

Information regarding children and young people in meetings and sponsorship

In July 2020 the NSB took advice from a safeguarding professional who is also a member of OA, regarding our guidance on the above topic. This has resulted in us issuing the following statement.

The NSB would strongly advise local groups not to admit any young person under the age of 18 into their group and that OA members do not sponsor anyone under the age of 18. This is based on the legislation that currently exists in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland regarding working with children and young people under the age of 18. A list of this legislation is given below.

The term “working with” means any activity including advice, support and guidance in a work role or a voluntary role. This would include any interaction that falls under the functioning of an OA local group, through membership or sponsorship. The professional advice we have received tells us that these activities with children or young people (those aged under 18 years of age) are “regulated” activities as defined in legislation covering, England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

In order to undertake “regulated” activities with young people under the age of 18, everyone involved would need an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service up-to-date clearance, and the local group would need to be a “Regulated Activity Provider” with the Disclosure and Barring Service. Our advice is that this is incompatible with the ethos of OA where we state in our Third Tradition that “the only requirement for OA membership “is a desire to stop eating compulsively”.

There are occasions where, because of childcare issues, a member may ask to bring a child or children into a meeting. This is up to the group conscience of that meeting. Any child or children admitted to an OA meeting with their parent or carer will remain the responsibility of that parent or carer for the duration of the meeting.

Legislation and Guidance

ENGLAND and WALES

Schedule 4 - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
Regulated Activity with Children in England - Disclosure and Barring Service

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups-Disclosure and Barring Service

SCOTLAND

Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007
Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme