

Gavi CSO funding mechanism

Safeguarding Guidance

Developing a safeguarding policy

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Introduction

Safeguarding is more than a compliance issue – it is an important value for everyone to uphold, especially with children and adults-at-risk.

This guidance has been written to support grantees in developing a good safeguarding policy. Features include; what makes a good safeguarding policy, the characteristics of a good safeguarding policy, and why each element is important.

It is hoped that the guidance will provide the support necessary for individuals to understand safeguarding and to develop a policy that is appropriate for their organisation's team.

Whilst there are key components to all good safeguarding policies, organisations should look to develop and implement one that is unique to them, therefore maximising its effectiveness and applicability depending on the context.

Section one: What is safeguarding and why is it important?

Definition

Safeguarding denotes measures to protect the health, well-being and human rights of individuals, which allow all people — and especially children, young people and adults-at-risk — to live free from abuse, harassment, harm and neglect. In the context of a work environment, that means ensuring those worked for (project participants or rights-holders in the communities) are unharmed by the work organisations undertake, and ensuring staff (including employees, volunteers, board members and trustees) are safe from harm.

A good safeguarding policy will include a definition of safeguarding. At its most basic, safeguarding means protecting people from harm and keeping people safe. Harm includes any form of bullying, harassment, exploitation, and abuse. It will refer to everyone and recognise that there are power differentials across society. These are based on gender, ethnicity, religion, caste, age, disability, work status, and so on. Children are very vulnerable, but depending on the context, there might also be others who are vulnerable – survivors of gender-based violence, or people living with disability, for example. It is recommended organisations consider a wider definition than just children, and one that is appropriate to their context.

A good safeguarding policy should extend to cover people working on behalf of their own organisation, including consultants and partners. These personnel also have a responsibility for safeguarding and upholding the organisation's safeguarding policy.

Procedures for reporting and response to safeguarding concerns

A good safeguarding policy will include the procedure for reporting and responding to a safeguarding concern or incident, clearly defining the procedure for reporting, the follow up process on reports or concerns raised, as well as the timelines. It should include adequate support for any victims of safeguarding issues through local sign-posting to local support services. Please note that confidentiality should be maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns, as much as possible.

This is important so that anyone who needs to report a safeguarding concern or incident knows what to do and what will happen once they approach the safeguarding focal point. They will also be aware how long the process may take.

Safeguarding incident register

A strong safeguarding policy should include reference to an organisation's safeguarding incident register, where safeguarding incidents are recorded. All safeguarding reports and incidents should be added to the log and include information such as:

- Date of the incident report
- Date of the alleged incident
- Incident details
- Action taken
- Incident update
- Lessons learned.

This data is kept in a safe place with restricted access but is recorded and shared with governance structures to make sure the organisation acts on incidents, deals with them appropriately and learns from them.

A log incident register will prove that an organisation takes its safeguarding incidents seriously and securely, acts quickly and thoroughly on them, and ensures any harm is reduced. It will also ensure organisations learn from the incident as a whole and evolve accordingly.

Risk register

A good safeguarding policy also refers to the organisation's risk register. Every organisation has various risks in the projects it runs. Safeguarding should be considered as a risk, and the organisation should consider different mitigations for safeguarding risks.

For example, if the organisation works with children, that is a safeguarding risk. A risk mitigation strategy might be that no staff member is allowed to be alone with a child.

Designated leads

In every organisation, there should be one designated safeguarding lead. This is the person who anyone with a safeguarding concern can come to and talk to in confidence about a safeguarding worry or incident. The designated safeguarding lead then has a responsibility on behalf of the organisation to act on the worry or incident. This could involve an investigation, or notifying local authorities, or escalating the matter to higher governance levels in the organisation. This person is normally qualified for the role by previous experience or training. Their contact details should be included in the safeguarding policy.

There should also be a senior designated safeguarding officer at Board level. This person's responsibility is to ensure the organisation takes all safeguarding concerns seriously, and that the governance structure and culture of the organisation upholds the highest values of behaviour and conduct.

Trainings

A good safeguarding policy specifies that all employees and associated parties are trained regularly. By 'regularly', this normally means when employees or associated parties start work with the organisation, i.e. during induction, and from then on an annual basis. By 'training', it means at minimum, reading and understanding the safeguarding policy of the organisation. Training should ensure all staff understand what safeguarding is, what an organisation's approach to safeguarding is, and how to report a safeguarding concern.

Some staff who deal directly with the most at-risk populations might need more training from experts, so do explore what is possible and appropriate depending on your organisation's context. The cost of trainings can be included in an organisation's project budget if it is relevant to the project or involves staff working on the project.

Updates

Like most policies, a good safeguarding policy is updated annually or more frequently if the situation changes. It is reviewed at Board level and signed by the officer designated for safeguarding at Board level. Updates ensure that the policy continues to evolve to reflect the organisation's changing circumstances. It is also important that the policy is not just held by one person in the organisation. Instead, the policy should be understood and adopted by all levels of governance.

Section two: Whistleblowing

A whistleblower reveals misconduct. All organisations should have a whistleblowing policy with a clear process for reporting as appropriate in their context. In some cases, this could be a link to the organisation's website; in others, it could be a policy in the organisation's office or a box outside the office buildings. This whistleblowing policy should mention safeguarding, so if the misconduct is to do with a safeguarding concern, the whistleblower knows who to approach and how.

Section three: Human resources

Recruitment and selection

All organisations are encouraged to have a Human Resource (HR) policy or equivalent. This specifies how staff are recruited and treated as employees. A good HR policy will also consider safeguarding issues. For example:

- Are reference checks made for new people hired as staff or associated parties?
- For each job role, is consideration made as to whether there are special safeguarding concerns for the job, and then things are checked accordingly?
- When staff or associated parties work directly with at-risk children, have they had background reference checks, including police checks, if this is appropriate in the organisation's context?

Code of conduct

A good safeguarding policy would include or refer to an organisation's code of conduct, which should outline expectations of behaviour. It should outline an organisation's purpose and values, and how

these directly connect to the rules, responsibilities, behaviour and practices expected of staff and/or consultants at all times.

Further links which might be helpful

- [MannionDaniels safeguarding policy](#)
- [Safeguarding Support Hub](#)