

THE HORIZONS PROJECT

PUBLICATION SERIES

HP-007

Safeguarding and Shared Responsibility

Protecting people through awareness, collaboration and appropriate action.

Version 1.0

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About This Publication

Few responsibilities are more important than safeguarding. It exists to protect people from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of harm, and it is a responsibility shared across communities, professions and organisations.

The Horizons Project takes that responsibility seriously. This publication explains how safeguarding fits within the Momentum philosophy, how Horizons understands its own non-clinical role and how concerns about safety can change the purpose of a conversation.

It is not intended to replace safeguarding policies, legislation or statutory guidance. Instead, it explains the principles that shape how Horizons approaches situations where the safety or wellbeing of an individual may become a concern.

It builds directly upon HP-006 – Professional Boundaries. Boundaries explain where Horizons' role begins and ends; safeguarding explains what happens when concern for safety means responsibility must be shared with others.

In ordinary Momentum practice, conversations help people maintain progress. When safeguarding concerns arise, the purpose of the conversation shifts towards protection.

Safeguarding Is Everybody's Responsibility

Safeguarding is sometimes imagined as something that belongs only to particular professions: social workers safeguard, healthcare professionals safeguard and police officers safeguard. In reality, safeguarding is much broader than that.

Every organisation working alongside people has a responsibility to remain alert to concerns, respond appropriately and understand when others need to become involved. Horizons accepts that responsibility.

At the same time, we recognise that safeguarding is rarely something one organisation should manage alone. Good safeguarding depends upon communication, professional judgement and shared responsibility.

Like every other aspect of Horizons, it begins with recognising that we are one part of a much larger network.

When Support Becomes Protection

Momentum conversations normally begin with support: listening carefully, helping someone think clearly and encouraging next steps that keep life moving.

Safeguarding concerns alter that focus. The question is no longer only, “What would help this person move forward?” It also becomes, “What needs to happen now to help keep this person, or someone else, safe?”

That change does not remove respect, choice or collaboration. It does, however, require Horizons to notice risk, remain within its role and involve others when protection depends upon shared responsibility.

Conversations Sometimes Reveal More Than Expected

Most Momentum Support Sessions begin as ordinary conversations. Someone may wish to discuss an upcoming appointment, a difficult week, financial worries, relationships, housing, recovery or health. Most remain exactly that.

Occasionally, however, a conversation reveals something unexpected: a child who may not be safe, an adult experiencing abuse, someone expressing thoughts that suggest immediate risk, or an individual being financially exploited.

These moments require a change in focus. The conversation is no longer simply about maintaining Momentum; it becomes about protecting people from harm.

Recognising that change is one of the most important responsibilities Horizons carries.

What Safeguarding Looks Like in Practice

Within Horizons, safeguarding is expressed through observable professional behaviour rather than through investigation or clinical judgement.

It may include recognising that something does not seem safe, remaining calm when a concern is disclosed and taking the concern seriously without exaggerating or minimising it.

It may involve asking only the questions needed to understand immediate safety, avoiding investigative questioning and not promising secrecy where protection may require further action.

It includes explaining, in plain language, what may need to happen next and involving the individual in those decisions wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so.

It also includes recording concerns accurately, sharing relevant information with the right people when necessary and working constructively alongside statutory services or other organisations with safeguarding duties.

In this way, Horizons contributes to safeguarding by noticing, responding and connecting — not by trying to become something it is not.

Horizons in Practice

Michael arrives expecting to discuss difficulties with his tenancy. As the conversation develops, he casually mentions that he is frightened to return home because someone living at the property has become increasingly violent.

He quickly changes the subject, saying he “probably shouldn’t have mentioned it.” At that moment, the purpose of the conversation changes.

Rather than continuing to explore housing paperwork, attention shifts towards understanding immediate safety, explaining why the disclosure matters and discussing the most appropriate next steps.

Wherever possible, Michael is involved in those decisions and treated with honesty and respect.

If safeguarding action becomes necessary, Horizons explains why, what information may need to be shared and who may need to receive it, unless doing so would create further risk.

The aim is not simply to respond, but to respond transparently.

Respecting People’s Voices

Safeguarding should never become something that is done to people whenever it can instead be done with them.

Where individuals have the capacity to make decisions and where it is safe to do so, Horizons believes they should remain involved in conversations about safeguarding concerns.

People deserve to understand why concerns have arisen, to know what may happen next and to be treated with honesty, even when conversations become difficult.

There will, of course, be circumstances where immediate action is required or where information cannot safely remain confidential. Those situations are sometimes unavoidable.

Even then, respect should remain at the centre of practice. Safeguarding is not only about protecting physical safety; it is also about protecting dignity.

Working Alongside Others

Safeguarding succeeds because nobody sees everything, but everybody may notice something. A GP may notice one concern, a housing officer another, and a family member, neighbour or support worker something different again.

Each observation may feel incomplete on its own. Together, they may reveal a pattern that no single person could see alone.

Horizons recognises that safeguarding often depends upon this collective understanding.

Our responsibility is not to become the lead safeguarding authority or to investigate matters that belong elsewhere. It is to recognise concerns, respond appropriately and work constructively with those organisations whose statutory responsibilities place them in the best position to act.

That approach reflects the wider philosophy of Horizons: the strongest outcomes usually emerge through collaboration rather than ownership.

When Protection Requires Information Sharing

Safeguarding sometimes requires information to be shared so that people can be protected from harm. That does not make trust less important; it makes honesty about safeguarding responsibilities essential.

Horizons should be clear that there may be circumstances where safety takes priority over keeping information within the immediate conversation.

Where information is shared, the focus should remain safeguarding: what concern has arisen, who needs to know and what level of information is necessary to support protection.

The fuller ethical questions of consent, confidentiality and proportionate information sharing are explored in HP-008 – Consent, Confidentiality and Information Sharing.

Safeguarding Is Also About Prevention

Many people think safeguarding begins when something has already gone wrong. Sometimes it does, but safeguarding can also be preventative.

Helping someone remain engaged with support, encouraging them to seek help earlier, reducing isolation, strengthening confidence and supporting healthy relationships are

not safeguarding interventions in themselves. Yet they may reduce the circumstances in which harm becomes more likely.

Momentum cannot eliminate risk; few approaches can. What it can sometimes do is help people remain connected to the relationships and services that make protection more likely.

Looking Ahead

Safeguarding is not a separate chapter within The Horizons Project. It runs through every conversation, every decision and every professional relationship.

As Horizons develops, safeguarding practice will continue to be strengthened through training, partnership working, appropriate escalation and continual learning.

Protecting people is not a task that is ever finished. It is a responsibility that must be renewed every day.

HP-007 has focused on when safety concerns mean responsibility must be shared. HP-008 – Consent, Confidentiality and Information Sharing continues that thread by exploring how information is shared ethically, proportionately and respectfully.

An Invitation

Perhaps the most important lesson safeguarding teaches us is that nobody sees everything, but everybody may notice something. Each concern, observation or conversation may form part of a wider picture.

When responsibilities are respected and brought together with honesty, humility and care, people are safer.

That is the approach Horizons hopes to contribute: not by standing apart from existing safeguarding systems, but by becoming a thoughtful, reliable and collaborative part of them.

Continue Exploring

Continue exploring with the next publication.

HP-008 — Consent, Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Exploring how trust, informed consent and appropriate information sharing support safe and collaborative practice.

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