

P5 Board and Trustees Safeguarding Briefing

What the board must do · What to ask management · What good governance looks like

Who is this for?

Board members, trustees and governing body members. You do not need to be a safeguarding specialist to fulfil your governance responsibilities — but you do need to understand what those responsibilities are, what questions to ask, and what good safeguarding practice looks like from a governance perspective.

1. Your Core Governance Responsibilities

- Approve the safeguarding policy (F1) and ensure it is reviewed at least annually.
- Ensure the organisation has a named, trained DSL in post at all times.
- Receive an annual safeguarding report (using O4) from the DSL or senior management. Ask questions about it.
- Ensure sufficient resources — staff time, training budget, expert support — are allocated to safeguarding.
- Champion a culture where safeguarding is taken seriously and concerns can be raised safely.
- Hold senior management accountable for safeguarding implementation.
- Act immediately if a serious safeguarding concern is raised that involves senior management or the DSL — in this case, the board is the decision-making body.

2. Questions to Ask at Every Board Meeting

You do not need to receive a full safeguarding report at every meeting. But you should regularly ask:

- "Do we have a trained, named DSL in post right now?"
- "Has the DSL completed their annual training refresher?"
- "Have there been any safeguarding concerns since the last meeting? How were they handled?"
- "Are all staff and volunteers who work with participants trained?"
- "Is there anything the board needs to know about safeguarding risks in current projects?"

3. The Annual Safeguarding Review

Once a year, the board receives a full safeguarding report from the DSL or senior management, based on O4 (Annual Self-Assessment and Review). This report covers:

- A summary of any safeguarding concerns that arose during the year (anonymised).
- Training completion rates across all staff and volunteers.
- Whether all safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and up to date.
- Any changes to legislation, guidance or programme requirements that affect the organisation's safeguarding obligations.
- Recommendations for the coming year.



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- The board should formally minute its consideration of the annual safeguarding report.

4. Serious Safeguarding Incidents — Board Responsibilities

If a serious safeguarding incident occurs, the board has specific responsibilities:

- The board chair must be informed of any Major safeguarding concern (as classified by the DSL) and any statutory referral that has been made.
- Where the incident may affect the organisation's legal standing, grant funding, or public reputation, the board must be involved in decisions about external disclosure.
- If the incident involves the CEO, director or DSL, the board chair becomes the decision-making lead.

5. Consequences of Safeguarding Failure

Safeguarding failures can result in serious consequences for the organisation, its leadership and individual board members. These include:

- Personal liability: board members can in some circumstances be personally liable for organisational failures if they knew or should have known about a risk and did not act.
- Regulatory action: referral to charity regulators or equivalent bodies.
- Criminal investigation: where a safeguarding failure amounts to negligence or concealment.
- Grant clawback: the European Commission, National Agencies and other funders can require repayment of project grants where a safeguarding failure has occurred. This power is grounded in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2025 and ESC Guide 2025, and in EU grant agreement general conditions. Organisations can also be barred from future Erasmus+ and ESC participation. These are not theoretical risks — they have been applied.
- Reputational damage: public disclosure of a safeguarding failure can severely affect the organisation's ability to recruit participants, staff and partners.

Legal reference

Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2025, Part A — participant protection obligations. ESC Guide 2025 — accreditation conditions including safeguarding requirements. EU Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046, Articles 135-145 — grounds for exclusion from EU funding, including serious misconduct. Grant Agreement General Conditions, Article 28 — reporting obligations and clawback provisions.

6. What Good Looks Like

Area	
Policy and procedures	Safeguarding policy reviewed and approved by the board in the last 12 months. All policies use current Safe Spaces framework documents.
DSL	Named DSL in post with formal appointment document (PI). DSL has completed training in the



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	last 12 months. Alternate DSL or external backup named.
Training	All staff and volunteers trained before working with participants. Training records up to date in P4.
Annual review	O4 completed annually and presented to the board. Board formally minutes its consideration.
Culture	Staff and volunteers feel safe to raise concerns. Anonymous reporting channel available and known to everyone. No retaliation against those who report concerns.
Incident response	Board informed of all Major concerns. Statutory referrals made when required. Cases reviewed and closed with documented decisions.

References

F1 Safeguarding Policy. F0 Safeguarding Policy Framework Section F.1 (Board responsibilities). P1 DSL Appointment. O4 Annual Self-Assessment. Charity Commission Safeguarding Guidance (UK). Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2025. Glossary of Key Terms (Safe Spaces) — for definitions of all bolded terms in this document.

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