



Good Practice Guidance Note

Inclusive Safeguarding: A Disability Lens for Safer Programming

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Acronyms

CAPSEAH	Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment.
СВСМ	Community Based Complaints Mechanism
cso	Civil Society Organisation
DID	Disability Inclusive Development
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDS	Global Disability Summit
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion
HDP	Humanitarian, Development and Peace
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDC	International Data Charter
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IDDC	International Disability and Development Consortium
KCS	Keeping Children Safe
LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
ODA	Overseas Development Aid
OPD	Organisations of Persons with Disabilities
PSEAH	Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment
UNCRPD	United National Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities





1. Introduction

What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the responsibility of organisations to make sure their staff, operations and programmes do no harm to people, nor expose them to abuse or exploitation, and includes protecting staff from inappropriate behaviour such as bullying and harassment¹. Disability-inclusive safeguarding means implementing safeguarding systems that include all people, including people with disabilities in all their diversity².

This guidance note is intended for practitioners and organisations working across humanitarian, development, and peace (HDP) settings. It provides both a clear, evidence-based rationale for why disability-inclusive safeguarding is essential, and practical guidance on how to implement it effectively throughout the programme cycle.

Safeguarding violations can result directly from the way programmes are designed or delivered. As such, there is a duty of care to ensure that all interventions are planned

and implemented in ways that prevent harm and promote the safety and dignity of all individuals, including people with disabilities.

By embedding disability inclusion into safeguarding approaches, this guidance note supports safer, more inclusive programming across Official Development Assistance (ODA)-funded initiatives. It offers a cohesive framework that ensures safeguarding and inclusion are mutually reinforcing, rather than treated as separate or competing priorities.

The guidance is particularly relevant for **implementing partners**, including **civil society organisations (CSOs) and private sector actors**, helping them integrate disability-inclusive safeguarding, including protection from sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment (SEAH), into their programme cycles. It also serves as a resource for **FCDO staff** and other **overseas development assistance (ODA) spending departments and agencies**, equipping them to support and advise partners in upholding disability-inclusive safeguarding standards.

While the primary focus of this guidance is on safeguarding adults with disabilities, it also highlights key considerations for children with disabilities. Given that children face distinct risks and vulnerabilities, practitioners should be aware that child safeguarding requires additional, context-specific measures. Where relevant, this guidance signposts to further resources tailored to child safeguarding. Users are strongly encouraged to consult these materials to ensure compliance with more detailed and specific requirements related to the protection of children with disabilities.

2. The Case for disability-inclusive safeguarding

2.1 Understanding disability through an inclusive lens

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) provides a transformative and inclusive understanding of disability. Rather than viewing disability solely as a medical condition or individual deficit, the UNCRPD emphasises the interaction between people with impairments and the barriers society creates. The Convention (2006) recognises that:

¹ Safeguarding resources | Bond

² Adapted from Able Child (2021) Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 1: guidance for organisations





"Disability is an evolving concept, and that it results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others"

This approach is rooted in the **social model of disability**, which reframes disability not as a problem within the individual, but as a result of the barriers created by society. It challenges the idea that someone is 'disabled' solely because of their impairment, such as being blind, and instead highlights how external factors, like the lack of accessible formats (e.g., braille or audio), absence of sign language interpretation, inaccessible buildings without ramps, and discriminatory attitudes, create barriers to inclusion and equal opportunity. This understanding is essential for inclusive safeguarding practices.

To be inclusive and uphold the rights of people with disabilities, **practitioners do not need to be specialists in every type of impairment**. What matters most is being able to recognise and address the barriers that prevent equal participation and access to protection for people with disabilities. These barriers typically fall into three key categories⁴:

Figure 1 Barriers to Participation







BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

INSTITUTIONAL

(Systemic policies, practices and procedures)

- Discriminatory laws or lack of disability inclusive policies
- Inaccessible services
- Bureaucratic processes that are hard to navigate
- Lack of disaggregated data
- Disaggregated data

ENVIRONMENTAL

(Physical and infrastructure obstacles)

- Inaccessible buildings or services
- Lack of accessible transportation
- Poorly designed emergency evacuation routes
- Inaccessible communications
- Geographic isolation or unsafe environments

ATTITUDINAL

(Social and cultural beliefs)

- Stereotypes that people with disabilities are helpless or a burden
- Stigma leading to social exclusion or invisibility
- Lack of awareness or understanding among service providers, policymakers or public
- Resistance to inclusive practices
- Overprotection or paternalism

³ United Nations. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *2006*, https://www.un.org/disabilities/

⁴ Adapted from Able Child (2021) Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 1: guidance for organisations





By understanding these barriers and working to eliminate them, practitioners help create safer, more inclusive environments where everyone, regardless of disability, can fully participate and be protected on an equal basis.

Disability inclusive safeguarding seeks to address these barriers and prevent harms rooted in power imbalances, discrimination, and inequality. Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH), along with other forms of harm, often stem from abuses of power that disproportionately impact those who are already marginalised. People with disabilities, particularly those facing intersecting

Only by understanding and dismantling the barriers people with disabilities face can we create environments that are truly safe, inclusive, and protective—where all individuals can participate fully and be safeguarded on an equal basis.

forms of discrimination—such as on the basis of gender, age, or ethnicity—are at heightened risk. These risks are often compounded by their exclusion from decision-making processes and services designed without their input. **Recognising how power dynamics and systemic exclusion affect people with disabilities allows practitioners to better identify and mitigate risks**. This reinforces the imperative to design safe programmes *with* and *for* people with disabilities.

V

Good Practice Tip - Apply an intersectional lens.

Remember people with disabilities are not one homogenous group. It is important to understand that forms of discrimination, exclusion and risks faced by people with disabilities are amplified for those with multiple protected characteristics, e.g. children and older people, women and girls, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and others (LGBT+), ethnic minorities, or people living in rural communities. Safeguarding responses must reflect this complexity.

2.2 Frameworks driving our commitment to inclusion and safeguarding

Disability-inclusive safeguarding refers to safeguarding systems that include people with disabilities by recognising and mitigating the specific and different risks they experience, encouraging and enabling reports of safeguarding concerns that involve them and responding to these concerns in a disability-inclusive way⁵. It essentially means making sure structures and systems are designed to ensure the safety, rights, and well-being of all people with disabilities across all contexts. International frameworks, and in some cases domestic laws, provide crucial guidance for organisations to adopt inclusive safeguarding practices that recognise the unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities and uphold their dignity and rights⁶.

Key international frameworks include:

<u>UNCRPD</u> and its Optional Protocol, adopted in 2006, is a global human rights treaty, affirming the equal rights of persons with disabilities and emphasises accessibility, non-discrimination, inclusion, and participation. It marks a shift from a medical or charity-based view to recognising people with disabilities as rights-holders capable of making decisions and contributing to society. The Convention forms the basis for inclusive development and programming.

⁵ Adapted from Watters, L and Orsander, M. (2021) Disability-inclusive child safeguarding guidelines, Able Child Africa

⁶ Hughes, K et al *Prevalence and Risk of Violence against Adults with Disabilities: A Systematic Review and Meta Analysis of Observational Studies*, 379 The Lancet 1621, 1626-28 (Feb. 28, 2012)





- ≥ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its accompanying UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) champion a global vision rooted in equity and inclusion, guided by the principle to "leave no one behind." This agenda directly supports safeguarding efforts, particularly through SDG 10, which focuses on reducing inequalities, and SDG 16, which aims to foster peace, justice, and strong institutions. Together, these goals emphasise the importance of creating inclusive, just, and equitable societies where everyone is protected and empowered to thrive.
- The Inclusive Data Charter (2018) aims to advance the use of inclusive and disaggregated data to ensure that no one is left behind. It promotes the principles of equity, transparency, and collaboration in data collection and usage. By encouraging the disaggregation of data and ensuring accurate representation of individuals with disabilities in statistics, the Charter helps identify barriers and inequalities that hinder their inclusion and protection, enabling data-driven decisions that support inclusive policies and responsive safeguarding efforts⁷.
- ✓ <u>IASC Guidelines, Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action</u> (2019) provides guidance on essential actions that humanitarian actors should take in order to effectively identify and respond to the needs and rights of people with disabilities who are most at risk of being left behind in humanitarian settings.
- Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (2024) supports the inclusion of people with disabilities across all stages of humanitarian response, not by isolating disability as a separate issue, but by embedding it in its **commitments to dignity**, **participation**, **and equality**. Humanitarian actors are expected to ensure accessible communication, collect disability-disaggregated data, provide universal access, involve people with disabilities in decisions, and adapt services to meet their needs.

UK commitments to disability-inclusive safeguarding

The UK has demonstrated leadership in advancing disability inclusion, notably through its commitments at the **Global Disability Summits** in 2018, 2022 and more recently at the 2025 Summit in Berlin. At the first global summit in 2018 the UK pledged to tackle stigma, promote inclusive education, support economic empowerment and harass technology and innovation⁸. In 2022, it announced 18 new commitments aligned with its <u>Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy 2022 to 2030</u>, focusing on global health, inclusive education, and economic development⁹.

The UK has also strengthened its safeguarding measures through the <u>UK Strategy (2020)</u> Safeguarding against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment within the Aid Sector .This strategy raises standards across departments delivering ODA, ensuring aid is delivered safely and ethically. Complementing this, the <u>Common Approach to Protection from SEAH (CAPSEAH)</u> provides practical guidance and minimum standards for preventing and responding to SEAH in HDP settings.

Together, these frameworks and initiatives reflect a strong commitment to building safe, inclusive environments that empower and protect people with disabilities.

⁷ Inclusive data charter action plan for the global Sustainable Development Goals - Office for National Statistics

⁸ Global Disability Summit 2018: Summary of Commitments - GOV.UK

⁹ Global Disability Summit 2022: UK international development commitments - GOV.UK





2.3 Disability prevalence and risk: understanding SEAH and other harms faced by people with disabilities

This part of the guidance seeks to equip practitioners and organisations with vital, evidence-based insights into the prevalence of disability and the heightened risks faced by people with disabilities, including SEAH and other forms of harm. It draws on key statistics to convey the scale and urgency of the issue, highlights critical risk factors and systemic barriers, and builds a compelling case for the adoption of disability inclusive safeguarding approaches. By deepening understanding of the distinct vulnerabilities experienced by people with disabilities, this guidance aims to drive the development of safeguarding strategies that are not only effective and inclusive but also grounded in equity and accountability.

Disability affects a substantial portion of the world's population, with an **estimated 1.3 billion people, roughly one in six globally, living with a disability**¹¹. This includes around **240 million children, or one in ten**¹², underscoring the widespread and global nature of disability. Yet people with disabilities continue to face **heightened safeguarding risks** including SEAH as well as other forms of violence and neglect. Understanding these risk factors and their presence in ODA

Safeguarding measures are designed to mitigate risks that people face. If they are not designed with and for persons with disabilities, they will not work to safeguard them from the different risks they face. People with disabilities may also find it more difficult to access services, find support or solidarity when abuse has taken place¹⁰.

programming is essential and proactively addressing them through inclusive safeguarding measures is crucial to ensuring protection for people with disabilities.

▲ Key risk factors facing people with disabilities:

Disproportionate exposure to abuse and violence:

- Persons with disabilities are three times more likely to experience physical violence, sexual violence and emotional violence than persons without disabilities¹³.
- Women with disabilities are up to 10 times more likely to experience gender-based violence (GBV), while up to 70% experience sexual abuse before turning 18 years old¹⁴.
- Children with disabilities are four times more likely to experience physical violence¹⁵.

These figures point to systemic failure in protective mechanisms, as well as deep rooted social norms and power imbalances that expose people with disabilities, particularly women and children to heightened harm.

¹² UNICEF (2024) Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities

 $^{^{10}}$ Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2022) Pocket Guide: Disability-inclusive safeguarding in programmes

¹¹ WHO Disability Factsheet 2023

¹³ UNFPA-WEI (2018) Women and Young Persons with Disabilities: Guidelines for Providing Rights Based and Gender Responsive Services to address GBV and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights

¹⁵ UNICEF (2024) Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities





Exclusion from education and protective environments

- Children with disabilities are twice as likely to never attend school, cutting off protective environments and opportunities for empowerment.¹⁶
- 75% of children with disabilities in some countries never attend school¹⁷
- Children with disabilities face a significantly higher risk of dropping out of school compared to their peers¹⁸.

These figures point to the significant **barriers to education** faced by children with disabilities, which not only deny them learning opportunities, but also exclude them from safe, protective environments that schools offer and limit their life chances in adulthood.

Intersection with poverty and marginalisation:

- 80% of persons with disabilities live in **low- and middle-income countries**, where they face compounded risks due to weaker systems and fewer resources¹⁹.
- People with disabilities experience poverty at more than twice the rate of people without disabilities and are two to four times more likely to be affected by climate change²⁰.
- Only 33.5% of persons with severe disabilities receive any kind of disability benefit underscoring systemic neglect and exclusion. ²¹

These figures highlight how disability intersects with poverty, climate vulnerability, and weak social protection systems, emphasising the urgent need for inclusive policies, targeted support, and equitable access to resources and services.

Gaps in GBV services and support systems:

 Support services for women experiencing violence tend not to be accessible for people with disabilities and are not adequately suited to their specific needs²²

This fact points to a critical **gap in GBV response systems**, where services often fail to be inclusive or accessible for women with disabilities. It suggests systemic **ableism and exclusion** in support structures, leaving survivors potentially without protection and allows abuse to persist unchallenged.

Barriers to addressing risks for people with disabilities:

The risks shared above are society-wide and provide an indication of the disability-related dynamics and risks that need consideration in ODA programmes. There are also risk factors related to the organisations delivering ODA programmes.

¹⁶ Global education monitoring report, 2020: *Inclusion and education: all means all -* UNESCO Digital Library

¹⁷ UNESCO Information Paper N. 49 (2018). *Education and Disability: Analysis of data from 49 Countries*. http://uis.unesco.org/en/news/education-and-disability-analysis data-49-countries

¹⁸ UNICEF Fact Sheet (2022) Children with Disabilities

¹⁹ IDC (2024) FCDO and Disability-Inclusive Development

²⁰ Ibid

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²¹ ILO World Social Protection Report 2020-22: Social protection at the crossroads – in pursuit of a better future

²² UNFPA-WEI (2018) Women and Young Persons with Disabilities: Guidelines for Providing Rights Based and Gender Responsive Services to address GBV and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights





☑ Disability-inclusion gaps in safeguarding policies and procedures of organisations delivering ODA programmes

- Many organisations do not make the necessary additions, modifications and adaptations to safeguard people with disabilities effectively²³.
- Safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices that exclude people with disabilities perpetuate marginalisation within organisations and programmes²⁴.

Risks faced by people with disabilities are often driven by a combination of stigma, discrimination, harmful traditional beliefs, lack of disability awareness, and insufficient support systems such as the absence of respite care for caregivers. Additional factors like increased vulnerability due to care needs, dependency on others, and the lack of accountability for abuse further compound these risks²⁵.

It is important to recognise that stigma, discrimination, and negative stereotypes, often intertwined with sympathy, misunderstanding, and myths, can lead to exclusionary or non-participatory approaches. These attitudes often manifest in organisational practices and as a result, the needs and voices of people with disabilities may be overlooked, placing them at higher risk²⁶.

Figure 2 – Impact of Discrimination and Exclusion²⁷



Organisations delivering ODA programmes are responsible for removing these barriers and ensuring safe, inclusive spaces for people with disabilities. Policies may emphasise diversity and equality, but if safeguarding systems like reporting mechanisms are inaccessible due to language, literacy, or other barriers they will fail to protect everyone. **Without intersectional safeguarding measures, risks are inadvertently created or intensified**²⁸. Safeguarding must therefore proactively address these issues by removing barriers, challenging stigma, guaranteeing access to services, and promoting the inclusion and agency of people with disabilities in all contexts.

²³ Watters, L and Orsander, M. (2021) Disability-inclusive child safeguarding guidelines, Able Child Africa ²⁴ Adapted from <u>Inclusive Futures (2024) Driving change: six principles for disability inclusive</u>

development

²⁵ UNFPA-WEI (2018) Women and Young Persons with Disabilities: Guidelines for Providing Rights Based and Gender Responsive Services to address GBV and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights

²⁶ Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2022) Pocket Guide: Disability-Inclusive Safeguarding in Programmes

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid





3. Key principles of disability-inclusive safeguarding

To effectively integrate disability-inclusive safeguarding, including the prevention of SEAH, throughout the programme cycle, it is essential to be guided by robust safeguarding principles.

This guidance note is informed by global safeguarding standards, including **CAPSEAH**²⁹ (Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment) and **IDDC** (International Disability and Development Consortium) Inclusive Safeguarding³⁰, which provide key principles and crucial guidance for safeguarding people with disabilities.

CAPSEAH Common PSEAH Principles³¹

- SEAH is strictly prohibited
- Zero tolerance for inaction
- Tailored, inclusive, and survivor-centred approaches
- Embedding SEAH prevention into organisational culture
- Appropriate response to suspicions, reports, and incidents
- Confidentiality & protection against retaliation

The **CAPSEAH common principles** serve as a foundation for safe and ethical practices among practitioners and organisations engaged in HDP work. These principles are designed to prevent and respond to SEAH, ensuring that safeguarding measures are effective, survivor-centred, and contextually relevant.

However, to realise a fully inclusive safeguarding approach, it is essential to integrate these principles with the **IDDC safeguarding principles**, detailed in Figure 3, which provide a **disability-inclusive lens** to safeguarding.

Figure 3: Key Principles of Disability Inclusive Safeguarding⁶²



By embedding these principles within their safeguarding frameworks, practitioners and organisations can more effectively tackle the unique risks, overcome barriers, and uphold

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²⁹ FCDO (2024) *The Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (CAPSEAH)*. https://capseah.safeguardingsupporthub.org/

³⁰ IDDC (2023) Inclusive Safeguarding

³¹ FCDO (2024) The Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (CAPSEAH). https://capseah.safeguardingsupporthub.org/

³² IDDC (2023) Inclusive Safeguarding





the rights of people with disabilities, ensuring that **no one is left behind** in the drive to prevent and address harm.

REMEMBER: The Keeping Children Safe (KCS) safeguarding standards offer key principles and guidance for practitioners and organisations working specifically with children.³³

4. Mainstreaming disability inclusive safeguarding across the programme cycle

This section provides practitioners and organisations with practical guidance on how to integrate disability-inclusive safeguarding at every stage of the programme cycle. It highlights key entry points to help determine where to begin and offers practical advice for implementing effective, inclusive safeguarding measures. By presenting clear and targeted recommendations, this section serves as a valuable resource for mainstreaming disability-inclusive safeguarding systematically into programme planning and delivery.

Effective **programme management is a structured yet dynamic process** that guides activities from identifying real-world challenge to closing the programme upon completion. This process involves designing interventions, engaging stakeholders and partners, monitoring implementation, and reporting progress³⁴. A critical component of effective programming is ensuring "**Safe Programming**," which safeguards programme participants and affected community members from both intentional or unintentional harm arising from programme design or delivery³⁵. This requires a proactive approach to identifying, assessing, mitigating, and managing risks of harm and abuse throughout the implementation of HDP programmes.

4.1 The iterative programme cycle: safeguarding considerations at every stage

At its heart, programme management follows an iterative framework known as the programme cycle, consisting of five interlinked stages: **Definition, Design & Planning, Mobilisation, Delivery,** and **Closure** (refer to figure 4 below). Each stage operates as a continuous cycle, informed by strategic objectives across a portfolio of programmes and policy priorities.

Figure 4 Standard Programme Cycle

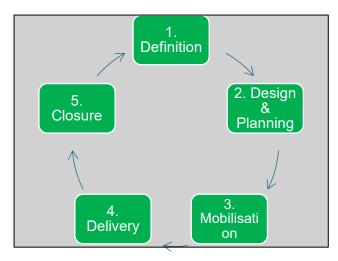
³³ Keeping Children Safe. (2023). The International Child Safeguarding Standards. Keeping Children Safe

³⁴ FCDO Programme Operating Framework, 2024.

³⁵ Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2021) How-to Safe Programming MENA.safeguardingsupporthub.org







By integrating inclusive safeguarding into programme management allows projects to assess, address and monitor risks of harm facing people with disabilities into every stage of the programme cycle³⁶:

▶ Definition: At the definition stage of the programme cycle, need assessments and activity planning often fail to sufficiently consider the perspectives of people with disabilities. This exclusion prevents their specific needs from being integrated into the foundational decision-making processes. To ensure a more inclusive approach, it is critical to engage

people with disabilities early on when assessing needs, defining problems, and identifying key stakeholders.

Design & Planning: At the design and planning stage, the absence of inclusive risk assessments and appropriate resourcing can lead to significant gaps in addressing the needs and vulnerabilities of people with disabilities. This oversight can result in programmes that fail to identify and mitigate risks effectively, exclude critical safeguards, and miss opportunities to promote accessibility and inclusivity. To create safe and impactful programmes, it is essential to prioritise disability-specific considerations, allocate resources for tailored safeguards, and embed inclusive safeguarding measures directly into the programme plan laying the groundwork for a more inclusive programme design.

✓ **Mobilisation:** At the mobilisation phase, the needs of people with disabilities are often overlooked, leading to significant barriers to their participation. Key aspects frequently neglected include ensuring accessible communication channels, allocating resources to support inclusive safeguarding, and providing disability-specific training for staff. Additionally, the failure to proactively engage with people with disabilities and their representative organisations further exacerbates these challenges, preventing meaningful involvement in programme activities. To address these challenges, inclusive practices must be prioritised from the outset. This includes creating accessible materials, fostering partnerships with disability-focused organisations, recruiting staff using valued based interview questions and equipping staff with the necessary attitudes and knowledge by delivering training on unconscious bias, inclusive communication and respectful engagement.

Delivery: At the programme delivery stage, people with disabilities may experience heightened safeguarding risks due to several factors. They are often more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation because of power imbalances and societal discrimination. Inaccessible reporting mechanisms and a lack of inclusive safeguarding measures can leave them unable to voice concerns or seek help. Additionally, intersecting identities such as being a woman or child, can amplify these risks making them more likely to be targeted for harm³⁷. Addressing these risks requires accessible and inclusive programme activities and regular monitoring to prevent harm to people with disabilities. Safeguarding mechanisms should be actively promoted to ensure that all participants, including those with disabilities, can report concerns safely and confidentially.

³⁶ Inclusive Futures (2024) Driving Change: Six Principles for Disability Inclusive Development

³⁷ Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2022) Pocket Guide: Disability-inclusive safeguarding in programmes





Closure: At the closure stage, safeguarding risks may heighten for people with disabilities as support systems and resources are withdrawn, leaving them particularly vulnerable. Factors such as the absence of alternative services, unclear communication about transitions, and unresolved safeguarding cases can further expose them to harm. To mitigate these risks, it is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of disability-inclusive safeguarding measures when assessing outcomes, gathering lessons learned, and transitioning responsibilities. This process should focus on documenting best practices, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring that safeguarding responsibilities extend beyond programme closure.

In summary, inclusive safeguarding must be actively built into every stage of the programme cycle not as an add-on, but as a core requirement. At each stage, this means formalising engagement with organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs), mapping what each person needs to participate, prioritising women and girls with disabilities as well as those with psychosocial disabilities and mental health conditions³⁸. At every step, a proactive, well-resourced approach ensures that the safety and protection of people with disabilities are not overlooked, but rather fully integrated and adequately funded within all aspects of project design and delivery.³⁹

4.2 Entry points and actions for practitioners and organisations

Safeguarding people with disabilities should be recognised as a core responsibility integral to safe programming, not an optional add-on. While some practitioners and organisations may feel they lack the capacity or resources to effectively safeguard people with disabilities there are practical steps that can be taken. The table below provides a structured framework of entry points and actions to guide disability inclusive safeguarding across the programme cycle. Grounded in evidence and real-world examples, it offers actionable recommendations to help create safe, inclusive environments for all. It also serves as a practical guide for FCDO staff and ODA spending departments to support partners with advice and oversight, and to strengthen quality assurance and inclusive safeguarding practice across programmes. Though not exhaustive, these actions provide a strong foundation for embedding disability-inclusive safeguarding throughout the programme cycle.

1. Definition Phase

En	try Points	Demonstrated Actions
<i> </i>	Define scope & set disability inclusive intentions	Clearly define the scope of the programme to ensure it addresses diverse needs, promotes accessibility, and embeds disability-inclusive safeguarding principles. Document clear and specific commitments to disability inclusive safeguarding from the outset ⁴¹ .
₹	GEDSI analysis and disability - inclusive risk mapping	Carry out an intersectional and participatory gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) analysis to assess what attitudes and prejudices cause the discrimination and exclusion of different marginalised groups including people with disabilities, what barriers they face and in what spaces, and who the key

³⁸ Inclusive Futures (2024) Driving Change: Six Principles for Disability Inclusive Development

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³⁹ Adapted from Able Child (2021) Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 2: guidance for practitioners

⁴⁰ Adapted from Able Child (2021) Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 1: guidance for organisations

⁴¹ Ibid





stakeholders are that can effect change as well as their incentives and disincentives to support inclusion efforts. It is important to understand the key spaces, places and networks where formal, informal, hidden and invisible power operate. This analysis should involve consultation with key stakeholders including people with disabilities and their representative organisations. Working alongside OPDs and people with disabilities is an essential requirement for effective inclusive safeguarding⁴².

The analysis also helps **identify the risks**, including safeguarding risks to people with disabilities as result of programming. The analysis should be continuously reviewed and updated to support strategy testing and adaption and to identify new/emerging risks.

Establish success criteria

Establish clear success criteria that place disability inclusive safeguarding at the core of programme achievement. Work in partnership with people with disabilities and their representative organisations to define outcomes that reflect accessibility, equity, and meaningful inclusion. Integrate measurable benchmarks such as increased participation of persons with disabilities and improved accessibility of programme outputs to ensure that safeguarding and inclusivity are embedded in how success is defined and evaluated.

Case Study 1 - Definition: What exactly is disability inclusive safeguarding?

During the definition phase of Inclusive Futures programme, we recognised that there was no single, universal definition of disability-inclusive safeguarding. Its meaning depended on local context, sector and the perspectives of those involved. While all partners agreed on a minimum commitment to 'do no harm', captured in a shared Code of Conduct, OPDs and community stakeholders pushed for a more expansive approach. They emphasised that disability-inclusive safeguarding must also include equal participation, build community trust, and ensure accessibility throughout the project. This reframed safeguarding as not just a matter of compliance, but a proactive, relational responsibility embedded across recruitment, planning, risk analysis, and reporting systems

This broader definition prompted deeper discussions about complex issues like neglect. In our inclusive education work, for example, outreach to identify children with disabilities not in school revealed cases where poverty, stigma, or a lack of caregiver support led to neglect. While this harm wasn't caused by the project, we recognised our duty of care and responded by treating these as protection concerns, offering resources such as a Positive Parenting Manual. We also encountered cases of "community concern"; safeguarding issues affecting people with disabilities not directly involved in the project but reported by community members. Though technically outside project scope, these reports reflected a trust in local OPDs and highlighted gaps in protection systems. To respond responsibly, we developed tools to track these cases and ensure appropriate handover. These experiences reinforced the importance of co-defining safeguarding with people with disabilities and

⁴² Inclusive Futures (2024) Driving Change: Six Principles for Disability Inclusive Development

⁴³ Inclusive Futures (2025) Case Studies of Disability Inclusive Safeguarding: Learning from Inclusive Futures





OPDs, being transparent about its scope, and building in flexibility to respond to the broader realities faced by people with disabilities.

2. Design and Planning Phase

En	try Points	Demonstrated Actions
ZJ.	Create a roadmap	Develop a roadmap with a focus on disability-inclusive safeguarding, outlining the project's vision and goals while ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities. • Facilitate participatory design workshops to establish a long-
		 term inclusive safeguarding goal for the programme⁴⁴. Set objectives and define activities that incorporate disability-inclusive safeguarding as an integral part of the programme design, rather than being an 'add on'⁴⁵. Regularly review and update the roadmap to adapt to evolving needs and regulations, ensuring ongoing inclusivity throughout the project.
<i> </i>	Working with partners	Identify and engage partners across the delivery chain who demonstrate the capacity to manage safeguarding risks specific to people with disabilities. This includes assessing and selecting partners based on their commitment to disability inclusion, safeguarding expertise, and demonstrated ability to engage PWDs meaningfully.
		Embed requirements for disability-inclusive safeguarding within programme design frameworks, due diligence processes, and funding agreements.
		For implementing lead partners, ensure downstream partners are equipped with appropriate training, tools, and support to uphold inclusive safeguarding standards throughout delivery.
<i>Z</i> /	Risk identification and mitigation	Take a proportionate, risk-based approach to safeguarding by assessing the nature and level of risk specific to the programme context. Conduct an in-depth assessment to identify and evaluate the specific risks, barriers, and power imbalances faced by people with disabilities and other at-risk groups. Begin with key guiding questions: Who is most at risk? Where does power lie? How might programme design reinforce or mitigate these dynamics?
		Use this analysis to inform programme design ensuring accessibility, safety, and inclusion are embedded from the start. Engage affected groups early in the process to help shape the programme and co-develop strategies that prevent harm and promote equity.
		Proactively identify and implement risk mitigation strategies to create a safer, more inclusive environment for people with

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⁴⁴ Inclusive Futures (2024) Driving Change: Six Principles for Disability Inclusive Development

⁴⁵ Adapted from Able Child (2021) Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 2: guidance for practitioners





		disabilities within the programme ⁴⁶ . Collaborate with OPD partners to mitigate risks, such as developing safer transportation options, including providing accompaniment and organised pick-up/drop-off services for public transport to and from project activities ⁴⁷
∠	Budgeting	Consider the costs of disability inclusive safeguarding measures and make the case at an organisational level and to donors to include more budget for accessibility and reasonable adjustments or repurpose existing funds ⁴⁸ .
∠	Reporting	Analyse the barriers people with disabilities face when reporting safeguarding issues and link these challenges to existing community-based complaint mechanisms (CBCMs) ⁴⁹ . Recognize that these barriers are often compounded by intersecting factors such as gender, age, and socio-economic status ⁵⁰ .
		Design reporting mechanisms in direct consultation with project participants, including people with disabilities, by actively asking what works best for them. Engage affected groups and OPDs to identify specific barriers to reporting and ensure the mechanisms are accessible, confidential, and responsive to the diverse needs of users. This participatory approach helps build trust, increases the likelihood of reporting, and ensures the system is sensitive to intersecting factors such as gender, age, and type of disability.
₹ Z	Case management	Establish clear, documented roles and responsibilities for safeguarding case handling at all levels of the programme. Identify who is responsible for receiving, managing, escalating, and responding to safeguarding concerns, including specific roles such as safeguarding focal points, programme managers, and partner staff. Develop a reporting and response flowchart or accountability map to visually outline these roles and how they interact. Ensure all actors are trained on their responsibilities, and that people with disabilities and other participants know who they can safely report to. Regularly review and update roles to reflect any changes in programme structure or partnerships.
		Create a case management and survivor support framework that prioritises safety, dignity, and accessibility. Ensure the framework is responsive to the heightened vulnerabilities and unique experiences of people with disabilities by incorporating individualised support plans, accessible communication methods, and partnerships with specialised service providers.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Inclusive Futures (2024) Driving Change: Six Principles for Disability Inclusive Development

⁴⁸ Adapted from Able Child (2021) Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 1: guidance for organisations

⁴⁹ Adapted from Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2023) Graphic: Intersectionality and Safe Programmes

⁵⁰ Adapted from Able Child (2021) Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 2: guidance for practitioners





	Identify and map available services and resources such as medical, psychosocial, legal, and protection support ensuring clear, coordinated referral pathways. Assess the accessibility and inclusiveness of each service for people with disabilities. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to define roles, responsibilities, and develop standardised referral protocols that guarantee timely, appropriate, and disability-inclusive support.
Initial training	Develop inclusive safeguarding training and sensitization for all programme staff and delivery partners to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to recognise risks and uphold safe, respectful, and inclusive practices. ⁵¹ Where possible:
	 Integrate disability inclusive safeguarding into existing training and capacity-building efforts and leverage free online training resources.⁵²
	 Co-design training with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations to ensure authenticity, relevance, and impact.
	Collect accurate, disability-disaggregated data in line with the principles of the Inclusive Data Charter ⁵³ , capturing age, gender, and type of impairment to clearly identify persons with disabilities and understand their specific experiences and intersectional needs before programme delivery. Use this data to inform the design of targeted interventions and implement appropriate reasonable adjustments. Strengthen and align with existing incountry data systems to avoid duplication and ensure sustainability. ⁵⁴
Monitoring	Develop clear indicators to track the implementation of safeguarding measures and assess ongoing risks faced by persons with disabilities, ensuring timely response and adaptation throughout the programme cycle.
	Establish accountability systems that actively include feedback from people with disabilities and ensure that inclusive safeguarding processes are regularly monitored, evaluated, and improved. ⁵⁵
Create a project plan	Create a project plan by breaking down the roadmap into specific, actionable tasks:

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⁵¹ Adapted from Able Child (2021) Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 2: guidance for practitioners

⁵² Adapted from Able Child (2021) Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 1: guidance for organisations

⁵³ Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (2018)<u>Inclusive Data Charter</u>

⁵⁴ Inclusive Futures (2024) Driving Change: Six Principles for Disability Inclusive Development

⁵⁵ Adapted from Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2023) Graphic: Intersectionality and Safe Programmes





- Define clear objectives for each phase and assign responsibilities to team members, ensuring roles are inclusive and accommodate diverse abilities.
- Set realistic deadlines for each task, accounting for accessibility considerations in design, development, and testing.
- Identify required resources, including assistive technologies or support services, and establish communication channels that are accessible to all.
- Build in regular checkpoints to monitor progress and address risks, particularly those that may impact the safety or participation of people with disabilities.
- Finalise the plan by ensuring all team members understand their responsibilities and that safeguarding measures are in place to create an inclusive and respectful working environment.

Case Study 2 – Design and Planning: Exploring risks in a programme 56

In the Inclusive Futures programme, we worked closely with OPDs, community members, and project partners during the design and planning phase to understand and address the unique risks faced by people with disabilities. Through participatory conversations, in homes, community groups, and workshops, we explored what safety and risk meant to individuals, especially those with lived experience. Using accessible language and informal dialogue, particularly for caregivers with low literacy, we identified key risks such as bullying during travel, increased caregiver stress and potential domestic violence, and risks of abuse for children with disabilities attending school for the first time.

Rather than treating risk assessment as a one-off exercise, we approached it as an ongoing, adaptive process. Together with community members, we co-developed practical mitigation strategies rooted in local realities, such as mapping safe travel routes, supporting group travel, raising awareness through community meetings, and providing accommodations like white canes or accessible materials. One-off activities, like clinic visits, also included tailored risk planning. We remained responsive to emerging issues, for instance, adjusting workshop times when shorter daylight hours introduced new safety concerns. This experience reinforced the value of inclusive, evolving, and locally grounded approaches to identifying and managing risk in disability-focused programming.

3. Mobilisation Phase

Entry Points

Demonstrated Actions

Prioritise safe hiring practices and ensure that job postings clearly state organisational commitment to disability inclusive safeguarding.

⁵⁶ Inclusive Futures (2025) Case Studies of Disability Inclusive Safeguarding: Learning from Inclusive Futures





		Where possible, actively hire people with disabilities within the programme staff team to foster diversity and representation. ⁵⁷
		Ensure that safeguarding focal points are identified and receive comprehensive training on disability-inclusive safeguarding.
<i> </i>	Due diligence	Ensure all delivery partners meet legal, ethical, and operational standards, with a focus on disability-inclusive practices. Conduct a thorough risk assessment, evaluate safeguarding policies for accessibility, and assess partner capacity to effectively implement disability-inclusive safeguarding throughout the programme.
<i>₹</i>	Information and communications	Create accessible awareness materials to communicate organisational safeguarding obligations, the code of conduct, what is SEAH, and reporting procedures. Ensure people with disabilities are represented in Information, Education and Communications (IEC) materials in an empowering way ⁵⁸ . Engage OPDs and people with disabilities in awareness-raising efforts. ⁵⁹
Ø.	Training	Using the materials developed in the design and planning phase, deliver bi-annual disability inclusive safeguarding training for all staff and delivery partners. This training must be a mandatory part of the induction process for all new hires. Suggested content to include:
		understanding of disability diversity, including respectful and inclusive language, and challenge harmful myths.
		intersectionality to recognise how overlapping identities affect risk and access to safeguarding.
		awareness of the different forms of abuse experienced by people with different types of disabilities.
		rights of people with disabilities to live free from harm, abuse, and discrimination.
		identify and mitigate specific safeguarding risks faced by people with disabilities.
		unconscious bias and organisational cultures and attitudes that may limit access to safeguarding for people with disabilities.
<i> </i>	Reporting channels	Test the proposed reporting mechanism with people with disabilities, gather their feedback, and make necessary refinements to ensure it is accessible, safe, and inclusive. Remember a range of reporting channels is ideal to ensure access, safety and comfort for all intended users ⁶⁰ .

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⁵⁷ Inclusive Futures (2024) Driving Change: Six Principles for Disability Inclusive Development

⁵⁸ Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2022) Pocket Guide: Disability-inclusive safeguarding in programmes

⁵⁹ Inclusive Futures (2024) Driving Change: Six Principles for Disability Inclusive Development

⁶⁰ Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2022) Pocket Guide: Disability-inclusive safeguarding in programmes





₽.	Resource allocation	Allocate resources for disability-specific safeguards e.g. a sign language interpreter, personal assistance or caregiver. ⁶¹
Z7	Stakeholder buy-in	Collaborate with stakeholders including OPDs, community leaders, service providers, and implementing partners to operationalise safeguarding plans. Clarify roles and responsibilities, establish shared safeguarding expectations, and ensure everyone is trained and equipped to implement disability inclusive safeguarding practices.

Case Study 3 – Mobilisation: Working out how much it costs⁶²

During the mobilisation stage of the Inclusive Futures programme, disability-inclusive safeguarding was planned and budgeted for, while remaining flexible to respond to emerging risks and individual referrals. We invested in safeguarding expertise, updated policies, ran inclusive trainings, and developed accessible reporting mechanisms. In our Inclusive Education project in Nepal, approximately 1% of the overall budget was spent directly on safeguarding activities. However, safeguarding was also embedded across the project in less visible ways such as in gender inclusion training, accessible communication, the participation of people with disabilities, and the roles of staff acting as Safeguarding Focal Points. These elements, while not always costed under safeguarding, were essential to creating safe, inclusive environments.

This integration made it difficult to determine when safeguarding efforts were "enough," especially when needs outpaced funding. Critical actions like supporting community concern cases, building referral relationships, or conducting safe home visits often fell outside the formal safeguarding scope but were taken on by committed staff and OPDs. Psychosocial support for staff handling safeguarding cases was rarely budgeted, leaving smaller organisations especially stretched. A key learning was that effective safeguarding depends not only on dedicated funds for training and response but also on the broader quality of programme delivery such as trusted relationships, inclusive design, and well-supported partners; all of which must be resourced as part of a truly disability-inclusive approach.

4. Delivery Phase

Entry Points	Demonstrated Actions
Community engagement	Conduct regular community awareness sessions to promote inclusive safeguarding and disability rights. Disseminate information regularly using multiple formats such as braille, sign language, easy-read, and audio to ensure accessibility for all. Integrate stigma reduction efforts into core project activities, addressing harmful attitudes and practices toward people with disabilities. ⁶³

⁶¹ Ibid

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⁶² Inclusive Futures (2025) Case Studies of Disability Inclusive Safeguarding: Learning from Inclusive Futures

⁶³ Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2022) Pocket Guide: Disability-inclusive safeguarding in programmes





		Partner with OPDs to take a lead role in challenging discrimination, shaping key messages, and driving community-wide awareness and behaviour change. 64
<i> </i>	Training	Deliver regular induction and refresher training on disability-inclusive safeguarding for all programme staff, volunteers, and delivery partners.
\triangleright	Event and activity planning	Carry out a disability-inclusive safeguarding risk assessment before any event or activity involving people with disabilities.
	71 3	 Build on standard safeguarding procedures by identifying and addressing specific risks related to accessibility, participation, and potential harm Once a full risk assessment has been completed and mitigation activities for each risk have been identified, it is important to ensure these are fully costed.
Ø.	Reporting	Actively inform and engage people with disabilities about available reporting mechanisms. Promote these mechanisms widely and in accessible formats to ensure all participants regardless of disability can report concerns safely, confidentially, and without fear of retaliation.
		Proactively inform all individuals who regularly interact with people with disabilities such as caregivers, family members, friends, and community members about the reporting systems in place. ⁶⁵ Equip them with the knowledge and tools to recognise and report safeguarding concerns, as they are often the first to notice or receive disclosures of potential harm.
		Regularly review reporting mechanisms to ensure they remain relevant and accessible, especially if reporting is low ⁶⁶ .
<i> </i>	Case handling	Establish a network of trained, community-based safeguarding focal points who are equipped to respond to concerns in an inclusive and safe manner.
		Ensure all individuals responsible for receiving reports have completed disability awareness training and are prepared to take disclosures from people with disabilities seriously.
		Expect and proactively identify specific risks and additional support needs for the case handling process including conducting an

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⁶⁴Inclusive Futures (2024) Driving Change: Six Principles for Disability Inclusive Development

⁶⁵ Adapted from Able Child (2021) Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 2: guidance for practitioners

⁶⁶ Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2024) How to note: establishing disability inclusive reporting mechanisms in Nigeria





		investigation e.g. disability rights trained investigator, sign language interpreters, accessible meeting spaces etc ⁶⁷ .
Ø	Risk management	Monitor and assess risks continuously throughout the delivery phase, focusing on the safety, accessibility, and well-being of people with disabilities. Proactively identify emerging risks, including safeguarding concerns, and implement timely mitigation strategies.
		Regularly review risk registers, adjust programme activities as needed, and ensure that all risks are addressed promptly with input from relevant stakeholders, particularly those with lived experience of disability.
<i> </i>	Monitoring & shared learning	Collect precise data and track your spending on inclusion. Clearly document costs in separate budget lines ⁶⁸ .
		Listen to feedback from people with disabilities, as well as data and reflections from project staff to improve and adjust programmes ⁶⁹ .
		Continuously track performance and monitor progress against key milestones.
		Share lessons learnt and successes relating to safeguarding people with disabilities, both internally and externally, to ensure people with disabilities are better protected across the sector ⁷⁰
	Case S	Study 4 – Delivery: Making reporting inclusive ⁷¹

During the delivery phase of Inclusive Futures programming, we prioritised creating multiple, accessible ways for people with diverse disabilities including children and those with complex needs to report safeguarding concerns safely. We began by consulting community members, including people with disabilities, to understand preferred and accessible reporting options. In Kenya, this included a toll-free number, monitored email inbox, complaints box, and trained staff. In Bangladesh, we added SMS and WhatsApp alongside feedback boxes. In Nepal, we trialled visual tools such as colours, symbols, and smileys to support non-verbal and neurodivergent children in expressing discomfort or

⁶⁷ Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2022) Pocket Guide: Disability-inclusive safeguarding in programmes

⁶⁸ Inclusive Futures (2024) Driving Change: Six Principles for Disability Inclusive Development

⁷⁰ Adapted from Able Child (2021) Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 1: guidance for organisations

⁷¹ Inclusive Futures (2025) Case Studies of Disability Inclusive Safeguarding: Learning from Inclusive **Futures**





harm. While these tools required time and practice, early results showed promise in helping children communicate concerns in meaningful ways.

Once systems were in place, we focused on making them known and trusted. Reporting options were explained during parent groups, home visits, and community meetings, and households were given contact details for Safeguarding Focal Points. Staff and partners received tailored training on how to report confidentially and encourage others to speak up. We monitored reporting patterns, addressed underreporting of sensitive issues like sexual abuse, and countered fear or shame through survivor-centred messaging and examples of positive outcomes. Anonymised examples of successful reporting were shared to build trust in the system, and we provided feedback where appropriate to show that reporting led to action. Importantly, we didn't wait for reports; safeguarding was embedded proactively in all activities, from seeking consent for images to modelling safe and respectful engagement. This helped normalise reporting as a protective act, reinforcing that every concern matters and everyone has a role to play in safeguarding.

6 5. Closure Phase

En	try Points	Demonstrated Actions
<i>₹</i>	Final evaluation	Conduct a comprehensive evaluation to assess the programme's success in meeting disability-inclusive safeguarding objectives, gather feedback from people with disabilities and stakeholders on safeguarding effectiveness and accessibility, and identify lessons learned, challenges, and recommendations for future programmes.
<i> </i>	Reflection and knowledge transfer	Facilitate a reflective session with the programme team and stakeholders to discuss lessons learned, focusing on improving disability-inclusive safeguarding for future programmes.
<i> </i>	Final report	Compile a final report detailing the programme's successes, challenges, and impact on people with disabilities, including how safeguarding was integrated and monitored. Share the report in accessible formats with stakeholders, including donors, community partners, and people with disabilities themselves.
\triangleright	Transition planning	Ensure that any open safeguarding cases involving people with disabilities are closed with proper follow-up and resolution.
		Release allocated resources, such as personnel and funding, as part of a structured transition process.
\triangleright	Sustainability planning	Plan for the sustainability of disability-inclusive safeguarding practices well before programme closure to prevent increased vulnerability among people with disabilities.
		As support systems and resources phase out, there is a risk that safeguarding mechanisms may weaken particularly if they are programme specific. To avoid this, ensure that safeguarding





		responsibilities, tools, and knowledge are transferred to local partners, OPDs, and community-based organisations. ⁷²
		Strengthen and align safeguarding practices with existing referral pathways and government systems, such as gender-based violence (GBV) reporting mechanisms, to ensure continued accessibility and responsiveness. By embedding safeguarding within broader institutional and community frameworks, programmes can help ensure continuity of protection and support beyond their lifespan.
Ø	Share Learning	Share the programme's impact widely, especially progress in disability-inclusive safeguarding, using diverse formats such as reports, videos, infographics, and stories of change. Celebrate achievements and recognise the contributions of all stakeholders, including people with disabilities and their representative organisations.
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Case Study 5 – Learning from Inclusive Futures⁷³

The Inclusive Futures Programme has demonstrated that disability-inclusive safeguarding is most effective when rooted in meaningful engagement with people with disabilities, participatory planning, and sustained organisational capacity strengthening with OPDs. As the programme moves toward closure, key lessons highlight the importance of co-defining safeguarding parameters, ensuring inclusive risk identification, and designing accessible reporting and referral mechanisms. These efforts must be accompanied by a proactive challenge to negative attitudes about disability, which often underpin safeguarding risks, and by transparent communication about the scope of safeguarding responsibilities both within and beyond the programme's remit.

Disability-inclusive safeguarding is not a standalone activity; it is a reflection of a broader culture of inclusion that ensures people with disabilities can access the full benefits of development and humanitarian programmes without facing additional barriers or risks. Embedding these practices into closure planning reinforces safeguarding as a lasting commitment, not just a compliance requirement.

5. Conclusion and Call to Action

Act now to champion disability inclusion and contribute to a future where safeguarding truly leaves no one behind.

Disability-inclusive safeguarding is both vital and transformative, breaking down barriers, mitigating risks, and addressing the distinct vulnerabilities experienced by people with disabilities. It paves the way for development that is not only inclusive but also sustainable, through partnerships with local and national decision-makers that foster long-term

ownership and impact⁷⁴. Achieving success in disability-inclusive safeguarding therefore relies on building strong, collaborative partnerships whether with OPDs, local authorities, or

⁷² Adapted from Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (2023) Graphic: Intersectionality and Safe Programmes

⁷³ Inclusive Futures (2025) Case Studies of Disability Inclusive Safeguarding: Learning from Inclusive Futures

⁷⁴ Inclusive Futures (2024) Driving Change: Six Principles for Disability Inclusive Development





other organisations. These partnerships must be rooted in shared goals, open communication, and an innovative approach to problem-solving.

Integrating disability-inclusive safeguarding across all phases of programming is a gradual process that requires intentional, well-considered actions. Rushing interventions can risk reinforcing existing barriers, whereas a thoughtful, step-by-step approach is more likely to produce meaningful and lasting results. By systematically identifying and addressing barriers, fostering awareness, and encouraging inclusive participation, programmes can create safeguarding practices that are both effective and enduring. This steady and purposeful progress is key to achieving safer and more inclusive outcomes.

6. Key Resources

For further support, the following resources are available:

- ✓ Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 1: guidance for organisations (Able Child 2021) Download here
- ✓ Disability-Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines, Part 2: guidance for practitioners (Able Child, 2021) Download here
- ✓ Driving Change: Six Principles for Disability Inclusive Development (Inclusive Futures, 2024) <u>Download here</u>
- ✓ Inclusive Safeguarding (IDDC, 2023) Download here
- ✓ Pocket Guide: Disability-inclusive safeguarding in programmes (Safeguarding Support Hub, 2024) – <u>Download here</u>
- ✓ Women and Young Persons with Disabilities: Guidelines for Providing Rights Based and Gender Responsive Services to address GBV and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (UNFPA-WEI, 2018) – <u>Download here</u>

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Helpdesk services are provided by a consortium of leading organisations and individual experts on disability, including Social Development Direct, Sightsavers, ADD International, Light for the World, Humanity & Inclusion, BRAC, BBC Media Action, Sense and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). Expert advice may be sought from this Group, as well as from the wider academic and practitioner community, and those able to provide input within the short time-frame are acknowledged. Any views or opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of FCDO, the Disability Inclusion Helpdesk or any of the contributing organisations/experts.





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