LET'S KEEP EVERYONE SAFE

an introduction to safeguarding

WHAT IS SAFEGUARDING?

'Safeguarding' is, as it sounds, all about keeping people safe – safe from abuse, exploitation and neglect. Abuse can take all kinds of forms, from financial abuse to physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Nobody likes to consider that any of these forms of abuse might be happening within our communities, but sadly, it remains our collective duty to be vigilant to these happening and take the proper measures to make sure that everyone is kept safe, through good safeguarding practice. Safeguarding can also include being aware of extremism and the radicalisation of vulnerable people.

Safeguarding legislation is primarily targeted at protecting two groups of people: (1) under-18s and (2) adults at risk, such as elderly and disabled people. However, **anyone can find themselves at risk of abuse**, and safeguarding policies should make it clear that **anyone might need safeguarding.** Here are some examples of abuse (although there are other forms too):

- Physical abuse, including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, unlawful or inappropriate restraint, or inappropriate physical sanctions.

- Sexual abuse, including sexual acts to which someone has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting.

- Psychological abuse, including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, or cyber bullying.

- Financial and material abuse, including theft, fraud, exploitation, misusing people's property or excessively pressuring them for money.

- Neglect, including ignoring medical or physical care needs, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

   For example, see the Surrey Adult Safeguarding Board's definition of abuse.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Every local authority in England has to have both a **Safeguarding Adults Board/Partnership** and a **Safeguarding Children Board/Partnership**. These handle safeguarding enquiries either directly from the public, from professionals, or from 'Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs'. In practice, this means that it **you should report legitimate safeguarding concerns to your local authority.**
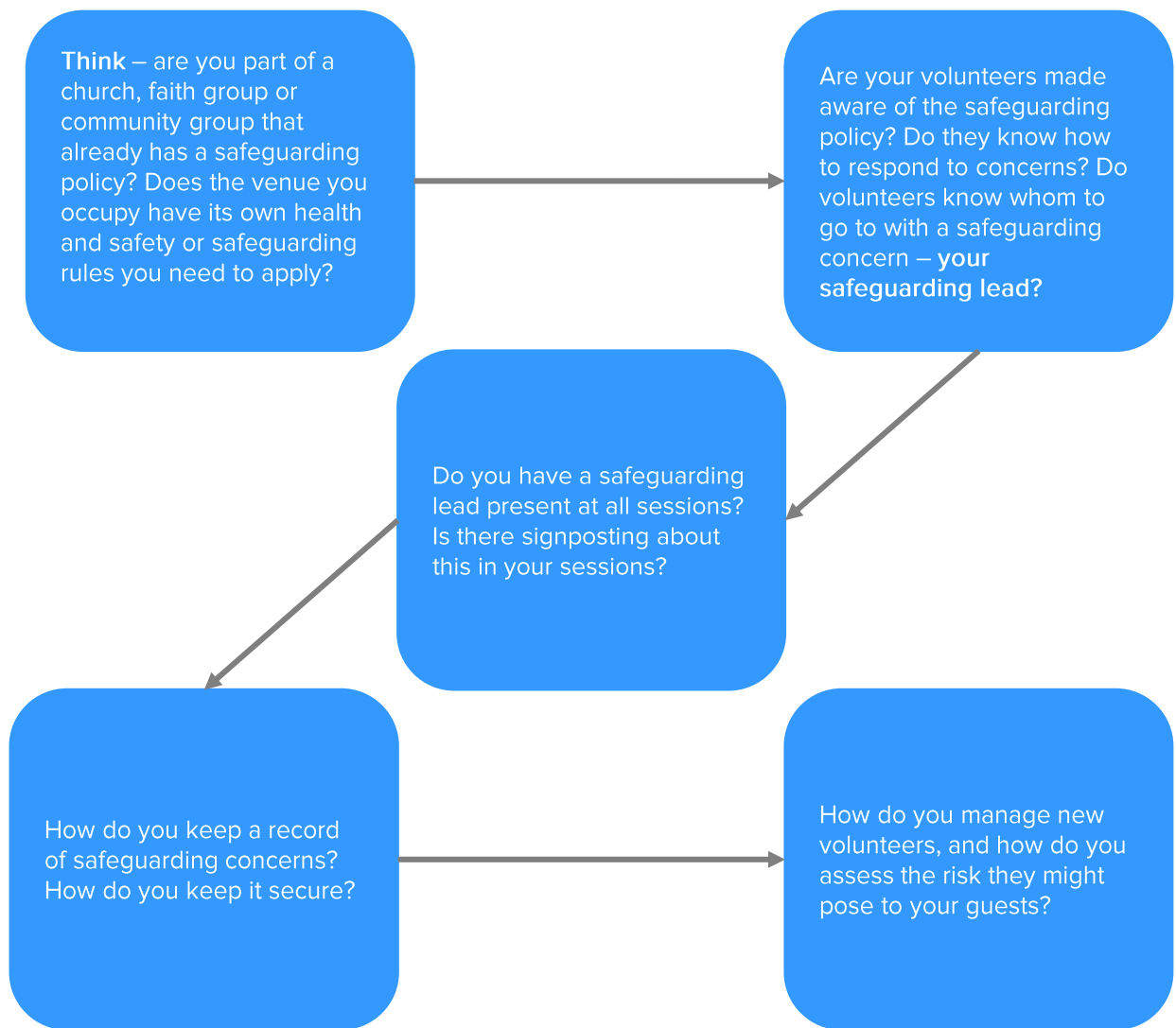
Here is what that page might look like:
https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/concerned-for-someones-safety

You can send a safeguarding concern either to your local authority team or to a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. Your local authority (at the county or unitary authority level) will know whom to contact and how – look at their website.

Your local safeguarding board will have relevant policies and procedures for you to follow – try to find these on their website.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO CONSIDER?

Think – are you part of a church, faith group or community group that already has a safeguarding policy? Does the venue you occupy have its own health and safety or safeguarding rules you need to apply?

Are your volunteers made aware of the safeguarding policy? Do they know how to respond to concerns? Do volunteers know whom to go to with a safeguarding concern – **your safeguarding lead?**

Do you have a safeguarding lead present at all sessions? Is there signposting about this in your sessions?

How do you keep a record of safeguarding concerns? How do you keep it secure?

How do you manage new volunteers, and how do you assess the risk they might pose to your guests?

PLACES OF WELCOME

WHAT DOES AN ORGANISATION NEED TO DO?

Your organisation will need to have a safeguarding policy that is compliant with national and local safeguarding policies (or adopt and follow the safeguarding policy of your host organisation). This should consider things like:

- Risks: what are the potential risks of your activities for children or adults at risk of abuse?

- Responsibilities: who is responsible for safeguarding in your organisation and making any reports which might need to be made?

- Vigilance: what are the signs of vulnerability or abuse of which your volunteers and staff need to be aware?

- Reporting: how are potential safeguarding concerns recorded, reported and communicated?

"If your charity works with children or adults at risk, either online or in person, you should:

- establish appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures that all trustees, staff and volunteers follow, which fit with the policies and procedures of your local authority safeguarding partnership or safeguarding children or adults board
- make sure all staff and volunteers receive regular training on child protection or working with adults at risk
- appoint a safeguarding lead to work with your local authority safeguarding partnerships or boards and/or create a plan for responding to concerns overseas
- manage concerns, complaints, whistleblowing and allegations relating to child protection or adults at risk effectively
- have clear policies when DBS checks are required, how you assess the level of check needed and how you handle the information

"You must follow relevant legislation and guidance."

Gov.uk – Safeguarding Duties for Charity Trustees

FINAL THOUGHTS

Make sure to raise any concerns which you might have with your organisation's safeguarding lead and consider contacting your local authority's safeguarding teams if prompt and appropriate action is not taken.

If you see something that worries you, or you are given information about possible abuse, follow the three R's:
- **Recognise** it as possible abuse or something to be aware of
- **Record** (write down) what you see or are told
- **Report** it to someone else with expertise in safeguarding such as the safeguarding lead in your organisation.

It is best to follow the procedures your organisation establishes rather than interfering directly in a situation you may not understand, or investigating yourself. **Do not investigate:** simply record your concerns and report them. Do not promise that you won't tell anyone; rather, say that you need to seek advice about this. Be clear that if someone tells you something concerning you cannot keep it to yourself.

If someone is in immediate danger, you should always ring 999.
If in any doubt about whether your safeguarding policies are appropriate, please contact your organisation's safeguarding lead.

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

If you need to design a policy and a procedure, because you are **not** covered by your host organisation, there are plenty of example policies from reputable organisations to consider, such as:

Keeping children safe in the voluntary and community sector | NSPCC Learning

Safeguarding: Example policy and procedures - Community Action Suffolk

Other resources include:

National Council of Voluntary Organisations – this guidance is ideal for those creating or updating safeguarding policies for their organisations

Charity Commission Guidance – this is a good overview for all those involved in safeguarding

Social Care Institute for Excellence – this is directed at care homes, but provides a number of useful examples for organisations working with older people, and answers some questions which volunteers might have about safeguarding

Faith groups can check out the support available around child safeguarding, much of it free, from SFI Together - Strengthening Faith Institutions (SFI)