

SAFEGUARDING AWARENESS WORKBOOK

MAY 2024



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Safeguarding Awareness Workbook.

After you have completed this workbook, you will:

- Have a basic understanding of what 'safeguarding' means
- Understand your safeguarding responsibilities within the food bank
- Know how to respond to concerns, incidents and disclosures appropriately
- Have an understanding of what barriers might exist to reporting a safeguarding incident
- Have read about real safeguarding incidents from food banks

This workbook should **take about 45 minutes to complete** and is intended to provide information and stimulate discussion - it certainly isn't a test or about knowing the right answer! **You will need a pen and paper** to jot down your answers. You can complete the workbook by yourself, or in a small group of volunteers or staff so you can share ideas and queries.

Flip to the answers section after each question to check you're on the right track. If you have any questions about the contents of the workbook, you should **contact your Project Manager** in the first instance. Your Area Manager is also available to answer any questions and would be happy to receive feedback on whether you have found the workbook useful.



BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF SAFEGUARDING

QUESTION 1

Write down what safeguarding means to you - this could be key words, phrases, or a definition.

Now check the answers sections...

Here's a bit more detail so you can have an understanding of the types of incidents a food bank team may come across, regardless of where you are in the country or how busy your food bank is.

- Abuse: sexual, physical, emotional (coercive control)
- Financial exploitation: including theft, fraud, and coercion
- Neglect: basic needs (food, water, shelter, cleanliness), educational, psychological
- Modern slavery: encompasses human trafficking, forced labour, and domestic servitude
- Discrimination: negative action or attitude because of a person's gender, race, sexual orientation, or religion (or lack of)
- Harassment: sexual harassment, stalking, intimidation

QUESTION 2

Write down five different groups of people who need to be considered when thinking about safeguarding within a food bank setting.

Now check the answers sections...

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

QUESTION 3

Consider how a food bank project operates in the wider community and list all the groups of people you can think of who have some responsibility for safeguarding.

Now check the answers sections...

Every adult who is involved with a food bank has responsibility for considering safeguarding in a way that is appropriate to their role.

The Board or Committee of your food bank has a responsibility to ensure that an appropriate Safeguarding Policy is in place and that you have a designated Safeguarding Officer whose role it is to ensure the implementation of safeguarding procedures is delegated to appropriate staff or volunteers.

QUESTION 4

Check your safeguarding policy and write down the details of your Safeguarding Officer.

Your Safeguarding Officer, with the Project Manager, is responsible for ensuring that all staff and volunteers at the food bank know about your Safeguarding Policy and that appropriate training and reporting mechanisms are in place. They are also responsible for ensuring that referral agencies or voucher holders have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures.

The staff and volunteer team are responsible for knowing what to do in the event of a safeguarding incident. You need to be able to recognise, record, and report.

QUESTION 5

Choose one of the following two scenarios and note down what you would do next:

- a. A person came to the food bank and they seemed very on edge. They started asking a lot about where the food is from and how they will be given it. You explained that it was donated by lots of people when they were doing their own shopping and we put it in carrier bags. At that point, the person said they thought they may not be able to take the food and started to get up to leave. You managed to get them to sit down and very gently asked why they needed to know and what was worrying them. The person then disclosed they were afraid of their partner and that they only ever shopped at Asda because it was cheapest.
- a. A parent with a child and a four month old baby arrived at the food bank. The child look dirty and the parent was very short-tempered with them. When you offered a drink and biscuits, the child consumed them very quickly and each time more biscuits were offered, they ate them. The parent was a bit on edge and started apologising, saying the child was greedy and had only just had breakfast. The parent became annoyed when you explained you didn't supply infant formula in line with guidance from the Trussell Trust. You were becoming concerned and after making up the food parcel, asked them if there was anything else they needed help with, offering to phone the health visitor on their behalf to ask for support in accessing appropriate infant formula for the baby. At this point they became quite hostile and left, dragging the child along with their carrier bags and shouting that 'the wee one will just have to go hungry until tomorrow.'

Now check the answers sections...

Having read the answers, does anything surprise you? Was your response very different? If yes, discuss the scenario in more depth with another team member.

HOW TO REPORT CONCERNS, DISCLOSURES AND INCIDENTS

Some helpful definitions:

- Concerns: your intuition, a niggle or a worry that you have about a situation e.g. a person coming for help at the food bank regularly appears with bruises to their face.
- Disclosure: when someone else tells you about an event or situation that they have seen or been part of e.g. a volunteer tells you another volunteer is bullying them.
- Incident: something that you witness yourself e.g. a fight between two people coming for help to the food bank.

Your food bank should have a Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form and Procedure. If you don't know where these forms are or what to do with them, find out as a priority. Basically, you need to record the following information:

- Date, time, location of incidents
- People involved
- What was observed
- What was heard
- What was disclosed/said to you – a clear accurate record of what people said using their own words
- Who you have passed the report onto and when
- Date and sign the report



TO SHARE OR NOT TO SHARE?

QUESTION 6

Look at the following two situations and decide whether you would share this information with anyone.

- A new volunteer admits to you over coffee that his ex-wife who died 10 years ago used to control how he spent his money and became violent when drunk.
- A young person tells you that the foster carer who used to look after her five years ago was a mean bully at home and she is worried that the kids currently placed with the foster carer will be bullied as well.

Now check the answers sections...

If you do need to share a disclosure, think about the following points.

- Don't promise to keep a secret.
- Let the person know you will have to tell someone and wherever it safe to do so, seek their consent before sharing.
- You must share information when there is a risk to children or if you believe others are at risk. If in doubt speak to your Safeguarding Officer.
- Share on a need-to-know basis – direct to your Safeguarding Officer, not other staff or volunteers.
- Record your actions i.e. note when and how you passed it on to the Safeguarding Officer (face-to-face, or a private phone call are best).

Up until this point, the content of the workbook has been looking at one-off incidents involving individuals. You have considered the principle that safeguarding is everybody's concern. The concept of whistleblowing refers to raising concerns within an organisation, whether specific incidents or ongoing malpractice. For example, this might be institutional discrimination or fraudulent financial practices. It is best practice for a food bank to have a whistleblowing policy that guides and protects employees and staff members should they wish to raise concerns externally. It might be that you would need to contact the Trussell Trust, police, or your charity regulator.

BARRIERS TO REPORTING

QUESTION 7

Write down some barriers that you can think of that might stop or delay the reporting of a safeguarding incident, disclosure or concern.

Now check the answers sections...

Were there any barriers that you hadn't thought of? Do any of these barriers exist in your food bank setting? How can you personally work on removing these barriers?

REAL FOOD BANK CASE STUDIES

You will gain a deeper understanding of the following case studies if you can discuss them with fellow team members. Do the decisions made in these case studies seem fair or completely at odds with what would happen in your food bank team?

1. A single man came to a food bank saying he was homeless and he'd been everywhere but there was no support. He was dirty. He was tired and clearly very hungry. The team managed to get some food inside him and offered to call appropriate agencies who could offer more support but they weren't able to make any progress before he left. When the food bank closed and the volunteers left, the man was sitting against the wall in the car park. A volunteer looked at him, thought about what they had heard at church about being a good Samaritan and offered him a bed for the night, a meal, a shower and the chance to wash his clothes. They didn't tell anyone from the food bank and it only came up in conversation the next week when the volunteer explained the man was lovely but he was still there at home and they weren't sure how to get him to leave.

The food bank met with the volunteer to discuss their actions. The volunteer felt that what they had done was okay and did not believe there was a problem. The food bank had to explain that this was outside the boundaries of what was acceptable of a volunteer, that it was very risky

behaviour and they were not able to provide the specialist supported needed to this person and there would be problems if, for example, the situation got out of hand or the man alleged any wrongdoing by the volunteer.

Whilst the volunteer had thought they were doing the right and generous thing, in safeguarding terms they had put themselves, the man and the food bank at risk. Unfortunately, acting in this manner was incompatible with remaining a food bank volunteer. The volunteer was asked to leave the volunteer team.

The matter was eventually resolved when the police became involved as the ex-volunteer started to be threatened by the man when he would not leave their home.

2. The food bank has seen an increasing number of people who do not speak English and don't seem to understand the way anything works like social security. All of them have come with along with the same person who acts as interpreter and explains that he is helping a group of people who have come to the UK and are struggling to settle in. The agency who referred the people are one of the agencies the food bank knows asks very few questions before issuing vouchers. One of the volunteers, whilst taking a break saw the two people leave and the person with the voucher was bundled into the back of a van with several other people.

Everyone thought it was a bit odd but decided it wasn't their responsibility and the interpreter had seemed quite pleasant and they blamed the nervousness of the client on the fact they didn't understand English. They also failed to call the voucher agency to discuss the repeat visits by this group of people. The food bank Safeguarding Officer had gone on maternity leave and a deputy hadn't been appointed.

A few weeks later the local paper reported that a number of people had been found in an old warehouse where they were living and were being forced to cultivate large amounts of cannabis. Several ring-leaders had been arrested and there was a picture of the person who the food bank recognised as the helpful interpreter. Everyone at the food bank felt very bad because they had seen a number of signs but not done anything. The police joined the dots after finding a food bank leaflet at the warehouse and subsequently visited the food bank. Team members were not aware of modern slavery and have now undergone training.

The food bank trustees also then had to contact the Charity Regulator as this was a Serious Incident Report. A few weeks later they were issued with regulatory guidance by the Regulator. If the volunteers had raised the alarm with the police or the local adult safeguarding department at the council, they would have done all they could and it would have been up to those agencies to investigate and decide the next move. Importantly, if the food bank trustees had ensured that proper and effective safeguarding training and procedures were in place, the volunteers would have been better prepared to recognise modern slavery.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully this workbook has been useful in considering safeguarding within a food bank setting. You may never have to deal with a safeguarding incident - they are distressing for all involved. However, it is a lot easier for a team or individual to cope with a stressful situation if well prepared and informed about your own food bank's procedures.

After completing this workbook, check you know the name and contact details of your own Safeguarding Officer. If there isn't one, raise your concerns with your Project Manager or trustees of the food bank charity. Food banks can also contact 31:8 for a source of impartial expert advice on safeguarding matters - this is a 24-hour free service and you can contact 31:8 on 0303 003 1111.

There are Modern Slavery training resources on the Digital Hub and you can access expert help through our Modern Slavery helpline. You can access this 9am – 5pm Monday – Friday by calling 01722 580358, or you can email modernslavery@trusselltrust.org for advice on what to do next if you have a potential issue.



ANSWERS

QUESTION 1

Safeguarding is about protecting children and adults from abuse, serious harm, neglect, discrimination, and exploitation. It is about creating a culture where everybody in the organisation understands their role and responsibilities, recognising an incident and then knowing what to do. Safeguarding is a holistic approach that considers more than just Health & Safety, Data Protection, Confidentiality or background checks.

QUESTION 2

- Children who are being supported by the food bank
- Adults who are coming for help
- Volunteers
- Staff members
- Carers
- School children helping out
- Support workers (voluntary or statutory services)
- Donors

QUESTION 3

- The Trustees or management committee of your food bank
- Your Safeguarding Officer
- Employed staff
- Food bank volunteers
- Referral agencies
- Families, friends or carers of people coming for help
- Families, friends or support workers of volunteers
- The Trussell Trust
- Police

- Churches
- Schools
- Charity Regulator e.g. Charities Commission

QUESTION 4

You should make a note of your Safeguarding Officer's name and contact details for your records.

QUESTION 5

- a. You recognised that there was a potential safeguarding issue but didn't want to escalate the problem so dealt with it very carefully. You offered to put a food parcel together all of which could have come from Asda and managed to find enough Asda carrier bags to pack it into. You then asked if there was anything you could do to help with the situation and offered a leaflet from the local domestic violence service and the details of how to contact the refuge.

It was clear that the person was able to make sound decisions and they said that as long as the food didn't start an argument they would be ok and declined further help and went away happy with the food and the service. You had done all you could, you hadn't tried to interrogate the person but had gently tried to help with the signposting. You were still concerned so after the person left you sat down with pen and paper and recorded the matter and gave the report to the Safeguarding Officer who filed it securely just in case anything further happened.

- a. You recorded the details and passed them to your Safeguarding Officer who reviewed the evidence. Because a child and baby were involved and the baby appeared to be at some risk of not being fed appropriately, your Safeguarding Officer contacted the local council child protection team immediately. A couple of days later the team came back to the Safeguarding Officer and confirmed they were now in touch with the family and were helping them to deal with a number of issues where the parents were struggling. The Safeguarding Officer reported back to you that they had passed on the concern and that appropriate help was now being given. No other information was relayed as you didn't need to know.

QUESTION 6

- a. This is confidential information between two adults. No one is currently at risk, so this conversation does not need to be shared, either informally or within your Safeguarding Procedures.
- a. This disclosure must be shared with your Safeguarding Officer, no one else. The children currently with the foster carer could be at risk from harm and as an adult, you have a responsibility to protect them. The young person should not be expected to shoulder the responsibility of reporting their concerns.

QUESTION 7

- Fear of being labelled a troublemaker or busybody
- Not knowledgeable about what is a safeguarding risk
- Not know the names of people involved
- You think person is a troublemaker or are prejudiced against them
- Cultural or institutional issues – you may have been drawn into the behaviour and bullying culture (like the Oxfam scandal in Haiti)
- Stigma of being a whistleblower – ostracised, victimised
- Not wanting to tell on colleagues and protecting friends
- Burnout/stress
- Fear of loss of promotion, job, references
- Lack of understanding of organisational policies and procedures
- Wrongly think that sharing breaches confidentiality
- Absence of organisational policies and procedures
- Intimidated or fearful of the people involved
- Can't be bothered attitude
- Past experience of reporting not making a difference
- Denial or disbelief at the disclosure
- Fear of hierarchy – it might be senior staff are responsible
- Worry about consequences for families – what if I'm wrong?
- Run out of time to deal with the incident