Safeguarding children at family events: recognise and report

General event and hospitality staff need to recognise when information should reach the safeguarding lead. They should know how to report an observation, a disclosure or a concern about an adult's behaviour towards a child. The briefing should cover an alternative reporting route if the usual contact is implicated or unavailable. The article is scoped to general staff in England; specialist safeguarding roles have additional requirements.

England general hospitality and event staff introduction; role-specific school, care, sport and safeguarding-lead awards are outside scope.

The practical principles

Notice concerns

Safeguarding means taking action to protect children from harm. Concerns may involve physical or emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or exploitation. A single sign may have several explanations; record what you observe and use the reporting process. A staff member may notice a child left alone repeatedly, an adult behaving coercively or a child asking for help. A child's safety takes priority over protecting the venue's reputation.

Listen without investigating

If a child tells you something worrying, listen calmly and let them use their own words. Reassure them that speaking up was right. Explain that you will need to share the concern with people who can help. Ask only necessary clarification and avoid leading questions or repeatedly asking them to retell it. Record their words accurately, separating direct observations from what someone else reported.

Use the safeguarding route

Report promptly to the designated lead or deputy. If they are unavailable, implicated or fail to act, use the alternative route and contact local children's social care or police as appropriate. You can report a concern without proving abuse. Call 999 when there is immediate danger. Keep records secure and share relevant information with those handling the concern. Local safeguarding contacts must be available during every shift.

Work through a shift scenario

Fictional exercise: a young visitor tells a volunteer something that makes them worried about safety at home. The volunteer listens calmly, avoids leading questions and explains that they need to share the concern with someone who can help. They record the child's words as accurately as possible, distinguish their own observations and report promptly through the appropriate route. Immediate danger calls for emergency action.

Avoid the common failure

A staff member's task is to pass on a concern accurately. Repeated questioning, confronting a suspected person or promising complete secrecy can undermine safety and appropriate investigation. Keep the record restricted and retain the time and recipient of the report. If a concern remains unresolved, use the escalation route.

A second situation to discuss

Fictional scenario: A young visitor tells a steward they are frightened to go home and asks the steward to keep it secret.

Listen, explain that you need help from the safeguarding team, and report promptly. Write down the words used and immediate circumstances. Avoid confronting the person involved or promising secrecy. Escalate immediate danger to 999.

Use a working record

Record the specific arrangements below before the briefing. Keep the wording short enough for a colleague to use during the shift. Where a field does not apply, explain why; where information is missing, assign a person to resolve it. Store personal or sensitive details in the business's approved system.

- Observation or exact words
- date and time
- immediate danger
- person informed
- report channel
- follow-up route

At the next handover, ask what changed, which action remains open and who now owns it. Close the record only when the agreed follow-up is complete. A recurring problem should inform the next briefing and the relevant operational procedure.

Check understanding

You need proof before reporting?

A reasonable concern can be reported Safeguarding authorities assess concerns; staff should report observations.

A disclosure should be recorded:

In the child's words where possible Accurate words and facts help appropriate assessment.

A child asks an event worker to keep a worry secret

A child starts to tell a steward something worrying and asks for a promise of secrecy. The steward is about to change shifts. How should they respond?

Compare your decision

Listen calmly, take the child seriously and explain in age-appropriate language that you may need to tell someone who can help. Avoid leading questions or trying to investigate. Follow the site's safeguarding and emergency procedures, including prompt referral to the designated lead.

Record the child's own words and the time of the referral through the approved confidential route. A rota change must not leave the concern in an informal handover.

Sources and scope

- Source: https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse
- Source: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-and-protecting-people-for-charities-and-trustees

Original workplace examples and suggested record. Prepared 19 October 2026. Use the current linked guidance and the venue's procedures for operational decisions.

Use this on shift

Resource page and fillable working record · Read the online guide · Course details