



OXFAM

OXFAM GB ADULT SAFEGUARDING POLICY

POLICY Details

Policy Number:	COCR021
Policy Owner:	Head of Safeguarding
Policy Author:	Head of Safeguarding
SlT Sponsor:	Chief Executive Officer

APPROVAL INFORMATION

Approved By:	Board of Trustees
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Frequency Of Review:	Every 3 years or sooner if applicable

CONSULTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Stakeholders Consulted:	<input type="checkbox"/> Board Committee <input type="checkbox"/> Country Director(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Governance team <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HR team <input type="checkbox"/> InfoSec team <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity team <input type="checkbox"/> International Ops <input type="checkbox"/> Legal team <input type="checkbox"/> Risk & Assurance <input type="checkbox"/> SLT Retail <input type="checkbox"/> Trustee Board <input type="checkbox"/> Union <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other/Equalities/Direct engagement/ Volunteering Team /Area Managers/Shop Managers
Date(S) Of Consultations:	
Description Of Consultations:	Head of Direct Engagement and Events Head of Festivals Head of Supporter Services Compliance and Supporter Risk Lead Marketing Compliance Manager

	Senior Face-to-face Programme Manager Face-to-face Coordinator
Implementation Owner:	Head of Safeguarding.
Implementation Plan:	Retail safeguarding training for managers and HRBPs Retail safeguarding e-learning Safeguarding focal point training Communication plan

SCOPE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Geographical Scope:	UK
Security Classification:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal <input type="checkbox"/> Confidential
Circulation:	Retail senior managers, retail managers, HR Business Partners (HRBPs), Direct Engagement managers, Office Volunteer managers

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1. Introduction

1.1 Policy Statement

At Oxfam, we believe in the inherent rights, freedom, dignity and equality of all people, especially adults at risk. Adults at risk can be extremely vulnerable, intersections of various factors such as class, gender, race, sexual orientation, disability or social and economic factors, further increase an adult's vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. Oxfam's approach to adult safeguarding has moved beyond limited definitions of vulnerability to recognise that anyone can experience vulnerability depending on context, power dynamics, and intersecting aspects of identity and circumstance.

This policy will automatically be applied in the UK and geographies where Oxfam GB is Executive Affiliate. The policy must be used in conjunction with One Oxfam Safeguarding Policies. The Care Act 2014 provides legal framework for safeguarding adults the UK. The Charity Commission, Oxfam GB's regulatory body expects organisations that work with adults at risk to comply with legislation and follow best practices.

Oxfam has a duty of care towards all adults at risk who work and volunteer for the organisation across UK and global programmes, the duty includes the safety and wellbeing of all adults at risk who come into contact with Oxfam in our retail shops, fundraising events or festival volunteering.

Oxfam is committed to minimising the risk of abuse occurring; supporting anyone who is vulnerable and is experiencing or has experienced abuse. Oxfam shall work with all relevant agencies to try to end any abuse that is taking place.

This policy shall be used in conjunction with relevant employment/labour laws, duty of care and relevant criminal laws to make decisions about how to respond to any complaints and concerns raised, with the best interest of the adult at risk always being prioritised.

Oxfam staff, volunteers and related personnel must report concerns of adult abuse perpetrated by representatives of Oxfam. This can be done this by reporting through Speak Up or contacting the Safeguarding Team.

The Safeguarding Team will provide advice about immediate referrals and liaise with the relevant agencies.

Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to create and proactively maintain an organisational culture and operational environment which prevents and deters any actions and omissions, whether deliberate or inadvertent, that place adults at risk of any kind of abuse. Substantiated allegations of abuse and other breaches of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal or withdrawal from volunteering.

This policy establishes Oxfam's approach to safeguarding adults who are at risk of abuse and outlines the responsibilities of all staff and related personnel to prevent and respond to abuse. It provides a framework for identifying, reporting, and addressing potential and actual safeguarding concerns.

Overarching accountability for Adult Safeguarding within Oxfam GB sits with the CEO and Chair of Trustees.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy to:

- define Oxfam's approach to safeguarding adults at risk
- provide a framework for identifying, reporting, and addressing potential and actual safeguarding concerns.

- keep adults at risk safe from harm perpetrated by Oxfam representatives (staff and volunteers)
- ensure a safe environment for all adults at risk who come in to contact with Oxfam
- allow Oxfam to hold those accountable those whose actions breach this policy and do not uphold the principles
- outline the responsibilities of all staff and related personnel to prevent and respond to abuse of adults at risk

1.3 Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to all Oxfam representatives, including staff, volunteers, and any other individuals working for OGB within the UK and geographies where OGB is executing affiliate. This policy compliments the One Oxfam safeguarding policies which are applicable worldwide.

The policy applies to all Oxfam staff, consultants, volunteers including Affiliate Trustees, Board and Committee members and Directors, trading staff, fundraising staff and invited visitors residing, working and/or travelling on behalf of Oxfam.

This policy applies in-person and online, and during and outside work hours. Actions taken by Oxfam employees and volunteers outside of working hours that are seen to contradict this policy will be considered a violation of this policy.

2. Core Adult safeguarding principles

2.1 The principles that guide this policy:

- **Best interests of the Adult:** The welfare of the adult is paramount.
- **Survivor-Centred Approach:** Oxfam prioritises the rights, needs and wishes of the victim-survivor, ensuring their safety, dignity and wellbeing are at the forefront of all actions and decisions relating to them.
- **Inclusiveness and Accountability:** Staff must be able to comply with and be accountable to each policy.
- **Confidentiality:** Information regarding adult safeguarding concerns will be handled with the utmost confidentiality.
- **Respect and Dignity:** Treat all adults at risk with respect and dignity.
- **Zero Tolerance to Inaction Against Abuse:** Oxfam has zero tolerance policy for inaction against any form of adult abuse or exploitation. Any form of bullying, harassment, humiliation, or other mistreatment towards an adult at risk will not be tolerated and could result in termination of employment or withdrawal from volunteering.

2.2 Oxfam's Core Principles on Adult at risk abuse

- Abuse by Oxfam Employees and volunteers towards an adult at risk constitute acts of gross misconduct and are, therefore, grounds for termination of employment or contract/agreement. Other forms of harm directed at an adult at risk or as a consequence of omission or neglect or duty by Oxfam Employees and volunteers is grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
- Oxfam Employees and volunteers are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents abuse and promotes the implementation of this Policy. Oxfam Managers at all levels have particular

responsibilities to support and develop systems, which maintain this environment.

- Prioritise the welfare of the adult at risk throughout any safeguarding process. This includes consulting the person in safeguarding decisions before taking action, (unless they lack capacity to make decisions, which must be documented in a risk assessment).

3. OXFAM ADULT AT RISK SAFEGUARDING COMMITMENTS

- A) Treat all adults at risk with respect and dignity
- B) Ensure safe recruitment and referencing and vetting procedures are in place and followed
- C) Ensure all managers and safeguarding focal points are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep adults at risk safe through the provision of appropriate training, including the emerging issues of digital safeguarding, domestic violence, forced marriage, criminal exploitation, racism and extremism where relevant
- D) Ensure clearly documented, contextually appropriate and reporting procedures are in place
- E) Ensure the identification and appointment of Oxfam people with clearly articulated responsibilities to coordinate/lead adult safeguarding work (including incident management and reporting) within UK operations
- F) Ensure effective adult safeguarding risk management
- G) Ensure appropriate procedures, protocols and processes are established and followed for managing personal data relating to adults at risk
- H) Ensure the Oxfam Digital Safeguarding and Social Media User Policies provide for the safe use of information and communication technologies such as the Internet, social networking sites, and digital photography

4. Policy Contents

4.1 Definition of safeguarding

The definition of “Safeguarding” in Oxfam is ‘The measures we take to prevent any type of abuse or exploitation from taking place through the course of our work, specifically sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment as well as all types of child abuse, and respond appropriately to concerns or feedback that are raised’.

Adult safeguarding is the process of protecting adults who have care and support needs from abuse and neglect, ensuring they have the right to live in safety and dignity. This involves people and organizations working together to prevent and respond to harm, promoting the individual's wellbeing, and respecting their views, wishes, feelings, and beliefs in decisions made about them.

An Adult at Risk is defined as any person aged 18 years and over who (a) has needs for care and support, (b) is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and (c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect

themselves against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it. This definition encompasses, but is not limited to, conditions specified in the Care Act 2014 and other relevant legislation. This definition of an adult at risk may at times be expanded to include:

- Adults experiencing situational vulnerability
- Adults whose vulnerability is related to context, environment, or power dynamics
- Adults experiencing multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities due to factors such as gender, sexuality, disability, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status

4.2 Definitions of abuse

Oxfam **will not** tolerate the abuse of adults at risk in any form.

Abuse can take many forms and occurs within various contexts. It may consist of a single act or repeated acts. Oxfam recognises that vulnerability is not inherent or permanent. Anyone can experience vulnerability depending on circumstances, power dynamics, and environmental factors.

For the purpose of this policy:

Physical abuse - Including but not limited to hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, unlawful or inappropriate restraint, or inappropriate physical sanctions. It also includes cultural practices which can cause distress, harm and/or lasting health ramifications.

Domestic abuse - "An incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse by someone who is or has been an intimate partner or family member regardless of gender or sexuality." Domestic violence and abuse may include psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; as well as 'honour' based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Sexual abuse - Including rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, unwanted touching, or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented, could not consent, or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse - Including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

Digital/Tech abuse - Including cyber stalking, online harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, technology-facilitated coercive control, surveillance through technology, and online grooming or exploitation. Digital abuse can cross over with other forms of abuse and often links to sexual and psychological harm.

Modern slavery – Including human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, and debt bondage. This involves the recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of people through the use of force, coercion, abuse of vulnerability, deception or other means for the purpose of exploitation.

Criminal exploitation is a less known about type of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking that encompasses acquisitive crimes such as forced begging, forced theft (including shoplifting and pickpocketing), as well as cannabis cultivation and financial exploitation. The homeless community, especially young men, can be particularly at risk.

Discriminatory abuse - Including abuse based on a person's age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity or other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment or hate crime/hate incident.

Financial and material abuse – Including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Self-neglect - covering a wide range of behaviours such as neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings.

Sexual harassment - any unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or offensive environment. This includes verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct.

4.3 Reporting concerns

If an adult at risk is at immediate risk or has reported to the police on 999.

If you think a crime has been committed, but there is no urgent risk, you can call 101
Always report an adult safeguarding concern to Speak Up.

Anyone raising a concern will be supported to do so without fear of retribution. Concerns can be raised at any time following an incident and will be investigated in accordance with this policy. Concerns can be raised anonymously.

It is the responsibility of all representatives of Oxfam to raise any concerns they have or those which are reported to them according to this policy. It is not your responsibility to decide whether or not abuse has occurred.

4.4 What to do if an adult at risk discloses abuse or you suspect abuse

Staff, volunteers and related personnel who have concerns about the welfare and safety of any adult at risk they come into contact with through their work or volunteering, must report the concerns immediately. If an adult at risk discloses that they have been abused, you must report this immediately.

Concerns can be reported to:

- A manager (who must report the matter to Speak Up),
- The Safeguarding Team
- An HRBP (if concerning a retail environment),
- To Speak Up, who will ensure appropriate action is taken. Reports may be made anonymously.

Managers who receive concerns from staff and volunteers must report the concern immediately to Speak Up or a safeguarding team member.

The Safeguarding Team will provide advice about immediate referrals and liaise with the relevant agencies.

4.5 Ways to Report Concerns

Safeguarding concerns can be reported via:

- The Speak Up online misconduct [webform](https://oxfam.clue-webforms.co.uk/webform/misconduct/en):
<https://oxfam.clue-webforms.co.uk/webform/misconduct/en>
- Email: speakup@oxfam.org.uk

In addition to the above, for those reporting concerns in a retail environment:

- The Retail Safeguarding Manager – contact: safeguarding@oxfam.org.uk

For Festivals & Events: Reports can be made directly to the Head of Festivals, Festival Coordinator, or UK Safeguarding Team using the designated communication channels established for that specific event. These event specific reporting lines ensure immediate response during festivals and other events.

4.6 Safer Recruitment

Safe recruitment refers to the processes and practices Oxfam uses to ensure individuals who are employed or engaged as volunteers are suitable for specific roles, particularly in environments where they will be working with adults at risk, children or other vulnerable groups. Safe recruitment practices aim to prevent the hiring of individuals who may pose a risk to these groups, ensuring a safe environment for all.

- **Pre-Employment Checks:** All potential employees and volunteers must undergo reference checks. Failure to provide a suitable reference may result in disqualification from the recruitment process.
- **ID Checks:** All potential employees and volunteers must provide valid identification.
- **Duty to Disclose:** All employees and volunteers must disclose any unspent convictions, and some specified spent convictions where they remain legally subject to disclosure. **Specified offences** are generally of a serious sexual or violent nature, or are relevant for safeguarding purposes. These offences are never filtered, regardless of how long ago they occurred. A full list of these offences is maintained by the government on GOV.UK.
- **Continual duty to disclose:** All employees and volunteers are required to disclose any new information that may affect their eligibility to work or volunteer with children or adults at risk, including allegations, investigations, or charges.
- **Exclusions:** Oxfam are not able to offer employment, or volunteering opportunities, where a criminal record check has identified a conviction for a sexual offence, any form of child or vulnerable adult abuse. For spent convictions a risk assessment must be completed in all cases.
- **Induction and Training:** New staff and volunteers will receive comprehensive induction training on safeguarding policies and procedures. Attendance and completion of this training are mandatory. Failure to comply with the training requirements will result in the individual being unable to commence their role pending successful completion

Please see Oxfam Recruitment Policy attached.

4.7 Training and Awareness

Safeguarding training equips staff and volunteers with the knowledge and skills to recognise signs of abuse or neglect. This enables them to take appropriate action. Through safeguarding training, staff and volunteers learn how to identify potential risks and vulnerabilities, empowering them to respond effectively when faced with safeguarding concerns. Staff who understand the principles of safeguarding contribute to a safe and supportive environment for vulnerable, marginalised or at-risk individuals.

- **E-Learning - Safeguarding Essentials training** is mandatory for all Oxfam Great Britain (OGB) staff.
- **Annual Code of Conduct Refresher** is mandatory for all staff
- **All volunteers are required to view a safeguarding video and are provided with a Code of Practice explainer containing essential guidelines and standards.**
- **Safeguarding refresher course.** This course is mandatory every two years for paid shop and deputy shop managers. This course is delivered by HR Business Partners who have completed additional training. A separate course is provided for festival coordinators and is delivered by the UK Safeguarding Advisor, and it is also delivered every two years.
- **Advanced Safeguarding Training** is mandatory for all Retail HR Business Partners (HRBPs). This is designed for individuals in leadership or managerial roles who oversee safeguarding practices.
- **On-line and digital training (including recognising and responding to online risks and threat(s))** is mandatory for all staff.
- **Refresher training:** Regular updates and refresher courses will be provided to ensure ongoing awareness and compliance

4.8 Digital safeguarding

Policy to applied in conjunction with the [Digital Safeguarding Policy](#)

Oxfam recognizes the increasing significance and need for digital safeguarding. Digital abuse often intersects with other forms of abuse and can be used as a tool for bullying, harassment, and exploitation.

For Oxfam shops, it's important that shop managers and Volunteer Supervisors clearly understand the risks posed to adults at risk via online activity and social media. **It is important to ensure adults at risk understand their responsibilities so not put themselves at risk of allegations.**

To mitigate these risks the following policy points must be adhered to:

- Adult staff and volunteers must not be in contact (e.g. telephone, text or online) with under 18s, or add them as friends on social media platforms
- Staff should be clear on how to report and seek help if there are any concerns

In Festival environments, any behaviour, including online activity on social media, in official or unofficial groups on platforms such as (but not limited to) WhatsApp, Facebook or X (formerly Twitter), which breaches our safeguarding standards could result in withdrawal of volunteer offers or removal from event sites.

Please see our Digital Safeguarding Policy and Festival Volunteer Agreement attached.

5. Standards (Must Be Measurable And Reportable)

- Safeguarding induction and mandatory training completed in first 3 months.
- Referencing and vetting documents correctly and securely stored.
- Criminal records checks for staff in designated roles.
- Cases correctly referred to external agencies and support services.
- Child victim-survivors, as well as staff and volunteers impacted, receive appropriate support in line with OGB survivor policy.

6. Related Documents

6.1 Policies

- [Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\) FR | ES | AR](#)
- [Safeguarding Child Policy FR | ES | AR](#)
- [Digital Safeguarding Policy FR | ES | AR](#)
- [Youth Safeguarding Policy FR | ES | AR](#)
- [Safeguarding Children Policy- Retail](#)
- [Survivor Policy](#)
- [Speak Up Policy](#)
- [Code of Conduct \(Staff\) FR | ES | AR](#)
- [Code of Conduct \(Non-Staff\) FR | AR](#)
- [Anti-bullying and Harassment](#)
- [Recruitment Policy FR](#)
- [Resolution Policy \(Previously Dealing With Problems At Work\) ES | FR | AR](#)
- [Volunteering Policy](#)
- [Safeguarding Procedures](#)

7. legal framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to safeguard adults at risk as follows:

England & Wales: The Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act 2005 (updated in 2019)

Scotland: The Adult Support and Protection Act 2007

Wales: Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014

Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

Data Protection Act 2018

Sexual Offences Act 2003

8. Survivor Support

Oxfam GB is committed to providing appropriate support to survivors of abuse perpetrated by Oxfam GB employees or representatives, or which occurs as a direct result of Oxfam's work. This support is available regardless of when the incident occurred and is not dependent on the naming of a perpetrator or the outcome of an investigation.

- See OGB - [Survivor Policy](#)

9. Confidentiality

Oxfam understand that information shared in the context of safeguarding is sensitive. The Safeguarding Team will handle all safeguarding concerns with the utmost confidentiality, ensuring that information is only shared with those who need to know, in line with legal and statutory requirements.

In situations where there is a risk of harm to an individual, or if there is a legal obligation to share information, Oxfam will act in the best interest of the vulnerable individual. The Safeguarding Team will share relevant information with appropriate authorities and professionals to ensure their safety, while respecting confidentiality to the greatest extent possible.

10. Roles and responsibilities

All Oxfam Employees, Volunteers and Related-Personnel: Everyone who works on behalf of Oxfam is required to report any suspicions or incidences of child abuse, Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) and abuse of adults at risk. They must familiarise themselves with this policy, adhere to it, report any concerns, and participate in safeguarding training. Failure to report to a relevant person suspicion of abuse relating to someone else is a breach of Oxfam's policy and could lead to disciplinary action being taken against employees and the termination of Oxfam's relationship with nonemployees. There is no obligation for an individual to report any incident that has happened to them.

Trustees and Directors: Oxfam Directors and Trustees, hold overall accountability for this policy and its implementation.

Safeguarding Focal Points: Provide support to prevent and respond to child abuse, SEAH and abuse of adults at risk alongside their substantive roles. Raising awareness and promoting best practices by receiving concerns, supporting survivors and reporting concerns in a confidential manner within their team.

Safeguarding Leads/Advisors: Provide support to Focal Points, staff and programmes to prevent and respond to child abuse, SEAH and abuse of adults at risk. Raising awareness, conducting training and promoting best practices, as well as receiving concerns, conducting referrals to specialised services and supporting investigations. Safeguarding Leads/Safeguarding Teams/Advisors and senior management may also offer advice and support relating to concerns relating to but not necessarily fitting definitions relayed above.

Managers: Responsible for promoting awareness of this policy with people they manage and for supporting/developing systems that create and maintain a safe working environment. This also includes the responsibility for ensuring that all staff and Related Personnel receive regular child abuse, SEAH and abuse of adults at risk trainings, with a particular emphasis on staff who are in direct contact with the people we serve. They must ensure that staff they supervise understand this policy, and that it is implemented, provide support to staff and volunteers, and handle safeguarding concerns appropriately Managers should prioritise awareness raising for themselves and their divisions, individual departments or teams, and provide budget lines for some activities.

Policy Owners: Are accountable for policy development, implementation, dissemination, maintenance, and review.

11. Consequences of non-compliance

Non-compliance with this policy shall result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

12. Appendices

12.1 DEFINITIONS

Oxfam Employees and related Personnel

The term "Oxfam Employees and Related Personnel" includes all employees of Oxfam International, Oxfam Affiliates and Oxfam Country Offices. The term also includes board members, volunteers, interns, and international and local consultants, day labourers, in addition to individual and corporate contractors of

these entities and related personnel. This includes non-Oxfam entities and their employees and individuals who have entered into partnership, sub-grant or sub-recipient agreements with Oxfam.

Adult at risk:

The Care Act 2014 defines an adult at risk as someone who:

- Is aged 18 years and over;
- Has needs for care and support;
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect;
- Is unable to protect themselves because of those needs

Oxfam recognises that this definition may be expanded to include:

- Adults experiencing situational vulnerability
- Adults whose vulnerability is related to context, environment, or power dynamics
- Adults experiencing multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities due to factors such as gender, sexuality, disability, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status

Mental Capacity

In the safeguarding context, mental capacity is defined as the ability of a person to:

- Understand the implications of their situation and the risks to themselves.
- Take action themselves to prevent abuse.
- Participate to the fullest extent possible in decision making about interventions involving them, be they life changing events or everyday matters.

Oxfam recognises that mental capacity can fluctuate and is decision specific. Staff and volunteers must never attempt to determine someone's capacity themselves. If you have concerns about an individual's ability to understand or make decisions, please notify the Safeguarding Team. Always maintain a presumption of capacity while the Safeguarding Team coordinates appropriate support and professional involvement as needed.

12.2 Procedures for managing adult safeguarding concerns

Please see Safeguarding Procedures attached.

Version Control

Version Number	Date	Author	Brief Description of Changes
Approved Dec 25	September 2025	Rosie Woollcott Head of Safeguarding	Aligned with Oxfam policy template Updated policy statement Definition of adult at risk to recognise vulnerability depending on context,

			power dynamics, and intersecting aspects of identity and circumstance. Contact details and reporting updated. Types of abuse
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APPROVAL HISTORY

Version Number	Date APPROVED	REVIEWED/APPROVED BY	COMMENTS
Approved Dec 25	December 2025	Board of Trustees	

PUBLIC