

Introduction to Safeguarding: Transcript

Introduction

When you work in health and social care, as well as professions such as education, healthcare or childcare, you will hear a lot about safeguarding, and how it is a fundamental principle of the profession. But what does safeguarding *mean*, and what will you need to know about it in health and social care?

Definitions

First, let us look at some definitions of safeguarding. Here, it is important to realise that what safeguarding means, and how it is applied, will vary depending on whether you're working with children, adults, or both. Therefore, different definitions exist to reflect this.

For example, we can look at this definition from the NSPCC, which specifically relates to safeguarding children:

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Safeguarding means: protecting children from abuse and maltreatment. preventing harm to children's health or development. ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care (NSPCC, 2018).

For adults, this you can consider this definition, from the Care Act Statutory Guidance:

Safeguarding is protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action. This must recognise that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances.

So, one thing we should emphasise here is that, regardless of whether you're referring to adults, children, or both, you should remember that safeguarding is not simply protection from harm, but it extends to pro-actively promoting wellbeing and security. This is a reflection of the many other person-centred principles that we have discussed elsewhere on this course. Furthermore, remember that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, regardless of profession or professional status. This does not change simply because of your job title.

Safeguarding children

If you work with people under the age of 18 in any capacity, then you will be required to complete a number of steps in training and adherence to child-protection and safeguarding legislation. Exactly what training is required will vary across roles, but you can expect at least some of the following:

- The principles of safeguarding, mainly what it means to protect children from abuse, maltreatment, neglect or exploitation.
- An understanding of what constitutes different types of abuse. Many training courses specify four types of child abuse: physical; emotional, sexual; and neglect, but others may go into more specific categories such as grooming or online abuse.



- Training in how to spot warning signs that a child may be being abused.
- Training in the correct procedures for acting on and reporting any suspicions that you have about a child in your care being abused. Different organisations will have different structures in place to handle these reports, but in most cases, the first thing you should find out is who is the Designated Safeguarding Lead in your organisation.
- How to nurture an environment in which children feel safe and cared for.
- How to encourage children in the development of their own wellbeing and personal safety

Differences between safeguarding adults and children

How is safeguarding for adults different to safeguarding for children? One crucial difference to consider is that “children” is defined as anyone under the age of 18, and all children are legally protected by laws and guidance covering safeguarding and child-protection.

By contrast, safeguarding legislation for those over 18 applies to VULNERABLE adults. What does it mean to be vulnerable? A vulnerable adult is defined as a person who, for any reason, may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

Examples of adults who might meet these criteria could be those experiencing issues such as dementia, mental health issues, learning disabilities, or conditions brought about by substance abuse.

The Care Act of 2014 stipulates that local authorities are obliged to act to protect any adult who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs),
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.’ (Care Act 2014, section 42)

Anyone with a responsibility of care for a vulnerable adult must ensure that their actions detect and prevent the risk of abuse or neglect, enable the individual to live safely, and promote the individual’s wellbeing, while involving them in as much decision-making as possible.

Why is safeguarding important?

Now you might think that many elements of safeguarding seem like good common-sense, but that does not mean that safeguarding policies and training should be taken lightly. It is essential that rigid legislation and structures exist to ensure that safeguarding is carried out correctly, as all too often, cases of abuse and neglect can go unreported. For this reason, we have acts of parliament such as the *Children Act* of 1989 and government publications such as *Working Together to Safeguard Children* from 2018. Children and vulnerable adults are among those at the highest risk of being abused or exploited, so we all have a duty of care to prevent this. Unfortunately, there have been several major scandals in the UK where adults or children in care have been abused or neglected, and failure to follow safeguarding protocols has resulted in tragedy. There is a separate video on this course which examines a few high-profile cases of safeguarding failings, in order to highlight the importance of adherence to legislation, and intervention in wrongdoing.

Conclusion

An understanding and thorough training in issues relating to safeguarding is clearly essential in all areas of health and social care work. You will need to focus on this at different stages of your current course, and at many times throughout your future career. As with other aspects of your learning and professional development, you should take steps to keep on top of your knowledge of changes and updates to procedures and legislation in this area, as any failure to act could have extremely serious consequences for some of the most vulnerable people in society.

References

- <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection#:~:text=Safeguarding%20means%3A,to%20children's%20health%20or%20development>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance#safeguarding-1>
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