

ALEXANDRA
PALACE

bic Bournemouth
International
Centre

BUSINESS
DESIGN
CENTRE

COVENTRY Building Society | arena

excel
LONDON

FARNBOROUGH
INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION &
CONFERENCE
CENTRE

HARROGATE
— CONVENTION CENTRE —

LIVERPOOL
EXPERIENCE
CAMPUS

Manchester
Central

nec
Birmingham

OLYMPIA
EVENTS

P&J LIVE

Q&A
CENTRE

SEC Scottish
Event
Campus

telford
internationalcentre

The O₂

eGUIDE

August 2026



Safeguarding
Guidance for events in
UK venues

AEV ASSOCIATION
OF EVENT
VENUES

Resource Background

What is the eGuide?

The eGuide brings together guidance for achieving common standards of health, safety and operational planning, management and on-site conduct for events at all participating AEV member venues. The scope and development of the eGuide follows extensive consultation with operations professionals within the exhibition and event industry to ensure an overall approach that remains broadly acceptable to the community. The status of the eGuide is like that of an Approved Code of Practice. It is an industry-specific guide developed by authorised professionals from the UK event venues. It incorporates health, safety and operational practices that represent compliance with Building Regulations and health and safety legislation.

Now recognised as the industry's best practice document, the eGuide is continually reviewed by working industry professionals who represent the best advice currently available, and who themselves must work within the guidelines in their own professional capacities. Senior representatives from ACC Liverpool, Alexandra Palace, Bournemouth International Centre, Business Design Centre, Excel London, Farnborough International Exhibition and Conference Centre, Harrogate Convention Centre, Manchester Central, NEC, Olympia Events , QEII Centre, Coventry Building Society Arena, SEC, Silverstone, Telford International Centre, The Brighton Centre and The O2 currently sit on the **eGuide working group**, meeting twice a year to steer the guidance thematically and address any complex or contentious topics. Several additional venues also participate in this process and are gradually moving towards formal adoption of the document themselves. Additionally, **the eGuide sub-committee** works all year round to maintain the detail of the document, ensure consistency and simplify rules and regulations to the greatest possible extent.

The current eGuide sub-committee comprises:

Ian Tynan - Excel London
Peter Boniface – Excel London
Del Cuttlan – Farnborough International Exhibition Centre
Ash Hammond – Manchester Central
Michelle Baldwin – NEC (chair and chair of the eGuide working group)
Rachel Maybury-Smith - NEC
Paul Brough - Olympia Events
Jill Wadge – SEC
John Crooks - SEC

Instructions from this group are subsequently collated and actioned in the document by Alden Arnold, Head of Commercial and Projects, Association of Event Venues.

By coming together, and proactively seeking to identify where working conditions and regulations are common (or, due to unique site circumstance, different), contributing venues are, in essence, providing the answers to questions that organisers and supplier companies may have resulting in more efficient on-site activity, a smoother operation for the event organiser, and, therefore, a more polished product for the client, exhibitor and visitor.

In competent hands these guidelines should be an invaluable tool, simplifying health & safety planning and management and other operational issues on the floor.

Application

For the purposes of this document the word 'event' will generally apply to any event held in the participating eGuide venues. It must be noted that in multipurpose venues where exhibitions, conferences and other like events can be run alongside sporting fixtures or musical entertainment in arenas, other guidance or legislation may be more applicable for specific activities.

How to Use and Engage with the eGuide

The eGuide will save hours of painstaking and detailed work for any AEV venue seeking to maintain regulations that are compliant with UK law. Notwithstanding a few points of detail, which can be separately annotated, any AEV member venue that hosts any degree of exhibition business activity should be able to adopt these guidelines wholesale. The guide equally provides the basis for organisers to plan the operational management of their event and for suppliers and clients/exhibitors to understand what is required of them.

It must be stressed, however, that this is a **guidance** document. If meticulously followed, it should ensure that users are compliant with current health and safety law. Nevertheless, the particulars of each exhibition (or similar event) should still be considered on an individual basis and venues, organisers, suppliers and clients/exhibitors must all remember that it is ultimately their responsibility to ensure that they address health & safety, and other operational issues properly, in compliance with the law.

It must also be stressed that all employers have a legal duty to employ staff that are competent to manage health & safety, and other operations that are relevant to their level and range of responsibilities. This guidance alone is not a substitute for proper training and experience.

The committee welcomes any constructive comment on these guidelines. If you feel you can contribute, please email eguide@aev.org.uk, and your point will be considered at the next committee meeting.

If you require additional health & safety support there are several specialist companies providing consultancy, training and floor management capabilities within ESSA and AEO Associate membership.

EIA note on legal compliance

The Association of Event Venues (AEV), Association of Event Organisers (AEO) and Event Services and Suppliers Association (ESSA) are managed by the Event Industry Alliance (EIA) secretariat. EIA advocates those members of all three associations work within or beyond the requirements of UK law. Where a British standard, Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance, approved code of practice, other central or local government guidance or examples of case law suggest that specific working methods or standards are needed to meet the requirements of UK law, the EIA advocates that members adopt these. In instances where groups of members wish to collaborate on finding alternative, but equally as safe, methods of work that they feel are more suited to the operational constraints of the event industry than those described elsewhere, the EIA will facilitate that collaboration and

any benchmarking or hazard and operability study (HAZOP) activity that is required, advise members of their specific duties and liabilities and, where requested, publish their findings, typically within the eGuide. The EIA cannot and does not however officially advocate any standard or working practice other than those produced by HSE, British Standards Institution (BSI) or other government agencies and offices, whether published within the eGuide or not, and reminds all organisations, members and non-members alike, that it is their individual responsibility to assess the risks of their work and to establish practices that comply with the law and that prevent work-related injury and ill-health.

Acknowledgements

Appreciation to Thomas Stead from **X2Consult** (AEV safeguarding partner) for leading on the creation of the new **Safeguarding section**.

Safeguarding

Other relevant sections:

[Accessibility](#)

[Children](#)

[Crèches](#)

Subsections:

- General principles
- Responsibilities
- Planning and risk management
- Vetting and training
- Managing concerns or disclosures

General Principles

1. Safeguarding refers to the proactive measures taken to protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, harm, or exploitation. It also encompasses promoting their overall wellbeing and ensuring they feel safe, respected, and supported. In the UK, safeguarding is not discretionary; it is a statutory obligation for organisations and professionals who work with, or come into contact with, vulnerable individuals.
2. The primary aim of safeguarding is to ensure that robust systems, appropriately trained personnel, and effective processes are in place to protect vulnerable attendees throughout every stage of their involvement in an event. These arrangements must be consistently applied across the entire event environment to provide comprehensive and reliable protection.
3. Safeguarding extends beyond basic safety or security measures. It encompasses welfare provision, clear and accessible reporting procedures, standards of conduct, and proactive prevention strategies. By embedding safeguarding at every level, organisations demonstrate their commitment to protecting individuals from harm and promoting a safe, supportive, and accountable environment.

Responsibilities

Organiser

4. The Organiser holds overall accountability for safeguarding for their visitors. This includes:
 - Understanding the expected attendee profile, including whether children or vulnerable adults may attend and at what points during the event.
 - Ensuring sufficient resources are in place to manage safeguarding risks.
 - Aligning event safeguarding processes with those of the venue.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

5. Organisers should appoint a DSL or safeguarding team depending on the size of the event. The DSL is responsible for:
 - Managing concerns and coordinating multi-agency responses.
 - Supporting staff and ensuring legal compliance.
 - Overseeing incident management and documentation.
 - Embedding a strong safeguarding culture across the event.

6. They must be trained on site and empowered to act at all relevant stages of the event.

Additional Roles

7. Multi-day or multi-site events may require Safeguarding Officers.
8. Where children are involved in performance or employment, all relevant licensing and supervision requirements must be met (see [Children](#) section).

Planning and Risk Management

Safeguarding Risk Assessment

9. A safeguarding risk assessment must be completed for any event involving children or vulnerable adults. Consider:
 - Supervision arrangements.
 - Lost/found child procedures.
 - Welfare or quiet rooms.
 - Restricted access areas.
 - Photography/filming controls and consent.
 - Escalation routes.
 - Safeguarding Intelligence.
 - Sexual Harassment.
 - Sexual Assault.
 - Inappropriate or child related safeguarding concerns.

Integration with Other Plans

10. Safeguarding must be integrated with security, fire and other emergency, medical, crowd management, accessibility and communications plans, however, should not be used as a dual role. Escalation protocols must be agreed between the Organiser and the Venue, including who is responsible for contacting Police or Social Services.

5R's Framework

11. Embedding the **Recognise** → **Respond** → **Report** → **Record** → **Refer** model within plans, Event Control SOPs and staff briefings helps ensure consistency.

Recognise

- Look for early signs of vulnerability or distress:
 - lost, disoriented,
 - coerced,
 - in restricted areas,
 - or visibly anxious.

Respond

- Approach calmly and ask non-intrusive questions.
- Provide appropriate welfare support.
- Use discreet communications (Event Control, coded messages).
- Offer basic comfort such as water or seating.

Report

- Raise concerns as soon as they arise, ensuring no delay in informing the appropriate safeguarding lead or responsible authority.
- Present information accurately and objectively, detailing only what has been observed, disclosed, or evidenced.
- Adhere strictly to organisational reporting protocols.
- Support subsequent safeguarding actions as required.

Record

- Create a clear, detailed, and factual record of the safeguarding concern as soon as possible after it arises.
- Include relevant information such as dates, times, locations, names of those involved, and the exact words used in any disclosure where appropriate.
- Ensure records are accurate, objective, and free from opinion or speculation.
- Store all safeguarding records securely, in line with data protection requirements, and restrict access to authorised personnel only.

Refer

- Escalate to the DSL/Event Control.
- Involve first aid, police or social care where thresholds are met.
- Only reunite after formal identity verification, not recognition alone.
- For mental health crises, involve trained professionals or emergency services.

Additional Planning Requirements

12 Consider wristbands or ID tags (with minimal, consented data such as telephone numbers for responsible adult).

13 Ensure there is an adequate lost child policy - including identity verification protocols. This may be an existing venue policy, or it may be show specific. If it is show specific, ensure it aligns with and is briefed to the Venue.

14 Consider conducting tabletop or live-play simulations including high risk and low risk examples of safeguarding concerns.

15 Crèches or youth zones must have qualified staff, appropriate staffing ratios, parental consent, and secure records.

16 Avoid one-to-one situations, staff should always work in pairs and ensure oversight of planned activities in feature areas or exhibitor-led sessions.

17 Include photography/filming controls in the safeguarding assessment and communicate arrangements clearly.

18 Ensure any expectations for exhibitors and/ or visitors is clearly communicated and that any records are submitted in a timely fashion.

Vetting & Training

Vetting (DBS):

19 Anyone in direct, unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults, or carrying out a regulated activity, must have an appropriate DBS check.

20 The Organiser should verify supplier compliance and, where appropriate, request evidence from the venue or third-party provider.

Training & Briefing:

21 All staff; contractors and volunteers must receive a pre-event safeguarding briefing covering:

- Policy Overview,
- Reporting routes,
- Safeguarding and welfare locations
- Expected behaviours/ appropriate conduct
- Any identified specific risks.

22 Communications briefings should include:

- Using radios discreetly.
- Avoiding personal discussions in public areas.
- Switching to back-of-house channels.
- Maintaining radio silence during critical incidents.

23 Customer-facing staff should be trained to recognise early signs of safeguarding characteristics and behaviours.

24 Any staff, volunteers, or contractors working in 'regulated activity' must, in addition to DBS, also hold relevant safeguarding training (level 2-3) which is in date and has been refreshed within the last 3 years.

25 Organisers should hold records to demonstrate they have verified documents/ identification / training.

Managing Concerns or Disclosures

26 Staff may receive concerns or disclosures from a child or vulnerable adult. Clear processes must be in place, and staff should be briefed on how to manage these appropriately. Escalation arrangements must be agreed in advance between the Organiser and Venue.

27 Immediate actions (all roles):

- Ensure the person's immediate safety.
- Report immediately to the DSL, Safeguarding Officer or Duty Manager (as defined locally).
- Record details accurately: facts vs opinion, timings, observations, witnesses, who was informed, and the individual's account where possible.
- The DSL should ensure referrals to police, social care or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (either in person or via the Venue). Written confirmation should follow no later than 24 hours.
- Provide debrief and support to staff involved.

28 The DSL must ensure:

- Accurate recording of concerns
- Prompt referral to appropriate services (e.g. police, LADO, social care)
- Follow-up and closure documentation

29 Emergency safeguarding incidents must be managed in parallel with other event control protocols.