ROYAL OPEN COLLEGE

From Knowledge to Practice

Safeguarding Practice Workbook

England edition

This workbook is guided practice. You read a short explanation, look at a worked example, then do the same thinking yourself on a different fictional situation. Everything you need is inside this file, including the answer guide.

It accompanies all seven Royal Open College safeguarding courses. Work through it in order, or use single modules as refreshers. Optional leadership extensions are marked; choose them by what you are actually responsible for, not by the number in a course title.

Before you start

This is continuing professional development practice. It is not a regulated qualification, it does not prove that you are competent in your workplace, and it does not qualify anyone to act as a designated safeguarding lead.

If you are dealing with a real concern now, use your organisation's safeguarding procedures. A real concern must never wait for a training exercise. In an emergency, or where someone is in immediate danger, call 999.

How to use this workbook

Filling it in on screen

Every answer space in this workbook is a real form field. Download the file to your own device first, open it in a PDF reader that supports forms, type your answers, then use Save or Save as to keep a copy. If you open the file inside a web browser, your typing may not be kept when you close the tab: browser viewers vary, and some will not save form data at all.

- Move between fields with the Tab key, or click straight into the box you want.
- Tick boxes and choose options with the space bar when the box has keyboard focus.
- Boxes grow no bigger than they look. Where a task needs a longer answer, a continuation box is provided and labelled.
- Printing works too. If you would rather write by hand, print the workbook and use the same spaces.

Your answers stay with you

Nothing here is submitted anywhere. There is no account, no upload and no marking service. Your saved copy sits on your own device.

That also means a copy you email or share carries your answers with it. Do not type real names, real case details, your employer's identifiers or anything that could identify a real person. Use fictional details, as the examples do.

Choosing your route

The main route runs straight through: explanation, worked example, four activities, a short reflection. Tasks marked Stretch your practice are optional and go further. Leadership extensions are also optional and are written for people who hold oversight, escalation or line management responsibility.

Content note and pausing

The examples describe neglect, emotional and physical harm, sexual harm, financial abuse, domestic abuse, self-neglect, online exploitation, organisational failure and concerns about staff conduct. Nothing is graphic. Even so, a scenario can land close to home. You can skip any module or activity and come back to it, and skipped work is simply left blank rather than counted as done.

How the answer guide works

Every activity has an entry in the answer guide near the end of the file. Each entry explains why an option is supported, incomplete or unsafe, and gives a sample written answer with acceptable alternatives. You mark your own written work against a simple rubric: Covered, Partly covered, Revisit. Nothing is marked automatically, and no score here describes your professional ability.

Go to the answer guide →

Contents

Each line links to the start of that section. Bookmarks in your PDF reader do the same job.

How to use this workbook →

Module 01 — Your role and its limits →

Module 02 — Recognising a concern →

Module 03 — Listening to a disclosure →

Module 04 — Responding and reporting →

Module 05 — Recording facts and chronology →

Module 06 — Sharing relevant information →

Module 07 — Voice, choice and support →

Module 08 — Following up and improving practice →

Capstone C01 — A concern in a school →

Capstone C02 — A concern in adult community support →

Answer guide →

Glossary →

Self-review and action plan →

Source register →

Module 01 — Your role and its limits

Why this comes first

Most safeguarding mistakes at the frontline are not failures of kindness. They are failures of role. Someone waits because they think a concern has to be certain before it is passed on. Someone else asks one question too many and turns a disclosure into an interview. A third person does everything right and then assumes that reporting was the end of their part in it.

Your role has three jobs in it: notice, respond, and pass on through the right route, then keep noticing. Deciding whether abuse happened is not one of them. Assessing a family, interviewing a child, investigating an adult's finances and deciding a threshold all belong to other people, who have legal powers you do not have and information you cannot see. [S1] [S3]

Three positions matter in almost every setting. The frontline practitioner sees the person regularly and holds the observations. The safeguarding lead, or the person with that oversight role in your organisation, weighs those observations against everything else known and decides what leaves the building. External agencies, mainly local authority children's social care or adult social care and the police, assess, investigate and decide statutory action. [S1] [S2] [S3]

Children and adults: two frameworks, one habit

For children in England, practice follows Working together to safeguard children, and in schools and colleges also Keeping children safe in education. A child's consent is not needed for you to pass on a concern to protect them. [S1] [S2]

For adults with care and support needs, practice follows the Care Act 2014 and its statutory guidance. The adult's wishes sit at the centre of what happens next, and their consent is normally sought, but consent is not a precondition for the local authority's duty to make enquiries. [S3] [S4]

The habit that serves both: write down what you actually saw or heard, and pass it to the named route today.

Worked example

Ruth is a teaching assistant in a primary school. Over three weeks she notices that Ellis, aged seven, is arriving without a coat in cold weather, is first in the queue at breakfast club and eats two portions, and has twice fallen asleep during afternoon reading. On Thursday Ellis says, “I stayed at my nan's but she was poorly so I made toast for my sister.” Ruth writes down the dates, the two sleeping episodes and Ellis's exact words, and takes the note to the designated safeguarding lead the same afternoon.

What makes this competent is not the quality of Ruth's hunch. It is that she separated three things: what she saw, what Ellis said in his own words, and what she thinks it might mean. She did not ask Ellis whether his mother had left him alone, because that question belongs to someone else. She did not wait for a fourth week to be sure.

M01-A01 Notice and distinguish

A record is only useful if a reader can tell where each part came from. Four kinds of statement appear in most safeguarding notes: an observation is what you saw, heard or counted; a direct quotation is the person's own words; a third-party report is what someone else told you; an interpretation is your judgement about what it might mean. All four are legitimate. Mixing them up is what causes trouble.

Read the four lines from Ruth's note and classify each one.

Ellis arrived without a coat on 4, 7 and 11 November.

Choose one

- [ ] Observation
- [ ] Direct quotation
- [ ] Third-party report
- [ ] Interpretation

Ellis said, “I made toast for my sister.”

Choose one

- [ ] Observation
- [ ] Direct quotation
- [ ] Third-party report
- [ ] Interpretation

The breakfast club supervisor told me Ellis has asked for extra toast every day this week.

Choose one

- [ ] Observation
- [ ] Direct quotation
- [ ] Third-party report
- [ ] Interpretation

Ellis's mother is struggling since her hours were cut.

Choose one

- [ ] Observation
- [ ] Direct quotation
- [ ] Third-party report
- [ ] Interpretation

Answer guide: M01-A01 →

M01-A02 Choose and explain

Ruth has written her note. The designated safeguarding lead is out of school for the rest of the day and the deputy lead is teaching. It is 2:15pm on a Thursday and Ellis goes home at 3:15pm. More than one response here is defensible; one is clearly weaker than the others.

Choose one

- [ ] Log the concern on the school's system now, and tell the deputy lead before the end of the day.

- [ ] Keep the note safe and hand it to the lead first thing tomorrow morning.
- [ ] Ask Ellis a few gentle questions about last night so the note is more complete before anyone sees it.
- [ ] Ring Ellis's mother to check whether everything is all right at home.

In two or three sentences, say why you chose that option.

Answer guide: M01-A02 →

M01-A03 Create a practice output: your reporting-route map

A reporting-route map is a single page you could hand to a new colleague. It names who receives a concern, who receives it when that person is unavailable, who receives it when that person is the subject of the concern, and what you do outside working hours. Most people discover the gaps in their own map only when they need it at four o'clock on a Friday.

Model map (fictional: Brookfield Community Trust)

Usual recipient: Dele Adeyemi, safeguarding lead, office 2B, logged on the concern system the same working day.

If unavailable: Karen Voss, deputy lead. If both are unavailable, the concern still goes on the system today, and any member of staff may contact local authority children's social care or adult social care directly.

If the usual recipient is the person the concern is about: the chief executive, and for a concern about an adult who works with children, the local authority designated officer through the head of setting. [S1] [S2]

Out of hours: the local authority emergency duty team. Immediate danger: 999.

Now build your own. Use real role titles from your setting if you know them, or write “not known yet” and find out. Do not enter colleagues' personal contact details.

Situation	Who receives the concern	How, and by when
Usual route, during working hours		
Usual recipient unavailable		
Usual recipient is the subject of the concern		
Outside working hours		
Immediate danger		

Answer guide: M01-A03 →

M01-A04 Review and transfer

Tick each statement you could now explain to a colleague without looking it up.

Tick all that apply

- [ ] The difference between noticing a concern and investigating it.
- [ ] Why a child's consent is not needed before a concern is passed on. [S1]
- [ ] Why an adult's wishes matter throughout, even though consent is not a precondition for the local authority's duty to make enquiries. [S3] [S4]
- [ ] Who receives a concern in my setting when the usual person is unavailable.
- [ ] What I do not decide, and who does.

Where does the limit of your own role sit most awkwardly in practice? Write in general terms, never about a real case.

Answer guide: M01-A04 →

Reflection

One thing you will do differently after this module.

Optional leadership extension M01-L

You hold the oversight role. A teaching assistant brings you the note about Ellis and asks whether it is “enough” to refer. Two things are being asked of you: a decision, and an explanation that will shape whether this person brings you the next one.

Write the reasoning you would give, in the box below, covering what you would do today, what you would tell the practitioner about the threshold question, and when you would review it. There is a model answer in the guide.

Answer guide: M01-L →

Module 02 — Recognising a concern

What recognising actually involves

Recognition is rarely a single moment. It is usually an accumulation: a change from how someone normally is, a pattern that holds across weeks, an explanation that does not quite fit, or a person who has become harder to see. None of those is proof, and none of them has to be.

The trap is the checklist. Lists of indicators are useful for prompting attention and dangerous as diagnosis. A child with poor attendance, or an adult with unexplained bruising, may be experiencing abuse or may have an entirely different explanation. Poverty, ethnicity, religion, disability and family structure are not evidence of abuse or of culpability, and treating them as such does real harm to people who already get a worse service. [S1] [S3]

What turns noticing into something usable is separating four things: the concern you hold, the evidence you can point to, the alternative explanations that would also fit, and the inference you have added yourself. Doing that honestly often strengthens a concern rather than weakening it, because it shows what remains once the assumptions are removed.

Evidence, not diagnosis

You are not deciding whether abuse or neglect has happened. You are deciding whether what you hold should be passed on so that someone with the fuller picture can weigh it. Reasonable cause to suspect is the trigger for a local authority enquiry about an adult under section 42 of the Care Act 2014, not proof. [S4]

For children, anyone with a concern should act the same day through their setting's route, and may contact children's social care directly. [S1] [S2]

Worked example

Amina supports adults in a community day service. Over six weeks she notices that Gerald, aged 71, who has a learning disability and normally arrives early, is now often late and twice arrived without lunch money. His nephew, who drives him, has started waiting in the car park and asking staff not to “bother” Gerald with forms. Gerald says, “He looks after all that now.”

Amina's evidence grid separates it out. Evidence: six weeks of lateness with dates; two days without lunch money; the nephew's request, witnessed by two staff; Gerald's own words. Alternative explanations: the nephew's work pattern may have changed; Gerald may have chosen to hand over his money management. Inference she has added: that Gerald is being financially controlled. She records the first three and labels the fourth as her view, then raises a concern the same day.

M02-A01 Notice and distinguish

Below are five lines from a colleague's note about Gerald. For each, decide whether it belongs in the evidence column of a grid, or whether it is an inference the writer has added. Both have a place in a record. Only one of them is a fact another person could check.

Gerald arrived after 10:30am on eight of the last twelve sessions.

Choose one

- [ ] Evidence: something another person could check
- [ ] Inference: the writer's judgement about meaning

Gerald is frightened of his nephew.

Choose one

- [ ] Evidence: something another person could check
- [ ] Inference: the writer's judgement about meaning

Gerald said, “He looks after all that now.”

Choose one

- [ ] Evidence: something another person could check
- [ ] Inference: the writer's judgement about meaning

The nephew asked two staff not to give Gerald any forms.

Choose one

- [ ] Evidence: something another person could check
- [ ] Inference: the writer's judgement about meaning

Gerald no longer has access to his own money.

Choose one

- [ ] Evidence: something another person could check
- [ ] Inference: the writer's judgement about meaning

Answer guide: M02-A01 →

M02-A02 Choose and explain

Amina has six weeks of observations and no proof of anything. Her manager is on leave. Which response is best, and why?

Choose one

- [ ] Wait until the nephew does something more obvious, so the concern is harder to dismiss.
- [ ] Raise a safeguarding concern with the local authority today, setting out the observations and labelling her own view as a view.
- [ ] Ask Gerald directly whether his nephew is taking his money.
- [ ] Speak to the nephew to give him a chance to explain before anything is raised.

Say why, in two or three sentences, including what it risks.

Answer guide: M02-A02 →

M02-A03 Create a practice output: an evidence grid

An evidence grid is a short table that stops a concern becoming a story. Here is the model, built from Amina's observations.

Concern	Evidence I can point to	Other explanations that would fit	My inference (labelled)
Gerald may not control his own money	Two sessions with no lunch money, 6 and 13 May. Nephew asked staff not to give him forms, witnessed by two staff.	Gerald may have asked his nephew to manage his money. The nephew may be protecting him from paperwork he finds stressful.	I think Gerald is not being given a choice. I have not checked this.

Now build one for a different fictional situation. Nadia, aged 15, has stopped attending the youth club she used to run the tuck shop at. A volunteer mentions that she was seen getting into a car with an older man twice in a fortnight. Nadia's college reports she is attending, but her coat and phone are new and she cannot say where they came from.

Concern	Evidence I can point to	Other explanations that would fit	My inference (labelled)

Answer guide: M02-A03 →

M02-A04 Review and transfer

Tick all that apply

- [ ] I can explain why an indicator list is a prompt and not a diagnosis.
- [ ] I can separate evidence from inference in my own writing.
- [ ] I can say what reasonable cause to suspect means, and what it does not require. [S4]
- [ ] I know that protected characteristics and poverty are not evidence of abuse. [S3]

Where does your own writing most often slide from evidence into inference? General terms only.

Answer guide: M02-A04 →

Reflection

One thing you will do differently after this module.

Optional leadership extension M02-L

A member of staff brings you a concern that is almost entirely inference, with one dated observation underneath it. Dismissing it teaches them not to come back; accepting it as written passes an unreliable account to another agency.

Write how you would handle both the concern and the conversation, and what you would ask the staff member to add before it goes further.

Answer guide: M02-L →

Module 03 — Listening to a disclosure

Receiving, not investigating

When someone begins to tell you that something is wrong, your job is to receive it accurately and safely. It is not to establish what happened. Investigative questioning by an untrained person can distress the person, close down the account and damage any later enquiry or prosecution. [S1]

Three habits carry most of the weight. Let the person finish without filling gaps or correcting them. Use open prompts — tell me, explain, describe — rather than questions that supply an answer. And never promise secrecy: say plainly, in words the person will understand, that you will have to tell one particular person whose job is to help keep them safe, and what is likely to happen next.

Accessible communication is part of receiving, not an extra. A person who uses symbols, a communication book, a tablet or an interpreter is telling you something in their own words, and those words are recorded as theirs. Take the time the person needs rather than the time you have. Do not ask a child to repeat an account for someone else, and do not ask an adult to perform their distress to prove it.

Three sentences that keep you safe and keep them talking

“Thank you for telling me. I am listening.”

“I cannot keep this just between us, because it is my job to help keep you safe. I will tell [named person], and I will tell you what happens next.”

“Can you tell me a bit more about that?” — and then nothing else until they have finished.

Worked example

A learner, Priya, aged 16, says to a college tutor: “Promise you won't tell anyone. My mum's boyfriend goes mad when she's at work and last night he threw my phone at the wall.”

The tutor does not promise. She says: “I can't promise that, because what you have told me matters too much for me to keep it to myself. I will tell Mr Nowak, our safeguarding lead, today, and I will come and find you afterwards so you know what is happening. Is there anything you want me to make sure he knows?” She writes Priya's words down within the hour, including the question Priya asked her, and takes it to the lead the same morning.

M03-A01 Notice and distinguish

Classify each response a practitioner might give. A supportive response keeps the person talking without shaping the account. A leading response supplies content the person has not given. An unsafe response makes a promise that cannot be kept or moves into investigating.

“Take your time. Tell me what happened.”

Choose one

- [ ] Supportive
- [ ] Leading
- [ ] Unsafe

“Did he hit you as well as throwing the phone?”

Choose one

- [ ] Supportive
- [ ] Leading
- [ ] Unsafe

“This is just between us, I promise.”

Choose one

- [ ] Supportive
- [ ] Leading
- [ ] Unsafe

“I can't keep it to myself, but I will tell you exactly who I tell.”

Choose one

- [ ] Supportive
- [ ] Leading
- [ ] Unsafe

Answer guide: M03-A01 →

M03-A02 Choose and explain

Mid-sentence, Priya stops and says, “Actually, forget it, it's fine.” What do you do? More than one option here is defensible.

Choose one

- [ ] Accept it, say she can come back any time, and still pass on what she has already told you.
- [ ] Encourage her to carry on, because stopping now means the concern is incomplete.
- [ ] Agree to forget it, since she has changed her mind and it is her information.
- [ ] Ask her what has made her want to stop, then accept whatever she says and pass on what you have.

Explain your choice, including what you do with what you already hold.

Answer guide: M03-A02 →

M03-A03 Create a practice output: a response script and a note

A response script is three or four sentences you can actually say, prepared in advance so that you are not composing them while someone is crying. The model below is written for a colleague in an adult service.

Model script (fictional: Harlow Independent Living)

“Thank you for telling me. I am going to listen, and I am not going to rush you.”

“I have to be honest with you: I can't keep this to myself. I will tell Ana Ferreira, who is our safeguarding lead. What matters to you about how that happens?”

“Is there anything you want to happen next? I will write down what you have told me in your words, and I will tell you what I have written.”

Write your own script for a young person in an education setting. Use words you would genuinely say.

Your response script

Now write the note. Below is a fictional disclosure. Record it as you would in your own setting: what was said, in whose words, what you said back, and what you did next — with nothing added.

The disclosure to record

At 11:20am on 3 March, in the corridor outside the library, Marcus, aged 13, says: “I'm not going to my dad's this weekend. He was drunk last time and he locked the door and I couldn't get out. Don't tell my mum, she'll cry.” He then asks whether he is in trouble.

Your record

Answer guide: M03-A03 →

M03-A04 Review and transfer

Tick all that apply

- [ ] I can say why a promise of secrecy is never appropriate, in words a young person would understand.
- [ ] I can tell the difference between an open prompt and a leading question.
- [ ] I know not to ask a person to repeat an account for a second member of staff. [S1]

- [ ] I can name at least two communication adjustments I could make immediately.

Which habit is hardest where you work, and what would make it easier?

Answer guide: M03-A04 →

Reflection

One thing you will do differently after this module.

Optional leadership extension M03-L

A member of staff tells you, after the event, that they promised a child confidentiality and then broke that promise once they realised they had to report it. The child has since refused to speak to anyone.

Write what you would do about the child, what you would do about the staff member, and what you would change so the next person does not make the same promise.

Answer guide: M03-L →

Module 04 — Responding and reporting

Three different actions

People often collapse three separate things into the word “report”. Immediate protective action is what stops harm happening in the next few minutes: first aid, calling 999, staying with someone, not sending a child home into a situation you have just been told about. Reporting is passing the concern through your setting's route so that a decision can be made. Seeking advice is asking someone more experienced what to do without necessarily naming the person yet.

They have different urgencies and different recipients, and they are not alternatives. Taking protective action does not discharge the duty to report. Getting advice does not replace a referral. And an acknowledgement that your report was received is not evidence that anything has been decided. [S1] [S3]

Two complications come up constantly. The first is the unavailable recipient: the lead is off site, the deputy is teaching, it is half past four. The answer is almost never to wait. Log it, use the named alternative, and remember that any member of staff may contact children's social care or adult social care directly. [S1] [S2] The second is the implicated recipient: the concern is about the person who normally receives concerns. Every organisation needs a route that does not run through that person, and where an adult who works with children may have harmed a child, the route runs to the local authority designated officer. [S2]

Beware of invented rules

There is no single national reporting hierarchy that applies to every setting, no universal referral deadline in hours, and no numerical score that decides for you whether something is a referral. Local safeguarding partners set thresholds and forms, and your organisation's procedure sits on top of national guidance. If a trainer or a template tells you otherwise, check it against your own procedure. [S1] [S3]

Worked example

A support worker, Jonah, arrives at the flat of Mrs Whitlock, aged 84, for a lunchtime call and finds her on the floor beside her chair, cold, saying she has been there since the evening call the day before. The rota shows the evening call as completed.

Jonah's sequence: check her, call 999 and stay with her; tell the office immediately so the next calls are covered and the manager knows; write the record while waiting for the ambulance, including the rota entry he can see; raise a safeguarding concern with the local authority the same day, because a call recorded as completed appears not to have happened and other people are on the same round. He does not question the colleague who signed the rota. That is not his to do, and doing it would warn someone before anyone has looked. [S3] [S4]

M04-A01 Notice and distinguish

Classify each of these as immediate protective action, reporting, or seeking advice.

Calling 999 and staying with Mrs Whitlock until the ambulance arrives.

Choose one

- [ ] Immediate protective action
- [ ] Reporting

- [ ] Seeking advice

Ringing the local authority's safeguarding team to raise a concern.

Choose one

- [ ] Immediate protective action
- [ ] Reporting
- [ ] Seeking advice

Phoning the on-call manager to ask how the rota discrepancy should be handled.

Choose one

- [ ] Immediate protective action
- [ ] Reporting
- [ ] Seeking advice

Arranging cover so the rest of the round is not missed.

Choose one

- [ ] Immediate protective action
- [ ] Reporting
- [ ] Seeking advice

Answer guide: M04-A01 →

M04-A02 Choose and explain

You are a youth worker. A fifteen-year-old tells you that the club's manager has been giving her lifts home alone and messaging her late at night. The club's safeguarding lead is that manager.

Choose one

- [ ] Raise it with the manager directly so he can explain before anything is recorded.
- [ ] Use the named alternative route in the club's procedure, today, and record what you were told.
- [ ] Wait until the trustee meeting next week, when several people will be present.
- [ ] Contact the local authority designated officer yourself, and tell the trustee with safeguarding responsibility what you have done.

Explain your choice, and name one thing you would not do.

Answer guide: M04-A02 →

M04-A03 Create a practice output: an action sequence

An action sequence is a numbered list in the order you would actually do things, with a reason attached to each step. The model below is Jonah's.

Model action sequence

1. Check her condition and call 999. Reason: immediate risk to life takes precedence over everything else.

2. Stay with her and keep her warm. Reason: she should not be alone, and I can give the crew an accurate account.

3. Tell the office at once. Reason: the rest of the round needs cover and the manager needs to know now, not at the end of my shift.

4. Write the record today, including what the rota showed. Reason: I will not remember the detail accurately tomorrow.

5. Raise a safeguarding concern with the local authority the same day. Reason: a call recorded as completed appears not to have happened, and others are on the round. [S3] [S4]

Write your own sequence for this fictional situation. You are a teaching assistant. At 2:50pm a seven-year-old tells you that her mother's partner “got angry and pushed her down the stairs” last night, and that her mother is collecting her at 3:15pm. Your designated safeguarding lead is in a meeting off site.

Your action sequence, with a reason for each step

Answer guide: M04-A03 →

M04-A04 Review and transfer

Tick all that apply

- [ ] I can distinguish protective action, reporting and seeking advice, and I know they are not alternatives.
- [ ] I know my setting's route when the usual recipient is unavailable.
- [ ] I know the route when the concern is about the usual recipient. [S2]
- [ ] I know that an acknowledgement is not a decision. [S1]

Which route would you struggle to use today, and what would fix that?

Answer guide: M04-A04 →

Reflection

One thing you will do differently after this module.

Optional leadership extension M04-L

You are the safeguarding lead. A referral you made eight days ago has had no response beyond an automated acknowledgement, and the child is still in the situation you described. A colleague says you should wait, because chasing looks like pressure.

Write what you would do, how you would record it, and at what point you would escalate beyond the team you referred to.

Answer guide: M04-L →

Module 05 — Recording facts and chronology

Writing for the person who was not there

A safeguarding record is read by people who did not see what you saw, sometimes months later, sometimes in a review or a court. That reader needs to know four things: what happened, when, where it came from, and what remains uncertain. Everything else is decoration.

Four habits do most of the work. Date and time everything, including when you wrote it. Keep direct speech in the person's own words rather than tidying it into yours. Attribute anything you did not witness to whoever told you. And write uncertainty plainly: “I do not know whether” is a professional sentence, not a weakness. Write the same day, because accuracy decays fast.

A chronology is the second half of the job. Individual entries can each look minor while the sequence tells a different story. Ordering dated events — and only dated events — is what lets a pattern appear without anyone inventing it. If a date is approximate, say so.

What a poor record looks like

“Mum was aggressive again at pick-up. Usual story. Child seemed withdrawn, probably because of the situation at home. Will monitor.”

No date, no time, no author. “Aggressive” is a conclusion with no behaviour behind it. “Usual story” tells the reader nothing and signals that earlier incidents were not recorded either. “Probably because” is an inference presented as cause. “Will monitor” names no action and no date.

Worked example

The same event, written usefully: “4 March, 15:20, written 15:45 by R. Obi, Year 3 teacher. At pick-up Ms Hale raised her voice at the office staff and said, ‘I've told you twice, I can't get here for three.’ She left with Sana at 15:25. Sana did not speak on the way to the door and did not take her coat from the peg. Sana has been quiet at pick-up on 18 and 25 February and today; I have not asked her about it. Passed to the safeguarding lead at 15:50. I do not know what has changed at home.”

M05-A01 Notice and distinguish

For each line, decide what the record is missing most.

“She's been late a lot recently.”

Choose one

- [ ] Dates or times that would let someone check it
- [ ] Attribution: who said or saw this
- [ ] The person's own words instead of a summary
- [ ] A label separating fact from the writer's judgement

“Dad said he'd sort it out, which he won't.”

Choose one

- [ ] Dates or times that would let someone check it
- [ ] Attribution: who said or saw this

- [ ] The person's own words instead of a summary
- [ ] A label separating fact from the writer's judgement

“A colleague mentioned there had been an incident at the weekend.”

Choose one

- [ ] Dates or times that would let someone check it
- [ ] Attribution: who said or saw this
- [ ] The person's own words instead of a summary
- [ ] A label separating fact from the writer's judgement

“He was upset about the visit.”

Choose one

- [ ] Dates or times that would let someone check it
- [ ] Attribution: who said or saw this
- [ ] The person's own words instead of a summary
- [ ] A label separating fact from the writer's judgement

Answer guide: M05-A01 →

M05-A02 Choose and explain

You realise a record you wrote last week says “the bruise was caused by the football match”, when in fact the child said that and you did not see it happen.

Choose one

- [ ] Edit the original entry so it reads accurately, leaving no trace of the change.
- [ ] Add a dated correction that says what the original should have said and why, leaving the original visible.
- [ ] Leave it: the meaning is clear enough and changing records looks suspicious.
- [ ] Ask the child to confirm the explanation again, then record that.

Explain your choice and what it protects.

Answer guide: M05-A02 →

M05-A03 Create a practice output: a record and a chronology

Rewrite this poor entry so it could be relied on. Invent no facts: if something is not in the original, it is not in your version either. Where information is missing, say that it is missing.

The entry to improve

“Carer seemed rough with Mr Adeyi when helping him up. He didn't complain but he never does. Second time I've thought this. Mentioned to team leader.”

Your improved record

Now build a short chronology from these fictional dated entries about Mr Adeyi, putting them in order and noting what the sequence suggests without adding a cause.

Entries to order

22 April: district nurse records a dressing change, no concerns noted.

3 April: Mr Adeyi's daughter rings the office asking why his call times keep changing.

19 April: bruising to left forearm recorded by night staff, explanation not recorded.

8 April: two calls recorded as completed at times when the rota shows one carer on shift for the whole round.

Date	What is recorded	Source	What is not known

Answer guide: M05-A03 →

M05-A04 Review and transfer

Tick all that apply

- [ ] Everything I write carries a date, a time and my name.
- [ ] I keep the person's words as the person's words.
- [ ] I attribute what I did not witness to whoever told me.
- [ ] I write what I do not know as clearly as what I do.
- [ ] I correct records by adding a dated correction, never by quietly rewriting.

Which of these is weakest in your own writing, in general terms, and what will you change this month?

Answer guide: M05-A04 →

Reflection

One thing you will do differently after this module.

Optional leadership extension M05-L

Reviewing a file before a multi-agency meeting, you find that three of the last six entries have no author and one contradicts another. The meeting is tomorrow.

Write what you would take to the meeting, how you would describe the state of the record honestly without discrediting the concern, and what you would change afterwards.

Answer guide: M05-L →

Module 06 — Sharing relevant information

The decision, not the instinct

Information sharing goes wrong in both directions. Sharing too widely exposes people and destroys trust; sharing too little has featured in reviews of almost every kind of safeguarding failure. Data protection law does not prevent sharing for safeguarding purposes: it provides the framework for doing it properly. [S7]

A defensible decision answers four questions. Who needs this, and why them? What is the smallest amount that does the job? What is the basis for sharing, and is it necessary and proportionate? And what have I recorded about the decision, including a decision not to share?

Consent is where most confusion sits. Seeking agreement is usually right and often required as a matter of good practice, but consent is not the only lawful basis for sharing, and there are circumstances where seeking it would increase risk — notably where doing so would tip off someone causing harm. Agreement to an intervention and a lawful basis for sharing data are two different things, and a record should show which one you relied on. [S7]

England: a duty that commences on 30 September 2026

Statutory guidance published on 10 September 2026 reflects that the information sharing duty under section 16LA of the Children Act 2004 comes into force on 30 September 2026. It places a duty on named organisations to share information where necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and is accompanied by template data sharing agreements for local adaptation. [S7] [S9]

Check the date you are reading this. Before commencement, the earlier non-statutory advice and your local arrangements applied; from commencement the statutory guidance governs. Either way, the practice questions above do not change.

For adults, sharing decisions run through the Care Act 2014 and its statutory guidance, alongside data protection law. [S3] [S4]

Worked example

A college safeguarding lead is asked by a student's employer whether the student is “in trouble with social services”. She declines, records the request, and tells the student's social worker that the employer asked. Separately, she shares with the school attended by the student's younger sibling the fact that a referral has been made and the name of the allocated worker, because the sibling's school needs to know who to contact rather than the content of the referral. Two requests, two different answers, both recorded with reasons.

M06-A01 Notice and distinguish

For each, decide whether the information described is relevant to the recipient's safeguarding role, or more than they need.

Telling a school nurse the specific injury a child described, so she can arrange an examination.

Choose one

- [ ] Relevant to that person's role
- [ ] More than that person needs

Telling all staff in a staffroom that a named pupil has been referred.

Choose one

- [ ] Relevant to that person's role
- [ ] More than that person needs

Telling a new key worker that an adult has asked not to be visited by male staff.

Choose one

- [ ] Relevant to that person's role
- [ ] More than that person needs

Telling a volunteer driver why a young person is subject to a plan.

Choose one

- [ ] Relevant to that person's role
- [ ] More than that person needs

Answer guide: M06-A01 →

M06-A02 Choose and explain

An adult you support, who has capacity for this decision, tells you her partner controls her money and asks you to tell no one. You believe others in the household, including a child, may be affected.

Choose one

- [ ] Respect her wishes completely: she has capacity, so the decision is hers.
- [ ] Explain what you must pass on and why, share what is necessary, and record her wishes alongside your reasons.
- [ ] Share everything she has told you with every agency involved, to be safe.
- [ ] Tell her partner that support is available, so the household gets help.

Explain your choice, including how her wishes still shape what happens.

Answer guide: M06-A02 →

M06-A03 Create a practice output: a sharing decision record

A sharing decision record is four or five lines that would let another professional understand your reasoning a year from now. Here is the model.

Model decision record

Date and author: 12 May, 16:10, J. Marston, safeguarding lead.

Shared with: allocated social worker, Hollow Lane team.

What was shared: that Nadia has missed four sessions since 28 April, the two dated observations of a car collecting her, and the volunteer's account. Not shared: the volunteer's personal details.

Why: necessary to safeguard a child, proportionate because limited to the observations relevant to the concern. The young person was told what would be shared and by whom. [S7]

Not shared with: her employer, who asked. No safeguarding purpose for that recipient; request recorded.

Write your own for this fictional situation. A neighbour has told you that an adult you support is being visited late at night by people who do not stay long, and that money has gone missing. The adult has told you he does not want “any fuss”.

Your decision record

Answer guide: M06-A03 →

M06-A04 Review and transfer

Tick all that apply

- [ ] I can name a lawful basis for sharing that is not consent. [S7]
- [ ] I know when seeking consent could increase risk.
- [ ] I record decisions not to share, with reasons.
- [ ] I share the minimum that lets the recipient do their job.
- [ ] I can explain the difference between agreeing to support and a basis for sharing data.

Which sharing conversation do you tend to avoid, and why?

Answer guide: M06-A04 →

Reflection

One thing you will do differently after this module.

Optional leadership extension M06-L

A partner agency refuses to share information you believe you need, citing data protection. The person is at risk now.

Write how you would challenge that refusal, what you would put in writing, and how you would record the disagreement.

Answer guide: M06-L →

Module 07 — Voice, choice and support

Two frameworks, genuinely different

For children, participation means finding out what the child thinks and feels, recording it in their words, and weighing it in decisions taken in their best interests. A child's view shapes how things are done; it does not decide whether a concern is passed on. [S1] [S2]

For adults, the starting point is different. The adult's wishes and desired outcomes sit at the centre of the response, an approach usually described as making safeguarding personal. An adult with capacity may make a decision others consider unwise, and that is their right. The local authority's duty to make enquiries still exists, and other people's safety may change what happens, but nothing here entitles anyone to take over an adult's life for their own good. [S3] [S4]

Capacity is decision-specific and time-specific. It is assumed unless established otherwise, and it cannot be inferred from a diagnosis, a disability, age, appearance or an unwise decision. Support to make the decision comes before any conclusion that someone cannot make it. [S5] [S6]

Transition is where the two frameworks meet awkwardly. Nothing about a person changes on their eighteenth birthday, but the framework around them does, and support can fall through the gap unless someone plans for it in advance.

Communication adjustments are part of the decision, not a courtesy

Ask how the person prefers to communicate and record the answer. Allow processing time. Use the person's own communication tools rather than requiring speech. Offer an interpreter or advocate where one is needed, and do not rely on a family member to interpret a safeguarding conversation. Do not assume a carer can speak for the person. [S3] [S5]

Worked example

Tomas is 17, has a learning disability and attends a college programme. A concern arises about money going missing from his account. He communicates best with short sentences and pictures, and takes time to answer. The lead arranges for the conversation to happen with the staff member Tomas knows best, uses his own picture book, and asks what he wants to happen. Tomas says he wants the money back and does not want his brother “to get shouted at”. Both are recorded. Because Tomas turns 18 in four months, the plan names who will pick this up in adult services and what changes then, including that a referral requiring his consent as an adult will need to be explained to him beforehand. [S3] [S4]

M07-A01 Notice and distinguish

For each statement, decide whether it is consistent with the framework named.

“He has a learning disability, so his sister will decide.”

Choose one

- [ ] Consistent with the framework
- [ ] Not consistent with the framework

“She has capacity and has chosen to stay, so we will keep offering support and review the risk to others.”

Choose one

- [ ] Consistent with the framework
- [ ] Not consistent with the framework

“The child said she does not want her mum told, so we will not pass the concern on.”

Choose one

- [ ] Consistent with the framework
- [ ] Not consistent with the framework

“He takes a long time to answer, so we will book a longer session and use his communication book.”

Choose one

- [ ] Consistent with the framework
- [ ] Not consistent with the framework

Answer guide: M07-A01 →

M07-A02 Choose and explain

An adult with capacity declines the support you have offered after a safeguarding enquiry. You remain worried.

Choose one

- [ ] Close your involvement: she has decided and that is the end of it.
- [ ] Record her decision and your reasoning, agree what would bring her back, keep the offer open, and consider risk to others.
- [ ] Ask for a capacity assessment, because her decision puts her at risk.
- [ ] Tell her family so they can persuade her.

Explain your choice and what you would record.

Answer guide: M07-A02 →

M07-A03 Create a practice output: a person-centred next-step plan

Build a plan for this fictional situation. Rosalind is 19, has recently moved from children's services to adult supported living, uses a wheelchair and a speech app, and has told a support worker that a member of staff “makes jokes” about her when helping her wash.

What Rosalind wants	What must happen anyway	Communication adjustments	Who does it, and when

Answer guide: M07-A03 →

M07-A04 Review and transfer

Tick all that apply

- [ ] I can explain why a child's wishes shape how, not whether, a concern travels. [S1]
- [ ] I can explain why an adult's wishes sit at the centre without being a veto. [S3]
- [ ] I never infer incapacity from diagnosis, disability, age or an unwise decision. [S5]
- [ ] I plan for transition before the birthday, not after it.
- [ ] I record communication adjustments as part of the plan.

Whose voice is hardest to capture where you work, and what would help?

Answer guide: M07-A04 →

Reflection

One thing you will do differently after this module.

Optional leadership extension M07-L

A young person moving to adult services will not meet the adult threshold, and children's services will close the case on their birthday. Both decisions may be correct; the gap is still real.

Write how you would evidence the gap, who you would escalate to, and what you would put in place meanwhile.

Answer guide: M07-L →

Module 08 — Following up and improving practice

Reporting is not the end of your part

The most common gap in otherwise good practice sits after the report. A concern is raised, an acknowledgement arrives, and everyone assumes something is happening. An acknowledgement records receipt. It does not establish that a decision has been made, that a threshold has been met, or that anyone has seen the person. [S1] [S3]

Following up means three things. Checking that what you reported arrived and what has been decided. Continuing to record what you see, because your observations after the report are as relevant as the ones before it. And raising it again, through a named escalation route, when nothing has changed and the risk has not gone away.

Professional disagreement is normal and is not a failure of partnership. Every local arrangement includes a way to challenge a decision you believe is wrong. Use it in writing, keep it factual, and record both the challenge and the response. Personal frustration is not evidence; a dated account of what has and has not happened is.

Finally, patterns. One missed call is an incident. The same gap across a round, a service or a term is an organisational concern, and it needs naming as one, because individual reports about a systemic problem tend to be answered individually and then repeat.

Worked example

A support worker raised a concern about pre-completed care records on 9 October and received an automated acknowledgement. On 16 October nothing had changed and the same pattern appeared on a second round. She wrote to the registered manager setting out both dates and both rounds, copied it to the local authority safeguarding team referencing her original concern number, and recorded that she had done so. She did not describe anyone as dishonest. She described what the records showed and what she had seen.

M08-A01 Notice and distinguish

For each, decide whether it establishes that a concern has progressed.

An automated email confirming the referral form was received.

Choose one

- [ ] Shows the concern has progressed
- [ ] Does not show that it has progressed

A social worker's call saying an assessment has been allocated and naming the worker.

Choose one

- [ ] Shows the concern has progressed
- [ ] Does not show that it has progressed

A colleague saying “I think that one got sorted.”

Choose one

- [ ] Shows the concern has progressed
- [ ] Does not show that it has progressed

A recorded decision, with reasons, that the concern did not meet the threshold and what was offered instead

Choose one

- [ ] Shows the concern has progressed
- [ ] Does not show that it has progressed

Answer guide: M08-A01 →

M08-A02 Choose and explain

Three weeks after your referral, nothing appears to have happened and the young person's situation looks worse. Your line manager says chasing will “annoy” the team.

Choose one

- [ ] Wait: the relationship with the local authority matters for future referrals.
- [ ] Write a dated summary of what has changed since the referral, send it through the escalation route, and record that you have done so.
- [ ] Make a fresh referral as though the first had not happened.
- [ ] Raise it informally with a social worker you know, and leave it there.

Explain your choice, including how you would keep it factual.

Answer guide: M08-A02 →

M08-A03 Create a practice output: follow-up log and handover

Complete a follow-up log for the fictional referral above, then write the handover you would leave if you were away for a fortnight.

Date	What I did or learned	What is still unresolved	Next check, and when

Your handover note

Answer guide: M08-A03 →

M08-A04 Review and transfer

Tick all that apply

- [ ] I know the escalation route in my own setting when a decision looks wrong.
- [ ] I keep recording after a referral, not only before it.
- [ ] I can tell an acknowledgement from a decision. [S1]
- [ ] I would name a repeating problem as organisational rather than reporting it again one case at a time.

One realistic improvement to follow-up where you work. Keep it general.

Answer guide: M08-A04 →

Reflection

One thing you will do differently after this module.

Optional leadership extension M08-L

Three practitioners have raised similar concerns about the same partner agency in six months. Each was handled separately and each was closed.

Write how you would establish whether this is a pattern, where you would take it, and how you would protect the people who raised the concerns.

Answer guide: M08-L →

Capstone C01 — A concern in a school

This capstone brings the eight modules together. Read the account, the records and the later update, then work through the five tasks. There is enough here to reason safely. There are also genuine unknowns, and part of the task is saying which is which.

The initial account

You are a pastoral support assistant at Fenmoor Academy, a fictional secondary school. Kieran is 13. His attendance has dropped from 96 per cent to 71 per cent since January. On 4 February he came to you at morning break and said: “I can't keep doing the mornings. Mum's not up and I have to get Bea to the childminder and then it's too late to bother coming in.” Bea is his sister, aged 2.

He also said, “Don't make it a big thing. Last time someone rang, Mum cried for two days.” He asked whether he could go to his lesson now.

The fictional records you can see

Attendance: 14 late marks and 9 unauthorised absences since 6 January, all Mondays to Wednesdays.

Office log, 21 January: “Called home re: absence. Mother said Kieran was unwell. No further detail.”

Year 8 tutor, 28 January: “Kieran asleep in registration twice this week.”

Nothing on file about a younger sibling, and no record of any agency involvement.

C01-T1 Prioritise

Three things compete for the next twenty minutes: Kieran's request to go to his lesson, the concern about a two-year-old, and the report you owe your safeguarding lead. Put them in the order you would act, and say why.

Your order, with reasons

C01-T2 Respond to what he told you

Write what you would actually say to Kieran before he leaves, in the words you would use. Remember what he asked of you, and what you cannot promise.

What you would say

C01-T3 Record it

Write the concern record. Include only what is in the account above, keep his words as his, and name what you do not know.

Your concern record

C01-T4 Decide what is shared, and with whom

Your safeguarding lead is at a conference until tomorrow. The deputy lead is available. Set out who you would tell, what you would tell them, and your reason.

Recipient	What you would share	Why this recipient, why now

The update, two weeks later

The deputy lead made a referral on 4 February. On 18 February you have heard nothing beyond an automated acknowledgement. Kieran's attendance is now 64 per cent. He tells you Bea is “at home now” because the childminder “got stopped”. He looks thinner and asks whether the school can give him a bus pass.

C01-T5 Follow up

Write what you do now, in order, and what you would escalate if nothing changes within a week. Note which facts have changed and which are still unknown.

Your follow-up plan

Answer guide: Capstone C01 →

Capstone C02 — A concern in adult community support

The adult framework applies throughout. Watch for the points where this case would be handled differently if the person were a child.

The initial account

You are a community support worker for the fictional Larchgate Wellbeing Service. Denise is 58, has multiple sclerosis and lives with her son, who manages her shopping and bills. She has capacity for day-to-day decisions and has never been assessed as lacking capacity for anything.

At a home visit on 11 March you notice the fridge is nearly empty and her prescription pre-payment has lapsed. Denise says, “It's been a tight month, that's all.” When you ask about her bank card she says her son “holds on to it so it doesn't get lost”, and then says: “Please don't start anything. He's all I've got and he'd be furious.”

The fictional records you can see

Service log, 26 February: visit shortened, “son present throughout, D said little”.

Service log, 5 March: “D asked whether the service can pay for a taxi to hospital. Advised to speak to her son.”

Care plan: Denise manages her own medication. No financial arrangements recorded, no lasting power of attorney recorded.

Two missed appointments at the MS clinic since January, reason not recorded.

C02-T1 Prioritise

Order what you would do in the next working day, and say why. Name anything you would deliberately not do at this stage.

Your order, with reasons

C02-T2 Respond to what she told you

Write what you would say to Denise at the visit. Her wishes matter, and you cannot promise to do nothing.

What you would say

C02-T3 Record it

Write the concern record, keeping her words as hers and separating what you observed from what you think it means.

Your concern record

C02-T4 Decide about the section 42 question

Set out whether you think the three-part test is arguably met, on the information you hold, and what you would say to the local authority. Being unsure is a legitimate answer if you say what would resolve it.

Part of the test	What the information shows	What is still unknown
An adult with needs for care and support		
Experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect		
Unable to protect herself as a result of those needs		

The update, three weeks later

A concern was raised on 12 March. The local authority made enquiries and Denise told the enquiry officer that she does not want any further action. She has capacity for that decision. Since then she has missed a third clinic appointment, and a neighbour has told your colleague that there is “shouting most nights”. A 14-year-old cousin has moved into the house.

C02-T5 Follow up

Write what changes, if anything, now that a child lives in the household and a new account has come from a neighbour. Say what you would do about Denise's stated wishes, and record your reasoning.

Your follow-up plan

Answer guide: Capstone C02 →

Answer guide

Every activity has an entry here. Selections have a supported answer and an explanation of why the other options are incomplete or unsafe. Written tasks have a sample answer and a note on acceptable alternatives, because more than one competent answer usually exists.

How to mark your own written work

Covered: your answer contains the elements listed, in your own words.

Partly covered: some elements are present, one or more are missing.

Revisit: the answer is missing the point of the task, or contains something unsafe.

This is reflection on a fictional exercise. It is not an assessment of your professional ability, and nobody else sees it.

Back to the contents page →

Module 01 — Your role and its limits

M01-A01 Notice and distinguish

- (a) Observation. Three dated occasions the writer saw for herself.
- (b) Direct quotation. Ellis's own words, kept as his.
- (c) Third-party report. Someone else's account, attributed to them.
- (d) Interpretation. A reasonable thought about cause, which belongs in the record only if labelled as the writer's view.

The common error is marking (d) as an observation because it feels obviously true. Feeling true is not the test; being checkable is.

M01-A02 Choose and explain

Supported: (a). Logging the concern the same day means it exists in the system whatever happens to anyone's diary, and telling the deputy keeps a person in the loop rather than a form. (b) is not disastrous but adds a night's delay and leaves the only copy with you. (c) is unsafe: it moves from noticing into questioning, and a well-meant question can shape the account and complicate any later enquiry. (d) is unsafe: contacting the family is the lead's decision, and it can cut across work you cannot see. [S1] [S2]

Sample written answer, M01-A02

“I chose (a) because the concern needs to exist somewhere other than my memory before the end of the day. Logging it protects Ellis if I am away tomorrow, and telling the deputy means a person with the fuller picture can decide what happens next. I did not choose (c) or (d) because deciding what happened and speaking to the family are not my part in this.”

Covered if your answer names both the record and the person, and says what you left to someone else.

M01-A03 Create a practice output

There is no single correct map: routes differ by organisation, and that is the point of writing your own. A map is Covered when all five situations have a named role rather than a name alone, when the third row does not route through the person the concern is about, and when the out-of-hours row names something you could actually do at 7pm on a Saturday. Writing “not known yet” honestly, with a note to find out, is better than a plausible guess.

M01-A04 Review and transfer

No marks attach to the tick boxes. If you left the third or fourth box unticked, that is the most useful thing this module has told you. The written prompt is Covered if it names a specific limit and what you do at that limit, rather than a general wish to help more.

M01-L Leadership extension

Sample answer, M01-L

“I would thank her for bringing it today and say plainly that this is exactly what I want to see. I would explain that a concern does not have to be proven before it is shared, and that my job is to weigh her observations against what she cannot see. I would record the concern, check whether a younger sibling is known to us, and consult children's social care about the right offer rather than deciding the threshold privately. I would tell her what I have done and set a date to review it with her, because if she never hears anything back she will stop bringing me things.”

Covered if the answer contains a decision, a rationale given to the practitioner, and a review point. [S1] [S8]

Back to Module 01 →

Module 02 — Recognising a concern

M02-A01 Notice and distinguish

- (a) Evidence. Dated, countable, checkable against the register.
- (b) Inference. It may be right, and nothing in the account establishes it.
- (c) Evidence. Gerald's own words are a fact about what was said.
- (d) Evidence. Witnessed by two staff and attributable.
- (e) Inference. What is known is that the nephew asked staff not to give him forms; that he controls the money is a conclusion.

M02-A02 Choose and explain

Supported: (b). Raising the concern with the observations attached, and labelling her own view as a view, gives the local authority what it needs to apply the section 42 test, which turns on reasonable cause to suspect rather than proof. [S4] (a) is unsafe: waiting for something more obvious means waiting for harm. (c) risks putting Gerald in a position where he has to answer about a relative he depends on, and moves towards investigating. (d) is unsafe: it alerts the person the concern is about before anyone has looked. [S3]

Sample written answer, M02-A02

“I chose (b) because the test is suspicion, not certainty, and I already hold six weeks of dated observations. It risks Gerald being upset that something was raised without his agreement, so I would tell him what I was doing and why, and record his response. I would not speak to the nephew, because that could increase the risk to Gerald.”

M02-A03 Create a practice output

A grid about Nadia is Covered when the evidence column contains only checkable items — stopped attending, the volunteer's account attributed to the volunteer, new coat and phone, college attendance — and when at least one genuine alternative explanation appears. Reasonable alternatives include a new job, a relative's gift, or a friendship the volunteer misread. The inference column should be explicitly owned: “I think this may be exploitation, and I have not established it.” Naming exploitation as a possibility is appropriate. Recording it as a finding is not.

M02-A04 Review and transfer

Covered if the written answer identifies a specific habit — for example writing “clearly distressed” instead of what the person did — rather than a general intention to be more careful.

M02-L Leadership extension

Sample answer, M02-L

“I would take the concern seriously and the account separately. The dated observation goes on the record as it stands. I would ask the practitioner three questions: what did you see, when, and who else was there. I would not send it on with the inference presented as fact, because an unreliable referral damages the next one. I would explain that I am not dismissing the worry, I am making it usable.”

Covered if it keeps the concern alive, separates evidence from inference, and protects the reporting relationship.

Back to Module 02 →

Module 03 — Listening to a disclosure

M03-A01 Notice and distinguish

- (a) Supportive. Open, unhurried, supplies nothing.
- (b) Leading. It introduces hitting, which Priya has not mentioned.
- (c) Unsafe. A promise that cannot be kept, and breaking it later costs the trust of the next person as well.
- (d) Supportive. Honest about the limit and specific about what happens next.

M03-A02 Choose and explain

Both (a) and (d) are defensible, and (d) is slightly stronger because it gives her a chance to say what has changed while still accepting her answer. What both share is the crucial part: you still pass on what you already hold. (b) presses a young person who has just withdrawn, which rarely produces a fuller account and often produces a retraction. (c) is unsafe: a concern does not become yours to discard because the person changed their mind. [S1]

Sample written answer, M03-A02

“I would accept that she wants to stop, tell her she can come back whenever she wants, and be honest that I still have to pass on what she has already told me. I would write down her words and the fact she stopped, because why she stopped may matter later.”

M03-A03 Create a practice output

A script is Covered when it thanks the person, declines to promise secrecy in plain words, names who will be told, and asks what matters to them about how it happens. A script that says “I will have to report this” and nothing else is Partly covered: accurate, but it leaves the person with no sense of what happens next.

Sample record of Marcus's disclosure

“3 March, 11:20, written 11:50 by [role]. In the corridor outside the library Marcus, Year 8, said: ‘I'm not going to my dad's this weekend. He was drunk last time and he locked the door and I couldn't get out. Don't tell my mum, she'll cry.’ He asked whether he was in trouble. I said he was not in trouble, that I could not keep it to myself, and that I would tell [named lead] today and come back to him. I did not ask any further questions. I do not know when the weekend contact arrangement was made or whether anyone else knows. Passed to [named lead] at 11:55.”

Covered if it has date, time, author, his exact words, your words back, what you did not ask, what is unknown, and the handover.

M03-A04 Review and transfer

Covered if the answer names one habit and one practical change, such as agreeing with colleagues where a private conversation can happen when every room is in use.

M03-L Leadership extension

Sample answer, M03-L

“The child comes first: I would make sure someone she has not been let down by offers to talk to her, tell her honestly what happened and why, and check what support is in place. With the staff member I would separate the error from the person — they reported it, which matters — and be clear that promising confidentiality is never available to us. Then I would change the induction and put the three sentences on the staffroom wall, because this is a training gap rather than a character flaw.”

Back to Module 03 →

Module 04 — Responding and reporting

M04-A01 Notice and distinguish

- (a) Immediate protective action.
- (b) Reporting.
- (c) Seeking advice.
- (d) Immediate protective action, in the sense that it prevents further missed care tonight. Accept reporting if your answer explains that the office is also the route for the rota discrepancy — the categories describe purpose, not paperwork.

M04-A02 Choose and explain

Both (b) and (d) are defensible and they are not alternatives: the internal alternative route and the local authority designated officer can both be used, and in many procedures the internal route triggers the officer referral. (b) is the better first step where a named alternative exists and will act today. (a) is unsafe: never put an allegation to the person it concerns, because it warns them and puts pressure on the young person. (c) is unsafe: a week's delay leaves a young person in contact with the subject of the concern. [S1] [S2]

Sample written answer, M04-A02

“I chose (b) because our procedure names a trustee as the alternative recipient and she can act today. I would record what the young person told me in her words before I did anything else. The one thing I would not do is speak to the manager, however awkward the silence is, because that would warn him and could put her at greater risk.”

M04-A03 Create a practice output

Sample action sequence for the 2:50pm disclosure

1. Stay with her and do not send her to the playground alone. Reason: she has just disclosed and should not be left.

2. Tell the deputy lead immediately, in person. Reason: collection is in 25 minutes and a decision about it cannot wait for the lead's return.

3. Write the record now, in her words. Reason: accuracy, and the deputy needs it before 3:15pm.

4. Follow the deputy's decision about collection. Reason: whether the child goes home, and with whom, is a decision for the lead with the fuller picture, in consultation with children's social care if needed. [S1] [S2]

5. Record what was decided, by whom and when, before you leave. Reason: tomorrow you will not remember the sequence.

Covered if the sequence keeps the child accompanied, gets the concern to a decision maker before collection, records contemporaneously, and does not have you deciding alone whether she goes home.

M04-A04 Review and transfer

Covered if the answer names a specific route and a specific gap, for example not knowing the out-of-hours number. The fix is usually one email away, which is rather the point.

M04-L Leadership extension

Sample answer, M04-L

“I would write a dated summary of what has changed since the referral, send it to the team with the original reference, and ask for the decision and the reasons. If there is no substantive response, I would use the escalation route in our local arrangements, in writing. I would record both the chase and the response. Chasing is not pressure: an acknowledgement is not a decision, and the child is still in the situation I described eight days ago.”

Back to Module 04 →

Module 05 — Recording facts and chronology

M05-A01 Notice and distinguish

- (a) Dates or times. “A lot recently” cannot be checked; “late on 4, 9 and 11 March” can.
- (b) A label separating fact from judgement. “Which he won't” is the writer's prediction presented as part of the account.
- (c) Attribution. Which colleague, when, and what exactly did they say.
- (d) The person's own words. “Upset” is a summary; what he said or did is the evidence.

More than one answer is arguable for (d) — a date would also help. Accept it if your reasoning names the substitution of a summary for the account.

M05-A02 Choose and explain

Supported: (b). A dated correction that leaves the original visible is how records are put right. (a) is unsafe: silently altering a record destroys its reliability and, in any later review, your credibility with it. (c) leaves an inaccuracy that another reader will take as your first-hand account. (d) asks a child to account for an injury a second time, which is re-interviewing. [S1]

Sample written answer, M05-A02

“I would add an entry today saying that the line about the football match recorded what the child told me, not something I witnessed, and that the original wording was mine. It protects whoever reads the file next, because they will otherwise treat it as my own observation.”

M05-A03 Create a practice output

Sample improved record

“[Date], [time], written [time] by [name and role]. At the lunchtime call I saw the carer take Mr Adeyi under both arms and lift him from the chair in one movement without saying anything to him first. He did not speak during the transfer. I saw a similar transfer on [earlier date]. Mr Adeyi has not said anything to me about it, and I did not ask him. I told [team leader] at [time] on [date]. I do not know what his moving and handling plan specifies.”

Covered if it adds date, time, author, a description of the behaviour instead of the word “rough”, the earlier occasion as a dated item, an explicit note that Mr Adeyi said nothing rather than “he never complains”, and the handover. Note that the original's “he never does” is an inference that explains away the person's silence; a good rewrite removes it.

For the chronology, the correct order is 3, 8, 19 then 22 April. The sequence is worth noticing because the daughter's query precedes the rota discrepancy, and the unexplained bruising follows it. What is not known: why the call times changed, who attended on 8 April, the explanation for the bruising, and whether the nurse saw the arm. A chronology that adds a cause — for example, that short staffing caused the bruise — is Revisit, however plausible.

M05-A04 Review and transfer

Covered if the answer names one habit and a change with a date attached. “Write up before I leave the building rather than the next morning” is worth more than a resolution to be thorough.

M05-L Leadership extension

Sample answer, M05-L

“I would take the file as it is, with a short covering note setting out which entries are unattributed and where two entries conflict, and say so at the meeting rather than letting a partner discover it. The concern itself still stands on the entries that are sound. Afterwards I would ask the two authors to add dated clarifications, not rewrites, and I would look at why unattributed entries are possible in our system at all.”

Back to Module 05 →

Module 06 — Sharing relevant information

M06-A01 Notice and distinguish

- (a) Relevant. The nurse needs the detail to do the task being asked of her.
- (b) More than they need. A staffroom is not a recipient, and this exposes the child.
- (c) Relevant. A key worker needs to know the preference to deliver care properly; the reason behind it may not be needed.
- (d) More than they need. The driver needs to know the arrangements, not the plan.

M06-A02 Choose and explain

Supported: (b). Her wishes are recorded and shape how it is done; the sharing itself is limited to what is necessary, and a child in the household may change what is necessary. (a) treats her wishes as a veto over other people's safety. (c) shares everything with everyone, which is neither necessary nor proportionate. (d) is unsafe: contacting the partner may increase the risk to her immediately. [S3] [S7]

Sample written answer, M06-A02

“I chose (b). I would tell her what I have to pass on, to whom, and why, and ask what she wants them to know about how she is contacted. Her wishes still shape the timing, the route and what support is offered, even though they do not decide whether the concern is shared. I would record her wishes next to my reasons so anyone reading later can see both.”

M06-A03 Create a practice output

A decision record is Covered when it names the recipient, what was shared and what was withheld, the reason expressed as necessity and proportionality, whether the person was told, and any decision not to share. For this scenario, sharing with the local authority is defensible on the neighbour's account plus the missing money; sharing with the neighbour is not. Telling the adult what you are doing is normally right here, because nothing in the account suggests that doing so would increase risk — which is the test for withholding that conversation. [S7]

M06-A04 Review and transfer

If you could not name a lawful basis other than consent, that is the item to take away: safeguarding sharing does not depend on consent alone, and the statutory guidance sets out the framework. [S7]

M06-L Leadership extension

Sample answer, M06-L

"I would ask, in writing, what specifically prevents the sharing and which provision they are relying on, and set out why I consider it necessary and proportionate, with the risk stated in dated facts. I would copy it to my own safeguarding partnership contact and record the exchange. Data protection is a framework for sharing properly, not a reason to refuse, and from 30 September 2026 the statutory duty applies to named organisations in England. [S7] [S9] If the person is at immediate risk I would act on what I already hold rather than wait for the argument to finish."

Back to Module 06 →

Module 07 — Voice, choice and support

M07-A01 Notice and distinguish

- (a) Not consistent. Capacity is decision-specific and assumed; a diagnosis does not transfer decisions to a relative. [S5] [S6]
- (b) Consistent. An unwise decision by someone with capacity is theirs to make, and risk to others is still weighed. [S3]
- (c) Not consistent. A child's wishes shape how a concern is handled, not whether it travels. [S1]
- (d) Consistent. Processing time and the person's own communication tools are adjustments, not favours. [S3] [S5]

M07-A02 Choose and explain

Supported: (b). (a) mistakes respecting a decision for ending all involvement. (c) is unsafe and is the most common misuse of the Mental Capacity Act in practice: capacity is not questioned because you dislike the decision. [S5] [S6] (d) shares information without a basis and may increase pressure on her.

Sample written answer, M07-A02

"I would record her decision in her words, my reasons for remaining concerned, and what we agreed would bring her back to us. I would keep the offer open with a named contact, and consider whether anyone else in the household is affected. I would not request a capacity assessment, because there is nothing to suggest she cannot make this decision — only that I disagree with it."

M07-A03 Create a practice output

A plan for Rosalind is Covered when her stated wishes appear in her words; when the “must happen anyway” column contains the concern being raised through the employer's conduct route and as a safeguarding concern to the local authority; when the adjustments column names her speech app, extra time, and a choice about who supports her; and when every row has a named role and a date. Plans that resolve the tension by dropping one column are Partly covered: the honest position is that some things happen whether or not she wants them, and she still chooses how.

Watch for two things this scenario is testing. Being 19 means the adult framework applies, so making safeguarding personal governs the approach. [S3] And “makes jokes” during personal care is not banter: it is potential psychological or sexual harm by a member of staff, so an employer conduct route runs alongside the safeguarding route.

M07-A04 Review and transfer

Covered if the answer names a specific group and a specific adjustment, rather than a general commitment to listen more.

M07-L Leadership extension

Sample answer, M07-L

“I would ask both services for their decisions and reasons in writing, so the gap is documented rather than argued about. I would take it to the safeguarding partnership escalation route, framed as a transition gap rather than a complaint about either team. Meanwhile I would keep a named contact in our own service and a review date, because the young person should not carry the cost of a boundary between two frameworks.”

Back to Module 07 →

Module 08 — Following up and improving practice

M08-A01 Notice and distinguish

- (a) Does not show progression. Receipt is not a decision.
- (b) Shows progression. A named worker and an allocated assessment are a decision.
- (c) Does not show progression. Corridor reassurance is not a record of anything.
- (d) Shows progression. A recorded decision with reasons is progress even when the answer is that the threshold was not met.

M08-A02 Choose and explain

Supported: (b). (a) puts the working relationship above the child. (c) wastes time and loses the history attached to the first referral. (d) leaves no record and no accountability. Keeping it factual is what makes it a professional challenge rather than a complaint. [S1]

Sample written answer, M08-A02

“I would write a dated note of what has changed since 4 February — attendance down a further seven per cent, the childminder arrangement ended, the request for a bus pass — and send it through the escalation route quoting the original reference. I would keep it to what I have seen and when, with no adjectives about the response so far.”

M08-A03 Create a practice output

A follow-up log is Covered when each row has a date, an action or a piece of information, an explicit unresolved item, and a next check with a date. The commonest weakness is a log that records actions and never records what remains unresolved, which is the column a colleague covering your absence most needs.

Sample handover note

“For [colleague], covering 18 February to 4 March. Kieran, Year 8, referral made 4 February, reference [number], no substantive response as at 18 February. Unresolved: whether an assessment has been allocated; the current arrangement for his sister; whether the family has been contacted. Next check due 21 February with [named team]; escalate through [named route] if no response by 25 February. He knows he can come to the pastoral office. Please record anything he tells you in his own words and pass it to [lead].”

Covered if the handover names the unresolved items, the next date, the escalation point and how to record.

M08-A04 Review and transfer

Covered if the improvement is something you could start this month without anyone's permission — a diary reminder to check a referral at seven days, for example.

M08-L Leadership extension

Sample answer, M08-L

“I would pull the three concerns together into one dated summary showing the pattern rather than three separate cases, and take it to the safeguarding partnership rather than back to the agency that closed them. I would tell the three practitioners what I was doing, keep their names out of the summary where it is not necessary to include them, and record that I had considered the risk of detriment to them. A pattern reported one case at a time gets answered one case at a time.”

Back to Module 08 →

Capstone C01 — A concern in a school

There is no single correct answer to a capstone. These notes describe what a strong response contains and the traps this case sets.

- T1 Prioritise. A strong answer does not treat the two-year-old as a footnote. Bea is a child about whom you now hold information, and she is not on anyone's file. Most answers that go wrong here spend the twenty minutes on Kieran's attendance.
- T2 Respond. He asked you not to make it “a big thing”. You cannot agree, and you can tell him what you will do, who you will tell, and that he is not in trouble. Acknowledging what he said about his mother crying is not a promise.
- T3 Record. His words, the dates from the attendance data, the sleeping entry attributed to the tutor, and an explicit note that nothing is known about Bea's care arrangements or any agency involvement.
- T4 Share. The deputy lead today, not tomorrow. The content is the concern and the two children, not a theory about the mother. Nothing goes to the wider staff team, and nobody rings home before the lead decides. [S1] [S2]

- T5 Follow up. Three facts have changed: attendance is worse, the childminder arrangement has ended, and he is asking for material help. “Got stopped” is his phrase and its meaning is unknown — a strong answer records it as his words rather than deciding that funding was withdrawn. The bus pass request is a practical need and is also information about the household. Escalation: ask for the decision and reasons, then use the local escalation route.

The trap in C01

The case is framed as an attendance problem, and attendance is where a school's machinery naturally points. Treating it as attendance produces a referral about Kieran alone, and leaves a two-year-old and a parent who may need support unmentioned. [S1] [S8]

Back to Capstone C01 →

Capstone C02 — A concern in adult community support

- T1 Prioritise. Raise the concern the same day, record what you saw, and tell Denise what you are doing. What you deliberately do not do: question her son, examine her bank statements, or ask her to prove anything.
- T2 Respond. Her fear is the most important thing she has told you. A strong answer says plainly that you cannot leave it, explains why, and asks what she wants the local authority to know about how she is contacted.
- T3 Record. The empty fridge, the lapsed pre-payment, her exact words about the card and about her son, the two log entries, the missed appointments. Labelled as your view: that this may be financial abuse and coercion.
- T4 The section 42 test. Needs for care and support: yes, she receives support and has a progressive condition. Experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect: arguably, on the financial indicators. Unable to protect herself as a result of those needs: this is the genuinely uncertain limb, and saying so is the right answer. What would resolve it is information you do not have. [S4]
- T5 Follow up. Two things change. A 14-year-old now lives in a household where shouting is reported most nights, which is a child safeguarding concern in its own right and does not depend on Denise's consent. [S1] The neighbour's account is third-party information and is recorded as such. Denise's decision still stands for her own enquiry, and a fresh concern can still be raised on new information.

The trap in C02

Denise said no, and she has capacity, so it is tempting to record that the matter is closed. Her decision governs her own enquiry. It does not govern a child in the household, it does not bind you when new information arrives, and it never removes the option of raising a further concern. Recording “declined, case closed” is the failure this capstone is built to catch. [S3] [S4]

Back to Capstone C02 →

Glossary

Terms as they are used in this workbook. Where a term has a statutory meaning, the source identifier points to the entry in the register.

Adult at risk

An adult with needs for care and support who is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and, because of those needs, cannot protect themselves. The three parts together form the section 42 test. [S4]

Capacity

The ability to make a particular decision at a particular time. It is assumed unless established otherwise and is never inferred from a diagnosis, a disability, age or an unwise decision. [S5] [S6]

Chronology

Dated events placed in order so that a pattern can be seen without anyone inventing one.

Designated safeguarding lead

The person in a setting who receives concerns, weighs them against the wider picture and decides what is referred. In education settings the role and its deputies are set out in statutory guidance. [S2]

Disclosure

When a person tells you something that raises a safeguarding concern. Your job is to receive it accurately, not to investigate it.

Escalation

The named route for challenging a decision you believe is wrong. Local safeguarding arrangements include one; using it is normal professional practice.

Family Help

The offer in England that brings together targeted early help and section 17 support for children and families. [S1] [S8]

Inference

Your judgement about what something means. It belongs in a record, labelled as yours, and never disguised as an observation.

LADO

The local authority designated officer, who handles concerns that an adult who works with children may have harmed a child or may pose a risk of harm. [S2]

Making safeguarding personal

The approach in adult safeguarding that puts the adult's own wishes and desired outcomes at the centre of the response. [S3]

Proportionate

No more than is needed to achieve the purpose. Applied to information sharing, it means the smallest amount that lets the recipient do their job. [S7]

Section 42 enquiry

The local authority's duty to make, or cause to be made, whatever enquiries it thinks necessary where the three-part test is met. Triggered by reasonable cause to suspect, not by proof. [S4]

Section 47 enquiry

The local authority's duty to make enquiries where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. [S8]

Threshold

The point at which a concern meets the criteria for a particular response. Thresholds are set locally and are decided by the local authority, not by you. [S1]

Self-review and action plan

This page is for you. Nothing here is scored, and no total describes your professional ability. Its only purpose is to turn eight modules of practice into three things you will actually do.

Confidence before and after

Rate how confident you felt before starting the workbook and how confident you feel now, on a scale you define for yourself. If a rating has not moved, that is useful information rather than a failure.

Practice area	Before	Now	What made the difference, or what is missing
Understanding my role and its limits			
Recognising a concern and separating evidence from inference			
Receiving a disclosure safely			
Responding and reporting through the right route			
Recording facts and building a chronology			
Sharing information proportionately			
Working with voice, choice and capacity			
Following up and escalating			

Three practice goals

Write three goals you can start within a month. A goal that depends on someone else changing first is a wish, not a goal.

Goal 1 — what, by when, and how you will know it happened

Goal 2 — what, by when, and how you will know it happened

Goal 3 — what, by when, and how you will know it happened

Where to take a real concern

- Immediate danger or a crime in progress: 999.
- Your own designated safeguarding lead or the named alternative in your procedure.
- Local authority children's social care or adult social care for the area the person lives in.
- A concern about an adult who works with children: the local authority designated officer, normally through the head of your setting. [S2]
- Advice when you are unsure: the NSPCC Helpline, 0808 800 5000. [S10]

A closing note on what this workbook is

You have practised applied judgement on invented situations. That is genuinely useful and it is not the same as competence in your own workplace, which is demonstrated over time, in real conditions, with supervision. This workbook is not a regulated qualification and does not qualify anyone to act as a designated safeguarding lead.

Source register

Every bracketed identifier in the workbook points to an entry here. All sources were checked on 20 September 2026. Guidance changes: check the current version before relying on any entry in practice.

Two dates worth noting

The information sharing duty under section 16LA of the Children Act 2004 comes into force on 30 September 2026. Statutory guidance reflecting it was published on 10 September 2026. If you are reading this before that date, the duty has been made but has not yet commenced. [S7] [S9]

Keeping children safe in education is reissued annually. The edition cited here has been in force since 1 September 2026. [S2]

S1 Working together to safeguard children

Department for Education. England.

2026 edition, published March 2026.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children

S2 Keeping children safe in education

Department for Education. England (schools and colleges).

2026 edition, in force from 1 September 2026.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

S3 Care and support statutory guidance, chapter 14: safeguarding

Department of Health and Social Care. England.

Updated periodically online; consulted on the date checked.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance

S4 Care Act 2014, sections 1 and 42 to 46

UK Parliament (legislation.gov.uk). England.

As in force on the date checked.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents

S5 Mental Capacity Act 2005 Code of Practice

Ministry of Justice. England and Wales.

2007 code; a revised code has been consulted on but is not in force.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-capacity-act-code-of-practice

S6 Mental Capacity Act 2005, sections 1 to 4

UK Parliament (legislation.gov.uk). England and Wales.

As in force on the date checked.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/9/contents

S7 Information sharing to safeguard children and young people

Department for Education. England.

Statutory guidance, page updated 10 September 2026; the information sharing duty commences 30 September 2026.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-sharing-to-safeguard-children-and-young-people

S8 Children Act 1989, sections 17 and 47

UK Parliament (legislation.gov.uk). England and Wales.

As in force on the date checked.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents

S9 Children Act 2004, section 16LA (information sharing duty)

UK Parliament (legislation.gov.uk). England.

Inserted by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act; commences 30 September 2026.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents

S10 NSPCC Helpline

NSPCC. United Kingdom.

0808 800 5000, 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday; email accepted at any time.

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/

Nothing in this workbook is legal advice. Where a scenario turns on a threshold, the answer guide says that thresholds are set locally and decided by the local authority, because no national figure exists to quote.