

Toolkit | Safeguarding



Safeguarding for helplines

This toolkit is designed to help you consider what you need to think about to develop a safeguarding policy for your helpline, webchat or listening service.

No matter what type of service you deliver you have a duty to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk of harm or abuse.

With over 25 years' experience of working with and supporting the helpline sector, Helplines Partnership has created this simple toolkit.

It will help you identify risk and practice; think about measures you need to put in place and your statutory requirements.

What does safeguarding mean?

Safeguarding is the action taken to promote the welfare of children and adults at risk and protect them from harm.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and should be a key part of every helpline's service. Helplines have a duty to protect their own helpline workers, volunteers and the organisation.

Safeguarding issues are something that many organisations have to be aware of, not just helplines.

Although reporting suspicions, disclosures or allegations of abuse against a child or adults at risk can be very difficult, the worst thing you can do is do nothing.

Definitions

- Child means anyone up to the age of 18 years (16 in Scotland)
- 'Adult at risk' means any person who is aged 18 or over and is at risk of abuse or neglect because of their support needs - term formerly 'vulnerable adult'
- Child Protection is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare, it refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect children who are suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm.

Developing a helpline safeguarding policy

Every helpline service needs a safeguarding policy. This is what sets out your safeguarding procedures.

When you are writing your safeguarding policy you need to think about what types of enquiries and contacts your service will receive.

Your policy needs to include:

- The correct legislation for children, young people and adults, if applicable, and dependent on the type of helpline
- What safeguarding means
- Your recruitment practices for helpline staff and volunteers
- The criteria your team will use to identify service users, children and adults, who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing significant harm
- When and how you will share information with other organisations such as the police or statutory bodies
- Safeguarding training provision
- A review date, ideally every 12 months
- Data protection, GDPR and information sharing
- It is good practice to have a separate confidentiality policy in place

Safeguarding procedures for helplines

It is essential that you have clear safeguarding procedures that your whole helpline team know about and understand, whether they are remote, or office based.

These include:

- Where to find your organisation's safeguarding resources such as templates, forms and support.
- Who is the safeguarding lead – a helpline worker or volunteer should NEVER make a safeguarding decision alone.
- The process for raising safeguarding queries.
- Secure storage for safeguarding documents.
- A documented process for recording safeguarding concerns, actions taken and clear reasons why information is being stored and recorded.

Confidentiality and information sharing

Remember that you are only responsible for sharing information with the relevant agencies – you are not responsible for the outcome.

Always record facts, not assumptions.

Safer recruitment

Your safer recruitment policy statement needs to set out a clear message to staff, volunteers and potential applicants that you prioritise safety and welfare of children and adults at risk.

It will allow you to:

- Plan the whole of your recruitment – ensure consistent approach.
- Minimise risk of appointing someone unsuitable.
- Make sure the right person is appointed, staff or volunteer, and meets your values
- Ensure the process is fair.
- Guarantee there are records of the process for future reference.

Real safeguarding policies

Organisations should make their safeguarding policies available to the public. When you are writing your safeguarding policy it may help to see how other organisations have written theirs.

Here are some examples:

- [Age UK](#)
- [Cruse Bereavement Care](#)
- [Samaritans](#)

Next steps

This toolkit is intended to help you consider what you need to think about to develop a safeguarding policy for your service.

Establish clear and well communicated safeguarding procedures to protect your service users, staff, volunteers and organisation.

Contact us

If you have questions about safeguarding, or want to learn more, talk to us about our specialist helpline training, consultancy services and membership.

Phone: 0300 330 7777

General enquiries

Email: info@helplines.org

Membership and Member enquiries

Email: membership@helplines.org

Training enquiries

Email: training@helplines.org



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