

# Safeguarding for Group Leaders

## Key issues

Safeguarding is protecting vulnerable adults or children from abuse or neglect.

As part of your application, the Home Office will expect you to submit a safeguarding policy. If you have another organisation acting as your Lead Sponsor, they can assist you with this, and may require you to follow their own safeguarding policy. You must give your Local Children Safeguarding Board an opportunity to comment on your Safeguarding policy.

Your Local Authority should have information available on safeguarding procedures and may be able to offer you support, training or guidance on how to begin developing a safeguarding policy. Most Local Authorities offer safeguarding training and we recommend that you attend this.

We strongly advise you to familiarise your group with your Local Authority's safeguarding procedures, ultimately they are the statutory body responsible for dealing with any safeguarding issues that arise.

## Legal context

The key legislation relating to the welfare of children is the Children Act 1989, particularly section 17 "Children in Need" and section 47 "Significant Harm". These mainly relate to the Local Authorities in safeguarding children, but your safeguarding officers will need to be aware of them.

In addition, safeguarding officers should be familiar with the document "Working together to Safeguard Children" <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2> and how organisations can work together effectively.

The key legislation relating to vulnerable adults is the Care Act 2014. You can find the text of the Act [here](#).

## Understanding your Local Authority

Although the statutory duty is the same across each Local Authority, their structures may vary and you will need to understand the process in your area.

Each Local Authority will have information on their website about their safeguarding policies and procedures, but it can take time to understand this, and to find out who you need to contact if you had a concern to report. We strongly advise you to take time to research this and relay this information to your Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO's).

Each Local Authority will have a Safeguarding Team (some may be in combination with other Local Authorities). Most have a website and we have provided a link to these in the Useful Resources section at the end of this document.

Some Local Authorities will provide advice and guidance about policies and practices in the local area, the availability of training and have very informative websites. We recommend this as starting point to understand safeguarding in your local area. Although their remit is specifically on safeguarding children, they may well be able to direct you to information on safeguarding vulnerable adults, or there may be significant crossover in policies or information.

When making a safeguarding referral, the point of contact may vary according to the type of issue, for example whether the issue concerns a child or a vulnerable adult. In many areas the Local Authority will have a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which will be the first point of contact for any safeguarding issue and will then refer the matter on to the appropriate department. Some may deal only with issues involving children, others may also deal with issues concerning vulnerable adults. We advise you to research this when drafting your safeguarding policy.

## Your role as sponsors

Your role as a sponsor group is not to take the place of the statutory authorities, such as the Local Authority's Children and Families Service, police or medical services.

Your role is to assess whether there are concerns about the welfare of children or vulnerable adults and take action to address them where appropriate. This may involve reporting concerns to the relevant statutory services (ideally with the consent of the people concerned, where possible) and working with them to address the concern.

As a group, you will need to record your concerns, the actions you take, and the actions taken or advice given by other organisations. For example, if you are concerned about the welfare of a child, you would record the reasons for your concern, the fact that you referred the case to the Local Authority Children and Families Service, the actions they took, and any advice or information they gave to the group.

You may encounter situations where you have a concern about someone's welfare, but you are unsure whether it reaches the threshold to make a safeguarding referral. In these

cases, group members should discuss the situation with their DSOs, who can then discuss the situation with each other. If they wish, the DSO's can contact the relevant team at the Local Authority for advice, without disclosing confidential information, who can offer guidance on whether it is something that needs to be referred to them and how to proceed. As stated above, we advise you research the various departments and contact numbers in advance of receiving a family.

In some situations, the Local Authority may ask you to work with them to manage the situation. For example, they may ask your group to introduce a social worker and be present at initial meetings to help build trust. They may also set up regular meetings to discuss the situation and ask your group to be present at them.

If suggested, you should not expect to have to take or accept the role of managing a serious safeguarding concern. This can open your group up to significant risk and lead to incorrect support being provided. There may be some low-level issues which your Local Authority or Lead Sponsor can support you to address, but you should be prepared to push back if you feel they are asking your group to exceed your capabilities. There may also be other forms of support which your Local Authority may be able to refer lower level cases to, such as Family Support Services.

## Useful resources

The websites listed below contain a range of resources which may be useful when preparing your safeguarding policy and planning how to deal with issues that arise.

Safeguarding Teams: <http://www.safecic.co.uk/your-scb-acpc/55-free-downloads-and-safeguarding-links/61-safeguarding-children-board-links>

NSPCC tools, training and resources: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/>

Social Care Institute for Excellence resources: <https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding>

Action for Children: <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/our-impact/safeguarding-children-from-neglect/>

Safeguarding older people: [https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/factsheets/fs78\\_safeguarding\\_older\\_people\\_from\\_abuse\\_fcs.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/factsheets/fs78_safeguarding_older_people_from_abuse_fcs.pdf)

Various government resources: <https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/safeguarding-children>