

How to choose a safeguarding training provider

Compare expertise, facilitation, quality assurance, accessibility, evaluation evidence and overall value.



Commission with clarity

Choosing a safeguarding training provider is more than comparing course prices or selecting the most familiar name.

Good safeguarding training should be relevant to your organisation, delivered by people with credible subject expertise, accessible to the people who need it, and supported by a clear approach to quality assurance and evaluation.

This guide helps commissioners compare providers consistently before making a decision.



The commissioning principle

Choose the provider that best combines relevant expertise, effective facilitation, quality assurance, accessibility and evidence of impact.

1 Start with the outcome you need

Before comparing providers, define what the training needs to achieve.

Consider:

- Who needs the training?
- What safeguarding responsibilities do they have?
- What level of knowledge or competence is appropriate to their role?
- What risks, safeguarding themes or organisational issues should the training address?
- What should participants know, understand or be able to do differently afterwards?
- Is the training part of a wider safeguarding, workforce development or assurance plan?
- Does the training need to reflect a particular sector, regulatory environment or local safeguarding context?

Avoid choosing a provider simply because they offer a standard course that appears to cover the right topic.

A strong provider should be able to discuss your requirements and explain how their proposed training will meet them.

2 Compare subject expertise

Safeguarding is not a generic subject. The credibility of the trainer and the relevance of their experience matter.

Ask providers to explain:

- Their professional safeguarding experience.
- Their experience in your sector or operating environment.
- The areas of safeguarding in which they have particular expertise.
- Their experience working with the roles and responsibilities of your participants.
- How they maintain current knowledge of legislation, statutory guidance, research and practice.
- What continuing professional development they undertake.
- Who designs and reviews their training materials.
- Whether the person delivering the training is the person with the relevant subject expertise.

Look for relevant expertise rather than impressive-sounding credentials alone.

For example, a provider may have considerable experience delivering training but limited experience of the particular safeguarding context your organisation operates in. Conversely, a highly experienced safeguarding practitioner may not necessarily have the facilitation skills needed to deliver effective learning to your audience.

Where delivery is supported by trainers who are not subject specialists, ask how the provider quality assures the accuracy and currency of the content.

Questions to ask

- What relevant safeguarding experience does the proposed trainer have?
- How does their experience relate to our sector and workforce?
- How do you keep your training content up to date?
- When was this course last reviewed?
- Who reviews the content for accuracy?
- Can you provide examples of comparable organisations you have worked with?

3**Compare the facilitation approach**

A good safeguarding course should do more than transfer information.

Consider how the provider creates opportunities for participants to think about safeguarding in the context of their own roles and make appropriate decisions.

Ask about:

- The balance between presentation, discussion and practical activity.
- Use of scenarios or case studies.
- Opportunities for reflection and questions.
- How the facilitator handles sensitive or challenging discussions.
- How participants' existing knowledge and experience are incorporated.
- How the approach changes for different audiences.
- How online delivery differs from face-to-face delivery.
- How the facilitator manages disclosures or safeguarding concerns arising during training.

The right approach will depend on the learning outcomes. A short awareness session may appropriately be more information-led, while training intended to develop professional judgement should normally provide opportunities to apply learning to realistic situations.

Look for evidence of:

Relevant: scenarios and examples reflect participants' real safeguarding responsibilities.

Interactive: participants have opportunities to discuss, practise and apply learning.

Inclusive: different experiences, perspectives and communication needs are considered.

Psychologically safe: sensitive safeguarding subjects can be explored appropriately without creating unnecessary distress or pressure to disclose personal experiences.

Role-specific: the training recognises that a trustee, volunteer, frontline practitioner and designated safeguarding lead may require different knowledge and skills.

4 Check quality assurance

A provider should be able to explain how it assures the quality of its training-not simply provide testimonials.

Ask about quality assurance of:

- Course content.
- Trainer competence.
- Learning materials and resources.
- Accessibility.
- Delivery consistency between trainers.
- Online platforms and learning technology.
- Participant feedback.
- Complaints and concerns.
- Updates following changes in legislation, guidance or practice.
- Periodic review of course effectiveness.

Do not assume that accreditation, a certificate or a polished website automatically demonstrates quality.

Ask for evidence

Instead of asking only:



Evidence check

"Is your training quality assured?"

ask:



Evidence check

"What is your quality assurance process, and what evidence can you provide that it is working?"

Useful evidence might include:

- Trainer competency requirements.
- Internal observation or peer review.
- Content review schedules.
- Version control for learning materials.
- External moderation or review where appropriate.
- Feedback and complaints processes.
- Examples of changes made following evaluation.

5 Check accessibility and inclusion

Accessibility should be considered before commissioning-not treated as an adjustment after booking.

Ask providers how they accommodate different learning and access needs, including:

- Disability and reasonable adjustments.
- Neurodivergent participants.
- Hearing or visual impairments.
- Different communication needs.
- Language and literacy needs.
- Digital access and confidence.
- Screen-reader compatibility.
- Accessible documents and presentations.
- Captions or transcripts for online learning.
- Breaks and session length.
- Different ways of participating in discussion and activities.

Also consider whether the training itself uses inclusive language, examples and scenarios.

For online training, check whether participants need particular software, equipment, bandwidth or technical skills.

Ask:

- What accessibility information do you provide before booking?
- How do participants request reasonable adjustments?
- What accessibility features are built into the course?
- Are training materials available in accessible formats?
- How do you support participants who cannot easily participate in conventional group discussion?

6 Examine evaluation evidence

A provider should be able to demonstrate how it evaluates training.

Participant satisfaction is useful, but it is only one form of evidence.

Ask whether the provider evaluates:

- Reaction - Did participants find the training relevant and useful?
- Learning - Did knowledge, understanding or confidence change?
- Application - Are participants applying the learning in their roles?
- Impact - Is there evidence that the training is contributing to better safeguarding practice?

The evaluation approach should reflect the purpose and scale of the training.

Be cautious about evidence such as:



Evidence check

"98% of participants rated the course excellent."

That tells you something about participant experience, but little about whether safeguarding practice improved.

More useful evidence might include:

- Pre- and post-training knowledge or confidence measures.
- Assessment of learning.
- Follow-up surveys.
- Evidence of changed practice.
- Case studies from comparable organisations.
- Repeat commissioning based on demonstrated outcomes.
- Examples of course changes made following evaluation.
- Clear reporting against agreed learning outcomes.

Ask the provider:



Evidence check

"What have you learned from evaluating this training, and what have you changed as a result?"

The answer can be more revealing than a collection of positive testimonials.

7

Compare providers consistently

Create a simple scoring framework before reviewing proposals.

For example:

Area	Key question	Suggested weighting
Subject expertise	Does the provider have credible and relevant safeguarding expertise?	25%
Facilitation approach	Will the learning approach achieve our intended outcomes?	20%
Quality assurance	Can the provider demonstrate reliable quality controls?	20%
Accessibility and inclusion	Can the training be accessed and used effectively by our workforce?	15%
Evaluation evidence	Can the provider demonstrate learning, application or impact?	20%

Adjust the weightings to reflect your organisation's priorities.

Score each provider against the same criteria, and record the evidence supporting each score.

This reduces the risk of choosing a provider because of a particularly persuasive presentation, personal recommendation or low headline price.

8 Look beyond the day rate

The cheapest course is not necessarily the best-value option.

Consider the total value of the training, including:

- Preparation and tailoring.
- Trainer expertise.
- Course materials.
- Travel and venue costs.
- Online platform costs.
- Administration.
- Accessibility adjustments.
- Evaluation and reporting.
- Follow-up support.
- Opportunities to refresh or reinforce learning.
- The likely impact on safeguarding practice.

A provider offering a slightly higher-cost programme may provide substantially greater value if it is better matched to your organisation and produces stronger learning outcomes.

9 Ask for a proposal that makes comparison possible

A useful commissioning request should ask each provider to supply broadly comparable information.

Request:

- Proposed learning outcomes.
- Course outline and methodology.
- Target audience and recommended group size.
- Trainer profile and relevant experience.
- Approach to tailoring.
- Delivery format and duration.
- Accessibility arrangements.
- Quality assurance arrangements.
- Evaluation methodology.
- Relevant examples or references.
- Costs and what is included.

- Cancellation and rescheduling arrangements.
- Any ongoing support or follow-up.
- How course content is kept current.

This makes it easier to compare providers on substance rather than marketing.

10 Warning signs to explore

A provider may warrant further questioning if:

- The trainer's safeguarding experience is unclear.
- Course content appears generic and unrelated to your organisation.
- The provider cannot explain when or how content is reviewed.
- Evaluation consists solely of satisfaction ratings.
- Claims about expertise are not supported by evidence.
- Accessibility information is vague or unavailable.
- The provider cannot explain how sensitive disclosures are managed during training.
- The same course is presented as suitable for very different roles without meaningful adaptation.
- Certificates or accreditation are emphasised more heavily than learning outcomes and impact.
- The provider is reluctant to share basic information about methodology, trainer expertise or quality assurance.

None of these automatically means a provider is unsuitable. They are prompts for further due diligence.

T A practical commissioning test

Before appointing a provider, ask:



Expertise

Would we trust this provider to advise us on the safeguarding issues covered by the training?



Facilitation

Will participants have meaningful opportunities to understand, discuss and apply the learning?



Quality

Can the provider demonstrate how it keeps its content and delivery accurate, current and consistent?

**Accessibility**

Can everyone who needs the training participate meaningfully?

**Evidence**

Can the provider demonstrate more than participant satisfaction?

**Fit**

Does the programme address our actual safeguarding responsibilities and risks?

If the answer to several of these questions is unclear, seek further evidence before commissioning.

C**Commissioning checklist**

- We have defined the purpose and intended outcomes of the training.
- The proposed provider has relevant safeguarding subject expertise.
- The trainer's experience is appropriate to our sector and audience.
- The facilitation approach matches the learning outcomes.
- The provider can explain how sensitive safeguarding discussions and disclosures are managed.
- Content is demonstrably current and subject to review.
- The provider has a clear quality assurance process.
- Accessibility and reasonable adjustments have been considered.
- Evaluation goes beyond immediate participant satisfaction.
- We have reviewed evidence of learning, application or impact where appropriate.
- Providers have been compared against consistent criteria.
- The full cost and value of the training are understood.
- The proposed training fits within our wider safeguarding and workforce development arrangements.

F**Final thought**

The strongest commissioning decision is not necessarily the provider with the most impressive credentials, the lowest price or the highest satisfaction score.

It is the provider that can demonstrate a credible combination of subject expertise, effective facilitation, robust quality assurance, accessible delivery and meaningful evidence of impact-and can show how those elements will meet your organisation's specific safeguarding needs.

For organisations commissioning safeguarding training, the aim should be to purchase better safeguarding capability, not simply to purchase attendance on a course.

Important information

SafeguardingLink helps organisations identify and compare safeguarding professional services. This guide is intended to support commissioning decisions; it is not advice about an individual safeguarding concern or a substitute for your organisation's procurement, legal or safeguarding procedures.

SafeguardingLink helps organisations define professional service requirements and compare independent safeguarding providers. Independent providers supply their own information; a listing is not accreditation, approval, endorsement or a suitability guarantee.

More commissioning resources: www.safeguardinglink.co.uk/resources