children England. This site gives up-to-date news as well as help and advice.

www.nspcc.org.uk
The Help and Advice section of the NSPCC website provides a comprehensive information service for organisations. Click through to the Child Protection Resources where you will find an extensive library, including "How does the child protection system work in the UK?" (April 2010).

Local Safeguarding Boards in the South East will be able to give you the most up-to-date guidance for your area. Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight can all be found at www.4lscb.org.uk. For other authorities enter your Local Authority name and LSCB into a web search engine like Google.

http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents
Thinkuknow is run by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre. The parents' pages give a really comprehensive introduction to safeguarding and new media.

Museum sector:

www.mla.gov.uk
The MLA guidance referred to above can be downloaded from the publications archive on the MLA site and still offers useful advice. Please note the 2010 bulletin has been superseded by the coalition Government's review of the system.