

# SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN THE AID SECTOR EVIDENCE SESSION

## NCVO BRIEFING TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

2 July 2018

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### About NCVO

Established in 1919, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) is the largest representative body for voluntary organisations in England, with over 13,000 members. NCVO champions voluntary action: our vision is a society where we can all make a difference to the causes that we believe in. A vibrant voluntary sector deserves a strong voice and the best support. NCVO works to provide that support and voice.

### How NCVO and charities are taking action on safeguarding

Recent concerns about safeguarding and wider conduct at work are, rightly, a major priority for charities, government, and regulators.

At summits held by the [Charity Commission](#) and the [Department for International Development](#), charities, sector bodies, the regulator and government agreed to put new mechanisms in place to strengthen safeguarding, workplace practices and culture, and prevent incidents wherever possible. NCVO is leading work around strengthening the sector's capacity and capability around safeguarding.

In addition to this, NCVO has committed to develop a set of principles that could act as a 'code of ethics' for the charity sector. Although the Charity Commission summit aimed to address the question of how safeguarding practices can be strengthened throughout the sector, the proposed code is not confined to this. It would apply more widely to conduct within charities, in order to ensure that every charity provides a safe environment.

The aim is for the code to act in part as an equivalent of the 'Nolan Principles' that apply to holders of public office. It will not be obligatory for organisations, but we hope it will be endorsed as widely as possible. This could be an important contribution to restoring a positive narrative about the work that charities do and the values they represent.

Work is also under way to:

- explore the issue of references, identifying the key legal challenges employers may face when an individual's past misconduct is not known and considering possible ways to address them

- map the safeguarding regulatory and capacity building landscape, so the sector can identify any gaps and weaknesses
- develop a reporting flowchart for domestic charities to use when handling safeguarding concerns.

This briefing focuses principally on the proposed code of ethics.

## Why NCVO is developing the code of ethics

Many organisations have their own codes of behaviour, but these can be specific to the circumstances of the particular organisation and usually focus on particular issues (such as working with children, or vulnerable adults). At present, there is no overarching set of principles that reflects the aspirations and shared values of all charities, no matter what size and what activity they undertake.

Whilst much of the recent narrative has been about safeguarding, many of the behaviours that have come to light go beyond this and involve a wider set of issues such as safe employment practices, dignity in the workplace, and generally treating individuals (whether staff, volunteers or beneficiaries) with respect.

There is a wealth of good practice already available, and such sources can be the basis on which to develop an overarching statement of principles that would provide a framework for charities to help them review their own policies and practice, and identify where these need clarification and development in line with their own purpose and specific values.

## The process of drafting the code

A first draft of the proposed code was discussed at a roundtable event on Thursday 24 May, chaired by Dame Mary Marsh. Participants included a wide range of charities, with diverse representation by size, geographical remit, type of activity and beneficiary category.

The first draft was developed by taking into consideration a variety of existing codes of conduct in both the charity sector and public sector, including the [Nolan Principles of Public Life](#), [Code of Ethics for Museums](#), Scout Association Young People First 'Yellow Card' and 'Orange Card', [Charity Governance Code](#), [College of Policing Code of Ethics](#), [code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers](#) and [NHS Constitution for England](#).

## Next steps for the code

A further draft is currently being developed to reflect, as far as possible, all the comments and suggestions received. This will be published for a wider consultation with the sector, to ensure the highest level of engagement and buy in from charities.

The consultation will be open for just over 10 weeks, and will run in parallel to a series of face-to-face engagement events.