

Safeguarding: A Quick Guide for Staff, Trustees and Volunteers

The Braillists Foundation

A short, supportive introduction to keeping people safe in our work, and what to do if something ever worries you.

This is a summary. Our full Safeguarding Policy (version 2.6, August 2025) remains the complete and authoritative document if you need the detail.

Contents

1. If you have a concern
2. What safeguarding means, and who this applies to
3. Safeguarding at the Braillists
4. What to do: Recognise, Respond, Record, Refer
5. What happens after you report

1. If you have a concern

Email safeguarding@braillists.org as soon as you can. If someone is in immediate danger or needs urgent medical help, call 999 first.

You don't need to be certain, and you don't need to have the answers. Passing your concern on to the right people is exactly the right thing to do, and it is always better to raise something that turns out to be nothing than to stay quiet about something that matters.

- Safeguarding email (the simplest route): safeguarding@braillists.org
- Safeguarding Lead, Dave Williams: dave@braillists.org
- Deputy Safeguarding Lead, Laurent Cadet de Fontenay: laurent@braillists.org
- Urgent, and you can't reach the Lead or Deputy: email safeguarding@braillists.org, which both of them monitor, or contact any board member
- Emergency, someone in immediate danger or needing urgent medical help: call 999

We also welcome concerns from members of the public, partners and others.

2. What safeguarding means, and who this applies to

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights so they can live free from harm, abuse and neglect. Three things are worth holding onto:

- It applies to everyone we come into contact with, not only children but adults at risk too. An adult at risk is someone who, because they need care or support, may be less able to protect themselves from harm, abuse or exploitation. Because so much of our community is made up of blind and partially sighted adults, adults at risk are where safeguarding most often touches our work.

- It is everyone's responsibility, not only the job of the Safeguarding Lead or the board.
- It still applies online. Most of what we do happens over video calls, email forums and online events, and safeguarding matters there just as much as it does in person.

If you're reading this, it almost certainly includes you. Our policy covers all board members, everyone on the Braillists Hub email group, and anyone else helping us: volunteers, consultants and contractors, and visitors to our events.

You are not expected to be a safeguarding expert. Your part is simply to notice, to care, and to pass concerns on to the right people. The rest is handled for you.

3. Safeguarding at the Braillists

Most of our activities are online: braille tuition, workshops, informational and social events, and email discussion forums. Our moderation policy and code of conduct help keep these spaces respectful and safe. Now and then we hold in-person events, braille gatherings, public demonstrations and lessons, or one-to-one and group tuition in hired spaces, and safeguarding is built into the risk assessment for each one.

Most of the people we work with are adults. Children (anyone under 18) are welcome at our events when a parent, guardian or nominated adult is with them, and we don't promote events as suitable for unaccompanied children. On the rare occasions where we expect to interact with unaccompanied under-18s, at least two volunteers who have passed a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check are present throughout. A DBS check is the criminal-record check that helps make sure people are suitable to work with children and adults at risk.

We have identified the following safeguarding scenarios as particularly likely to occur in our online spaces:

Money. A member asking others for money, an outside party targeting members with a scam, or someone offering help with banking, benefits or shopping in a way that gives them control over another person's money or property. Financial abuse frequently begins as a favour, and the person being harmed may not see it that way.

Unwanted contact. A member continuing to contact another after being asked to stop, or moving a conversation out of a class or forum into private email or messaging in order to carry on. Please pass this on rather than trying to mediate it yourself.

4. What to do: Recognise, Respond, Record, Refer

Recognise

A safeguarding concern isn't always dramatic or obvious. It might be a change in someone, in their mood, their behaviour or the way they communicate. It might be something a person tells you about their own situation (this is called a disclosure), something you witness online or in person, or worry about the way a fellow volunteer or member is behaving towards someone.

The Care Act 2014 statutory guidance sets out ten types of abuse and neglect: physical, domestic, sexual, psychological or emotional, financial or material, modern slavery, discriminatory, organisational, neglect and acts of omission, and self-neglect. Two are worth spelling out because of who we work with.

- **Financial or material abuse** covers theft, fraud, scams, and pressure or control over someone's money, property, benefits or possessions.
- **Discriminatory abuse** is harassment or poorer treatment because of a protected characteristic, including disability. In practice that can look like someone being talked over, having decisions made for them, or being told they cannot do something because they are blind.

Trust that quiet “something isn't right” feeling. It is not your role to investigate, to decide whether something is true, or to put it right.

Respond

If someone confides in you, please do:

- listen calmly and patiently, and let them tell you in their own way
- take what they say seriously, and reassure them they were right to speak up.

Please try not to:

- ask probing or leading questions, or make them repeat the story
- investigate, or confront anyone, yourself
- share it with anyone who doesn't need to know.

Adults and children are treated differently here, and the difference matters.

If a child discloses, you pass it on, and you should tell them you will.

If an adult discloses, they normally decide what happens next. Tell them you would like to pass it on to our Safeguarding Lead, explain why, and ask whether they are happy for you to do that. Please don't promise to keep something entirely secret, because there are situations where a concern goes on regardless. It is kinder to be honest about that from the start. Even where an adult asks you not to share the detail, let the Safeguarding Lead know that a conversation has taken place, so they can decide what is needed.

A concern is passed on whether or not the adult agrees where:

- someone else may be at risk, including any child
- the person may be acting under coercion, undue influence or duress
- a criminal offence may have been committed
- the person may not have the mental capacity to make this decision for themselves.

You are not expected to work out whether one of these applies. If you think one might, pass the concern on and say why.

If someone is in serious distress

If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 999. Otherwise, tell the Safeguarding Lead the same day rather than waiting. You are not expected to judge how serious it is, and you are not expected to provide support yourself.

You can let the person know about Samaritans, free on 116 123, at any time of day or night, and the RNIB Helpline on 0303 123 9999, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm.

Record

As soon as you can, write down the date, time and place, what was said (using the person's own words where you can), and what you saw. Stick to the facts rather than your opinions.

Keep your notes securely and don't delete anything until you have passed them to the Safeguarding Lead and had confirmation that they have been received. Once you have that confirmation, delete any copies you still hold, including emails and messages.

Refer

Pass your concern to the Safeguarding Lead or Deputy as soon as possible, using the contacts in section 1. If it's urgent and you can't reach either of them, contact any board member.

5. What happens after you report

You won't be left wondering whether anything is happening. The Safeguarding Lead or Deputy will check how urgent the concern is, arrange medical help if it is needed, look into the situation enough to decide the right next steps, and where necessary refer it on to the police, the local authority or adult services, and the DBS. For concerns involving children, that includes the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the local-authority official who oversees concerns about adults who work with children. As a charitable incorporated organisation, we also report serious safeguarding incidents to the Charity Commission, which is the board's responsibility. Where a concern involves one of our own people, that person is kept away from contact with those at risk while it is looked into.

Safeguarding information is shared only with the people who need to know it, and records are kept securely. Speaking up about a worry is never "telling tales". It is exactly what we want you to do, and ours is a culture where you can raise a concern without fear. If you ever feel something isn't right about how the organisation itself is acting, please raise it with the Safeguarding Lead or with any trustee.

Throughout, the welfare of the child or adult at risk comes first, and whoever raised the concern is supported. If you are ever unsure, please just ask, that's what we're here for.

Related documents

Our full Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and Moderation Policy are available on our website at www.braillists.org.

The Braillists Foundation CIO. Safeguarding quick guide, version 2, August 2026. Next review August 2027. Based on our Safeguarding Policy, version 2.6 (August 2025).