

Involvement & Engagement

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Introduction

One of the core principles of Making Safeguarding Personal is that safeguarding practice is person-centred, and outcome focused.

This means that we develop our culture to focus on the effectiveness of our safeguarding arrangements, as they are experienced by the person.

This means:

- having conversations with people about how we might respond in safeguarding situations in a way that enhances their involvement, choice and control as well as improving their quality of life, wellbeing, and safety.
- a shift from process driven responses to responses that are tailored to optimise inclusion and involvement.
- seeing people as experts in their own lives and working alongside them.

Maximising involvement

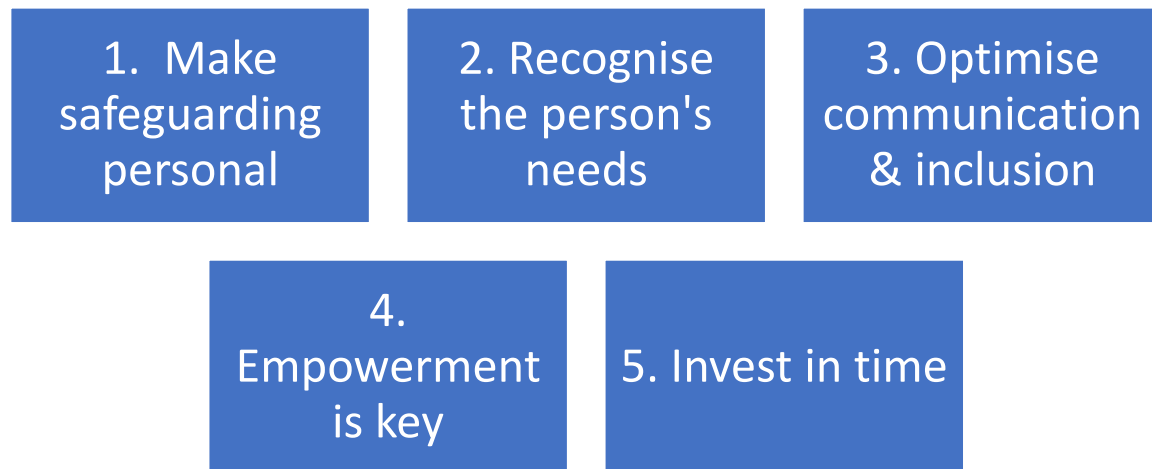
Empowering adults involves a proactive approach to maximising their involvement in decisions about their care, safety, and protection, and this includes decisions regarding whether and when to raise a safeguarding concern.

Adults may have reservations about their concerns being raised as a safeguarding matter. For example, they may be unduly influenced, coerced, or intimidated by another person, they may be frightened of reprisals, they may fear losing control, they may not trust government services or other partners, or they may fear that their relationship with the person (subject of the abuse) will be damaged. Reassurance and appropriate support may help to foster confidence in services and help decide upon whether and when it is best to share information.

Staff should consider the following and:

- Explain the concern and why you think it is important to share the information.
- Offer the person control or support them to share the information themselves.
- Explain the benefits to them, or others, of sharing information – could they access better help and support?
- Discuss the consequences of not sharing the information – could someone come to harm?
- Reassure them that the information will not be shared with anyone who does not need to know.
- Offer the reassurance that ongoing support is available to them.
- Explore the reasons for the adult's objections – what are they worried about?
- Explore the desired outcomes the person may wish to achieve, and how they could be otherwise achieved.

Principles of engagement



1. Make safeguarding personal

- Ask the person – what do they want to change, improve, or stay the same?
- Are we working alongside the person to achieve what they want?
- Talk through risks and benefits, what does the person understand these to be?
- Explore options, scenario plan and have real conversations.
- Be honest, what is it we are worried about as professionals.
- Have you included the person or considered their needs above your organisation's usual ways of doing things. For example: perhaps a meeting isn't necessary, and a conversational approach would work better, where the adult can be more in control.

2. Recognise the person's needs.

- Take into consideration the person's needs, strengths, disabilities, and history.
- Think about the context of the abuse/neglect.
- Think about what else may be happening in the person's life that may hamper engagement.
- Think about future planning, harm reduction and future safety/wellbeing.

3. Optimise communication and inclusion.

- Is it possible to provide information in a different language or format?
- Does the person have a sensory impairment? If so, what support does the person require to help them stay involved?
- Would the person benefit from advocacy?
- Safety first – are there any factors that need to be considered when getting in touch with the person e.g., sending out post / meeting in certain areas.
- Consider who else the person trusts in their network that can support the relationship you are building with them e.g., friend, a relative or keyworker.

4. Empowerment is key.

- Remember that not all decisions need to be made speedily, take time to build people's knowledge to enhance their ability to make their own decisions. Explore benefits and risks - the person may see from their own standpoint.
- Empower people to make their own decisions (where possible)

5. Invest in time.

- Keep communication lines open, like Rome, not everything can be or needs to be achieved in one day.
- Staff being busy can be experienced negatively by the people we aim to support.
- See people in a location where they feel most at ease.
- Break things down into achievable chunks.
- Negotiate a suitable time and place to meet (don't just send out invites to suit staff needs).

Engagement may fluctuate Just because a person has not engaged with services in the past, does not mean that this will always be the case, this time it might be different. Show that you care, keep lines of communication open with the person and their network. Strive to work with the person at their pace. Actively listen - what are they trying to tell you, or

sometimes not tell you. Past experiences could affect how the person chooses to involve themselves, this needs to be acknowledged.

Think local - act personal (TLAP) – making it real statements

(developed by people who use social care services)

'I have access to easy-to-understand information about care and support which is consistent, accurate, accessible and up to date.'

'I can speak to people who know something about care and support and can make things happen.'

'I have access to a range of support that helps me to live the life I want and remain a contributing member of my community.'

'I am in control of planning my care and support.'

'I can plan ahead and keep control in a crisis.'

'I feel safe, I can live the life I want, and I am supported to manage any risks.'

Benefits of involvement and engagement



Equality: treating people with lived experience as equal partners and with respect for their strengths, knowledge, and experience.

People feel valued and empowered and more likely to have a positive experience which can improve their self-esteem and self-confidence.

People feel in control of their safeguarding journey when it is conducted at a pace they are comfortable with.

Diversity: making sure the voice of all the different groups that make up a wide cross section of the community, can be heard.

There is a positive recognition of carers roles.

Active involvement reduces a person's feeling of shame, embarrassment, and isolation.

There is as much or as little involvement and engagement as the person would like.

Challenges



Working with people in the safeguarding arena, can pose challenges.

We may need to think and plan differently with some people, to optimise their involvement.

People may be ambivalent – and not want matters following up, however, where risks are likely to increase, or affect others, or where staff are implicated, we may need to do more.

Also, in the right context, ambivalence should be challenged, countered, and kept under review.

There may be fear, or fear of reprisals, or not wanting others (e.g. staff, family) to get into trouble.

There may be coercion.

People may not want to consider themselves as at risk or see themselves as a victim of abuse or exploitation.

Always consider a person's vulnerability and how this may impact on positive engagement – e.g. their past experiences of services, history/trauma, or whether they have a disability, or mental health need, or misuse of substances.

Understanding people's experiences



In 2013 The Association of Adult Social Services (ADASS) and the Local Government Association stated, “unless people's lives are improved, then all the safeguarding work, systems, procedures and partnerships are purposeless”.

It is helpful to remember that it is not our policy and procedures that safeguard people, it is good practice that does.

Our P&P provide a framework within which good practice can flourish.

We are not safeguarding people effectively if we are not engaging in meaningful dialogue, at the beginning, throughout and at the end of our involvement. In addition, people's own outcomes can inform us of when we are working effectively or not – and therefore individuals should be routinely asked for qualitative feedback – as their voiced experiences can influence and shape our work going forwards (as an evidence base for change).

‘Adult safeguarding needs to be as empowering as possible. It is vital that people have as much control and choice as possible, that their preferred outcomes are addressed and that the pace, meetings, and protection plans are guided by their needs and circumstances.

Accessible information, advice, support, and good advocacy are essential components to this'. (Local Government Association).

Holding ourselves to account



There's something of a mantra that has infiltrated the world of social care in recent years along the lines of 'if the person has capacity, we can't do anything.'

The capacity and self-determination law (CSDL) is an empowering piece of legislation, and is not designed to be used as a gateway tool to restrict resources, or bring tricky matters to a close as a *fait accompli* - or as a convenient end to a difficult matter.

Whilst we have accountability to our employers, leaders, colleagues, and more particularly our clients, we can regularly hold ourselves to account, for the work we do, and the way we go about it.

Some questions we may ask ourselves:

- Have we sufficiently engaged the person, do we understand their human story – and have we listened to their experiences?
- Are we trying to fit people into mainstream services, or are we truly looking to create solutions to their individual needs and circumstances?
- Have we fallen at the first hurdle (e.g. refusal or challenge) or are we resilient and genuine in our continued offers of support or counterchallenge?
- Are we calling out injustices, are we using our influence sufficiently, are we seeking improvements to what we know is not working well-enough for the people we serve?

- Is my role and status a help or hindrance – is there someone else better placed to positively engage?

Please see follow on chapter - [Safeguarding and the Law](#).