

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited

Safeguarding Standards in AA Fellowship: June 2018

Background

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited (the General Service Board) is a charitable company, with registered charity number 226745.

The members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) support each other in self-regulating groups (the AA Fellowship) which are autonomous from the General Service Board.

The Disclosure and Barring Service and Scottish Government have confirmed that AA members do not require DBS or Disclosure Scotland checks for 12th Stepping or Sponsoring, as they are members of self-regulating groups. As individuals, however, AA members should be aware of their duty of care to others and hence follow the law and best practice on safeguarding, when acting in AA's name. This updated guidance is offered by the General Service Board to be disseminated by the AA Fellowship to all AA members.

This guidance has been updated in light of recent high-profile cases in the wider charity sector which have prompted the need to review and further strengthen safeguarding standards within the AA Fellowship.

The basic principle

Every AA member must recognise that all individuals, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

Who the Guidance protects

This Guidance applies to the safeguarding of all AA members or those who AA members come into contact with when acting in AA's name, including those under the age of 18 (minor) or any vulnerable adults who may be members of the AA Fellowship.

Disseminating best practice

A copy of the latest version of this Guidance should be given to every new AA [and existing AA] member. It is vital that all Group Secretaries understand and learn about safeguarding and protection issues within the context of the AA Fellowship in order to ensure a safe environment for AA members and those who AA members come into contact with when acting in AA's name.

New Members

Meetings with new members to the AA Fellowship:

- should be conducted by two existing AA members and, wherever possible, by a man and a woman;
- should be held in a public place and the date, time, and place of any meeting should be reported in advance to the Group Secretary.

Sponsors

A Sponsor should:

- be at least a year away from their last drink.
- have regard to this guidance and their duty of care towards other AA members.

AA members are not legally required to obtain a DBS Certificate in order to act as a Sponsor. However, Sponsors are encouraged to apply, as individuals, for a basic DBS Check and to provide a copy of their DBS Certificate to their Group Secretary, as a means of strengthening safeguarding standards in the Fellowship.

DBS Checks for members attending schools and prisons

Schools, educational establishments, and prisons will carry out identification checks, and some may ask all volunteers to provide a DBS certificate.

An enhanced DBS check must be obtained by any AA member engaging in a regulated activity. This includes any member who, in AA's name, frequently attends a school, educational establishment, or prison (e.g. to provide advice and guidance or teach) or may have unsupervised contact with a minor or vulnerable adult. It is the school's/prison's/educational establishment's duty, and not that of the Fellowship, to ensure that the requisite DBS checks are completed. However, as a matter of best practice, any members acting in AA's name, should be willing to provide a DBS Certificate or sign up to the DBS Update Service for repeat checks, if requested.

If any Group Secretary or AA member is unsure whether any role undertaken in AA's name requires a criminal record check of any sort they should consult the following governmental guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

Any AA member who holds a DBS Certificate should be encouraged to notify the Group Secretary of this fact and of any updated DBS certificate obtained.

Reporting safeguarding concerns

If any AA member believes they are being abused or knows/suspects that another AA member is being abused they should consider taking the following action(s), as appropriate:

- Preserve any evidence.
- Report all concerns to the:
 - Group Secretary and/or any Group member;
 - Local Authority Adult Social Care team (about a vulnerable adult); and/or
 - Local Authority Children's Services team (about a minor).
- In an emergency, if there is immediate risk of abuse call 999.

If there is any doubt about whether a situation amounts to abuse, members of the Fellowship should ask the advice of their Local Authority Safeguarding Lead.

Smaller Groups

Smaller AA groups, and those in rural areas, should consider contacting other groups in the region to pool resources for 12th Stepping, sponsorship, and to promote and strengthen and safeguarding practices.

Review

This Policy shall be reviewed annually by the Charity (or sooner should there be a change in legislation).

This policy was approved by the General Service Board of AA on: 14 July 2018

Date of next review due: July 2019

Signed:

Roger Booth

Roger Booth (General Secretary) on behalf of the General Service Board for AA (GB) Ltd