

Acuity Safeguarding Policy & Procedure

1 Aim

This safeguarding policy and accompanying procedures apply to all individuals working for Acuity Research & Practice, including employees, contractors, and partners. It provides clear guidance on what safeguarding is, the steps to take if you suspect or are informed about abuse, and the subsequent actions that will follow. This ensures a consistent and effective approach to safeguarding across all our activities.

At Acuity, we recognise our duty of care to prioritise the protection, safety, and well-being of all individuals, particularly those who may be at risk, as participants in our research. We are committed to ensuring that our work – whether through telephone surveys, interviews, or other fieldwork – is conducted ethically, responsibly, and in a manner that upholds the dignity and rights of all participants.

Our commitment to safeguarding extends to our staff, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary knowledge, support, and resources to carry out their roles confidently and safely. We aim to foster a culture where safeguarding is a shared responsibility, with clear processes and robust systems in place to address concerns effectively.

Specifically, we aim to:

Protect participants: We are committed to identifying and mitigating risks to individuals, particularly those who may be vulnerable due to their personal circumstances, age, or health conditions, and responding appropriately to any safeguarding concerns.

Support staff: We provide training, resources, and a supportive environment to empower staff to handle safeguarding issues professionally and without fear of reprisal.

Promote awareness and accountability: We ensure that everyone associated with Acuity understands their safeguarding responsibilities and has access to clear procedures for raising and addressing concerns.

Collaborate responsibly: We work in partnership with relevant external agencies and stakeholders to ensure safeguarding issues are resolved in the best interests of those affected.



Safeguarding is integral to how we operate at Acuity. By embedding safeguarding principles into everything we do, we demonstrate our commitment to ethical practices, participant welfare, and the safety of our staff. Together, we aim to create a research environment that is safe, inclusive, and respectful for all.

2 Definition

Safeguarding can be defined as measures to protect people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect (Care Quality Commission, 2018).

Although the majority of our business and work is carried out with adults, we may occasionally have contact with those under 18 years of age.

3 Roles of Responsibility

While it is not our job to establish whether or not abuse is taking place, it is our responsibility to report any concerns we have over the welfare of children, young people, or adults. This duty extends to the identification of abuse, as well as to allegations brought to the attention of Acuity staff by an employee, a member of the public, our self-employed associates, and any other agencies/individuals with whom we work.

Acuity is not expected to investigate suspicions or concerns; other agencies are trained to do so. Acuity will ensure that all staff and associates understand.

- What they need to do, and what they can expect of one another, to safeguard individuals at risk using this policy. The policy is available at Induction.
- Effective safeguarding systems are those where:
 - All staff who come into contact with individuals at risk are alert to their needs.
 - Expert judgement is used to ensure the right solution/actions are taken to safeguard and promote an individual's welfare.
 - Appropriate information is shared in a timely way.

Acuity recognises that abuse is a symptom of social, institutional and individual discrimination. Disabling attitudes and practices create the belief that it is acceptable to treat others with little respect and to fail to inform, consult, include, or empower people to exercise choice and take decisions that affect their lives. Preventing discrimination is essential to abuse prevention and will not be tolerated.



4 Reporting a safeguarding issue

In the event of a concern about a child or an adult at risk, the primary concern is to ensure you record relevant information. Acuity staff or Associates should then make their line manager/supervisor aware of the issue. They (or their line manager, as agreed) should then contact the (social services) Safeguarding Team at the appropriate local authority as quickly as possible. If it is believed a criminal offence has occurred, contact the Police on 101. Alternatively, phone 999 if a crime is being committed or someone is in immediate danger; this is an emergency protocol.

Safeguarding concerns raised by interviewers should be red-flagged in the internal system with relevant information and reported to the appropriate line manager/supervisor. The CATI interviewer training manual clearly states the process for interviewers to report safeguarding/red flagging and a copy is provided in advance of any Induction training.

Employee safeguarding concerns within Acuity should be reported to a line manager/Director, or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL will ensure others in the organisation understand and follow safeguarding advice and protocols.

5 Role and rationale for appointing a DSL

Acuity conducts housing research that often involves engaging with participants who may be experiencing vulnerabilities. These include, but are not limited to, individuals facing housing instability, health challenges, or other forms of personal distress. During our research activities, safeguarding issues may be disclosed or identified, particularly through direct participant engagement, such as telephone surveys. To ensure such issues are managed responsibly and ethically, Acuity has appointed a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL is responsible for overseeing safeguarding practices, providing guidance to staff, and ensuring concerns are addressed in a manner consistent with statutory and ethical standards. The DSL is supported by a Deputy DSL whose role is to support the DSL and deputise for them in their absence. The roles are currently undertaken by the following people:

DSL: Sean Brennan

Deputy DSL: Laura Crocker



6 Training and awareness

Acuity will ensure an appropriate level of safeguarding training is available to its Directors, employees, associates (interviewers) and any relevant persons linked to the business who need it, to ensure all are aware of: what safeguarding is; our role in safeguarding each other and other individuals; recognising safeguarding issues and taking appropriate action.

7 References and further information

Care Quality Commission (2018) Safeguarding People. Available online at: <http://www.cqc.org.uk/what-we-do/how-we-do-our-job/safeguarding-people>. This policy reflects the latest updates to this CQC guidance made in November 2022.

The MRS Code of Conduct 2023 <https://www.mrs.org.uk/standards/code-of-conduct>. This came into effect in May 2023, replacing the 2019 version, and can be accessed here: [MRS-code-of-conduct-2023.pdf](#).

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