



Safeguarding Adults at Risk (formerly Vulnerable Adults)

What is safeguarding of Adults at Risk?

“Safeguarding” refers to measures designed to protect the health, wellbeing, and human rights of individuals.

Who is responsible for safeguarding adults at risk?

Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility. Members must report any safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in their club or county, the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) at an EBU competition (usually one of the directors), or the English Bridge Union/English Bridge Education & Development (EBU/EBED) DSOs by emailing: safeguarding@ebu.co.uk.

If a member remains concerned that their referral has not been acted upon and believes an individual remains at risk, they are obligated to refer the matter to the appropriate authorities themselves.

Key Definitions

Adult at Risk

Any person aged 18 or over who:

- Has needs for care and support,
and
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect,
and
- As a result of those needs, is unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or the risk of harm.

All three criteria must be met to qualify as an adult at risk.

Abuse

Abuse can take many forms and may be a single incident or a pattern of repeated actions.

Under the Care Act 2014 and Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the following can constitute abuse or neglect:

Types of abuse:

- **Domestic abuse** – Includes any abusive behaviour that is physical, sexual, violent, threatening, controlling, coercive, economic, or emotional, perpetrated by someone

personally connected (e.g. family member, partner, or ex-partner). Co-residence is not required.

- **Physical abuse** – Assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, over/under medicating, or intentionally removing walking aids.
 - **Sexual abuse** – Non-consensual sexual activity, inappropriate looking/touching, sharing images, rape, assault, indecent exposure, and harassment.
 - **Psychological abuse** – Threats, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyberbullying, and isolation.
 - **Financial or material abuse** – Theft, fraud, scams, coercion in financial matters, or misuse of property, possessions, or benefits.
 - **Modern slavery** – Includes slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, and domestic servitude.
 - **Discriminatory abuse** – Harassment, slurs, or unfair treatment based on race, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, or religion.
 - **Organisational abuse** – Poor care practices or neglect by care providers, whether one-off or ongoing.
 - **Neglect and acts of omission** – Ignoring care needs, failing to provide access to services or medication, or withholding adequate nutrition and heating.
 - **Self-neglect** – Failure to care for one's hygiene, health, or environment, including hoarding behaviors.
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What are some examples of situations that may activate safeguarding procedures?

- A member controlling the finances of another member who has care and support needs and cannot protect themselves.
 - A member with care and support needs arriving at a club without appropriate clothing and appearing confused.
 - A member diagnosed with dementia making advances toward another member.
 - A member discloses that their partner, spouse, or family member prevents them from leaving the house without permission.
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What are the signs and indicators of abuse and neglect?

Signs may include:

- Unexplained bruises or injuries, or lack of medical attention for injuries.
 - Non-attendance at the club without explanation and no response to outreach.
 - Significant weight change and/or an unkempt appearance.
 - Changes in behaviour, such as becoming withdrawn or unusually aggressive.
 - A member displaying fear of a specific individual or group.
 - A member sending unwanted sexually explicit messages to another member.
 - Threats, bullying, or intentional physical harm to another member.
 - Direct disclosure from a member that they are being abused, harmed, or neglected.
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How do you respond to a disclosed safeguarding concern?

Do:

- Stay calm and avoid showing shock or disbelief.
- Listen carefully.
- Be sympathetic (e.g., “I’m sorry that this has happened to you.”).
- Be aware that medical evidence may be necessary.
- Assure the person that:
 - They did the right thing by speaking up.
 - You are treating the matter seriously.
 - It is not their fault.
 - You will report it to the appropriate person.
 - You will take steps to protect and support them.
- Record and report the disclosure according to your safeguarding procedures.

Do not:

- Press for details the person is uncomfortable sharing.
- Interrupt or postpone someone freely recalling events.
- Promise confidentiality—you have a duty to report.
- Make unrealistic promises (e.g., “This will never happen again”).
- Contact the alleged abuser.
- Be judgmental.
- Share the information beyond those with a legitimate need to know under the safeguarding policy.
- Family should not be contacted without the consent of the adult at risk.

How should a safeguarding concern be recorded?

- Use the person’s exact words where possible.
- Describe the context in which the disclosure occurred.
- Note the setting and anyone else present at the time.
- Distinguish facts from opinions.
- Use black ink (pen or biro) so the report can be photocopied.
- Remember, your report may be used in legal or disciplinary processes.

What is the responsibility of the DSLs?

When concerns arise, the views and wishes of the adult at risk should be considered wherever possible, and their autonomy respected.

Concerns must be handled sensitively and confidentially. It is generally inappropriate to inform the adult’s family, especially if they may be involved in the abuse.

DSLs are responsible for taking reasonable steps to protect adults at risk and overseeing how safeguarding is managed within the EBU. They must refer safeguarding concerns to the relevant authorities promptly.

DSLs support those involved in safeguarding incidents but do not conduct investigations. Investigations must be led by the relevant local authority (e.g., adult social care or safeguarding teams).

If someone is in immediate danger or a crime has occurred, the Police should be contacted immediately by calling 999 (emergency) or 101 (non-emergency).

Additional Support:

Hourglass (formerly Action on Elder Abuse) offers 24-hour UK-wide support, advice, and advocacy for older adults (over 60), professionals, and relatives experiencing or concerned about abuse, harm, or neglect.

- **Freephone Helpline:** 0808 808 8141
- **Text service:** 07860 052906
- **Email:** helpline@wearehourglass.org

Acronyms Used in This Document

- **DSL** – Designated Safeguarding Lead
- **DSO** – Designated Safeguarding Officer
- **EBU** – English Bridge Union
- **EBED** – English Bridge Education & Development

Change Record

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