



ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND SAFEGUARDING PROCESSES

**“THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF INVOLVING VULNERABLE CHILDREN
IN DECISION MAKING”**

**“CP4EUROPE – STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CHILD PARTICIPATION
FRAMEWORKS AND ACTION IN EUROPE”**

9 December 2021

Building a Europe
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2 FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Safeguarding refers to measures designed to protect the health, wellbeing and human rights of individuals. Safeguarding vulnerable children enables them to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.



3 SAFEGUARDING REQUIREMENTS

Safeguarding requires:

1. Considering each child as an individual with a right to be protected
2. Making a concerted and mindful effort to prevent harm to children
3. Sharing the ethos of safeguarding with colleagues, and responsibly engaging workers who understand and appreciate safeguarding
4. Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

4 PREVENTION

The main way to safeguard children and protect them from harm is to prevent it from occurring.

Prevention may be directed at changing attitudes to children and the way children are treated – for instance, by ensuring that child participation is a right that children may exercise or decline instead of a standard that must be fought for each time .

Mandatory Reporting may also contribute towards ensuring better prevention.



5 SAFEGUARDING AND BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD

Often, safeguarding involves the taking of best interest decisions in order to protect children.

How ethical is it for adults to hold children's wishes and decisions to a higher standard than that applied to adults, as is frequently the case?

Please stop to consider whether our understanding of child participation and child protection, motivated by BIOC, leads to the exclusion of the child's wishes. And stop pitting child protection and child participation/autonomy against each other.



6 THE 5 Rs of safeguarding


All personnel working with children have a responsibility to follow the 5 R's

- **Recognise**
- **Respond**
- **Report**
- **Record, &**
- **Refer**

CHILDREN REPORTING ABUSE

7

MANY CHILDREN DO NOT TELL ADULTS ABOUT ABUSE.
THERE ARE MANY REASONS FOR THIS SOME OF WHICH MAY BE:

- Fear they will not be believed.
 - Fear that they are to blame.
 - Threats may have been made against them or people close to them.
 - A belief that they will be taken away from home.
 - Feeling guilty or embarrassed.
 - Some members of minority ethnic communities because of a history of racism, being misrepresented or misunderstood, may be reluctant to seek support from outsiders to their community or reluctant to engage with state agencies.
 - Communication or learning disabilities.
 - They may not know that what is happening to them is child abuse.
 - Children with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse sometimes because of needs for intimate care, isolation, and dependency. They are less likely to disclose because of feelings of powerlessness, not having the language or awareness, and are less likely to present cause for concern.
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8 WHY ADULTS DON'T TAKE ACTION

These reasons or causes include:

Overwhelming feelings (like fear, anger, or shame) caused by just thinking about the abuse of children.

Confusion caused by incorrect stereotypes about what kinds of people abuse children.

Physical, emotional, and financial dependency on an individual or group that would be lost (for oneself and the family) if such concerns are raised

Self doubts of various kinds (e.g., “I’m paranoid.” “What if I’m wrong?” “It’s none of my business.”).

Fears of various consequences (e.g., of acknowledging betrayal by a trusted and respected person, of being wrong, of being right).



9 HOW DO WE SAFEGUARD THE VULNERABLE CHILD?

Children must be told of the safeguards in place and the options available to them in a manner they understand. Once a child does share information with us, we have an ethical (and in some countries legal) responsibility to act on it.

Participation rights require us to:

- **Empower** children by encouraging them to make their own decisions and provide informed consent.
- **Promote** their well-being and take their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs into account.
- **Explain** in an appropriate and accessible way what decisions have been taken, and why



THEORY TO PRACTICE

- Respect for the child as an autonomous individual
 - Mindful of ethical constraints
 - Including children in the decision-making process
 - Actively listening to children
 - Solutions and responses that fit the context
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- Safeguarding is fundamental to child protection and only strengthened by child participation

II REFERENCES

- Child Safeguarding Standards: www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk/resources
- Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021)
- NSPCC Safeguarding and Child Protection Standards for the Voluntary and Community Sector, 2019
- Child Safeguarding Report 2020, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3
- Wood Report: Sector expert review of new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, 2021



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THANK YOU

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