

Child Protection – Advice for Christmas Activities

Reviewed October 2016

Note: Scottish and Eire clubs should seek advice from their District Safeguarding Officer as separate legal requirements may apply.

Introduction

Rotary is the 'number one' service organisation in Great Britain and Ireland (RIBI) and as such it must take the lead in the important matter of safeguarding and protecting children and adults who are deemed to have vulnerability. Christmas, in particular, is a time when Rotary clubs are very much seen in the public domain carrying out a variety of duties involving contact with children and vulnerable people. Therefore this information sheet is to assist Rotary clubs in the planning of their activities in conjunction with the RIBI Safeguarding Policy and the RIBI Safeguarding Guidance Manual.

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 amends the definition of regulated activity relating to children from 10th September 2012

The new definition of regulated activity relating to children applies to individuals undertaking the following:-

- Registered child minders
- Registered foster carers
- The day to day management or supervision of any person engaging in regulated activity is also in regulated activity. This also applies to someone who would be in regulated activity but for the consideration of supervision

"Regulated activity" and "Specified place" remain in force with some amendments none of which have any bearing on the role of Santa.

Consequently there are no requirements for Santa to be DBS checked.

However, Rotarians should be mindful of the document 'Rotary Club Insurance Guide' and those sections relating to 'Santa' activities.

To this end clubs are reminded to carry out and record a Risk Assessment for all their activities which will include those involving Santa. See Appendix C 'Risk Assessments' in the RIBI Safeguarding Guidance Manual for more information (*available to download from the RIBI website – see links over page under 'Useful Resources' together with samples of completed Risk Assessment Forms*).

The following are considered as Best Practice for such events:

Father Christmas in a Grotto

The arrangements must be such that there cannot be any possibility of Santa being placed in an unaccompanied 'one-to-one' contact with a child in a 'private' place such as a 'grotto'. Santa must be accompanied by another adult helper at all times. Parent/guardian should also be encouraged to be present or in sight of Santa.

Santa should not invite a child to sit on his lap. Children should be encouraged to stand next to Santa or sit on a chair that has been provided for a child's use. **However, if a parent/guardian asks** if a child can sit on Santa's lap for a photograph for example, this is perfectly acceptable with the requesting parent/guardian present. Should the child climb onto Santa's lap of their own accord the child may remain with the permission of the parent/guardian present. Parents should be discouraged from placing or forcing a child who is obviously distressed/frightened/crying to go and see Santa or sit on his lap.

Father Christmas on a Sleigh

Santa should be on his own and children not allowed to get on the sleigh. If Santa does get off the sleigh to meet with children then he should be accompanied by another Rotarian/adult/parent/guardian. Santa should not get off the sleigh to visit the "poorly" child in their home/bedroom except at the invitation of the parent/guardian who must accompany Santa at all times and within sight of another Rotarian.

Rotarians must be mindful of the Health & Safety Policy and Insurance Policy requirements with regard to the use of vehicles, sleighs, trailers for such an event. Best practice would suggest that there are no young children near the sleigh whilst it is in motion. Guidance on a safe distance from the sleigh should be given to those collecting as well the provision of "high viz" jackets.

Father Christmas at a Children's Party

If Santa is visiting to distribute presents he must be accompanied by another adult at all times.

If Rotary has organised the party then there should be an appropriate ratio of adults to children maintained for the duration of the party. The ratio will be determined by:-

- The age and nature of the children
- The experience of the organisers
- The location and nature of the event

A wise organiser will err on the generous side. All supervisors must be briefed on the details of their role. This can include parent/guardian. Parent/guardian should be encouraged to attend where there are young children (under 10yrs) or those with a disability as they may require personal assistance for toileting etc. If there are boys and girls present there should be both male and female adults in attendance at all times. If a parent/guardian is not available and a child requires urgent personal care or assistance, e.g. taken ill or requires the toilet, another adult should be made aware of the situation and be present as far as is possible. A record should be made of the incident and the parent/guardian told at the earliest opportunity.

Organised games should not involve physical contact as part of the game. There should be no opportunities for single adults to meet or to undertake activities with single children in private. All activities should be public and open. Information should be given to parents in advance of the party of action that will be taken in the event of a child's inappropriate behaviour – e.g. verbal warning given, asked to sit in a specified area of the room, or removal from the party and returned home.

Photographs

Christmas is very much a time when photographs are taken of children. If Rotarians intend to take photographs at an event they must obtain the **written permission** of the parents prior to the event. If they are to be published Christian names only should be used. Obviously, parents can take photos of their own children. At school events schools tend to have their own policy and this should be adhered to. See Appendix F "Photography of Children and Vulnerable Adults" in the RIBI Safeguarding Guidance Manual for more information (*available to download from the RIBI website – see links under 'Useful Resources' opposite*).

Pantomime outings

These may be by coach or by private car. If by private car or minibus the driver should drive and the supervision of the passengers is the responsibility of a second adult. A sole adult should not carry a single unaccompanied child. If, in an emergency, that is unavoidable the problem must be shared with a third party before the journey is undertaken. An explanation should be given as to why they are going to be alone with the child, the estimated journey time, and destination. Ensure parents are aware of the arrangements being made for the safety of their child. Keep a written record of the occasion. As part of the risk assessment consideration must be given to the safety of the vehicle, need and use of seat belts/booster seats, insurance, MOT, and drivers licence.

Letters to Father Christmas

These should not be sent to an individual's private address but to a central box on display at a Christmas event.

General Code of Behaviour

There are general guidelines in Appendix B Code of Behaviour in the RIBI Safeguarding Guidance Manual (*available to download from the RIBI website – see links under 'Useful Resources' opposite*). It is advised that Rotarians use them as best practice when working or involved with children and vulnerable people.

Allegations or Complaints

In the event of a complaint or allegation being made either by a child, parent or other party present, or inappropriate behaviour being observed then the incident must be recorded in writing immediately and the Club and District Safeguarding Officer informed immediately. The DPO should then inform the RIBI Compliance Officer (details below) and send written details of the incident. See Appendix J Dealing with Complaints, Accusations and Whistle-Blowing for the procedure to be followed (*available to download from the RIBI website – see links under 'Useful Resources' opposite*).

If in doubt or concerned about any issue or incident then contact the RIBI Compliance Officer Mike Goodridge for advice:- Tel: 01483 535108 or Email: michaelgoodridge@gmail.com.

Useful Resources on the RIBI Website

The following documents can be found on the RIBI website in the Compliance section, which covers Safeguarding, Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Data Protection and Insurance (<http://www.rotarygbi.org/members/club-district-support/compliance/> you will need to sign into the Members' area to access the documents):

[RIBI Safeguarding Guidance Manual](#)

[RIBI Safeguarding Policy](#)

[Rotary Club Insurance Guide](#)

[Appendix B – Code of Behaviour](#)

[Appendix C – Risk Assessments](#)

[Appendix J – Dealing with Complaints, Accusations and Whistle-Blowing](#)

[Risk Assessment Form](#)

[Examples of completed Risk Assessment Forms](#)