

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults



Unit: Health, safety and welfare in a fitness environment

Safeguarding

CONSIDER

What is safeguarding?

Which populations are vulnerable?



Safeguarding

Safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults (adults at risk) means to ensure their safety, protect them against maltreatment, and remove any risk of harm, neglect or abuse.

Children and vulnerable adults

In the UK, most protection agencies refer to **children** as any person under the age of 18.

(NSPCC, 2014)

A **vulnerable adult** is any person 'aged 18 years or over, who is in receipt of or in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation'.

(Department of Health, 2000)

Policies and procedures

TASK

What policies and procedures would a fitness organisation need in relation to safeguarding?

What would be the role of a fitness instructor (including limitations)?

What procedures would you need to follow to protect yourself from accusations of abuse?



Policy

A 'safeguarding' policy is a statement by an organisation that explicitly states its views in relation to keeping children and vulnerable adults safe and what it will do to keep them safe, including reporting procedures.

Policies and procedures

The key principles for any situation working with children, young people and vulnerable adults will often be similar in any code of practice and may include:

- Behaviour.
- Competence.
- Relationships.
- Rights and responsibilities.



Behaviour

Key behavioural points when working with children include:

- Demonstrate proper personal behaviour and conduct at all times.
- Be a role model.
- Wear a uniform and name badge to be easily recognisable to children and parents.
- Know how to respond appropriately to any areas of concern.



Competence

Company policy and procedures must detail the requirements for instructors or supervisors of children or vulnerable adults.

- If working with children, a DBS check is a legal requirement.
- References are vital when determining an individual's suitability.
- Extra qualifications and experience may be necessary.

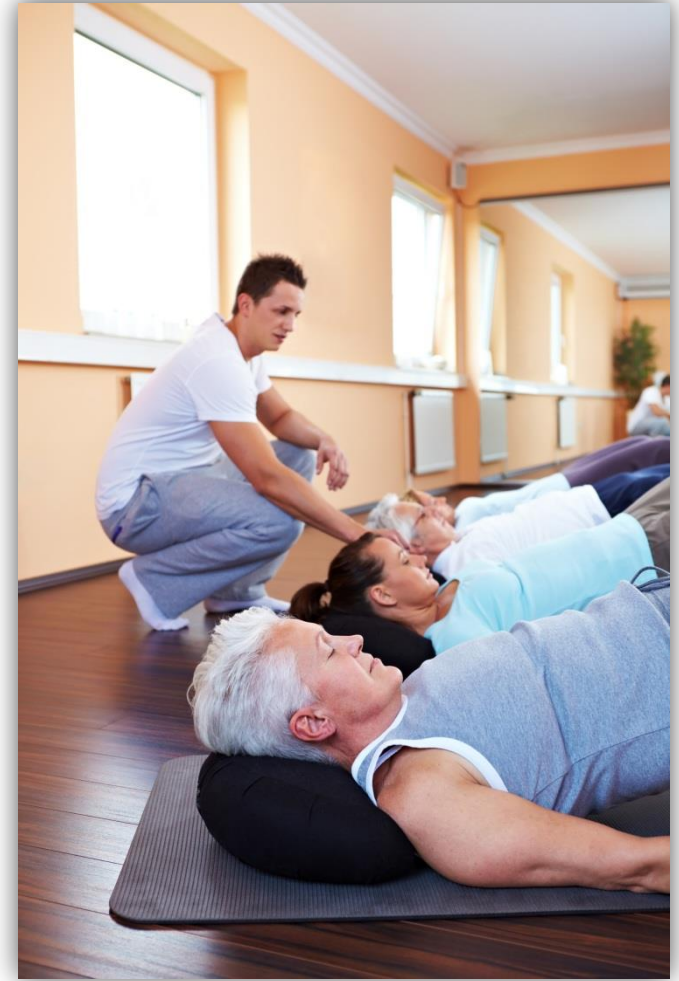


Relationships

Adults must develop a relationship with children, vulnerable adults and staff based on:

- Openness.
- Honesty.
- Mutual trust and respect.

You must also be able to appropriately manage confidential information.



Rights and responsibilities

Adults must always respect and champion the rights of every individual to participate in leisure activities.

You must recognise the need to protect the rights of participation, enjoyment and achievement for all.

Everyone has the right to:

- Live free from violence, fear and abuse.
- Be protected from harm and exploitation.
- Be independent.
- Say 'no' to anything they don't fully understand.



Best practice guidelines

When working with children and vulnerable adults, it is appropriate to:

- Work in an open environment.
- Avoid spending time alone with children or vulnerable adults.
- Never offer a child or vulnerable adult a lift home if this would mean being alone with them.
- Never photograph children or vulnerable adults without the written permission (permission from parents or carers for children).



Types of abuse

Small group task

What are the signs of different types of abuse?

Groups:

- A. Physical.
- B. Emotional.
- C. Sexual.
- D. Neglect.
- E. Bullying and harassment.

Present to rest of group.



Types of possible abuse

Fitness professionals must maintain vigilance in recognising the signs and symptoms of these forms of abuse:

- Physical.
- Emotional.
- Sexual.
- Neglect.
- Bullying and harassment.



There are other forms of abuse which might primarily affect adults

Key signs of possible physical abuse

- Signs of physical injury.
- Fear or concern of parent being contacted.
- Aggressive or angry outbursts.
- Keeping arms and legs covered.
- Withdrawn behaviour.
- Unexplained bruising or injuries.
- Bruises which reflect hand marks.
- Prone to flinching.
- Depression.
- Running away.



Key signs of possible verbal abuse

- Neurotic behaviour.
- Inability to take part.
- Fear of making mistakes.
- Sudden speech disorders.
- Self-harm.
- Fear of parents being contacted.
- Developmental delays.



Key signs of possible sexual abuse

- Sudden changes in behaviour.
- Becoming aggressive/withdrawn.
- Apparent fear of one person.
- Running away.
- Sexual drawings/language.
- Bedwetting.
- Self-harm/suicidal thoughts.
- Advanced sexual knowledge.
- Sexual behaviour.
- Genital pain or itching.
- STDs.
- Stomach pains.



Key signs of possible neglect

- Truancy and lateness.
- Regularly alone and unsupervised.
- Constant hunger.
- Unkempt state.
- Weight loss.
- Inappropriate dress.



Key signs of possible bullying

- Shyness.
- Insecurity.
- Seems 'over' sensitive.
- Signs of physical and/or emotional abuse.



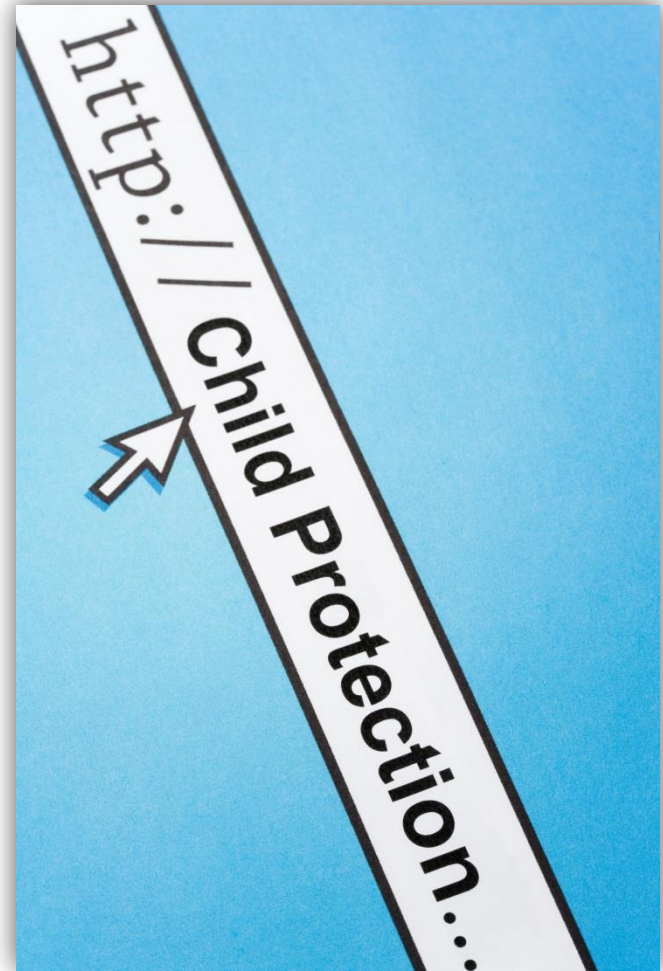
Dealing with suspected abuse

CONSIDER

How would you deal with suspected abuse?

Consider:

- When would you contact statutory agencies?
- Which agencies?
- How would you maintain confidentiality?



Responding to suspected abuse



Concerns are likely to be raised if:

- Abuse is observed, i.e. you witness bullying, harassment or physical abuse taking place.
- Signs of abuse are observed
- Another person reports their concerns.
- A child or vulnerable adult discloses abuse directly.
- In all instances, it is essential to take action!

Responding to suspected abuse

Dealing with evidence or an allegation of abuse is seldom straightforward.

The adult may be shocked and disturbed by what is heard or seen, however action should always be taken.

Follow the company policies.

Report to the designated **child protection or safeguarding officer** who is based within the organisation or a senior manager.



Guidelines for responding to direct disclosure



- Listen and let the child or vulnerable adult speak.
- Stay calm, accept what is being said and avoid the need to judge.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Tell them that you take what they are saying seriously.
- Be honest and explain that you will have to tell someone else to protect them.
- Don't make them repeat the story, interrogate them or ask leading questions.
- Don't tell people who do not need to know.
- Don't approach the alleged abuser or the parents, guardian or carer.
- Record in writing.
- Maintain contact with the child or vulnerable adult if possible.

Recording information

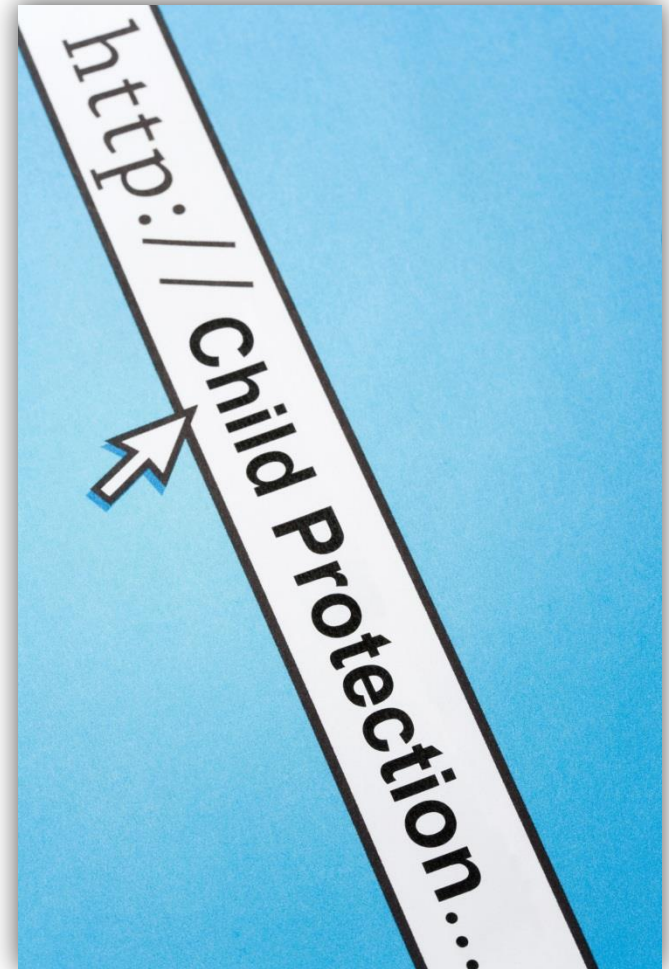
When recording information you should:

- Report the facts – what you have seen, heard or what has been reported or disclosed.
- Do not give your personal opinions: be clear when reporting your own or others' interpretation of events and reasons for this.
- Clearly distinguish between your personal knowledge and what you have been told by others.

Safeguarding agencies

Each professional has a responsibility to act on what has been reported by referring their concerns to one of the following:

- Child welfare agencies.
- Social services.
- Local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs).
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
- Adult social care services
- Police.
- ChildLine.
- Welfare officer in the workplace.
- Safeguarding officer.
- NSPCC.



Maintaining confidentiality

- Follow organisation procedures.
- Adhere to guidance from relevant legislation (data protection, information governance and sharing).
- Share information only on a 'need-to-know basis' with relevant people.
- Remember the child or vulnerable adult will be the centre of the whole process; their confidence, safety and security must be assured.
- All written reports relating to the incident must be locked away securely.