

Safeguarder Practice Standards Guidance

November 2023

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Considerations for the Role of the Safeguarder

This guidance should be used alongside the Performance Support and Monitoring Framework to support you to meet the Safeguarder Practice Standards (the Standards), and to safeguard the best interests of the child regardless of their age, stage or ability.

The guidance does not aim to be an exhaustive list of requirements but provides considerations for you to think about in your role as a Safeguarder.

Throughout the document, the word ‘families’ is used. Please assume that this means the child’s family, carers, and other important people that may have a role in their upbringing. Also, whenever this document refers to a child, please take it that this should be taken to mean both verbal and non-verbal children.

Standard 1: THE CHILD’S VIEW

In all actions concerning the child, the Safeguarder must, in the best interests of the child, enable the child to exercise their right to be heard and express a view through the Safeguarder’s practice and child’s participation in the process.

Practice Standard	Considerations for Safeguarders
1.1 Safeguarders must treat children with dignity, in accordance with their rights, and ensure they are supported to play an active part in the decision-making processes, including ensuring that they have the information they need to participate.	I find ways to help the child understand the process in which they are involved.
	I find out how the child might participate in this process in a way that is best for them, either by speaking to the child or to whoever knows them best.
	I communicate to the child that they have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them, and that I will take their views into account.

	I treat the child with courtesy and kindness and respect their rights.
1.2 The views of the child must be listened to and considered. Their participation is encouraged and supported to help Safeguarders identify their needs and best interests and inform Safeguarders' conclusions and recommendations.	I listen to and observe the child, and take into consideration what this is telling me in the context of the wider information I have gathered.
	I actively consider the needs and wishes of non-verbal children and make every effort to communicate with them, respecting their best interests.
	I identify what the child needs and reflect this in my report.
	I explain to the child that my own views might not be the same as theirs, and that my recommendations will reflect what I consider to be in their best interests.
1.3 Safeguarders must respect the child's choices where they choose not to express their view.	I explain to the child what I do with the information they tell me before they decide if they want to express their views.
	If the child chooses not to speak to or communicate with me, I explain that they can change their mind, at any time before I make my final recommendations.
	I seek the child's views through those who know them best if the child has made the choice not to speak with me.
1.4 Safeguarders must decide how to engage with each child most effectively. This will take into account the following:	I discuss and agree with the child, and their family, where appropriate, how often and where we should meet.
	I seek permission from a parent or carer before arranging to meet with the child, in order to minimise any potential issues or distress.

Each individual child's culture, ethnicity, background, and language	
The child's age and stage of development	I meet with the child without informing their parent or carer only in exceptional circumstances, and can justify my reasons for this.
Any disability or other individual need and circumstance affecting the child	I find out if the child would like someone that they know and trust to be there when we meet.
The child's preferred way of communicating	I make efforts to ensure the place and time the child and I meet feels comfortable to them.
Where and when to meet the child, and whether someone like a support person could be present	I consider communication tools and activities that I might use to assist me in gathering the child's views.
Involvement the child may already have with other adults whose role it is find out their views, such as an advocacy worker	I use language that is child friendly and appropriate when I communicate with them.
	I consider using alternative means of communication if appropriate, e.g. British Sign Language, or language translation.

Standard 2: RELATIONSHIPS

Every child is supported through the Safeguarder's development of effective relationships with all relevant parties.

Practice Standard	Considerations for Safeguarders
2.1 Safeguarders must work towards building positive relationships with the child, parents, carers, and people involved in the children's hearing and court proceedings.	I seek guidance from those who know the child and family best when deciding how to engage with them.
	I meet with people who the child identifies as important to them. If for any reason I cannot, I explain why my reasons are in the best interest of the child.
	I am prompt and proactive in engaging with others.
	I give the child and family the option to meet with me in person.
	I understand that children and families might have had difficult experiences and relationships that may impact on how they communicate and work with me, and I am sensitive to this.
2.2 Safeguarders must work in a way that promotes diversity, and respects different cultures and values.	I work independently, but collaboratively with others wherever possible to ensure that the best outcomes for the child are achieved.
	I treat the people I meet with integrity, openness, respect, and fairness, and without discrimination.
	I respect the right of other people to hold views and opinions that are different from my own.
	I understand the impact of racism, sexism and other examples of oppression and take this into account when engaging with people.

2.3 Safeguarders must find the most appropriate way to communicate with, listen to and wherever possible, meet with all the significant people in the child's life.	I prepare fully for meetings with children, families, and other people significant in the child's life, to allow me to seek their full and clear views.
	I take into account any possible barriers to meeting or communicating with the child and family, and try to find ways to overcome these e.g., requirement for translation.
	I respect a person's choice not to meet me in their home and consider appropriate alternative locations.
	I agree a date and time with children and families if visiting them in their home. I do not make unannounced visits.
2.4 Safeguarders must show sensitivity to the impact of trauma.	I adjust my practice accordingly to avoid further upset to the child and family.
2.5 Safeguarders must work within the current national policies and frameworks and in support of collaborative approaches, with particular reference to Getting It Right for Every Child and the Early Years Framework.	I keep up to date with national policies and frameworks and how they relate to my practice.
	I am aware of the Getting It Right for Every Child and the Early Years Framework.
	I am respectful to professionals and other people involved in the child's life, and work towards developing relationships with them to ensure the best outcomes for the child.
2.6 Safeguarders must ensure that the ending of the appointment is clearly and sensitively communicated with children, parents, carers, and all the significant people in the child's life.	I explain at the start of my appointment that my role will be time limited. I consider individual needs when planning how to discuss this.
	I prepare the child and family for the ending of the working relationship, and I say goodbye when it is the right time to do so.
	I do not continue to meet with children and families after my appointment has concluded; namely once a children's hearing makes a substantive decision and the time to appeal/any appeal itself has ended.

Standard 3: INDEPENDENCE

A Safeguarder will act with independence within the parameters of the role, ensuring that the best interests of the child are their primary consideration.

Practice Standard	Considerations for Safeguarders
3.1 Safeguarders must introduce themselves and explain the independent nature of the role and its boundaries to children, parents, carers, and other people involved in the proceedings.	I explain my role in a way that others will understand.
	I give the child and family information about how my role is different to the other professionals they are involved with.
	I explain that I have a particular role (to report to the children's hearing, or be involved at court), and that I cannot get involved beyond that role (e.g. by helping the child or family where someone else could be doing this).
	I am clear when explaining my role that my focus is on the best interests of the child.
	I share Safeguarder leaflets with people where I consider it to be appropriate and explain where they can find more information on the role.
	I ensure that the child and others that I speak to know that I am independent, and not employed by any organisation or agency.
	I explain to the child and their family that I am not a decision maker, and it is the children's hearing or court that will decide what happens next.
	I explain to the child and family who they should contact if they wish to provide feedback about my practice as a Safeguarder.
	I check the understanding of my role with all people I am in contact with, including the child, family and professionals.

3.2 Safeguarders must consider and check for any potential conflict of interest which may affect objectivity. They must also consider any circumstances which may be perceived as a conflict of interest particularly to the child, their parents, carers, and people involved in the children's hearing and court proceedings and, if so, take appropriate action in the circumstances.	I consider the potential impact of continuing with appointments where there is a perceived or actual conflict of interest.
	I discuss conflicts of interest, including perceived or potential conflicts of interest, with my Support Manager in order to reflect and consider the actions I should take.
	I maintain appropriate personal boundaries by discouraging and avoiding social relationships with the child or family, including the accepting or giving of gifts.
	I do not use my position as Safeguarder to gain any personal, financial or material benefit.
3.3 Safeguarders must understand and address issues of role boundaries and separate their role as a Safeguarder and any other professional role that they may have.	I draw on my own skills and expertise but use these only within the parameters of the Safeguarder role.
	I do not take on any other role's functions (for instance, where I have identified a gap in services), no matter how competently I feel I could perform that role.
3.4 Safeguarders must not undertake the role or responsibilities of other professionals or decision-makers.	I recognise that my role as Safeguarder is not a "doing" role, and that I do not have an active role in doing things that I think might help.
	I signpost others to the relevant service or agency where I consider this to be appropriate.
	I focus on the needs of the child, and make recommendations about how these needs can be met, but do not take steps to access this service or to advise the child or family about this.

3.5 Safeguarders must ensure that conclusions and recommendations are not influenced by undue pressure or persuasion from any other source	I express my own, individual views and opinions in written and verbal reports.
	I justify the reasons for my views being the same, similar or different to the views of others.
	I consider all the information I am given, to come to my own independent view on what is in the child's best interests.

Standard 4: REPORTING The child's views and best interests are reflected in the Safeguarder's verbal and written contribution into proceedings.

Practice Standard	Considerations for Safeguarders
4.1 The Safeguarder's conclusions and recommendations must be informed by: A purposeful and proportionate review of relevant background information Active listening and careful consideration of the views of those individuals and services involved Critical and objective analysis and evaluation	I make sure the child's best interests are at the centre of my planning, meetings, analysis, and final recommendations.
	I read all paperwork thoroughly, to give me an understanding of the background to the child's life.
	I demonstrate my independence by ensuring my report can be understood in isolation from other reports.
	I reflect and consider the child's views in my report, as well as the views of the family, professionals, and others that I have spoken to.
	I demonstrate clear links between the information gathered, my analysis of all the information, and my recommendations.
	I explain why my final recommendations are in the best interests of the child.
4.2 The Safeguarder's report will provide a holistic sense of the child's world and their needs, to help the children's hearing and court to make decisions that are in the best interests of the child.	I consider the child's needs and human rights in my written and verbal reports.
	I write about the child as a unique individual and report what matters to them.
	I obtain the views of the child about their relationship with their siblings, if appropriate, and include these in my report.

4.3 Reports must only contain information that is necessary and relevant. Appropriate consideration must be given to information that might distress the child.	I consider the language and tone I use to avoid causing additional distress.
	I am mindful that the child may read my report now or in the future, and take this into account when writing it.
	I include only necessary sensitive information in my report, doing so in a way that minimises distress to the child and family
4.4 Recommendations made by the Safeguarder must be shared appropriately with the child and the people involved in the children's hearing and court proceedings, in advance of hearings.	I consider how best to share my recommendations with the child and family, for example, whether to share in person or on the phone, and when and where to share my recommendation.
	I speak to those who know the child best to plan how my recommendations should be shared with them.
4.5 The Safeguarder should explain how, and in what circumstances, the views of the child were obtained and how these informed their recommendations.	I ensure my analysis and recommendations contain clear links back to the child's views.

Standard 5: CONFIDENTIALITY

The Safeguarder must respect the child's, parents', and carers' right to confidentiality and privacy.

Practice Standard	Considerations for Safeguarders
5.1 Safeguarders must explain to the child, their parents, carers, and other significant people in the child's life what personal information the Safeguarder holds about them, what the Safeguarder will do with that information, who they will share it with and how their privacy will be respected.	I consider who it is appropriate for me to share information with, and the reasons for this.
	I explain to the child, family, and other significant people in the child's life that the Safeguarder role may involve sharing confidential or sensitive information with others who have a right to know.
	I explain what information I might have to share and what the reasons are for this.
	I use a Privacy Notice with the child and their family.
	I consider the way in which I share and communicate confidential or sensitive information with others.
	I submit a non-disclosure request if I think it is in the best interests of the child.
	I have reasons and justification for requesting access to additional personal information that is not available to the other agencies involved.
	I follow relevant procedures if there is a child or adult protection risk, or a crime being disclosed or observed. I know how and when to explain this to the child or family member.
	I take steps to ensure that conversations I have with people in person, by phone or online are private.
	I ensure that information is not disclosed to others who do not have a legal right to it.

5.2 Safeguarders must comply with the data protection legislative framework, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. All personal information, whether held digitally or in paper format, relating to the appointment held by the Safeguarder must be destroyed securely following the end of the appointment.	I comply with my responsibilities as a data controller.
	I am registered with the Information Commissioner's office (ICO) and my registration is maintained throughout my term of appointment.
	I comply with the Data Management Policy for Safeguarders.
	I confirm people's identities before sharing confidential information.
	I ensure all personal and private information communicated by me is done securely.
	I use a locked storage box to store information. I ensure that those who I share a home or office with do not have access to this.
	I store and process electronic data securely.
	I securely destroy all data at the end of an appointment.
	I respond appropriately to data breaches, caused by my own actions or that of another.

Standard 6: VALUE-BASED PRACTICE

A Safeguarder must treat the child, their parents, carers, and people involved in the children's hearing and court proceedings with integrity, fairness, openness, respect and without discrimination.

Practice Standard	Considerations for Safeguarders
6.1 Safeguarders must appreciate how their behaviour, language and presentation can impact on the child, their parents, carers, and people involved in the children's hearing and court proceedings and adapt them to suit circumstances and settings.	I am open, honest and transparent.
	I am aware of the impact that body language and non-verbal communication has on others.
	I acknowledge the strengths in families, and others that I speak to in the course of my enquires and reflect these in my report.
	I write about all individuals in a respectful and non-judgemental way.
	I consider the language and presentation of my written reports to ensure they are accessible to all those who may read them.
	I am mindful of my personal values and beliefs that might influence my practice and recommendations.
	I am open to feedback from others about my practice and can have reflective conversations with them about this.
6.2 Safeguarder's actions must not contribute to delays in the decision-making process for the child. For example, Safeguarders are expected	I engage promptly with the child, family, carers and other professionals.
	I am prepared for court and children's hearings, so I do not contribute to delay.
	I challenge unnecessary delay caused by others.

to attend the hearings and court
in accordance with Practice
Notes.

I submit my reports on time and keep to statutory timeframes.

Standard 7: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Every child's Safeguarder takes responsibility for their continuing professional learning and development.

Practice Standard	Considerations for Safeguarders
7.1 Safeguarders must demonstrate how they continue to update and improve their own knowledge and reflect on and improve their practice.	I seek out new information, skills, and opportunities to continually develop my practice.
	I embed new learning in my practice.
	I keep a record of my own learning and development.
7.2 Safeguarders must complete mandatory training	I complete all mandatory training within the required timescales.
7.3 Safeguarders must familiarise themselves with the relevant legislation and guidance and keep up to date with legislative changes.	I keep up to date with new legislation and guidance that affect children and young people.