

R4 Safeguarding for Adult Participants at Risk

Identifying vulnerability · Additional measures · Practical guidance

Purpose

ESC volunteers and other adult participants are not children, but some may be at risk of harm due to disability, mental health conditions, economic vulnerability, social isolation, or other factors. This document provides practical guidance for identifying and responding to additional vulnerability in adult participants.

1. What Makes an Adult Participant "at Risk"?

An adult participant may be at additional risk if they:

- Have a physical or sensory disability that affects their ability to protect themselves or raise a concern.
- Have a mental health condition that affects their judgment or ability to seek help.
- Are in a situation of significant economic vulnerability or dependency on the project or host organisation.
- Are far from home, without family or social support networks, in an unfamiliar country.
- Have experienced previous trauma or abuse.
- Have limited language ability in the project language, reducing their ability to communicate concerns.

Having one or more of these characteristics does not define a person as vulnerable or less capable. It means the organisation has additional responsibilities to ensure safeguarding measures are effective and accessible for them.

2. Confidential Needs Assessment

Before participation, the project coordinator or DSL should conduct a confidential needs assessment for any participant who may benefit from additional support. This should cover:

- Any health condition, disability or support need that the organisation should be aware of to plan appropriate safeguarding measures.
- Communication preferences and language needs.
- Emergency contact details and any specific medical requirements (see R2 Form D).
- Any concerns the participant has about their own safety or wellbeing in the project context.

This assessment is confidential. Information gathered is held only by the DSL and used solely to plan appropriate support. It is not shared with other participants, the wider staff team, or partner organisations without the participant's consent, except where required to prevent harm. See O3 for data protection requirements.

The needs assessment is referenced in R0 (Risk Assessment) Context 5. Record that an assessment was conducted in R0 — do not include the content of the assessment in R0.

3. Additional Safeguarding Measures



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Risk factor	
Disability (physical or sensory)	Ensure the participant can access all reporting channels. Provide F4 (Participant Safeguarding Card) in accessible format (large print, Easy Read, audio). Confirm the reporting system is physically and digitally accessible.
Mental health condition	Discuss with the participant (in the needs assessment) what support they may need. Ensure they have a named contact beyond the DSL — someone they can approach informally. Agree how to check in during the project without making them feel monitored.
Economic vulnerability	Ensure the participant knows they can raise concerns without jeopardising their participation or their ESC grant. Anonymous reporting is available and known to them.
Language barrier	Provide F4 in their language. Ensure a professional interpreter is available for any disclosure or welfare conversation. Do not use other participants as interpreters.
Isolation (far from home)	Regular structured check-ins. Named contact in home country. Ensure they know the anonymous reporting channel and emergency services number (112) before they travel.

4. Responding to Concerns Involving Adult Participants at Risk

The same four response types apply. Additional considerations:

Apply Psychological First Aid (PFA — defined in the Glossary) in any initial response. Do not interrogate or ask for the full account in the first conversation.

The person's informed choice is central to the response. They are told what will happen before it happens. Their preferences about next steps are sought and respected wherever legally possible.

Duty of care may override individual preference where there is an immediate risk to their safety or others' safety.

Note on capacity

Where a participant may lack capacity to make informed decisions about their own safety (e.g. due to a severe mental health crisis), the DSL consults relevant statutory services in the country where the participant is located. Decisions about someone who lacks capacity must be made in their best interests and documented carefully.

References



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F0 Section B (scope includes adults at risk). R2 Form D (medical information). O3 GDPR. F4 Participant Safeguarding Card. R0 (Risk Assessment Context 5). Glossary: Adult at risk, Psychological First Aid.



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