

Safeguarding Adults In Solihull What Does Good Practice Look Like



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Introduction

This brief guide is intended for both practitioners and the public and explains what safeguarding adults means and what good practice looks like. It will cover the legal expectations of good practice as well as the approach we have agreed to take in Solihull.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the [SSAB Engagement Overview for Practitioners](#) which sets out best practice for effective engagement.



What Does Safeguarding Mean?

Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted.

The Care Act 2014 sets out 6 principles which apply to all sectors and settings and underpin all safeguarding work:

Empowerment

People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and give informed consent.

"I am asked what I want as the outcomes from the safeguarding process, and these directly inform what happens."

Prevention

It is better to take action before harm occurs.

"I receive clear and simple information about what abuse is, how to recognise the signs and what I can do to seek help."

Proportionality

The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

“I am sure that the professionals will work in my interest, as I see them, and they will only get involved as much as needed.”

Protection

Support and representation for those in greatest need.

“I get help and support to report abuse and neglect. I get help so that I am able to take part in the safeguarding process to the extent to which I want.”

Partnership

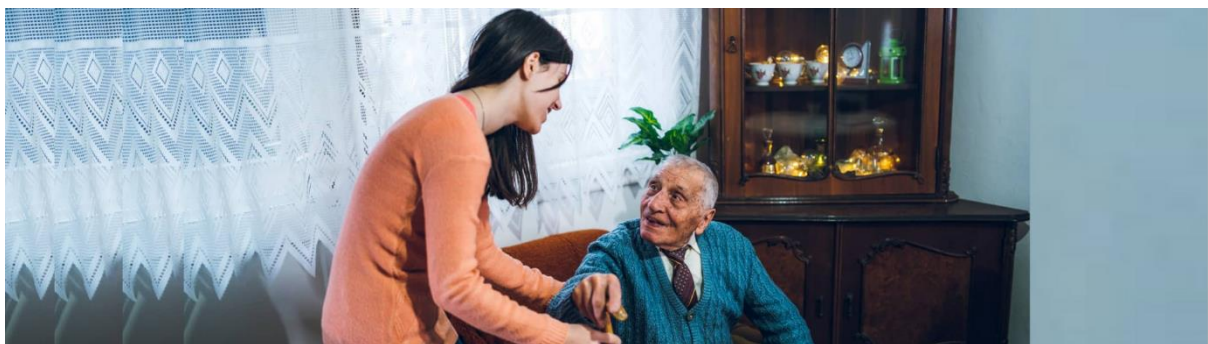
Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

“I know that staff treat any personal and sensitive information in confidence, only sharing what is helpful and necessary. I am confident that professionals will work together and with me to get the best result for me.”

Accountability

Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

“I understand the role of everyone involved in my life and so do they.”



What is “Making Safeguarding Personal”?

In addition to upholding the above principles, it is also important that all organisations recognise that adult safeguarding arrangements are there to protect individuals who have different preferences, histories, circumstances and lifestyles, so it is unhelpful to prescribe a process that must be followed whenever a concern is raised.

The Care Act (2014) sets out that approaches to safeguarding adults must ensure they are “making safeguarding personal”, but what does this mean?

Making safeguarding personal is about focusing on achieving meaningful improvement to people’s circumstances. It is about better engagement with people right from the beginning of the process to understand what they want and to review whether this is achieved. It is an approach that moves safeguarding away from 'doing to' people, to one that is 'done with' them.

This approach will have different names in different organisations e.g., patient voice, victim led support, person centred care, strengths-based practice. What is important is that in all organisations, the following best practice standards developed by Birmingham Safeguarding Adults Board and adopted in Solihull, are evident:

The person is heard

- We give the person time and space to talk
- We listen to them
- We take what they say seriously
- We make sure they do not have to keep repeating the same thing to different people
- We ask what their priorities are
- We ask whether they want any help from us
- We ask what they think that help might look like

The person’s choices are respected

- We support the person to make their own choices and decisions
- We give them as much information as possible in order make their own choices
- We respect their values and decisions
- We do not make the person feel judged or punished for the choices they make or the things they tell us
- We support the person to be as safe as they want to be
- We always act in line with the Mental Capacity Act where choice and decision making is impaired

The person is understood

- We communicate with the person in ways they understand, without using jargon

- We get a sense of what matters most to them, and why
- We take steps to understand their culture, background and community
- We are curious, not because we want to take control of their life, but because we care about what happens to them
- We try to understand who they feel they can trust, and to keep those people around them

The person can trust us to be honest

- We discuss our concerns with the person before deciding what to do
- We are open about any worries we have for them
- We keep them informed about who is doing what, and why
- We are honest if it is necessary to act against their wishes or expectations
- We seek consent before sharing any information about them
- When we do share information, we explain who we are sharing it with, and why



How Does this Fit with Strengths-Based Practice?

Adult Social Care at Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council have adopted a strengths-based approach to social work. This means the person and those supporting them work together to identify what the person wants to achieve and what matters to them as an individual. It involves supporting people to identify and use their own strengths and abilities, by understanding their lived experience and can only be effective when open and honest relationships are built between the person and those supporting them.

This complements the approach to safeguarding set out above and means the focus is kept on the individual and what they want to achieve. Focusing on strengths does not mean ignoring challenges and addressing these accordingly will form part of the support provided.

Strengths based questions can be helpful when talking to people about a safeguarding situation and the support they think they need. Here are a few questions that might be helpful:

- “What is working well?”

- “What could be going better?”
- “What stops things working better for you?”
- “Tell me about what a good day looks like for you? What makes it a good day?”
- “What could you ask others to do, that would help create a better situation for you?”
- “What kind of supports have you used that have been helpful to you? How did the supports improve things for you?”
- “When you think about X (whatever it is that is stopping things going well) is there anything you can think of that could help in any way?”



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

There is evidence that culturally competent safeguarding practice enhances children’s and adults’ well-being. It is important that practitioners are sensitive to differing family patterns and lifestyles and to caring patterns that vary across different ethnic and cultural groups. At the same time, they must be clear that child or adult abuse cannot be condoned for religious or cultural reasons. All practitioners must take personal responsibility for informing their work with sufficient knowledge (or seeking advice) on the particular culture and/or faith by which the adult and their family or carers lives their daily life.

There may be a poor view of support services arising from initial contact through the immigration system, and, for some communities, particularly those with insecure immigration status – an instinctive distrust of the state arising from previous experiences.

For autistic people, it is often not their autism that causes difficulties as such, but the expectations and responses they have from other people. In particular, the expectation to act, respond and learn in the same way that more typically developing peers do. Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board has [developed a separate guide on safeguarding with autistic people.](#)

Existing evidence reported by Safe Lives suggests that LGBT+ people face a range of distinct barriers on a systemic level, which often prevent them from getting the support they need. Systemic barriers relate to the way services are designed and delivered that may result in them being less accessible and inclusive for LGBT+ people. Safe Lives also suggest that LGBT+ people might feel unsure of or are reluctant to disclose

their relationships and identity with non-LGBT+ organisations. They also often believe that non-LGBT+ services are 'not for them' and fear and/or anticipate being misunderstood or discriminated against by services. [Find out more here.](#)

Practitioners will therefore need to understand a person's religion, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, as well as any other protected characteristics and how they may intersect. They will need to understand areas of a person's life that are important to them and will need to develop trust with an individual before they feel comfortable to disclose what is happening to them in terms of abuse or neglect.



Where Decision Making is Impaired the Mental Capacity Act Must Guide Practice

Where there are questions about an adult's ability to understand and make decisions related to safeguarding, the principles of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) must be followed. These are set out in [The Mental Capacity Act 2005 Code of Practice](#) and are intended to be enabling and supportive of people who lack capacity, not restricting or controlling of their lives. The Act aims to protect people who lack capacity to make particular decisions, but also to maximise their ability to make decisions, or to participate in decision-making, as far as they are able to do so.

The five statutory principles are:

1. A person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that they lack capacity.
2. A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision unless all practicable steps to help him to do so have been taken without success.
3. A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision merely because he makes an unwise decision.
4. An act done, or decision made, under this Act for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be done, or made, in his best interests.
5. Before the act is done, or the decision is made, regard must be had to whether the purpose for which it is needed can be as effectively achieved in a way that is less restrictive of the person's rights and freedom of action.



Advocacy

Advocacy means getting support from another person to help express views and wishes, and help a person stand up for their rights. Where an adult is being supported around a safeguarding matter, the Care Act (2014) states that they must have an advocate to support them where they have a substantial difficulty or lack capacity to take part in decisions about safeguarding and balancing risks, and they have no-one else to support them.

Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board has a separate guide to advocacy which you can find on our website or [by clicking here](#)



What About Risk?

At the heart of adult safeguarding is the tension between the duty to protect an adult from the risk of harm, with the duty to promote and enable the adult's wellbeing. Safeguarding is about supporting adults to achieve the right balance between the risk they face and the way they want to live their life.

What is needed is an approach that recognises that taking carefully considered risks can enable individuals and help improve their wellbeing, whilst minimising the potential harmful outcomes.



Risk Enablement (or Positive Risk Taking)

Approaches that aim to make safeguarding personal and empower the individual must include risk enablement.

Drawing on the principles of making safeguarding personal, strengths-based working, the Care Act (2014) and Mental Capacity Act (2005), risk enablement focuses on empowering a person to be involved in thinking about the risks they face and planning any actions to address them.

Some helpful questions to ask may be:

- “What is important in your life?”
- “What is working well?”
- “What things are difficult for you?”
- “Do you think there are any risks?”
- “Could things be done in a different way, which might reduce the risks?”
- “Who is important to you?”
- “Are there any differences of opinion between you and the people you said are important to you?”

The best approach to risk enablement is one which is collaborative not only with the person being supported, but also the people who are important to them and the network of practitioners supporting them.

Remember: the identification of a risk carries a responsibility to do something about it

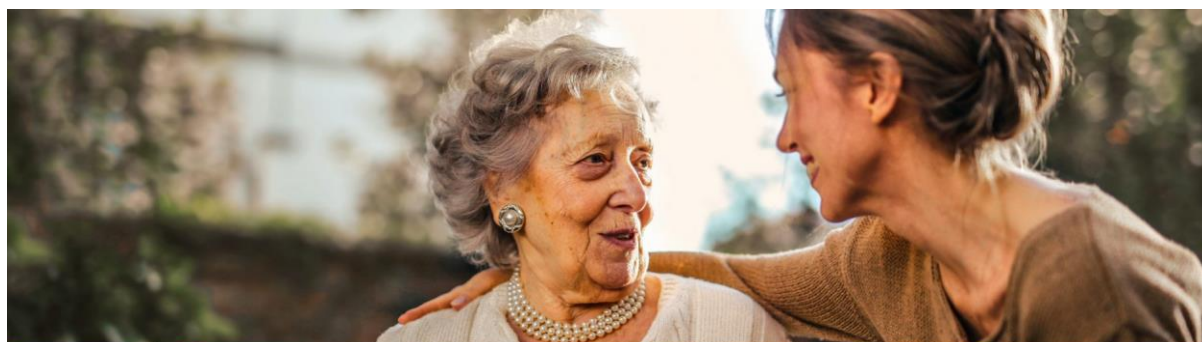


Responding to Identified Risks

Consider actions to mitigate the risk. Planning this will involve consideration with the adult and those important to them of:

- The safeguarding outcomes that the adult wants to achieve (their balance between safety and wellbeing)
- The resources and assets around the adult and in their community and how these could be used to reduce the risk
- The impact on their wellbeing of any proposed actions to mitigate the risk
- The emphasis should be upon achieving an acceptable balance between reducing risk and the impact this may have upon the adult's wellbeing.

Remember: an individual's right to take risks does not give them the right to put others at risk.



Defensible Decision Making

Assessments, judgements and defensible decisions regarding safeguarding and risk assessment should be clearly recorded. The names of those involved in decision making and those responsible for actions should be documented; this is especially important where situations are complex, high risk, or controversial.

Recording should show:

- Reasons for the decisions
- That decisions are balanced
- That the adult has been appropriately supported with decision making, including being supported to weigh the potential negative consequences of the options they consider
- That decisions are regularly reviewed
- Reference to relevant legislation



Resources

This guide is designed to be an introduction to safeguarding and risk. [Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board's website](#) has a number of other resources on a variety of topics related to safeguarding which will help develop an understanding of safeguarding best practice.

The [Policies, Procedures and Resources](#) pages contain local, regional and national policies and procedures as well as several practice guides on topics like Autism, Gender Identity, Coercive Control.

The [Learning and Development page](#) holds a wide variety of webinars on topics such as domestic abuse and older women, self-neglect and mental capacity and transitional safeguarding. This is also where the Safeguarding Adult Board's [multi agency training offer](#) can be found, with a variety of courses across the year that practitioners can book on to.





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