

Ambassador safeguarding essentials – our guide



As an Ambassador for Meningitis Research Foundation, you have a responsibility to be aware of what safeguarding is when undertaking your role.

Please read through this guide carefully. And remember, we're always here to support you. You will not be asked to face safeguarding situations alone.

What is safeguarding?

Everyone has the right to live in safety. Safeguarding is the protection of a person's health, wellbeing and human rights.

It involves putting in place measures that keep people safe when they may be at risk from abuse, neglect or any other forms of harm. This applies to everyone – children, young people and adults.

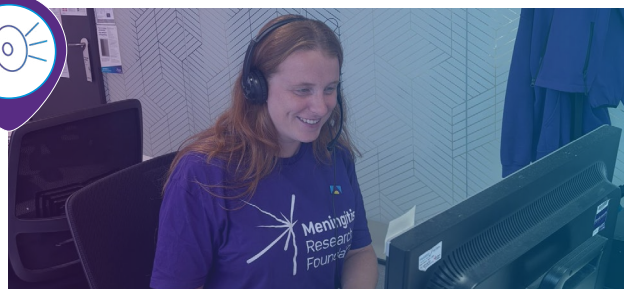
Both individuals and organisations must understand and follow safeguarding measures.

Why does Meningitis Research Foundation need safeguarding measures?

All organisations have a duty to ensure the safety of everyone who works with them or for them. This includes volunteer roles too.

Here at Meningitis Research Foundation, we have policies and processes to protect each other. These include ensuring people know how to raise concerns if they witness any abusive or harmful behaviour.

As a charity, we regularly work with people who may be more vulnerable due to their experiences with meningitis. This means we must take extra steps to ensure their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Generally, these people are less likely to identify or report abuse or neglect. They may not even be aware that harmful behaviour is happening.



Safeguarding lead

Meningitis Research Foundation have a designated safeguarding lead. Please check our Ambassador hub for up-to-date contact details, or alternatively contact our central team who will pass this on to the appropriate staff member:

 0333 405 6262  info@meningitis.org

We can be reached Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm.

We understand that if you are new to safeguarding, it can be a challenging and perhaps unnerving topic. If you feel anxious about any of the points described in this guide, please get in touch with us. We're happy to answer any questions and support you through any aspect of our policy and processes in more detail. We want you to feel comfortable and confident with this important aspect of the Ambassador role.

Adult safeguarding

There are many different types of abuse or harm that an adult can experience:

- **Self-neglect**
A broad category which includes issues like neglecting personal hygiene, health or home surroundings.
- **Modern slavery**
Includes human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude.
- **Domestic abuse**
Includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse perpetrated within a person's family.
- **Discriminatory**
Abuse experienced due to a protected characteristic outlined in the [Equality Act](#), including race, gender and disability.
- **Organisational**
Neglect and poor care within an institution or care setting, such as a hospital or care home.
- **Physical**
Includes hitting, kicking, restraint and misuse of medication.
- **Sexual**
Includes rape, indecent exposure and sexual harassment.
- **Financial or Material**
Includes theft, fraud and internet scamming.
- **Neglect or Acts of Omission**
Includes ignoring medical or physical care needs.
- **Emotional or Psychological**
Includes threats of harm, humiliation, intimidation and isolation.

Recognising any of the above types of harm will not always lead to safeguarding measures taking place. This shouldn't worry you. What's most important is that anything you see, hear or are concerned about is raised with us here at Meningitis Research Foundation. We will always listen to your concerns, investigate the situation and decide on the best course of action.

Child safeguarding

Child safeguarding is protecting the physical and mental health and development of someone under the age of 18. The aim of safeguarding children is to ensure that they grow up safely and are given the best start in life.

Children and young people have less power than adults, and this makes them more vulnerable to abuse and harm. Some children may have additional vulnerabilities, such as a disability, communication challenges or mental health issues. Others may live with vulnerable parents, which puts these children at further risk of harm.

Children are most likely to be abused by people they know. Disabled children are more likely to be abused than non-disabled children.

The four main types of child abuse or harm that you are most likely to encounter when working with children and young people are:

- **Physical abuse**
Deliberately hurting a child and causing physical harm.
- **Emotional abuse**
Includes ignoring, excluding or abandoning a child, as well as forcing them to take part in inappropriate activities, such as crime.
- **Sexual abuse**
Forcing a child to take part in contact or non-contact sexual activities.
- **Neglect**
Ongoing failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs. This is the most common type of child abuse.

It's important to understand that even if you're not sure whether something you've seen is child abuse or harm, you must still report it to us.

Your experiences can help us to build up a picture, and we may already be aware of other important information that they contribute to.

Difference between adult and child safeguarding

Safeguarding looks different for adults and children for a few reasons:

These groups face different challenges.

The processes for reporting and handling safeguarding concerns differ.

There is different legislation for adults and children.

Another key difference between the two groups is an adult's right to make decisions and consent to things a child cannot. This respects an adult's individual choice of how they would like to live their life, and whether they want to take steps to protect themselves.

Children cannot consent to harm or abuse, so need further protection due to their age. In the UK, the definition of a child is someone before their 18th birthday. An adult is someone who has reached the age of 18.



Signs that someone may be suffering from abuse, neglect or other harm

It's not always easy to recognise the signs of abuse or harm in adults or children. The following signs do not necessarily mean someone is experiencing abuse, but they are useful to be aware of.

Signs that someone could be experiencing abuse, neglect or harm may include:

Unexplained or inappropriately explained injuries.

Being afraid of particular places or making excuses to avoid particular people.

Withdrawal from regular activities, unusually subdued behaviour or poor concentration.

Stress, anxiety or depression.

A fear of authorities.

Low self-esteem.

Having angry outbursts or behaving aggressively towards others.

Self-harming behaviours.

Untreated medical problems and/or injuries.

Unexplained shortage of money.

Risk factors

Certain groups are deemed to be at greater risk of abuse, neglect or harm. They include people with care or support needs, such as older people and those with disabilities or communication difficulties.

People who have experienced meningitis could have additional care and support needs. Many meningitis survivors are left with complicated and often life-long impairments. We know that bacterial meningitis leaves one in five with lifelong disabilities such as hearing loss, brain damage, limb loss or epilepsy. Viral meningitis can leave one in twenty with life-altering disabilities, and research has found that people who have had viral meningitis can experience a reduced quality of life for at least one year after the acute illness.

Families and friends sometimes need to take on caring responsibilities for those affected by meningitis, which increases their own vulnerability too.

How to respond to a disclosure from someone

A disclosure is when a person tells you about harm or abuse. It can be sudden and alarming for you to hear, but it's important you remain calm and supportive throughout the disclosure. The person has felt able to tell you what they know, which is so valuable.

A disclosure may come from the person who is suffering abuse, or it may come from someone who has witnessed abuse and is speaking out on behalf of the victim.

If someone discloses information to you, you must:

- Take it seriously.
- Stay calm and be sensitive and supportive of them.
- Listen carefully to what is said, allowing the person to speak at their own pace.
- Keep questions to a minimum. Only ask questions if you need to identify or clarify what the person is telling you.
- Reassure the person that they have done the right thing.
- Ask them what they would like to happen next (this may be less appropriate for a child or a witness of abuse).
- Explain that you will have to share the information with the safeguarding lead.
- Act swiftly to report the disclosure to the safeguarding lead.
- As soon as possible, record in writing what was said using the person's own words.
- Make an arrangement for how you or the safeguarding lead can contact the person again safely (if not able to do so immediately). This may be more appropriate for adults, as children may not be allowed to return to a dangerous situation.

If anyone is in immediate danger for their life, call 999.

It is important not to:

- Dismiss or ignore the concern.
- Panic or allow shock or distaste to show.
- Make negative assumptions about the alleged perpetrator.
- Make assumptions, speculate or come to your own conclusions.
- Probe for more information than is being offered.
- Promise to keep the information secret.
- Make promises that cannot be kept.
- Conduct an investigation of the case.
- Confront the person thought to be causing harm.
- Take sole responsibility.
- Tell anyone except the safeguarding lead or other staff member at Meningitis Research Foundation if they are unavailable.

If a child discloses something, it's important to:

- **Show that you care.** Give them your full attention, make eye contact and keep your body language open and encouraging. Be compassionate, understanding and reassuring. Make sure they know that their feelings are important and that they have done the right thing.
- **Slow things down.** Let the child take their time and don't interrupt. Respect pauses and know that the disclosure may not cover everything, in order.
- **Show that you understand.** Make it clear to the child that you are interested in what they're saying. Reflect their words back to them and check your understanding using their language – because it's their experience.
- **Thank them** for being brave enough to tell you. Reassure them that they have done the right thing.



What to do if you spot something that causes concern

If you see something or receive a disclosure that causes concern – however big or small – please pass it on to the safeguarding lead as soon as possible. It may be that what you have spotted is part of a wider picture of information we have. If they aren't available, please contact another member of the Meningitis Research Foundation team by:

☎ 0333 405 6262 ✉ info@meningitis.org

When passing on information, it's important to be as clear as you can. Writing down what you have witnessed or heard, in the order you saw or heard it, is the best approach. If you need to report something verbally, please state it clearly and objectively. If you are giving an opinion (for example, "I think they were lying when they said..."), make sure you're clear when doing this.

It's vital that you do not talk or gossip with others about what you have seen or heard. Only share it with the safeguarding lead or other staff member as needed.

If you have written or recorded anything relating to what you've seen, or any actions you've taken, please keep it safe and tell us. It's possible that you will need to either safely destroy it, or pass it over to Meningitis Research Foundation staff.

Writing down information

Here are some of the details you should always try to include when writing down what has caused you concern:

- What the person said, in their words (as much as possible).
- Names, and any contact details you have.
- Any children involved, their names and ages.
- Any information about the abusers (e.g. full name, relationship to the person of concern).
- Any other witnesses.
- Any other people affected (e.g. others in the home/setting).
- Date and time of the incident.
- Who you are.



Some situations can be particularly serious and require immediate action. Do not wait to speak to us, and instead call 999 if:

- A person's life is at risk
- A crime has been committed



Lastly...

Your voice is powerful and using it in the right way can make a huge difference to the more vulnerable people within our communities. As an Ambassador for Meningitis Research Foundation, we encourage you to speak out against wrongdoing of any kind. Even if something is not a safeguarding issue, your feedback is always important and valuable. If in doubt, always say something – it's good to check.

We don't want you to have to make any difficult decisions on your own. But we do ask that our Ambassadors are aware, alert and ready to raise anything to us.

Thank you for helping us keep everyone we work with safe, healthy and happy.



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