



Circles Network Policy

Safeguarding Adults Policy

April 2025
Circles Network Human Resources



Section 1: Safeguarding Adults Policy

Introduction

Circles Network is committed to Safeguarding Adults in line with national legislation and relevant national and local guidelines.

We will safeguard adults by ensuring that our services are delivered in a way which keeps all adults safe.

Circles Network is committed to creating a culture of zero-tolerance of harm to adults which necessitates: the recognition of adults who may be at risk and the circumstances which may increase risk; knowing how adult abuse, exploitation, or neglect manifests itself; and being willing to report safeguarding concerns.

This extends to recognising and reporting harm experienced anywhere, including within our activities, within other organised community or voluntary activities, in the community, in the person's own home and in any care setting.

Circles Network is committed to best safeguarding practice and to uphold the rights of all adults to live a life free from harm from abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

Policy Statement

Circles Network provides a range of services to adults and their families in various locations throughout the UK. The Board of Trustees takes its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of vulnerable adults entrusted into the care of / or in the venues of Circles Network, very seriously and is committed to the safeguarding of adults. This policy is one of a series in Circles Network integrated safeguarding portfolio. Circles Networks designated safeguarding lead arrangements (code of conduct), safer recruitment policy, complaints, and online safety.

This policy is available on the Circles Network website and all trustees, colleagues and volunteers are required to read it and confirm they have done so in writing before commencing work with Circles Network.

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all Children/young people and adults. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where people are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children and young people receive effective support, protection, and justice.

Circles Network believes everyone has the right to live free from abuse or neglect regardless of age, ability or disability, sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, marital or gender status.

Circles Network is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and positive environment and an open, listening culture where people feel able to share concerns without fear of retribution.

Circles Network acknowledges that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and is committed to prevent abuse and neglect through safeguarding the welfare of all adults involved.

Circles Network recognises that health, well-being, ability, disability and need for care and support can affect a person's resilience. We recognise that some people experience barriers, for example, to communication in raising concerns or seeking help. We recognise that these factors can vary at different points in people's lives.



Circles Network recognises that there is a legal framework within which sports need to work to safeguard adults who have needs for care and support and for protecting those who are unable to take action to protect themselves and will act in accordance with the relevant safeguarding adult legislation and with local statutory safeguarding procedures.

Actions taken by Circles Network will be consistent with the principles of adult safeguarding ensuring that any action taken is prompt, proportionate and that it includes and respects the voice of the adult concerned.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the commitment of Circles Network to safeguarding adults and to ensure that everyone involved in Circles Network is aware of:

- The legislation, policy and procedures for safeguarding adults.
- Their role and responsibility for safeguarding adults.
- What to do or who to speak to if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of an adult within the organisation.

Scope

This safeguarding adult policy and associated procedures apply to all individuals involved in Circles Network including Board members, Staff and Volunteers and to all concerns about the safety of adults whilst taking part in our organisation, its activities and in the wider community.

We expect our partner organisations, including for example, affiliated organisations, to adopt and demonstrate their commitment to the principles and practice as set out in this Safeguarding Adults Policy and associated procedures.

Commitments

In order to implement this policy Circles Network will ensure that:

- Everyone involved with Circles Network is aware of the safeguarding adult procedures and knows what to do and who to contact if they have a concern relating to the welfare or wellbeing of an adult.
- Any concern that an adult is not safe is taken seriously, responded to promptly, and followed up in line with Circles Network Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures.
- The well-being of those at risk of harm will be put first and the adult actively supported to communicate their views and the outcomes they want to achieve.
- Any actions taken will respect the rights and dignity of all those involved and be proportionate to the risk of harm.
- Confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored in line with our Data Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Circles Network acts in accordance with best practice guidance from Local Safeguarding boards in each locality of the UK.
- Circles Network will cooperate with the Police and the relevant Local Authorities in taking action to safeguard an adult.

- All Board members, staff, and volunteers understand their role and responsibility for safeguarding adults and have completed and are up to date with safeguarding adult training and learning opportunities appropriate for their role.
- Circles Network uses safe recruitment practices and continually assesses the suitability of volunteers and staff to prevent the employment of unsuitable individuals in the organisation.
- Circles Network shares information about anyone found to be a risk to adults with the appropriate bodies. For example: Disclosure and Barring Service, Services, Police, Local Authority/Social Services.
- When planning activities and events Circles Network includes an assessment of, and risk to, the safety of all adults from abuse and neglect and designates a person who will be in attendance as a safeguarding lead for that event.
- Actions taken under this policy are reviewed by the Board and senior management team on an annual basis.
- This policy, related policies (see below) and the Safeguarding Adults Procedures are reviewed no less than on a two yearly basis and whenever there are changes in relevant legislation and/or government guidance as required by the Local Safeguarding Board, or as a result of any other significant change or event.

Circles Network are committed to developing and maintaining its capability to implement this policy and procedures. In order to do so the following will be in place:

- A clear line of accountability within the organisation for the safety and welfare of all adults.
- Access to relevant legal and professional advice.
- Regular management reports to the Board detailing how risks to adult safeguarding are being addressed and how any reports have been addressed.
- Safeguarding adult procedures that deal effectively with any concerns of abuse or neglect, including those caused through poor practice.
- A Safeguarding Lead.
- Arrangements to work effectively with other relevant organisations to safeguard and promote the welfare of adults, including arrangements for sharing information.
- Codes of conduct for Board members, Staff, and Volunteers and other relevant individuals that specify zero tolerance of abuse in any form.
- Risk assessments that specifically include safeguarding of adults.
- Policies and procedures which are consistent with this Safeguarding Adults policy.

Section 2: Supporting Information

Key Points

- There is a **legal duty on Local Authorities** to provide support to 'adults at risk'.
- **Adults at risk** are defined in legislation and the criteria applied differs between each home nation.
- The safeguarding legislation applies **to all forms of abuse** that harm a person's well-being.
- The law provides a framework for good practice in safeguarding that makes the overall **well-being** of the adult at risk a priority of any intervention.
- The law in all four home nations emphasises the importance of **person-centred safeguarding**, (referred to as '**Making Safeguarding Personal**' in England).

- The law provides a framework for making decisions on behalf of adults who can't make decisions for themselves (**Mental Capacity**).
- The law provides a framework for all organisations to **share information and cooperate** to protect adults at risk.

Safeguarding Adults Legislation

Safeguarding Adults in all home nations is compliant with United Nations directives on the rights of disabled people and commitments to the rights of older people. It is covered by:

- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- General Data Protection Regulations 2018

The practices and procedures within this policy are based on the relevant legislation and government guidance.

- England - The Care Act 2014
Care and Support Statutory Guidance (especially chapter 14) 2014
- Wales - Social Services and Well Being Act 2014
Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019
- Scotland - Adult Support and Protection Act 2007
Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 Code of Practice 2014
- Northern Ireland - Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership 2015

Each home nation also has legislation about the circumstances in which decisions can be made on behalf of an adult who is unable to make decisions for themselves:

- England and Wales - Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Scotland - Adults with Incapacity Act 2000
- Mental Capacity (Northern Ireland) 2016
- There are specific offences applying to the mistreatment of and sexual offences against adults who do not have Mental Capacity and specific offences where mistreatment is carried out by a person who is employed as a carer: e.g. wilful neglect and wilful mistreatment.

Definition of an Adult at Risk

The Safeguarding Adults legislation creates specific responsibilities on Local Authorities, Health, and the Police to provide additional protection from abuse and neglect to Adults at Risk.

When a Local Authority has reason to believe there is an adult at risk, they have a responsibility to find out more about the situation and decide what actions need to be taken to support the adult. In Scotland and Wales, the Local Authority can gain access to an adult to find out if they are at risk of harm for example, if that access is being blocked by another person.

The actions that need to be taken might be by the Local Authority (usually social services) and/or by other agencies, for example the Police and Health. The Local Authority role includes having multi-agency procedures which coordinate the actions taken by different organisations.

England (Care Act 2014)

An **adult at risk** is an individual aged 18 years and over who:

- (a) has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) AND;
- (b) is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect, AND;
- (c) as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

Scotland (Adult Support and Protection Act 2007)

An **adult at risk** is an individual aged 16 years and over who:

- a) is unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests,
- b) is at risk of harm, and
- c) because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, is more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected.

Wales (Social Services and Well Being Act 2014)

An **adult at risk** is an individual aged 18 years and over who:

- a) is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, AND;
- b) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs) AND;
- c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

Northern Ireland (Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership 2015)

An **adult at risk of harm** is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their a) personal characteristics and/or b) life circumstances.

- a) **Personal characteristics** may include, but are not limited to age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.
- b) **Life circumstances** may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

An **adult in need of protection** is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:
 Personal characteristics **AND/OR** Life circumstances **AND**;
 c) who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests; **AND**
 d) where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.

In order to meet the definition of an 'adult in need of protection' either (a) or (b) must be present, in addition to both elements (c), and (d)

Abuse and Neglect

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. It can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it. Any or all of the following types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence, omission or ignorance.

There are different types and patterns of abuse and neglect and different circumstances in which they may take place.

Safeguarding legislation in each home nation lists categories of abuse differently however, they all include the following types of abuse:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological
- Neglect
- Financial

Abuse can take place in any relationship and there are many contexts in which abuse might take place; e.g. Institutional abuse, Domestic Abuse, Forced Marriage, Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery, Sexual Exploitation, County Lines, Radicalisation, Hate Crime, Mate Crime, Cyber bullying, Scams. Some of these are named specifically within home nation legislations.

Often the perpetrator is known to the adult and may be in a position of trust and/or power.

Table 2

The Safeguarding Adults Legislation in each Home Country defines categories of adult abuse and harm as follows.

<i>England (Care Act 2014)</i>
Physical Sexual Emotional/Psychological/Mental Neglect and acts of Omission Financial or material abuse Discriminatory Organisational / Institutional Self-neglect Domestic Abuse (including coercive control) Modern slavery



Scotland (Adult Support and Protection Act 2007)

Physical
Psychological
Financial
Sexual
Neglect

Northern Ireland (Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership 2015)

Physical
Sexual violence
Psychological / emotional
Financial
Institutional
Neglect
Exploitation
Domestic violence
Human trafficking
Hate crime

Wales (Social Services and Well Being Act 2014)

Physical
Sexual
Psychological
Neglect
Financial

Signs and Indicators of Abuse and Neglect

An adult may confide to a member of staff, volunteer, or another participant that they are experiencing abuse inside or outside of the organisation's setting. Similarly, others may suspect that this is the case.

There are many signs and indicators that may suggest someone is being abused or neglected. There may be other explanations, but they should not be ignored.

Person Centred Safeguarding/ Making Safeguarding Personal

The legislation also recognises that adults make choices that may mean that one part of our well-being suffers at the expense of another – for example we move away from friends and family to take a better job. Similarly, adults can choose to risk their personal safety; for example, to provide care to a partner with

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dementia who becomes abusive when they are disorientated and anxious.

None of us can make these choices for another adult. If we are supporting someone to make choices about their own safety we need to understand 'What matters' to them and what outcomes they want to achieve from any actions agencies take to help them to protect themselves.

The concept of 'Person Centred Safeguarding'/'Making Safeguarding Personal' means engaging the person in a conversation about how best to respond to their situation in a way that enhances their involvement, choice and control, as well as improving their quality of life, well-being and safety. Organisations work to support adults to achieve the outcomes they want for themselves. The adult's views, wishes, feelings and beliefs must be taken into account when decisions are made about how to support them to be safe. There may be many different ways to prevent further harm. Working with the person will mean that actions taken help them to find the solution that is right for them. Treating people with respect, enhancing their dignity and supporting their ability to make decisions also helps promote people's sense of self-worth and supports recovery from abuse.

If someone has difficulty making their views and wishes known, then they can be supported or represented by an advocate. This might be a safe family member or friend of their choice or a professional advocate (usually from a third sector organisation).

Wales (Social Services and Well Being Act 2014)

The Act's principles are:

- **Responsibility** - Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- **Well-being** - Any actions taken must safeguard the person's well-being.
- **Person-centred approach** - Understand what outcomes the adult wishes to achieve and what matters to them.
- **Voice and control** - Expect people to know what is best for them and support them to be involved in decision making about their lives.
- **Language** - Make an active offer of use of the Welsh language and use professional interpreters where other languages are needed.
- **Prevention** - It is better to take action before harm occurs.

Scotland (Adult Support and Protection Act 2007)

The Act's principles are:

The overarching principle underlying Part 1 of the Act is that any intervention in an individual's affairs should provide benefit to the individual and should be the least restrictive option of those that are available which will meet the purpose of the intervention.

This is supported by a set of guiding principles which, together with the overarching principle, must be taken account of when performing functions under Part 1 of the Act. These are:

- The wishes and feelings of the adult at risk (past and present);
- The views of other significant individuals, such as the adult's nearest relative; their primary carer, guardian, or attorney; or any other person with an interest in the adult's well-being or property;
- The importance of the adult taking an active part in the performance of the function under the Act;
- Providing the adult with the relevant information and support to enable them to participate as fully as possible;
- The importance of ensuring that the adult is not treated less favourably than another adult in a comparable situation; and

- The adult's abilities, background and characteristics (including their age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, religious persuasion, racial origin, ethnic group and cultural and linguistic heritage).

Northern Ireland (Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership 2015)

The Act's principles are:

- **A Rights-Based Approach** – To promote and respect an adult's right to be safe and secure; to freedom from harm and coercion; to equality of treatment; to the protection of the law; to privacy; to confidentiality; and freedom from discrimination.
- **An Empowering Approach** – To empower adults to make informed choices about their lives, to maximise their opportunities to participate in wider society, to keep themselves safe and free from harm and enabled to manage their own decisions in respect of exposure to risk.
- **A Person-Centred Approach** – To promote and facilitate full participation of adults in all decisions affecting their lives taking full account of their views, wishes and feelings and, where appropriate, the views of others who have an interest in safety and well-being.
- **A Consent-Driven Approach** – To make a presumption that the adult has the ability to give or withhold consent; to make informed choices; to help inform choice through the provision of information, and the identification of options and alternatives; to have particular regard to the needs of individuals who require support with communication, advocacy or who lack the capacity to consent; and intervening in the life of an adult against his or her wishes only in particular circumstances, for very specific purposes and always in accordance with the law.
- **A Collaborative Approach** – To acknowledge that adult safeguarding will be most effective when it has the full support of the wider public and of safeguarding partners across the statutory, voluntary, community, independent and faith sectors working together and is delivered in a way where roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clearly defined and understood. Working in partnership and a person-centred approach will work hand-in-hand.

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England (Care Act 2014)

The Act's principles are:

- **Empowerment** - People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.
- **Prevention** – It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- **Proportionality** – The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- **Protection** – Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- **Partnership** – Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse
- **Accountability** – Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

Mental Capacity and Decision Making

We make many decisions every day, often without realising. UK Law assumes that all people over the age of 16 have the ability to make their own decisions, unless it has been proved that they can't. It also gives us the right to make any decision that we need to make and gives us the right to make our own decisions even if others consider them to be unwise.

Most adults have the ability to make their own decisions given the right support however, some adults with care and support needs have the experience of other people making decisions about them and for them.



Some people can only make simple decisions like which colour T-shirt to wear or can only make decisions if a lot of time is spent supporting them to understand the options. If someone has a disability that means they need support to understand or make a decision this must be provided. A small number of people cannot make any decisions. Being unable to make a decision is called "lacking mental capacity".

Mental capacity refers to the ability to make a decision at the time that decision is needed. A person's mental capacity can change. If it is safe/possible to wait until they are able to be involved in decision making or to make the decision themselves.

Not being allowed to make decisions one is capable of making is abuse. For example, a disabled adult may want to take part in an activity but their parent who is their carer won't allow them to and will not provide the support they would need. Conversely the adult may not seem to be benefiting from an activity other people are insisting they do.

Another situation is where an adult is being abused and they are scared of the consequences of going against the views of the person abusing them. It is recognised in the law as coercion and a person can be seen not to have mental capacity because they cannot make 'free and informed decisions'.

Mental Capacity must also be considered when we believe abuse or neglect might be taking place. It is important to make sure an 'adult at risk' has choices in the actions taken to safeguard them, including whether or not they want other people informed about what has happened, however, in some situations the adult may not have the mental capacity to understand the choice or to tell you their views.

Each home nation has legislation that describes when and how we can make decisions for people who are unable to make decisions for themselves. The principles are the same.

- We can only make decisions for other people if they cannot do that for themselves at the time the decision is needed.
- If the decision can wait, wait – e.g. to get help to help the person make their decision or until they can make it themselves.
- If we have to make a decision for someone else then we must make the decision in their best interests (for their benefit) and take into account what we know about their preferences and wishes.
- If the action we are taking to keep people safe will restrict them then we must think of the way to do that which restricts to their freedom and rights as little as possible.

Many potential difficulties with making decisions can be overcome with preparation. A person needing support to help them make decisions whilst taking part in a sports organisation will ordinarily be accompanied by someone e.g. a family member or formal carer whose role includes supporting them to make decisions.

It is good practice to get as much information about the person as possible. Some people with care and support needs will have a 'One page profile' or a 'This is me' document that describes important things about them. Some of those things will be about how to support the person, their routines, food and drink choices etc. but will also include things they like and don't like doing.

If a person who has a lot of difficulty making their own decisions is thought to be being abused or neglected you will need to refer the situation to the Local Authority, and this should result in health or social care professionals making an assessment of mental capacity and/or getting the person the support they need to make decisions.

There may be times when an organisation needs to make decisions on behalf of an individual in an emergency. Decisions taken in order to safeguard an adult who cannot make the decision for themselves could include:

- Sharing information about safeguarding concerns with people that can help protect them.
- Stopping them being in contact with the person causing harm.

Recording and Information Sharing

Circles Network must comply with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Information about concerns of abuse includes personal data. It is therefore important to be clear as to the grounds for processing and sharing information about concerns of abuse.

Processing information includes record keeping. Records relating to safeguarding concerns must be accurate and relevant. They must be stored confidentially with access only to those with a need to know.

Sharing information, with the right people, is central to good practice in safeguarding adults. However, information sharing must only ever be with those with a 'need to know'.

This does **NOT** automatically include the persons spouse, partner, adult, child, unpaid or paid carer. Information should only be shared with family and friends and/or carers with the consent of the adult or if the adult does not have capacity to make that decision and family/ friends/ carers need to know in order to help keep the person safe.

The purpose of Data Protection legislation is not to prevent information sharing but to ensure personal information is only shared appropriately. Data protection legislation allows information sharing within an organisation. For example:

- Anyone who has a concern about harm can make a report to an appropriate person within the same organisation
- Case management meetings can take place to agree to co-ordinate actions by the organisation

There are also many situations in which it is perfectly legal to share information about adult safeguarding concerns outside the organisation. Importantly personal information can be shared with the consent of the adult concerned. However, the adult may not always want information to be shared. This may be because they fear repercussions from the person causing harm or are scared that they will lose control of their situation to statutory bodies or because they feel stupid or embarrassed. Their wishes should be respected unless there are over-riding reasons for sharing information.

The circumstances when we need to share information without the adult's consent include those where:

- it is not safe to contact the adult to gain their consent – i.e. it might put them or the person making contact at further risk.
- you believe they or someone else is at risk, including children.
- you believe the adult is being coerced or is under duress.
- it is necessary to contact the police to prevent a crime, or to report that a serious crime has been committed.
- the adult does not have mental capacity to consent to information being shared about them.
- the person causing harm has care and support needs.
- the concerns are about an adult at risk living in Wales or Northern Ireland (where there is a duty to report to the Local Authority).

When information is shared without the consent of the adult this must be explained to them, when it is safe to do so, and any further actions should still fully include them.

If you are in doubt as to whether to share information seek advice e.g. seek legal advice and/or contact the Local Authority and explain the situation without giving personal details about the person at risk or the person causing harm.

Any decision to share or not to share information with an external person or organisation must be recorded together with the reasons to share or not share information.



Multi-Agency Working

Safeguarding adults' legislation gives the lead role for adult safeguarding to the Local Authority. However, it is recognised that safeguarding can involve a wide range of organisations.

Circles Network may need to cooperate with the Local Authority and the Police including to:

- Provide more information about the concern you have raised.
- Provide a safe venue for the adult to meet with other professionals e.g. Police/Social Workers/Advocates.
- Attend safeguarding meetings.
- Coordinate internal investigations (e.g. complaints, disciplinary) with investigations by the police or other agencies.
- Share information about the outcomes of internal investigations.
- Provide a safe environment for the adult to continue their sporting activity/ their role in the organisation.

Operational Procedures

Each locality, in which Circles Network are operational, have a procedure detailing the responsibilities and processes that team member should follow in the event of a safeguarding concern relating to an adult. These can be found in the team portal on the Circles Network website available to all team members within the organisation.

Contact information for reporting safeguarding adult concerns in areas of operation in England:

Peterborough

To report a safeguarding concern regarding an adult, complete the form (appendix 3) and email to adultsocialcare@peterborough.gov.uk

The website for the Cambridge and Peterborough Safeguarding board has more information and allows access additional information and training, follow this link <https://www.safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk/>

Warwickshire

More information, advice and training can be found on the Warwickshire Safeguarding Board website <https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/>

Contact Social Care and Support on: 01926 412080

Lincolnshire

To report a safeguarding concern regarding an adult who resides in Lincolnshire complete the form following this link <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/safeguarding/lsab>

For up to-date information on Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board follow this link <https://www.lincolnshiresab.org.uk/>

West Sussex

To report a safeguarding concern regarding an adult follow this link [Raise a concern about an adult - West Sussex County Council](#)

The website for West Sussex Safeguarding board has more information and allows access additional information and training, follow this link [Search results - West Sussex County Council](#)