



Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups

Advice for Parents

Membership of a pipe band can play a positive role in the lives of many children and young people. The pipe band can help children and young people develop musical knowledge and performance skills as well as gaining important social and life skills. That is why it is important that everyone in the pipe band world does as much as possible to create and maintain an enjoyable and safe environment.

As a parent or carer, you play a very important role in protecting your child. The information you give your child and the example you set, can provide your child with the knowledge and confidence needed to deal with potentially threatening or abusive situations.

Before you enrol your child with a pipe band, you may wish to consider how that pipe band is run. This is your responsibility. Even though the organisation may seem professional, you should not make any assumptions about the way the pipe band is run until you have checked it yourself. This leaflet gives advice to help you ask the right questions about important child protection measures that pipe bands should have in place.

At this time, the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association has over 550 pipe bands registered as members.

We want to ensure that all children have the best possible experience. That's why it's important that the Pipe Band offers an environment where children are safe from the possibility of any form of ill-treatment. We hope this leaflet will help you to know what to look for and what to ask when you enrol your child in a pipe band. The Pipe Band should welcome your questions about how they will keep your child safe. Pipe Bands have legal responsibilities to make sure that their instructors and other staff are safe to work with children. Although ill-treatment of children within Pipe Bands is very rare, bands still need to check the background of people they employ. Pipe Bands should be able to provide you with confirmation that appropriate staff and volunteers have registered with the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme and undergone appropriate vetting. With this leaflet we want to help parents and carers to make the right decision about enrolling your child in a pipe band and how to ensure their safety. We hope you find this advice helpful.

Before you enrol your son or daughter in a pipe band, there are a number of key areas you should consider in relation to the safety of your child. This includes the commitment of the pipe band to good practice and child protection.

You could ask questions around the following themes:

Child Protection Policy: A good pipe band will welcome questions about its activities and the safety of its environment. It will have a child protection policy and you should be told what to do if your child has any concerns. Ideally, there should be a welfare/safeguarding officer who will answer any questions you might have.

Protecting Vulnerable Groups Membership: You need to be sure that the staff and volunteers who will be working with your child are suitable. Ask the Pipe Band if the Pipe Major, leading drummer and all instructors are members of PVG.

Appropriate training and education: Ask if instructors and volunteers have undertaken training or educational courses or achieved formal qualifications in the piping and drumming. Ask if the pipe band offers opportunities for members to achieve educational qualifications in Piping and Drumming.

Events away from home: Ask about what arrangements the pipe band makes to ensure children are kept safe when they take part in competitions or events away from home.

RSPBA Membership: Find out whether the band is registered with RSPBA.

Ask about how the Pipe Band safeguards and promotes the welfare of children. This can include a register at the beginning and end of sessions; first aid provision; the number of children looked after per instructor; arrangements for transporting them to and from events.

Things to watch out for: The following may alert you to any inappropriate situations that may be affecting your child:

- Activities where parents are discouraged from staying to watch or from becoming involved.
- Individuals who take charge and operate independently of organisational guidelines.
- Individuals who show favouritism or personally reward specific children.
- Encouragement of inappropriate physical contact.
- Poor communication and negative responses to questions about safeguards for your child.
- Children who drop out or stop going for no apparent reason.
- Invitations for children to spend time alone with staff or volunteers (or even to visit their home).

If you feel any of the above may be happening, contact the Pipe Band immediately and ask questions.

Helping your child

Of course, you want your child to enjoy participating in pipe band activities. However, it is important that you inform your child what to do if he/she feels that they are being badly treated by someone who is supposed to be instructing or looking after them.

If your child experiences such behaviour, you may notice a change in behaviour – possibly appearing worried or not wanting to take part in pipe band activity. Talk to your child but understand that your child may find it difficult to open up immediately. Please ensure that you remember to tell your child that it is not their fault.

Your child may be upset or frightened by witnessing bad behaviour by a member of staff towards one of their friends. You can help by making sure that the matter is taken forward. You can also let them know that their friend should tell an adult they trust as soon as possible.

This could be:

- A parent or guardian, or someone else in their family
- Another member of staff in the pipe band

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- A teacher or school counsellor
- Their doctor or school nurse
- Another adult they may trust

Some scenarios you may encounter:

“My child’s instructor has suggested some additional one to one tuition sessions to help development. I don’t know if we should accept.” One to one tuition in isolation, with very few exceptions, is not considered to be good practice. If the instructor has suggested this, ask for some more information and ask for the club’s welfare officer to be involved in the discussion.

“The club won’t allow us to watch the band practices and have told us this is because we will put the children off.” There are sometimes occasions where a minority of parents interfere with the tuition provided. Ask the band what safe arrangements are available for viewing – and if it has a code of conduct for staff and parents.

“I arrived to pick up my child from the session and the instructor said they had left with a friend. Should children be allowed to leave sessions?” The band and the instructors are responsible for the supervision of your child during the session and should be clear about guidelines for collecting children from activities. Normal practice is that children, particularly under nine, will always be collected by parents unless alternative arrangements have been made by you and the club has been informed.

“My child’s photo and some of their details are on the band website but we were not asked for permission. Can a band do this without our permission?” No, a good band should always ask for your permission to put images or information about your child on the website. Band websites do provide a good way of promoting and celebrating young people’s involvement and success in pipe band activities and competitions. However, care needs to be taken about the details that are included.

“I find it difficult to get information from the band about the band practices and how the members are picked for competitions” Bands should operate in a fair and open manner. It is important that children and parents understand both what is expected of them and what they can expect of the band. The band should be happy to answer any questions to show how activities will be provided in a way that makes all children feel valued and able to participate to the best of their ability.

“My child has suddenly started saying they don’t want to continue with the band and asked if we can find somewhere else to play.” Talk to your child and try to find out more, as there could be many reasons for this. Also talk to other parents to see if their children are expressing similar concerns. If the cause is linked to the behaviour of someone in the band, it is important to report this to the band welfare officer.

“My child has been receiving text messages from the instructor, and when I asked they said all the children do.” Instructors should not be contacting your child independently without your knowledge and consent. While there may be occasions when it is necessary for an instructor to contact a young person at short notice the parent should always be informed. Ask your child if they are worried about any of the texts and ask to see them. If you are concerned in any way speak to the band welfare officer.

“I’ve complained to the band secretary about the bullying my child has experienced in band sessions. I have been told I am over sensitive and it’s normal for children to behave in this way.” It is important that you do not have your concerns dismissed. Children should be appropriately supervised in all band activities. Speak directly to the band welfare officer. Suggest that the band puts in place an anti-bullying policy that can be promoted through its activities.