

SAFEGUARDING ADULTS AT RISK

The definition of “vulnerable adult” originated in the 1997 Consultation Document “Who Decides?” ‘No Secrets’ was then published as government guidance for developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse.

Introduced in 2000 it encouraged organisations to work together to protect vulnerable adults from abuse.

Nearly twenty years on we moved away from the terminology of ‘vulnerable adults’ towards ‘adults at risk of harm’, usually shortened to ‘adults at risk’ in policies and procedures. There may also be reference to an ‘adult with a care and support need’. Any policy and procedures that sports and activity organisations implement should reflect this and include the current definition of adults at risk rather than that of vulnerable adults.

For organisations this shift in language can be confusing. Some sports and physical activity organisations had found it helpful to refer to specific categories of people who may be at increased risk of harm, for example adults with a physical or learning disability or older people.

The Care Act 2014, however, makes it clear that abuse of adults links to circumstances rather than the characteristics of the people experiencing the harm. Labelling groups of people as inherently ‘vulnerable’ is seen to be disempowering.

All sports organisations have a duty to ensure that the welfare of all adults is ensured. As part of this they need to understand when to implement their safeguarding adults reporting procedures.

This definition from the Care Act 2014 should replace the old definition from No Secrets that will have been used in many older safeguarding vulnerable adults policy and procedures.

Safeguarding duties apply to an adult who:

- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and;
- 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.

“Adult safeguarding” is working with adults with care and support needs to keep them safe from abuse or neglect. It is an important part of what many public services do, and a key responsibility of local authorities.’ Care Act 2014

Who might have care and support needs?

‘Care and support’ is the term used to describe the help some adults need to live as fully as possible with any illness or disability they may have.

It can include help with things like:

- getting out of bed
- washing
- dressing
- getting to work
- cooking meals
- eating
- seeing friends
- caring for families
- being part of the community

It might also include emotional support at a time of difficulty and stress, helping people who are caring for an adult family member or friend or even giving others a lift to a social event. Care and support includes the help given by family and friends, as well as any provided by the council or other organisations.