

Safeguarding Adults Policy - 2026

Bowls Safeguarding Adults Policy

Policy Owner: Bowls Development Alliance (BDA)

Policy approved by: BDA

Date Policy approved: 6th May 2026

Next review Date: 6th May 2027



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Introduction

The Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) and the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of bowls are committed to Safeguarding Adults in line with national legislation and relevant national and local guidelines.

The BDA, as the umbrella organisation for the development of the sport of bowls, works with all the NGBs of bowls to provide a framework of policies and procedures which help ensure a safe environment for everyone playing the sport.

For the purposes of this policy and related procedures, the bowls family comprises: the Bowls Development Alliance, the National Governing Bodies (Bowls England, British Crown Green Bowling Association, English Bowling Federation, English Indoor Bowling Association, English Short Mat Bowling Association), players, coaches, umpires/officials, and supporters.

Together we will safeguard adults by ensuring that our activities are delivered in a way which keeps all adults safe. We will ensure that everyone who participates in bowls can do so in a safe, positive, and enjoyable environment.

Policy Statement

The BDA and Bowls NGBs believe everyone has the right to live free from abuse or neglect regardless of age, ability or disability, sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, marital or gender identity. We are committed to creating and maintaining a safe and positive environment and an open, listening culture where people feel able to share concerns without fear of retribution.

The BDA and NGBs are committed to creating a culture of zero-tolerance of harm to adults which necessitates: the recognition of adults who may be at risk and the circumstances which may increase risk; knowing how adult abuse, exploitation, or neglect manifests itself; and being willing to report safeguarding concerns.

All participants are entitled to feel safe and protected from any form of abuse and neglect.

The BDA and Bowls NGBs acknowledge that **safeguarding is everybody's responsibility** and are committed to preventing abuse and neglect by protecting the welfare of all adults involved in bowls.

Physical and mental health, wellbeing, disability and care and support needs may affect a person's ability to protect themselves. We recognise that some people may face barriers to reporting concerns or seeking help, including communication barriers and these factors can change at various stages of a person's life.

The BDA and Bowls NGBs recognise that there is a legal framework within which sports need to work to safeguard adults who have needs for care and support and for protecting those who are unable to take action to protect themselves and will act in accordance with the relevant safeguarding adult legislation and with local statutory safeguarding procedures.



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Actions taken by the BDA and Bowls NGBs will be consistent with the principles of adult safeguarding- **empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership, and accountability.**

Legislation and Government Guidance

Safeguarding adults across the UK is rooted by international human rights principles including the rights of disabled people and older people.

Key legislation that underpins this safeguarding policy includes:

- [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- **General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)** [Data protection: The UK's data protection legislation - GOV.UK](#)

The practices and procedures within this policy are based on the relevant legislation and government guidance for England.

Key safeguarding legislation and guidance in England include:

- [Care Act 2014](#)
- **Care and Support Statutory Guidance (2014)** - particularly chapter 14 which sets out safeguarding duties for local authorities and partner organisations. [Care and support statutory guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Prevent Duty

[Prevent duty guidance: England and Wales \(2023\) - GOV.UK](#) The Prevent Duty forms part of the UK's counter-terrorism strategy and is introduced under the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015.

The duty requires certain public authorities, including local authorities, education providers, health services, and police, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Other Relevant Legislation

A wide range of criminal and civil legislation may apply where abuse or neglect has occurred.

For example, legislation dealing with:

- Murder/ attempted murder.
- Physical Assault
- Sexual Offences
- Domestic Abuse and coercive or controlling behaviour.
- Forced Marriage
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Theft and fraud
- Modern slavery and human trafficking
- Hate Crime
- Online abuse and harassment



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Safeguarding legislation also includes provisions relating to the vetting and barring of individuals who may be unsuitable to work with adults with care and support needs, under the safeguarding framework administered by the [Disclosure and Barring Service - GOV.UK](#)

Mental Capacity Act

[Mental Capacity Act 2005](#) provides a legal framework for making decisions on behalf of adults who may lack the mental capacity to make specific decisions for themselves.

The Act also establishes offences relating to the wilful neglect or ill-treatment of individuals who lack mental capacity, including situations where abuse is carried out by a person responsible for their care.

Definitions

Adult at Risk

An **adult at risk** is an individual aged 18 years and over who:

Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) AND is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect, AND as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

Care Act 2014

Adult safeguarding legislation creates specific responsibilities for Local Authorities, Health Authorities, and the Police to provide additional protection to adults at risk from abuse and neglect.

If they believe there is an adult at risk, they have a responsibility to find out more about the situation and decide what actions need to be taken to support the adult. The Local Authority role includes multi-agency procedures which coordinate the actions taken by different organisations.

In bowls we may need to take action to safeguard an adult; for example, to use the safeguarding disciplinary procedures in relation to a member of staff or volunteer who has been reported to be harming a participant in our sport.

BOWLING ENVIRONMENTS

For the purposes of this safeguarding policy, the *bowling environment* refers to any setting in which bowling-related activities take place or where members of the bowls community are gathered. This includes, but is not limited to, all formal and informal activities, venues, and occasions connected to the sport of bowls.

A bowling environment therefore includes:

- All on-site locations such as bowling greens, clubhouses, changing facilities, car parks, and surrounding grounds.



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- Hired or offsite venues used for matches, competitions, training sessions, tours, or social events.
- Any gathering of bowls members, whether organised by the club or informally arranged, where individuals are present in their capacity as members.
- Travel to and from bowling activities when organised by or associated with the club.
- Digital or online spaces used for communication between members, including social media, messaging platforms, and virtual meetings.

This definition applies regardless of the time, location, or level of formality, where there is a reasonable connection to bowling activities or membership of the bowls organisation.

Participants

For the purposes of this safeguarding policy, *participants* refer to any individual or organisation involved in, attending, or connected to bowling activities.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Individual players, whether registered members or non-members
- Spectators attending bowling activities or events.
- Staff and volunteers in any capacity, including coaches, officials, and support personnel.
- Any affiliated or associated entity, including clubs, leagues, county associations, and National Governing Bodies (NGBs)

A participant is therefore any person or organisation that is present within, contributes to, or has a role or responsibility in the bowling environment, whether on a temporary or ongoing basis.

Safeguarding Adults

Safeguarding adults is defined in **Care and Support Statutory Guidance** as:

Protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It involves people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, whilst also promoting the adult's wellbeing.

This includes where appropriate, taking into account the persons views, wishes, feelings, and beliefs when deciding on any action.

Safeguarding practice must also recognise that adults may have complex personal circumstances and relationships, and may sometimes be uncertain, ambivalent, or unrealistic about their situation.

Principles of Adult Safeguarding

The Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) and Bowls National Governing Bodies (NGBs) are committed to applying the six key principles of adult safeguarding set out in the Care Act 2014. These principles underpin all safeguarding work and should inform the actions of everyone involved in bowls.



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1. Empowerment

Adults are supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and give informed consent. Safeguarding responses should be person-centred and led by the views, wishes, and preferences of the adult wherever possible.

2. Prevention

It is better to take action before harm occurs. The BDA and Bowls NGBs will promote awareness, training, and safe practices to reduce the risk of abuse or neglect within bowls activities.

3. Proportionality

Safeguarding responses should be the least intrusive and most appropriate to the level of risk presented. Actions taken should be balanced and proportionate to the concerns raised.

4. Protection

Adults who are experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect should be offered appropriate support and protection. The BDA and Bowls NGBs will work to ensure that individuals are supported and safeguarded where concerns arise.

5. Partnership

Safeguarding is most effective when organisations work together. The BDA and Bowls NGBs will work in partnership with local authorities, police, health services and other relevant agencies to prevent, detect and respond to abuse and neglect.

6. Accountability

There should be clear roles and responsibilities for safeguarding. The BDA and Bowls NGBs will ensure that safeguarding decisions and actions are transparent and accountable.

Abuse and Neglect

It is important to be aware of what constitutes abuse. Abuse is a form of maltreatment and may involve a single act or repeated acts. It may occur through deliberate actions or through a failure to act.

The categories of abuse outlined below are identified in the Care Act 2014 and apply in England. There are some slight variations in terminology in the other home nations of the United Kingdom.

Abuse can occur in a range of settings, including in a person's home, within the community, in institutional settings, or in sport and leisure environments. Abuse may be carried out by people known to the individual or by strangers. Individuals in positions of trust, such as relatives, community leaders, teachers, coaches or volunteers, can also be perpetrators of abuse.



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Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse

- Assault, hitting, slapping, or pushing.
- Misuse of medication
- Inappropriate restraint
- Inappropriate physical sanctions

Sexual Abuse

- Rape or sexual assault.
- Indecent exposure
- Sexual harassment
- Inappropriate language, looking or touching.
- Sexual teasing or innuendo
- Sexual photography
- Exposure to pornography or witnessing sexual acts.
- Sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological or Emotional Abuse

- Emotional abuse
- Threats of harm or abandonment
- Humiliation or blaming
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Intimidation or harassment
- Verbal abuse
- Cyber bullying
- Isolation or withdrawal of supportive networks
- Unreasonable withdrawal of services or support

Financial or Material Abuse

- Theft or fraud
- Internet scams
- Misuse of property, possessions, or benefits
- Coercion relating to financial affairs, property, wills, or inheritance.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse includes patterns of behaviour such as:

- Psychological abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Emotional abuse
- So-called “honour-based” abuse

Modern Slavery

- Human trafficking
- Forced labour.



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- Exploitation through coercion, deception, or abuse of power
- Domestic Servitude

Discriminatory Abuse

Discriminatory abuse includes harassment or unequal treatment because of:

- Race
- Gender or gender identity
- Age
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief

Neglect and Acts of Omission

Neglect may include:

- Ignoring medical, emotional, or physical care needs
- Failure to provide access to appropriate health or care services.
- Withholding necessities such as medication, nutrition, or heating

Self-Neglect

Self-neglect refers to behaviour that threatens a person's own health or wellbeing, including:

- Poor personal hygiene
- Neglecting health needs
- Unsafe living conditions
- Hoarding

Organisational Abuse

Organisational abuse refers to neglect or poor care practice within an organisation or care setting such as a hospital, care home, or community organisation. It may result from inadequate policies, procedures, or professional practice.

Other forms of Harm

Adults may also experience other forms of abuse identified in separate legislation including:

Radicalisation – where individuals or groups attempt to recruit or influence people including adults at risk into extremist ideologies. They seek to sow division between communities based on race, faith, or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) - a form of violence against women. FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. This is illegal in England and Wales under the FGM Act 2003.



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Forced Marriage - a forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some adults with learning or physical disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual, and emotional pressure. It is different to an arranged marriage where the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses. Forced marriage is illegal in the UK.

Honour based abuse - a broad umbrella term used to describe a combination of practices used principally to control and punish the behaviour of a member of a family or social group, in order to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs in the name of 'honour.'

Hazing - any activity expected of someone in joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate.

Abuse in a Sporting Context

Abuse can occur within a sporting environment and be perpetrated by participants, coaches, officials, volunteers, or spectators. The Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) and Bowls National Governing Bodies (NGBs) recognise that abuse can take many forms and may involve misuse of power, authority, or trust.

Examples of abuse within sport may include:

- Harassment of a participant because of their disability or other protected characteristics,
- Failing to meet the needs of the participant for example training without appropriate breaks or support.,
- A coach intentionally striking or physically harming an athlete,
- One elite participant controlling another athlete with threats of withdrawal from their partnership,
- An official, coach or participant sending unwanted sexually explicit messages or images.
- A player threatening another player with physical harm and /or persistently blames them for poor results.

Such behaviours may constitute physical, emotional, psychological, discriminatory, or sexual abuse and should always be reported and addressed appropriately.

Abuse Outside the Sporting Environment

Abuse or neglect may also occur outside the sporting environment. While it may not take place during bowls activities, concerns about an adult's welfare should still be reported and acted upon in line with safeguarding procedures.

Abuse outside sport could be carried out by:

- A spouse, partner, or family member,



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- Neighbours or other residents,
- Friends, acquaintances or strangers,
- Individuals who deliberately target and exploit adults they perceive as vulnerable,
- Paid staff, professionals or volunteers providing care and support.

In many cases the perpetrator is known to the adult and may be in a **position of trust authority or power**.

Signs and indicators of abuse and neglect

Adult abuse and neglect can manifest itself in a variety of signs. These signs may not always be obvious, and a single indicator does not necessarily mean abuse is occurring. However, a combination of indicators or a sudden change in behaviour should be treated as a potential concern.

Common signs may include:

- Physical indicators: unexplained bruises, cuts, burns or other injuries – or a lack of medical attention when an injury is present.,
- Financial indicators: belongings or money going missing, unexplained financial difficulties.
- Attendance and engagement: not attending sessions, no longer enjoying activities, or failing to respond to reminders from team members or coaches,
- Changes in Appearance and hygiene: sudden weight loss or gain, unkempt appearance, or a deterioration in personal hygiene,
- Behavioural changes: noticeable changes in confidence mood or behaviour, for example, a participant may appear quiet and withdrawn around one person but behaves differently around other trusted adults.,
- Fear or anxiety: expressing fear of a particular person or group, showing a reluctance to be alone with certain individuals.,
- Curbed freedom: a parent, carer or other person always speaks for the adult and prevents them from making choices or decisions for themselves.
- Disclosure: they may tell you / another person they are being abused – i.e. a disclosure.

Making Safeguarding Personal

The Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) and Bowls National Governing Bodies (NGBs) recognise that adults make choices that may involve risks to their own wellbeing. For example:

- Moving away from friends or family to take a better job, even if it affects their social connections.
- Continuing to care for a partner who may behave abusively due to a health condition, such as dementia.

Safeguarding is not about making decisions on behalf of an adult, but about empowering and supporting them to protect themselves in a way that respects their wishes, feelings, and dignity.



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This includes providing appropriate support, clear information, and guidance to enable individuals to make informed choices about their own safety and wellbeing.

'**Making Safeguarding Personal**' is a concept which means.

- Engaging the adult and empowering them to best respond to their situation.
- Listening to them and understanding "what matters" to them and the outcomes they want to achieve.
- Enhancing their involvement, choice, and control in any safeguarding action.
- Supporting decisions that improve wellbeing, quality of life and safety.

There are often multiple ways to reduce or prevent harm. By working with the adult, we can ensure that actions taken are **appropriate to their circumstances** and **respect their preferences**. This approach also promotes self-worth, dignity, and helps recovery from abuse.

Advocacy and Support

If an adult has difficulty making their views and wishes known, they can be supported or represented by an advocate. This might be a trusted family member or friend of their choice or a professional advocate (usually from a third sector organisation).

Advocates help ensure that the adult's voice is heard, and that their choices and outcomes guide the safeguarding response.

Mental Capacity and Safeguarding

Understanding mental capacity is essential when safeguarding adults. Mental capacity refers to a person's ability to make **specific decisions for themselves**. It is a key consideration when supporting adults to stay safe and make choices about their own lives.

Why Mental Capacity Matters

- **Respecting choice:** Preventing an adult from making decisions they are capable of making can itself be a form of abuse. For example, a disabled adult may want to participate in an activity, but their carer refuses to provide support. Conversely, adults may be pressured to participate in activities that they do not wish to do.
- **Coercion and abuse:** Adults who are being abused may be afraid to act against the wishes of the perpetrator. Coercion can diminish a person's ability to make **free and informed decisions**, which may impact their mental capacity in law.
- **Safeguarding decisions:** When abuse or neglect is suspected, it is important to ensure the adult is involved in the choice of actions taken to protect them, including whether or not to involve others. However, some adults may **lack the capacity to understand or communicate their wishes**, in which case additional support is required.

Supporting Adults with Limited Capacity

If an adult finds it difficult to make decisions and there is a concern they are being abused or neglected:



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- The situation should be referred to your Club or County Safeguarding Officer, your National Governing Body Lead Safeguarding Officer or the Local Authority.
- Health or social care professionals may assess the adult's mental capacity.
- Support should always be provided to help the adult make decisions wherever possible.

Emergency Decision-Making

There may be circumstances where a bowls club or organisation must act quickly to protect an adult who **cannot make a decision for themselves**. In such situations, appropriate actions could include:

- Sharing safeguarding concerns with people or agencies who can help protect the adult.
- Preventing the adult from being in contact with the person causing harm.

All decisions should be **proportionate, documented, and made in the best interests of the adult** while respecting their dignity and rights.

Safeguarding Responsibilities in Bowls

Safeguarding adults at risk is **everyone's responsibility**. All organisations involved in bowls – from clubs to National Governing Bodies – must ensure they have procedures and protocols in place to fulfil their safeguarding duty of care.

Leadership and Governance

- A senior board or committee level member to take leadership responsibility for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements.
- Promote a culture that prioritises adult safety throughout the organisation.

Designated Safeguarding Practitioners

- At least one identified lead safeguarding practitioner who can advise and support others when a safeguarding concern arises.

Culture of Listening and Belief

- A culture where disclosures of abuse are taken seriously, listened to, and acted upon appropriately.

Safe Recruitment Practices

- Safe recruitment practices for individuals whom the organisation will permit to work regularly with adults at risk, including policies on when to obtain a criminal record (DBS) check.

Codes of Conduct

- Clear expectations for all participants, staff, and volunteers, highlighting the importance of safeguarding and the organisation's zero-tolerance approach to abuse.



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Whistleblowing Procedures

Accessible procedures for raising concerns about poor practice or safeguarding issues.

- Integration of whistleblowing policies into training and codes of conduct.
- A culture that encourages concerns to be raised without fear of retaliation.

Allegations Management

- Clear policies for dealing with allegations against people who work with adults at risk.

Information Sharing

- Clear arrangements for sharing safeguarding information with appropriate professionals and local safeguarding partners.
- Procedures to ensure that relevant information is shared safely, securely, and proportionately.

Supervision and Training

- Appropriate supervision and support for staff and volunteers including undertaking safeguarding training.

Roles of the BDA, NGBs, County Associations and Clubs

Within the sport of bowls, specific organisations and individuals have defined safeguarding responsibilities. These roles ensure that safeguarding arrangements are implemented consistently across the sport.

The Bowls Development Alliance (BDA)

The BDA, working together with the bowls NGB's has developed these guidelines on behalf of the sport of bowls. All of the NGB's have adopted this policy and associated procedures.

The BDA works to:

- Develop and maintain up to date safeguarding policies and guidance for the sport of bowls.
- Ensure that bowls has clear and consistent safeguarding policies and procedures which are implemented across all the National Governing Bodies of the sport.
- Communicate these safeguarding policies and guidelines across the bowls community.
- Ensure that these safeguarding policies and guidelines are reviewed at least every year or whenever there is a major change in legislation.
- Ensure bowls organisations have clear safeguarding roles and responsibilities.
- Provide advice and guidance to safeguarding leads within NGBs, county associations and clubs when safeguarding concerns arise.
- Support the safeguarding leads within the NGBs through
A monthly **safeguarding steering group**,
A monthly **Case Management Group (CMG)**.
- Provide ongoing telephone or email support from the BDA Lead Safeguarding Manager.



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- Maintain and securely manage a safeguarding case database to ensure effective coordination of cases, accurate record-keeping, and the analysis of trends and outcomes to inform continuous improvement in safeguarding practice.

The National Governing Bodies of Bowls

Each National Governing Body (NGB) must ensure that everyone is protected and kept safe whilst participating in the sport of bowls.

They will:

- Appoint a Lead Safeguarding Officer to act as the primary safeguarding referral route for their County Associations and affiliated clubs and members.
- With the BDA, provide guidance on safeguarding for adults at risk and all those participating in the sport.
- Ensure safe recruitment practices are followed, provide training and supervision of staff, coaches, and volunteers.
- Advise County Associations and bowls clubs on best practice and recommend they adopt the BDA safeguarding guidelines and the minimum standards laid down in appropriate codes of conduct.
- Respond to allegations, concerns and complaints relating to safeguarding.
- Receive and record securely, notification of any safeguarding concerns within their County Associations or clubs.
- Provide advice to their counties and clubs on how to manage the safeguarding process.
- Liaise with the BDA Safeguarding Manager regarding any safeguarding cases requiring onward referral to statutory agencies.
- Be represented on the Case Management Group (CMG) for the BDA/NGB.
- Provide Safeguarding reports to the CMG and discuss concerns relating to members of their code.
- Be represented on the BDA/NGB steering group to support with all safeguarding updates and developments.
- Provide safeguarding data to the BDA Lead Safeguarding Officer to assist in their provision of safeguarding reports to the BDA Board.

County Associations (*where relevant*)

County Associations have direct responsibility for the welfare of individuals involved in bowls activities organised by the county with support from their National Governing Body.

They should:

- Appoint a County Safeguarding Officer who is suitably trained and has an approved current DBS certificate.
- Adopt safe practices in the recruitment, training and supervision of staff, coaches, and volunteers.
- Promote safeguarding education and training across the county.
- Adopt and promote the use of the Bowls development Alliance safeguarding policies and associated guidance to support best practice and ensure that key safeguarding procedures are communicated to all clubs within the county.



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- Report all concerns, allegations, or complaints in the county to the NGB Lead Safeguarding Officer.

Affiliated Clubs

All recognised affiliated clubs must ensure they have safeguarding procedures in place to protect everyone involved in the sport of bowls.

Whilst the ESMBA do not affiliate clubs the expectation remains that those ESMBA clubs still follow the below guidelines.

Clubs should:

- Adopt the BDA safeguarding policies and procedures and publish these on their website if they have one.
- Adopt safe practices in the recruitment, training and supervision of staff, coaches, and volunteers.
- Appoint a Club Safeguarding Officer and ensure that members are made aware of who this person is and how they can be contacted.
- Display the Club Safeguarding Officer poster on the club notice board this should include a picture of the Club Safeguarding Officer and how to contact them.
- Promote safeguarding training opportunities to the Club Safeguarding Officer and other club members where appropriate.
- Maintain a safe inclusive and fair membership policy.

Club/County Safeguarding Officers

Club and County Safeguarding Officers should play a key role in promoting good safeguarding practice and ensuring that concerns are reported appropriately.

Club and County Safeguarding Officers should:

- Be provided with information support and training appropriate to the role.
- Be clearly identified to all members with their contact details and preferably a photograph, via handbooks, web sites, noticeboards or similar.
- Act as the first point of contact for any individual who wishes to report a safeguarding concern.
- Promote safeguarding awareness and share relevant safeguarding information to their county association or club members.
- Report all safeguarding concerns to the NGB Lead Safeguarding Officer.

Club Safeguarding Officers are not responsible for determining the outcome or seriousness of a concern; their role is to record and report all safeguarding concerns promptly to the County Safeguarding Officer and/or the NGB Lead Safeguarding Officer, as appropriate. County Safeguarding Officers must, in turn, report all concerns to the NGB Lead Safeguarding Officer to ensure appropriate oversight, consistency, and escalation where required.



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Good Coaching Practice

As individuals in positions of trust, coaches are responsible for protecting adults from harm, abuse, and neglect, and for promoting their safety and wellbeing at all times they can be the first to recognise and raise concerns.

Safeguarding awareness is included within Level 1 and Level 2 coaching qualifications, and coaches are strongly encouraged to undertake additional safeguarding training provided through Coach Bowls [Safeguarding Officer Training | Coach Bowls](#) or similar.

Joint guidance was produced by sports coach UK and the Child Protection in Sport Unit in 2010 outlining best practice guidelines for coaches.

It stressed the need for ratios for coaches to participants (generally 1:8). This will minimise any risks to participants and enhance the benefits they draw from the activity.

Coaches should never be left alone with an individual or group and it is recommended that at least one adult present is the same gender as the bowler or group of bowlers.

Physical contact should be avoided in coaching. A responsible coach should only use physical contact if the aim is to: develop sports skills or techniques, treat an injury, prevent an injury or accident from occurring or meet the requirements of the sport. They should explain the reason for the physical contact, reinforcing the teaching or coaching skill. Unless the situation is an emergency, the coach should ask the player for permission.

The Coach should hold an appropriate qualification, comply with minimum age requirements, have relevant insurance cover, and have read and this Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy, the Safeguarding Children Policy plus the following policies of their NGB:

- Code of conduct for coaches
- Equality Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

Safer Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers

Safer recruitment is an essential part of creating a safe and positive environment and demonstrating a commitment to safeguard all participants from harm. Bowls clubs and organisations must use safer recruitment practices and continually assess the suitability of staff and volunteers to prevent unsuitable individuals from working within the sport.

Safer recruitment should be an ongoing process of improvement for any club or organisation whose activities involve contact with children or adults at risk. The Ann Craft Trust provides clear guidance on safer recruitment.

Ensuring that staff and volunteers recruited are safe and suitable to work with adults at risk and children involves several stages within the recruitment process, including:

- A clear application process
- An appropriate interview or selection process
- References where appropriate
- Criminal record checks where required.
- A structured induction process



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A DBS check is not typically required for staff or volunteers working with adults. However, in certain circumstances it may be appropriate.

The Ann Craft Trust provides a helpful flowchart which clubs, county associations and NGBs should use in deciding if this should be done. [Guidance for DBS Checks in Sport - Working with Adults \(England and Wales\) - Ann Craft Trust](#)

Safe and Fair Membership

Bowls clubs and County Associations should promote a safe culture through their membership procedure.

Clubs must ensure that their membership application process is robust, comprehensive, and designed to support effective safeguarding practices. Application forms should collect full and accurate personal details, including date of birth, contact information, and next of kin, to enable appropriate communication and emergency response where necessary.

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In addition, applicants should be required to provide references and complete a self-declaration section, allowing the club to identify any potential risks or concerns at an early stage.

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It is also essential that any relevant medical conditions are disclosed so that the club can take reasonable steps to support the health, safety, and wellbeing of all members. This thorough approach helps create a safer environment and demonstrates the club's commitment to safeguarding.

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Safeguarding concerns may arise in relationship to the membership or proposed membership of individuals with criminal records, unspent convictions, or ongoing police investigations/court proceedings- particularly in relation to financial, sexual, or violent offences.

In such cases Club or County Safeguarding Officers must speak to their NGB Lead Safeguarding Officer or the BDA Safeguarding Manager straight away for further advice and guidance. Membership may be still appropriate, but a risk assessment must be conducted to determine whether participation is safe.

Clubs and County Associations should keep in mind the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act when making membership decisions if applicable [Rehabilitation Periods - GOV.UK](#)

Where concerns arise, a temporary suspension may be issued to members and individuals looking to join a bowls club or play bowls while a risk assessment is conducted.

Implementation of Safeguarding in Bowls

- The Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) will update, publicise, and promote this Safeguarding Adults Policy along with the Safeguarding Regulations 2026 and other related policies and guidelines.
- National Governing Bodies (NGBs) should publish and distribute this Safeguarding Adults Policy and the Safeguarding Regulations 2026 to all County Associations and/or directly to affiliated clubs.
- County Associations (where relevant) should support clubs in understanding, developing, and communicating this safeguarding information.



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- Clubs are encouraged to complete the “Club Checklist” or the BDA Club Health Checker to help them identify areas for development within the club.
- Clubs should ensure that all members are aware of relevant safeguarding policies and procedures, this can take the form of a summary document which identifies how the full policy and procedures can be accessed [Safeguarding Policies - Bowls Development Alliance](#)
- Clubs should appoint a Club Safeguarding Officer to lead on the development of safeguarding practices within the club and to respond to any concerns. They should publicise and promote their role and contact details to all members.

Dealing with Concerns, Disclosures or Allegations

Abuse can and does occur in a variety of situations, including sport or other social activities. Most adults at risk are abused by someone known to them, either within or outside of the bowls context. Concerns may arise from something an individual says or from observations of behaviour that raise safeguarding issues. These concerns may relate to:

- An adult at risk themselves
- A perceived risk to other adults
- The behaviour of a member of a bowls club or organisation towards an adult at risk

It is essential that those involved in bowls remain vigilant and take appropriate action when concerns arise.

Reporting a concern about an adult at risk of harm

- Any safeguarding concerns or allegations should be reported to the relevant Safeguarding Officer at club or county level or by informing the National Governing Body Lead Safeguarding Officer [Safeguarding - Bowls Development Alliance](#)
- If the Safeguarding Officer is implicated, another committee member or the National Governing Body (NGB) Lead Safeguarding Officer should be contacted directly.

If an adult discloses a situation affecting themselves and requests that it not be taken further, the Club Safeguarding Officer can consult the NGB Lead Safeguarding Officer, or BDA safeguarding manager without providing identifying details.

Low Level Concerns

Not all concerns about an adult relate to abuse. Some relate to poor practice or minor issues that can be managed internally by the club using its disciplinary processes. The NGB can help a club decide what is appropriate. However, recording and monitoring lower-level concerns is important, as patterns of thoughtless or inappropriate behaviour may escalate to higher-level risks over time if unchecked.

Confidentiality

All information regarding any safeguarding concern must be treated in the strictest of confidence and only shared with individuals in designated safeguarding roles.

Safeguarding Officers may need to seek advice from or report to statutory agencies, such as Adult Social Care or the Police. Non-emergency calls to the police should use 101; emergencies require 999.



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If you are unable to speak to your Club/County Safeguarding Officer or your NGB Lead Safeguarding Officer, The Ann Craft Trust Helpline (0115 951 5400 <https://www.anncrafttrust.org/help-advice/>) can be contacted for advice.

The adult themselves can be directed to appropriate helplines listed in appendix 4.

Responding to a Concern

If you have any concerns about an adult's welfare, you should report them to the club or organisation's Safeguarding Officer. If the Safeguarding Officer is implicated in the concern, inform another committee member or contact the National Governing Body (NGB) Lead Safeguarding Officer directly.

You must not investigate concerns yourself or keep them to yourself. It is not your responsibility to determine whether a situation constitutes poor practice, abuse, or bullying. However, it is your responsibility to report any concerns. Reports can be made without providing the individual's name or any identifying details.

If the concern was an emergency requiring, you to speak to the police or adult social care directly please make your club/county safeguarding officer or your NGB Lead Safeguarding Officer aware as soon as possible.

For further information see Appendix A of this document and to submit a concern either phone or email your Club/County Safeguarding Officer or complete the reporting form by following this link [Safeguarding - Bowls Development Alliance](#)

If you receive a Disclosure

To maintain the integrity of the sport of bowls, it is essential that all organisations apply consistent procedures when handling disclosures made by an adult that disclosure may relate to something that has happened to them or allegations made against another individual.

This consistency is particularly important because individuals may participate, coach, or officiate across multiple codes, and uniform procedures help ensure safeguarding concerns are managed fairly, safely, and effectively across the sport.

If an adult talks about a concern or abuse to a club or organisation member, the club member should:

- **Stay calm** and keep an open mind, listen very carefully to what is being said and take the matter seriously.
- As soon as possible **record in writing what was said** using the person's own words.
- **Do not** make promises that cannot be kept.
- Ask only **open questions** e.g. 'Is there anything else you want to tell me?' or 'What did you mean by the word xxxxx?'
- **Do not** ask leading questions that may compromise any future actions e.g. 'Did they hit you?'
- **Reassure the adult** that they have done the right thing telling you and ask them what they would like you to do next.
- **Explain** that you would prefer to find support for them through the relevant Safeguarding Officer(s) If they are uncertain about involving a Safeguarding Officer, discuss the consequences of not sharing the information e.g. could someone else come to harm?



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- **Give careful consideration** as to whether a relative or carer should be informed of the concern at that stage - if they are responsible for the abuse or are unable to respond to the situation appropriately then this could put the adult at greater risk.

If there is an allegation about an individual that relates to their behaviour towards, suitability to work/ volunteer with or participate alongside adults at risk, (including observed behaviour, information about a police investigation, court case or conviction) the club or association must inform the Lead Safeguarding Officer at their NGB who will:

- Ascertain the source of the information, e.g. self-disclosure, word of mouth, online, newspaper, police, or offender management services (Local Authority Safeguarding Team, Probation Service, mental health team),
- Speak to the individual concerned about the allegation. However, if there is an ongoing police investigation speak to the officer in the case first to make sure you will not be harming any investigation. If in doubt speak to your NGB Lead Safeguarding Officer
- Ask the individual to stop working/volunteering/participating immediately whilst a full investigation is conducted. This is a neutral action, not intended to assign guilt and is to protect all parties involved,
- Conduct an investigation to gain the fullest available information; this may involve interviewing the individual concerned, witnesses of any observed behaviour or obtaining information from official sources. If there is an ongoing police investigation the police investigation takes primacy and the club/county or NGB should pause any investigation until told otherwise.
- Conduct a risk assessment which will consider the risks posed and any safeguards that are or could be put into place,
- Consider temporary suspension if risks cannot be managed within the club(s) concerned while investigations take place,
- Use the relevant disciplinary policy and procedures for the NGB(s) involved if necessary.

For further guidance see the Safeguarding Regulations 2026

The NGB(s) Case Management Group or BDA Case Management Group (depending on the level of concern) will assess whether it is appropriate for the person to return to working/volunteering/participating and how this will be managed.

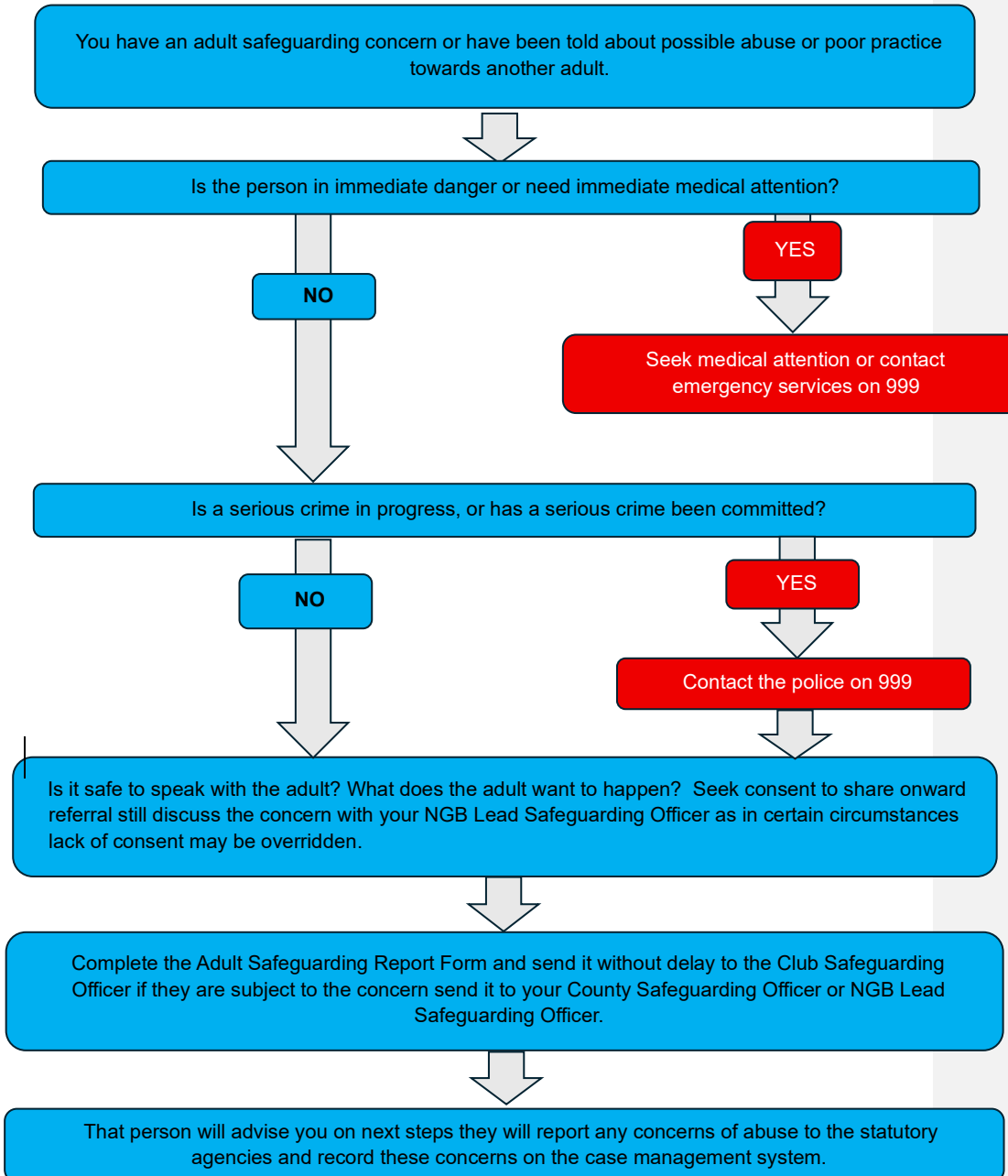
They will assess on a case-by-case basis any support needed for the person about whom the allegations have been made.

An independent person may be appointed to give this support.



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APPENDIX A: PROCESS MAP – REPORTING A CONCERN



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APPENDIX B: Information Sharing

All sports organisations must comply with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Information about concerns of abuse includes personal data. It is therefore important to be clear as to the grounds for processing and sharing information about concerns of abuse.

Processing information includes record keeping. Records relating to safeguarding concerns must be accurate and relevant. They must be stored confidentially with access only to those with a need to know.

Sharing information, with the right people, is central to good practice in safeguarding adults at risk. However, information sharing must only ever be with those with a 'need to know.' This does NOT automatically include the persons spouse, partner, adult, child, unpaid or paid carer.

Information should only be shared with family and friends and/or carers with the consent of the adult or if the adult does not have capacity to make that decision and family/ friends/ carers need to know in order to help keep the person safe.

Information may be shared **without consent if:**

- Someone is at serious risk of harm.
- A crime may have been committed.
- Others may be at risk.
- The person is being coerced or under duress.

This is allowed because data protection law does not prevent sharing safeguarding information when necessary to protect people.

Data protection legislation allows information sharing within an organisation. For example:

- Anyone who has a concern about harm can make a report to an appropriate person within the same organisation.
- Case management meetings can take place to agree to co-ordinate actions by the organisation.

When information is shared without the consent of the adult this must be explained to them, when it is safe to do so, and any further actions should still fully include them.

If you are in doubt as to whether to share information, seek advice from your Club/County Safeguarding Officer or your NGB Lead Safeguarding Officer. Explain the situation without giving personal details about the person at risk or the person causing harm.

Any decision to share or not to share information with an external person or organisation must be recorded together with the reasons to share or not share information.

The Bowls Development Alliance is participating in the Sport England Case Management Project which means they may occasionally need to share anonymised case management data with Sport Resolution & the National Safeguarding Panel so they can support and advise on specific cases.



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Appendix C – Good Practice Guides to promote Safeguarding in Bowls

Topic	BDA Template / Guideline number
Physical Contact	8-Physical-Contact-in-Bowls.pdf
Managing Challenging Behaviour	7-Managing-Challenging-Behaviour.pdf
Travelling and Staying Away	5-Travelling-and-Staying-Away-Guidance.pdf
Code of Conduct	V2-General-Code-of-Conduct-in-Bowls.pdf
Safeguarding Resources from the BDA	https://bowlsdevelopmentalliance.com/safeguarding/resources

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Appendix D – Linked Policies

Topic	BDA Document Location
Whistle Blowing	3-Whistleblowing-Guidelines.pdf (bowlsdevelopmentalliance.com)
Anti-Bullying Policy	Anti-Bullying-Policy.pdf (bowlsdevelopmentalliance.com)
Complaints and Appeals	Complaints Procedure - Bowls Development Alliance
Regulations in relation to safeguarding disciplinary issues	Under construction
Safeguarding Children Policy	Resources - Bowls Development Alliance
Safe and Fair Membership	Under construction
Data Protection - Information Sharing - Privacy	Privacy Policy - Bowls Development Alliance
Safe Recruitment	2-Safe-Recruitment-Guidelines-.pdf (bowlsdevelopmentalliance.com)
Equality	Equality Policy - Bowls Development Alliance

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Appendix E – Support lines

Support Organisation	Topic(s)	Contact Details
Action on Elder Abuse	Aims to prevent the abuse of older people	020 8765 7000 enquiries@elderabuse.org.uk
Ann Craft Trust	Adult Safeguarding (plus safeguarding children)	0115 951 5400 Ann-Craft-Trust@nottingham.ac.uk
Anti - Bullying Alliance	Support with bullying issues	aba@ncb.org.uk
ASSIST	Support for families who have experienced trauma	01788 551919 assisttraumacare.org.uk
Citizens Advice Bureau	Free information and advice on legal and other problems	08001448848 citizensadvice.org.uk/
Karma Nirvana	Support and advice re honour-based abuse and forced marriage	0800 5999 247 karmanirvana.org.uk
LGBT Foundation	Support for LGBTQ+ issues	https://lgbt.foundation/ 0345 3 30 30 30
Men's Advice Line	For males living with /survivors of domestic abuse	https://mensadviceline.org.uk/ 0808 801 0327
NACRO	Advice on working with those with criminal convictions	0300 123 1889 https://www.nacro.org.uk/
Rape Crisis	Information for survivors of sexual violence and their friends and family	rapecrisis.org.uk 0808 500 2222
Respond	Support for victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse who have learning disabilities	020 7383 0700 https://respond.org.uk/
Samaritans	An organisation providing volunteers to listen when people need help	Freephone 116 123 www.samaritans.org
Stonewall	Information and support for LGBTQ+ communities	https://www.stonewall.org.uk/
Stop Hate Crime	Challenges all forms of hate crime and discrimination	0800 138 1625 https://www.stophateuk.org
Suzy Lamplugh Trust	Leading authority on personal safety.	0207 091 0014 https://www.suzylamplugh.org
Victim Support	Support for those who have suffered the effects of a crime.	0808 168 9111 https://www.victimsupport.org.uk
Women's Aid Federation	National domestic violence charity	01236 730992

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Key abbreviations found in this document

ACT	Ann Craft Trust - Leading UK Authority on Safeguarding
ASC	Adult Social Care
BDA	Bowls Development Alliance
BCGBA	British Crown Green Bowls Association
BE	Bowls England
CMG	Case Management Group
DBS	Disclosure & Barring Service (formally known as CRB)
EBF	English Bowling Federation
EIBA	English Indoor Bowling Association Ltd
ESMBA	English Short Mat Bowling Association
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
MASH	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
NACRO	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NGB	National Governing Body
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
SO	Safeguarding Officer (NGBs, Counties and clubs)



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Version 1

First Approved:	December 2021
Last reviewed:	May 2026
Date of next review:	May 2027

Review History

Date of Review	Comments
December 2021	Version 1 created and approved for use
November 2023	Reviewed
May 2025	Reviewed
May 2026	Version 2 created

Revision History

Version	Change Log	Date
1	New policy created to separate policies for children and adults	December 2021
2	Policy Updated	May 2026