

Questions to ask before commissioning safeguarding training

Define the audience, outcomes, delivery requirements and measures of success.



Commission with clarity

Good safeguarding training starts with a clear commissioning brief. Before approaching trainers or training providers, be clear about what you want the training to achieve, who needs it, how it needs to be delivered and how you will know whether it has made a difference.

Use the questions below to turn a general training requirement into a clear specification that providers can respond to.



The commissioning principle

Start with the change the training needs to make, not simply a course title.

1 What do we want the training to achieve?

Start with the outcome, rather than the course title.

Ask:

- What safeguarding knowledge, skills or confidence do participants need to develop?
- What should participants be able to do differently after the training?
- What current practice, quality assurance findings, incidents, reviews or learning have identified the need?
- Are there specific safeguarding competencies or responsibilities the training needs to address?
- Is the requirement for awareness, knowledge development, practical skills, specialist expertise or a combination?
- How does the training support our organisation's safeguarding strategy, policies and workforce development priorities?

Aim for specific learning outcomes. Rather than simply requesting 'safeguarding awareness training', specify what participants should understand, recognise, apply or be able to do as a result.

Outcome-focused commissioning keeps attention on the difference training is intended to make, rather than simply the number of people attending.

2 Who is the training for?

Training should reflect the roles, responsibilities and experience of the people attending.

Consider:

- Which staff, volunteers, managers, trustees or professionals need to attend?
- What is their existing level of safeguarding knowledge?
- What are their different roles and responsibilities?
- Are there different learning needs within the audience?
- Are participants from one organisation or multiple agencies?
- Does the group include people who work directly with children, adults at risk, families or people with lived experience?
- Are there accessibility, language, communication or reasonable-adjustment requirements?
- Does the training need to be appropriate for different professional or cultural contexts?

Avoid assuming that one standard course will meet every audience's needs. Safeguarding learning should be matched to roles and responsibilities, with specialist or role-specific learning where appropriate.

3 What should the training cover?

Before approaching providers, identify the essential content without over-prescribing the trainer's methodology.

Ask:

- Which safeguarding topics must be included?
- Are there specific policies, procedures, legislation, statutory guidance or local arrangements that need to be reflected?
- Does the training need to incorporate learning from safeguarding reviews, audits, incidents or local practice?
- Are there particular safeguarding themes or emerging risks that need attention?
- Does the training need to include scenarios, case studies, discussion or practical exercises?
- Are there subjects that should be excluded or commissioned separately as specialist training?

Give providers enough context to propose an appropriate approach, while leaving room for their professional expertise.

4 What delivery format do we need?

Be clear about the practical requirements before comparing providers.

Consider:

- Face-to-face, online or blended delivery?
- How many participants will attend?
- How long should each session be?
- What dates or timeframes are required?
- Is the training a one-off session, programme or series?
- Are there different cohorts or locations?
- What technology, venue or equipment will be available?
- Are there requirements around accessibility or digital inclusion?
- Do participants need pre-course or post-course resources?
- Is attendance or completion required to meet an internal or external requirement?

Where training involves sensitive safeguarding subjects, consider whether the proposed format allows enough time for questions, reflection and appropriate support.

5 What do we need from the trainer or provider?

Decide what evidence you want providers to supply when responding to your request.

You may want to ask for:

- Relevant safeguarding subject expertise and professional experience
- Experience of delivering training to a similar audience
- Examples of relevant previous training
- Proposed learning outcomes and course content
- Delivery methodology
- Trainer biographies and relevant qualifications or experience
- Approach to accessibility and inclusive learning
- Quality assurance arrangements
- Evaluation methodology
- References or evidence of previous client feedback
- Costs, including any additional expenses
- Cancellation, rescheduling and licensing arrangements

Do not rely on a course title or generic description alone. Ask providers to demonstrate how their proposed training meets your specific learning outcomes and audience needs.

6 How will we evaluate the training?

Evaluation should be considered before the training takes place, not added afterwards.

Ask:

- What will success look like?
- How will we know whether participants achieved the intended learning outcomes?
- Will we measure knowledge, confidence, skills or intended changes in practice?
- Do we need a baseline measure before training?
- Should participants be followed up after the session?
- Can evaluation include feedback from managers or supervisors?
- Are there existing quality assurance or audit measures that could provide evidence of changes in practice?
- Who will receive the evaluation findings and how will they be used?

Attendance and satisfaction are useful measures, but they do not necessarily demonstrate improved safeguarding practice. Consider whether you can measure changes in knowledge, confidence and behaviour and, where proportionate, whether learning is being applied in practice.

7

What will happen after the training?

Training is more likely to influence practice when it is connected to wider learning and development activity.

Before commissioning, consider:

- How will participants apply the learning in their roles?
- Will managers reinforce or discuss the learning through supervision or team meetings?
- Are there resources or follow-up activities that participants will need?
- Is refresher training required?
- How will learning from the evaluation inform future training?
- Do we need to review whether the training has influenced practice after a defined period?

Consider agreeing with the provider what information will be returned to the organisation after delivery, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality and data protection.

C

A simple commissioning checklist

Before approaching trainers, you should be able to answer:

- What safeguarding issue or development need is the training addressing?
- What are the intended learning outcomes?
- Who is the audience and what do they already know?
- What role-specific competencies or responsibilities need to be addressed?
- What content is essential?
- What delivery format, duration and timing are required?
- What accessibility requirements need to be considered?
- How many participants and cohorts are involved?
- What evidence do we want from potential providers?
- How will we evaluate learning and its influence on practice?
- What follow-up or refresher activity is required?
- What budget and procurement constraints apply?



The key question

Before asking 'Who can deliver safeguarding training for us?', ask:



Commissioning question

What change do we need this training to make, for whom, and how will we know it has made a difference?

A clear answer will make it easier to brief providers, compare proposals and commission training that meets your organisation's actual safeguarding needs.



SafeguardingLink commissioning tip

A good training brief does not need to prescribe every aspect of the course. Set out the need, audience, outcomes, constraints and measures of success, then ask providers to explain how their expertise and approach will meet them.

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