



Sustain's Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure Policy Statement

Sustain is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, volunteers and clients, and we make every effort to ensure that no individual will be discriminated against on irrelevant grounds such as ethnic origin, gender, disability or any other personal attribute.

The majority of our work is office-based or working with organisations. However, on rare occasions Sustain works with schools and other youth organisations, with Sustain staff (very occasionally) working directly with children or vulnerable adults. This requires Sustain staff and/or volunteers to assume a position of trust. To ensure the protection of children, and justify public trust and confidence, Sustain is required to ensure that only suitable staff and/or volunteers are allowed to undertake work that brings them into regular contact with children. Sustain uses the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure service to assess the suitability of such staff, and requires that staff provide an Enhanced Disclosure.

As an organisation using the Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure service, Sustain complies with the CRB Code of Practice. Thus, Sustain's approach to the protection of children and vulnerable adults is that:

- the welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount
- everyone that we work with, whoever they are, should be able to participate in and contribute to activities in a safe environment
- we should take all reasonable steps to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- all Sustain staff and/or volunteers who work routinely with children and/or vulnerable adults will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility
- having a criminal record will not necessarily prevent a person from employment or undertaking voluntary work with Sustain. This will depend on the nature of the job an individual is applying for and the circumstances and background of the offences
- anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children or vulnerable adults will be automatically excluded from working with children or vulnerable adults.

Disclosures through the Criminal Records Bureau

In the case of Sustain advertising staff, freelance or voluntary positions, or where an existing member of staff or volunteer is moving across to a job that requires Enhanced Disclosure under the terms of this policy, and where a CRB Disclosure forms part of the selection and/or appointment process, the job description will make clear reference to this requirement.

Where a Disclosure forms part of the appointment process, Sustain will encourage all applicants to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage in the application process. This information should be sent marked as "confidential" to the member of management staff named in the job advertisement and/or job description. Disclosure information will only be seen by those at Sustain who need to see it as part of the recruitment process, and this information will be treated confidentially and sensitively. Information will remain confidential to the Sustain management team, and may additionally be shared with the Board of Trustees in exceptional circumstances.

Sustain undertakes to discuss any relevant matter revealed in a Disclosure with the applicant, and we aim to ask questions relating to the Disclosure information, which are relevant, non-discriminatory and fair.

Applicants who are deemed unsuitable to undertake an activity on behalf of Sustain in the light of the contents of a Disclosure will receive a written explanation as to Sustain's decision.

Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought, or provision of information that is found to be misleading, could subsequently lead to Sustain rejecting an application or to the withdrawal of an offer of employment, or of a contract of employment. Sustain undertakes to discuss any matter revealed in a Disclosure with the applicant before withdrawing any such offer or contract.

Applicants who are not able to provide a Disclosure before starting work should contact Sustain at the earliest opportunity to explain why this is not possible, and mutually agree how to proceed and comply with the requirements of this policy. The process of obtaining a Disclosure should be completed as soon as possible, and certainly before any activities that involve children and/or vulnerable adults.

Training for Sustain staff and volunteers

All Sustain staff and volunteers who come into regular contact with children or vulnerable adults in the course of their work will receive advice outlining good and bad practice and informing them what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a child or vulnerable adult. This will be based on guidance issued by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, see: http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/informhub_wda49931.html. Links to this information will also be provided by Sustain for all staff, volunteers and management.

Responding to allegations

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in Sustain in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the child or vulnerable adult in question. This applies both to any allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring in Sustain and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

In the event of allegations or suspicions, Sustain will suspend all activities undertaken by the member of staff or volunteer in question that involve direct contact with children or vulnerable adults. The parent and/or carer, or other relevant individual or organisation, of the child and/or vulnerable adult, will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the NSPCC Helpline, local social services or the police, as appropriate.

Where there is a complaint against an employee or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation.

- Criminal in which case the police are immediately involved.
- Child protection, in which case the social services (and possibly) the police will be involved.
- Disciplinary or misconduct in which case Sustain and its Trustees will be involved.

Should the relevant authorities deem that sexual, physical or mental abuse has taken place, this will be considered by Sustain as gross misconduct and be grounds for dismissal.

At all stages of the process described above, every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information will be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The Coordinator of Sustain, management team and Trustees
- The parents of a child and/or carer of a child or vulnerable adult
- The person making the allegation
- Social Services/NSPCC Helpline staff/police
- The alleged abuser

All information will be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

Approved by the Sustain Board of Trustees, 29 October, 2009; updated, 29 October, 2009