

Safeguarding Terms and Definitions

Safeguarding Definitions

We all need to be kept safe, regardless of our situation. But at certain times and in certain circumstances in life, the need for safeguarding is greater. Generally, safeguarding is focussed on two groups of society who are seen to need particular care:

Children and Young People

The term "child" is used to include all children and young people who have not yet reached their 18th birthday. However, the term "young person/people" is sometimes used for those aged between 14 and 17.

Adults at Risk

Vulnerability in adults is not easy to define, but can best be viewed as a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect himself or herself from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired, either temporarily or indefinitely, through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress. This may include:

- People with a mental health problem or mental illness (including addictions or dementia)
- People with a physical disability
- People with a sensory impairment
- People with a learning disability
- People who are frail and/or experiencing a temporary illness.
- People experiencing personal trauma

The term "adults at risk" is now widely used in terms of social care, but "vulnerable adults" can be found in legislation and related documents.

Safeguarding Roles

Throughout Mothers' Union safeguarding documents and resources, we have used a standard terminology to describe the various safeguarding roles both in Mothers' Union and in the Anglican provinces in Britain & Ireland. Inevitably there will be local variations, so this section aims to clarify what is meant by the titles used in our documents and resources.

Anglican Provincial/Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser

A person who is professionally qualified and experienced in safeguarding practice appointed by an Anglican diocese or province to advise and support the diocese/province on all safeguarding matters.

MU Diocesan Safeguarding Contact

A person appointed by a diocesan board of trustees to be a key link on safeguarding matters across the diocesan Mothers' Union.

Parish Safeguarding Officer

A person appointed in a parish to advise on safeguarding matters. This term is widely used in the Church of England. Equivalent roles are the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator in the Church in Wales and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Coordinator in Scotland. In the Church of Ireland, the Parish Panel has similar responsibilities for safeguarding children, while the Diocesan Panel is responsible for adults at risk.

Criminal Records Checks

As part of the Safer Recruitment process, some roles which involve contact with children, young people and adults at risk will require a check of the criminal records system to make sure that anyone offering to take on these roles does not have a conviction that may make it inappropriate for them to do so. The agencies dealing with these checks and their terminology differs across Britain & Ireland.

In England and Wales, checks are carried out by the Disclosure and Barring Service and are commonly referred to as DBS checks.

In Northern Ireland, these are known as Access NI checks, and in the Republic of Ireland there is Garda Vetting – Garda is the police force in the Republic of Ireland.

In Scotland, Disclosure Scotland administers and manages the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme.