



Al-Anon Family Groups Safeguarding Policy

Version Control Record

Version	Action
0.1	Al-Anon Safeguarding Policy approved by Family Groups Ltd and Al-Anon Family Groups CLG.

Version	Date Approved	Date of next review	Policy Name
2.0	FGLtd 29 th June 2024 and AFG CLG 3 rd July 2024	June 2027	Safeguarding Policy
List of amendments		• Changed annual review of policy to three years	
3.0	FGLtd 4 th July 2026 and AFG CLG 1 st July 2026	June 2029	Safeguarding Policy
List of amendments		• Replaced 'young people' with 'children' for clarity • Replaced 'Equal Opportunities Policy (UK)' with 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy' • Replaced 'staff' with 'employees' for clarity • Removed 'Designated Liaison Person' as this person only deals with Alateen • Included emergency services for Eire • Removed OSCR as they no longer receive safeguarding reports • Removed DBS as they do not receive safeguarding reports • Included HSE in Eire	

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire is committed to protecting everyone who comes into contact with our organisation - children and adults. We believe that everyone has the right to freedom from all forms of exploitation and abuse.

This policy sets out our approach to safeguarding. It should be read in conjunction with:

- Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire Service Manual
- Al-Anon Safeguarding Children Policy UK
- Al-Anon Safeguarding Children Policy Eire
- Al-Anon Family Groups GDPR Policy
- Al-Anon Family Groups Health and Safety General Policy Statement (UK)
- Guideline UKG22 Safety in Al-Anon
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints Policy.

NOTE: Alateen Groups have a separate safeguarding policy, specifically to address child protection legislation, and so this policy does not include Alateen members or Alateen Groups. Under 18s are not allowed to attend Al-Anon meetings.

We publish this policy on our website and we encourage our members, volunteers and employees to report any safeguarding concerns to the General Secretary at generalsecretary@al-anonuk.org.uk or GSO, 57b Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0BB.

1. What do we mean by safeguarding and protecting people from abuse?

We use the term safeguarding to refer to the steps that we take to protect people from the risk of harm or abuse that could arise when they come into contact with our organisation, whether as members, office holders, volunteers or employees.

Safeguarding risks can take many different forms and we have listed some examples below. This list is not exhaustive and it is important to recognise that any action or inaction by another person that causes a violation of a person's human rights is a safeguarding issue, whether deliberate or unknowing, and whether contained in a single act or repeated acts.

- Sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation – including indecent exposure, exposure to pornographic material, sexual teasing or innuendo, or inappropriate touching.
- Physical abuse – including hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, pushing, restraining or otherwise causing physical harm.
- Emotional or psychological abuse – including humiliating, blaming, controlling, overprotecting, isolating, intimidating or harassing.
- Bullying or harassment – including cyber bullying, harassment, or abuse.
- Discriminatory abuse on any of the grounds in the Equality Act 2010 includes, but is not limited to abuse that is related to a person's age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

See UKG22 Safety in Al-Anon for further information.

2. What are our responsibilities?

Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who believe that alcoholism is a family disease and share their experience, strength and hope in order to solve their common problems. Al-Anon is a self-supporting fellowship whose programme is based on the Twelve Steps (adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous).

Everyone who comes to an Al-Anon meeting does so to recover from the family disease of alcoholism. We are all potentially vulnerable, therefore providing a safe and secure environment to talk about difficult situations is paramount. We do this by ensuring all members of Al-Anon, are given a warm welcome. We give access to policy documents and guidelines through the website where we also emphasise our principles of confidentiality and anonymity.

Throughout the process of ensuring everyone's safety and welfare, and while recognising the equality of every person, we encourage everyone to keep in mind differing family patterns and lifestyles, not only due to different racial, ethnic and cultural groups but also issues of age, disability, gender, social background, religion, language and sexual orientation.

i) General Service Board

The General Service Board is ultimately responsible for safeguarding and for ensuring that Al-Anon personnel are competent to carry out their safeguarding responsibilities. The Trustees are committed to making sure that all safeguarding concerns and allegations are taken seriously and responded to appropriately by the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding.

- Safeguarding is on the agenda at Board meetings and Trustees receive reports on any safeguarding issues.
- The Trustees seek to avoid potential conflicts of interest. They will remove themselves from any discussion which involves actual conflicts of interest in order to avoid Al-Anon being compromised in any way in enforcing our safeguarding commitments.
- Any safeguarding concerns or allegations concerning the General Secretary or a Trustee will be reported to the Lead Trustee safeguarding@al-anonuk.org.uk who will respond appropriately.
- The Board will discuss the reporting procedures of safeguarding issues to Al-Anon's regulators, the Charity Commission and/or the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (**OSCR**). In Eire, the Charities Regulator (CRA)/Health Services Executive (HSE).
- The Board will support the General Secretary, including referrals on a safeguarding matter to the statutory agencies.
- The Trustees will review this Safeguarding Policy every three years or sooner when there are any material changes to safeguarding legislation or guidance.

ii) General Secretary

The General Secretary reports to the General Service Board on safeguarding issues. The General Secretary is responsible for:

- arranging for the Board to review this Safeguarding Policy every three years or sooner when there are material changes to the safeguarding legislation or guidance;
- reviewing compliance with this Safeguarding Policy;
- acting as a point of contact within Al-Anon UK & Eire for safeguarding questions, concerns or complaints;
- ensuring that safeguarding concerns are investigated appropriately and in line with this Policy;
- maintaining a record of all safeguarding incidents, concerns, reports and referrals; and
- liaising with external agencies on safeguarding issues (see External Agencies below).

iii) Group Representatives

Group Representative (GR) should:

- act as a point of contact within their Group for safeguarding questions, concerns or complaints;
- report any safeguarding concerns to the General Secretary.

iv) Group Members and employed Personnel

All members and personnel who work for, or volunteer on behalf of, Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Éire share a responsibility to protect people from harm and to ensure the welfare of all members in a safe and caring environment that supports their best interests and prevents abuse.

Al-Anon UK & Eire is committed to providing a safe setting for everyone involved in the organisation.

We ask everyone to:

- be familiar with this Safeguarding Policy and adhere to it;
- report any safeguarding concerns or suspicions following the procedure set out below;
- co-operate with the reporting procedures regarding any safeguarding concerns.

3. Prevention of Harm

i) Safe Recruitment Practice:

Al-Anon is committed to the safe recruitment, selection and vetting of staff. The General Secretary is responsible for ensuring that the recruitment measures set out below are applied rigorously and consistently.

Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire will ensure that it carries out appropriate DBS checks.

ii) Meetings: Safeguarding will be a regular agenda item at staff meetings and General Service Board meetings.

iii) Training: The General Secretary, staff and Board members will receive appropriate training to fulfil their responsibilities regarding Safeguarding.

4. Reporting safeguarding concerns

If you have any concerns that someone may be experiencing, has experienced, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse or exploitation you should make a report to the General Secretary without delay at generalsecretary@al-anonuk.org.uk or GSO, 57b Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0BB.

When you make a report, it is helpful if you can provide details of your concerns including:

- the name(s) of the people involved;
- a description of each incident;
- the dates, times and location of each incident.

If you are concerned that someone is at risk of serious harm, you should call the emergency services (by ringing (999 UK) (999/112 Eire). This should be done without delay and then the matter reported to the General Secretary as soon as possible.

5. Confidentiality

Al-Anon will treat all safeguarding reports as confidential and information will only be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis. This may include sharing information with selected GSO personnel, with

members of the General Service Board or with external agencies (see External Agencies **contact list on the website**).

Our traditions of anonymity and confidentiality must not prevent you from disclosing safeguarding concerns or issues. The ethos of 'Whom you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here let it stay here' or 'The things you heard were spoken in confidence and should be treated as confidential. Keep them within the walls of this room and the confines of your mind' DOES NOT APPLY IN THE CONTEXT OF ABUSE.

Anyone who makes a report under this procedure in good faith will be protected against any negative repercussions as a result of raising a safeguarding concern.

6. Responding to and reporting of allegations of abuse and other safeguarding issues

Safeguarding reports may reach Al-Anon through various routes, including at meetings or conventions, in telephone calls, text messages or social media. All concerns must be taken seriously.

If someone raises a safeguarding concern with you, you should:

- listen and empathise; offer understanding and reassurance
- reassure and affirm their courage in speaking out
- Only ask questions of clarification on what the person has said
- repeat what you have been told to check your understanding
- reassure them that Al-Anon will treat all safeguarding reports as confidential but **do not make promises of secrecy**
- encourage the member to contact the appropriate agencies who will help them
- make a record of the conversation and report accurately to the General Secretary at GSO
- The Safeguarding Reporting form (below) and all materials relating to the safeguarding concern should be sent to the General Secretary at GSO without delay

The General Secretary will consider the safeguarding report and will make a decision about how to take the matter forward and, if necessary, take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of the individual or Group.

7. Reporting to the General Service Board

- The General Secretary will inform the Board in an anonymised report, usually through the Chair of GSB, when a safeguarding report is received and reported to external agencies. It is the responsibility of the Trustees to ensure that this reporting has been done. The Trustees will discuss the reporting procedures of safeguarding issues to Al-Anon's regulators, the Charity Commission UK, and the Charities Regulator (CRA) in Eire. During this discussion the Trustees will consider the guidance 'How to report a serious incident in your charity' published by the Charity Commission (UK) and 'Raise a concern about adults at risk of abuse' (Eire).

8. Reporting to External Agencies

Al-Anon will refer safeguarding concerns to appropriate external agencies, which may include:

- a Local Authority Designated Officer (**LADO**) or Local Safeguarding Adults Board in England and/or their equivalents in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland or Eire
- law enforcement authorities for criminal investigation
- the HSE and Gardai in Eire

- Emergency services (999 UK) (999/112 Eire). This should be done without delay if anyone is concerned that someone is at risk of serious harm

Where applicable, a redacted report of incidents or concerns of safeguarding allegations, may also be provided to other third parties (for example, our public liability insurers).

Safeguarding Children in Al-Anon

No one under the age of 18 may attend an Al-Anon meeting. Members should assure themselves, in order to avoid legal consequences, that any young attendees are 18 or over.

Vulnerable Adults

Many members feel very vulnerable when attending Al-Anon meetings but in terms of this policy a vulnerable adult is considered to be:

anyone over the age of 18 years who may be unable to protect themselves from abuse, harm or exploitation, or their ability to report such instances is limited, which may be by reason of illness, age, mental illness, disability or other types of physical or mental impairment.

Al-Anon members have a duty of care to report abuse, harm or exploitation of any vulnerable adult to their Local Safeguarding Adult Board (LSAB) in the UK and Health Service Executive (HSE) in Eire. Members can find local contact details by contacting their local authority or Health Trust Safeguarding Lead for further advice.

In reporting a concern, the names of both the person making the report and the vulnerable person must be provided before any further action can be taken.

Members can contact the General Secretary at GSO for advice about a concern but if a member considers that there be an immediate and serious danger to the vulnerable adult then they should call the emergency services without delay. Please inform the General Secretary at GSO if you or your Group have dealt with a safeguarding incident so that it can be logged centrally.

SAFEGUARDING REPORT FORM

Please use this form to report any safeguarding incident that has arisen in your Group to the General Secretary at the General Service Office at:

Email: generalsecretary@al-anonuk.org.uk

Postal Address: 57B Great Suffolk Street, London SE1 0BB.

Your Contact Details:

Name.....

Email.....

Telephone no.....

Details of Safeguarding Incident:

Date and time:

Location:

Name of Person or people involved:

Description of incident:

Action Taken:

Signed (person making the report):

Date of report:

Signed (General Secretary):

Date received: