Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults

This document gives practical guidance on maintaining safeguarding standards for children and vulnerable adults.

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Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Introduction

Safeguarding is a term used to refer to the duties and responsibilities that those providing health, social or education services must carry out or perform in order to protect individuals and vulnerable people from harm.

A vulnerable adult is defined by the UK Department of Health **as,** '*A person aged 18 years or older: who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.*'

For further information see the Department of Health document 'No Secrets', which gives guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse.

This Loss Prevention Standard (LPS) aims to give practical guidance on how to maintain effective safeguarding standards and improve claims defensibility. There is a checklist at the end of this document to assist you.

Types and Signs of Abuse

Signs of abuse can often be difficult to detect. Many forms of abuse are also criminal offences and should be treated as such. Click here for further information on the types and indicators of abuse provided by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE).

Types of abuse may include:

- Physical abuse
- Domestic violence or abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational or institutional abuse
- Neglect or acts of omission
- Online abuse
- Self-neglect

General indicators to look out for include:

- Changes in behaviour/demeanour
- Injuries/bruising with suspect explanation
- Damage to property
- Signs of mental health issues such as self-harming and low self esteem
- Signs of anxiety
- Missing personal possessions
- Unexplained withdrawals from personal accounts
- Lack of respect/dignity by care providers

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Policies and Procedures

Organisations need to ensure that their safeguarding provisions remain robust to take account of external factors such as changes in legislation/guidance and geopolitical issues, and internal factors such as changed organisational structure, changes of staff and training/screening needs. Safeguarding policies and provisions should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they provide a suitable level of protection.

Do I need a Safeguarding Policy?

If you or your employees work with vulnerable adults or vulnerable children, then the answer is 'yes'. Policies should be put into practice, reviewed annually (or more frequently) and made available to the public.

The Care Act 2014 instructs local services like councils, the NHS & the police to work together to make policies to protect adults.

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 also requires anyone working with vulnerable groups of people to go through a vetting process to check for any previous criminal convictions.

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 allows local authorities and other organisations to better regulate interventions in the interest of vulnerable children.

Safeguarding policies should cover the following:

- Demonstrate ownership of the safeguarding agenda
- Maintain and review a record of concerns
- Follow safe recruitment procedures, including DBS checks by the Disclosure and Barring Service
- Maintain safe premises and equipment, inside and out
- **Include the organisation's** approach to bullying and measures to combat this
- Include procedures for vulnerable persons when away from the main place of work or premises
- Lay out the required intervals for safeguarding training and DBS checks
- Make sure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities
- Report concerns promptly
- Be alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse
- Make provision for whistleblowing
- Cooperate with investigations by Adult Social Care Services
- Support any protection plan put in place
- Ensure that staff and volunteers sign policies and procedures to confirm understanding and agree compliance

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Organisations with responsibility for providing services or personnel to vulnerable groups have a legal obligation to refer relevant information to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

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Whistleblowing

Raising concerns at work, often known as whistleblowing, is the act of reporting a concern about a risk, wrongdoing, or illegality at work, in the public interest.

Raising concerns should be the norm and accepted as an important part of people's day-to-day work as they reflect on their professional practice and work to improve their service. Whistleblowing is an early warning system that gives managers an opportunity to put things right before anything catastrophic happens.

It is a big step for many people and staff who speak up can often feel isolated and stressed. It is therefore vital to ensure that they feel supported and encouraged to report concerns, and the communication of whistleblowing policies and training of staff is crucial to support good practices and procedures.

Recruitment and Training

Recruitment:

- Advertisements for job vacancies should make reference to your safeguarding policy and screening, and written references should be required and checked to ensure relevance
- Successful candidates should sign a personal declaration of criminal convictions
- DBS checks should be carried out, including where appropriate, enhanced DBS checks with barred list or similar statutory disclosure checks for all new employees and volunteers before their start date. Subsequent DBS rechecks should then be carried out for all employees on a regular basis

Training:

- Thorough induction training should be completed for all new employees/volunteers prior to their start date that includes safeguarding policy principles and procedures relevant to your sector
- Safeguarding training should be refreshed to ensure knowledge is up to date
- Safeguarding should form part of staff and volunteers ongoing supervision, support, and appraisal
- All training should be recorded and signed for by all employees and volunteers

Health Care and Social Care Sector

It is essential that there is an ongoing conversation between social workers, commissioners, providers, and people **who access day care services, and their carers and families about changing plans, people's needs and levels and** types of support. This is an ongoing and iterative process.

There is often difficulty in distinguishing between "abuse" and "poor practice". Care should be taken to ensure that these are categorised correctly, and appropriate actions put in place to resolve rather than assuming the answer. Learn from poor practice incidents to stop bad practices early and minimise repeat incidents or more serious incidents that may stray into safeguarding issues.

Residential Care (Adults and Children)
When vulnerable persons are placed in residential settings the opportunity for safeguarding issues to arise could increase. Things to consider include:

- **Minimise lone working and activities "behind closed doors"**
- Maintain staffing levels to ensure safe working with residents. Consider how this will be achieved during potential periods of higher staff absences
- Continue to notify the relevant authorities, managers, etc. of any safeguarding incidents

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- Ensure all staff, particularly new starters receive safeguarding training at the required intervals, and this is recorded
- DBS checks should be carried out (preferably Enhanced checks). Click here for further DBS guidance
- Promote good communications: **"If you see something – say something"**
- Deprivation of liberty remains in force, make sure that individual assessments have been completed for each individual. Consider this where residents may need to be isolated, click here for further Deprivation of Liberty guidance
- Ensure care plans and policies adequately consider safeguarding risks

Domiciliary Care and Supported Living
This situation is often more difficult to manage as care workers are entering the service user's private residence and visit multiple vulnerable persons each day. During high pressure situations, short cuts and poorer practices may creep across the organisation due to staff shortages or absence. It may be a good idea to undertake refresher training of safeguarding principles at this time and retain records. There may also be an increased reliance on temporary staff or volunteers to support regular employees. Again, ensure safeguarding training and documentation is in place for all.

Education Sector

If pupils are being educated remotely or in the workplace (e.g. apprenticeships), this can present new challenges to managing safeguarding. It is important to maintain standards and discharge the duty of care towards both pupils and staff during these periods and adapt policies and procedures to ensure they are robust.

Here are some tips to help keep standards high:

- Review your safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure they remain valid and robust
- Communicate amendments to policies and procedures to all staff and keep records
- Ensure training in safeguarding remains up to date, this should extend to volunteers and any other interested parties that may interact with pupils/students
- Safe recruitment processes should be in place. Click here for further DBS guidance
- If pupils are being asked to access websites and resources as part of remote learning, ensure that they have adequate security and safeguarding measures in place to prevent incidents occurring. The checks carried out prior to allowing access should be documented and records retained
- Communicate policies and procedures to all interested parties who will be interacting with pupils/students during this period of remote or workplace learning. Will it be in group live video/audio sessions or via one to one learning sessions? Risks should be assessed and documented to ensure that appropriate control measures are in place
- Consider cyber risks to pupils/students and how this can be managed. Do your current insurance arrangements adequately cover cyber risk?
- Encourage all interested parties to set age-appropriate parental controls on digital devices and use internet filters to block malicious websites
- Set out a reporting procedure for pupils learning remotely to notify of any safeguarding related incidents and communicate this to all interested parties (parents, governors, etc). Review existing reporting procedures to ensure that they remain effective
- DBS checks – ensure these are kept up to date for all staff and other interested parties that may interact with pupils/students during this time. It is recommended that Enhanced DBS checks are obtained
- Ensure Health and Safety checks have been completed to ensure that the learning environment is of a safe standard and provides the facilities which will be required for learning to take place

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Charity and Not for Profit Sector

This sector relies heavily on volunteers and community spirit. However, from a risk management perspective, this can present some challenges.

Some tips to help include:

- Provide guidance to new and existing volunteers on how to report safeguarding concerns
- Volunteers should be instructed to not place themselves in a vulnerable position. This should be documented, and records maintained
- Consider where there may be a risk of financial abuse and implement control measures to minimise risks
- Think of volunteers acting on your behalf as if they were employees and implement the same level of safeguarding policies and procedures for them
- Ensure new volunteers receive key training and documentation and record that this has been completed
- Review policies/procedures in line with the Charity Governance Code to ensure that standards are maintained
- Maintain codes of conduct during this period; this should include the core values of the organisation towards safeguarding and how staff and volunteers are expected to behave

Checklist

A generic Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults checklist is presented in Appendix 1 which can be tailored to your own organisation.

Specialist Partner Solutions

Aviva Risk Management Solutions can offer access to a wide range of risk management products and services at preferential rates via our network of Specialist Partners.

For more information please visit:

Aviva Risk Management Solutions – Specialist Partners

Sources and Useful Links

- Guidance: Safeguarding and DBS Factsheet: FAQs – GOV.UK
- Policy Paper: Strategy for dealing with safeguarding issues in charities – GOV.UK

Additional Information

Relevant Loss Prevention Standards include:

- Claims Defensibility
- Volunteers and Willing Helpers – How Should They be Protected
- Lone Working

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To find out more, please visit [Aviva Risk Management Solutions](#) or speak to one of our advisors.

Email us at riskadvice@aviva.com or call 0345 366 6666.*

*Calls may be recorded and/or monitored for our joint protection.

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Appendix 1 - Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Checklist

Location	
Date	
Completed by (name and signature)	

	Safeguarding – General	Y/N	Comments
1.	Do you have a written safeguarding policy that includes a Statement of Intent on Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons and does this include anti-bullying?		
2.	Are your safeguarding and protection policies and procedures up to date and communicated to all staff and volunteers?		
3.	Do you have a documented method to ensure the Vulnerable Persons' Protection Policy is kept up to date?		
4.	Are your safeguarding and protection policies easily accessible for employees/volunteers/families/children?		
5.	Do you have a code of conduct which includes: • Appropriate behaviour towards vulnerable persons? • How to manage challenging behaviour of vulnerable persons? • Intimate care and appropriate conduct? • Supervision of vulnerable persons' whilst away from the premises?		
6.	If you provide overnight accommodation, do you have suitable policies, procedures, guidance, training and supervision in place?		
7.	Have safeguarding responsibilities and accountabilities been assigned to individuals and are these clearly defined and reviewed regularly?		

	Recruitment and Training	Y/N	Comments
8.	Do advertisements for job vacancies make reference to your safeguarding policy and screening?		
9.	Are written references required and do you carry out a check to ensure they are relevant?		
10.	Do successful candidates sign a personal declaration of criminal convictions?		
11.	Do you: • Undertake DBS checks including where appropriate Enhanced DBS checks with barred list or similar statutory disclosure checks for all new employees and volunteers before their start date? • Complete DBS rechecks for all employees on a regular basis?		
12.	Is there induction training for all new employees/volunteers prior to a start date that includes safeguarding policy principles and procedures relevant to your sector?		
13.	Is this refreshed to ensure knowledge is up to date?		
14.	Are staff and volunteers provided with ongoing supervision, support, appraisal and training?		
15.	Is all training recorded and signed for by all employees and volunteers?		

	Incident Reporting	Y/N	Comments
16.	Are there procedures in place for reporting of safeguarding incidents and are these made clear to all staff and volunteers?		
17.	Is there a whistleblower policy and is there a formal whistleblowing investigation procedure? Have staff and volunteers been reminded of the incident reporting procedure and whistleblowing policy?		

	Record Keeping	Y/N	Comments
18.	Do you securely retain for a minimum of 30 years the following documents: • Employment and engagement applications, references, identity verification, records of DBS or similar statutory disclosure checks? • Your safeguarding policy including any revisions? • Records of safeguarding policy training? • Your accident and incident registers? • Records of any alleged, actual, or threatened abuse and action taken including notifications to relevant authorities? • Referrals, assessments, treatment, and care plans for any person in your care?		
19.	Are General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements being maintained?		

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Organisational Culture	Y/N	Comments
20.	Do staff feel able to report: • Suspected safeguarding concerns? • Poor working practice or unsafe behaviours? • Changes in service users or other members of staff that may indicate abuse?		
21.	Is your organisation audited/accredited by a third party approving body that includes safeguarding?		

22.	Additional comments:

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