

How-to note



Integrating safeguarding in Human Resources

For Nigerian civil society organisations (CSOs) in humanitarian and development settings

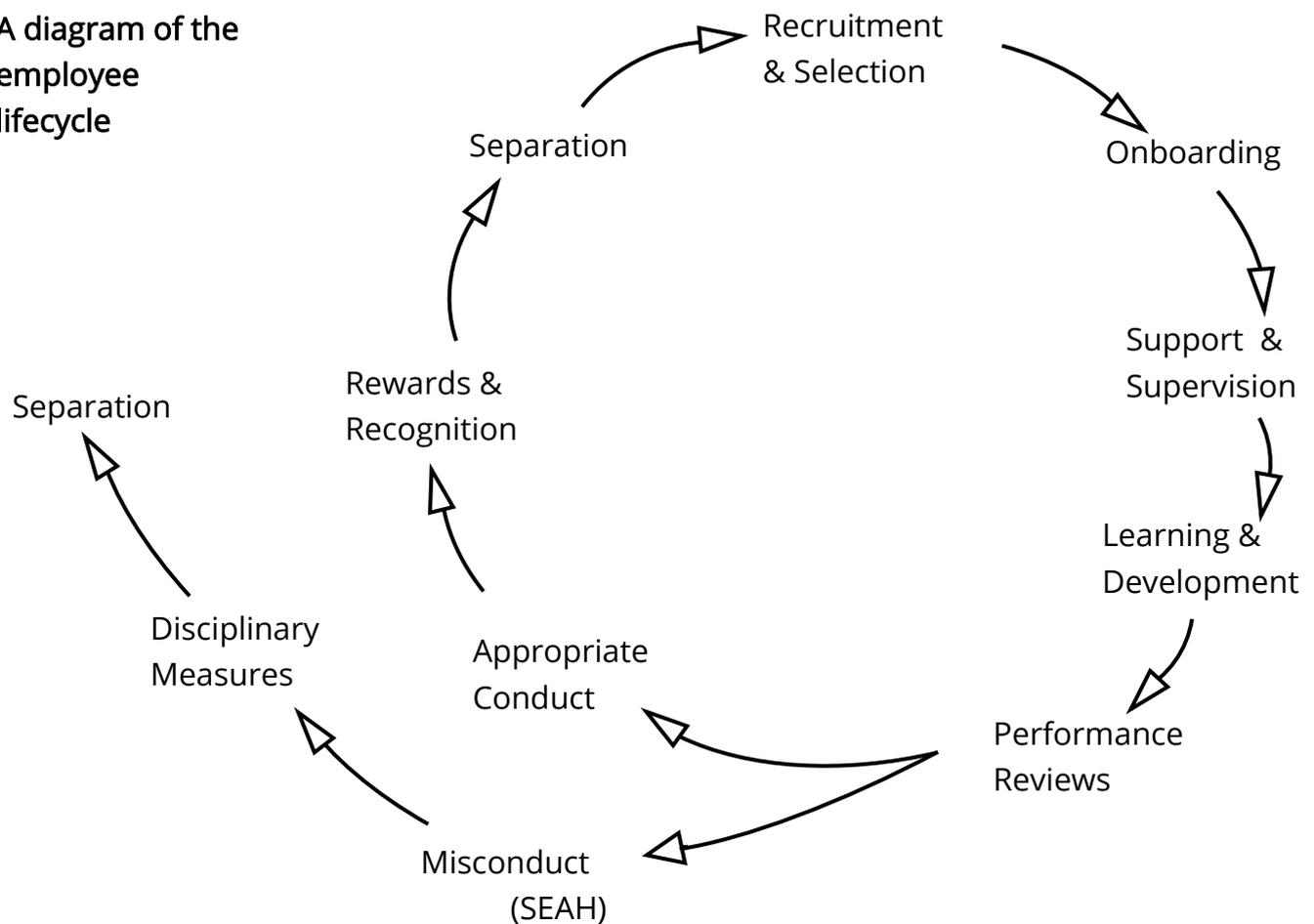
What is the role of HR in safeguarding?

The Human Resources (HR) function is a key stakeholder in safeguarding. HR is involved throughout the employee lifecycle right from the time an applicant expresses interest in joining an organisation to the point when they leave the organisation, presenting ample opportunities to integrate safeguarding in HR. For this to happen, the organisation needs to consider how it plans and implements HR activities including recruitment and selection; onboarding; support and supervision; learning and development; performance reviews, rewards and recognition and lastly separation. Integrating safeguarding in HR activities and establishing clear links between policy and practice will contribute to creating organisations that deliver safer programmes to beneficiaries including children and at-risk adults. This resource pack provides practical guidance for integrating safeguarding into HR after recruitment. [For tips on Safe Recruitment click here.](#)

Onboarding

The onboarding phase follows recruitment. Onboarding involves a detailed orientation on the technical requirements of the role as well as an understanding of the administrative and operational procedures of the organisation. It enables the new hire to settle into his/her role quickly. A key component of the orientation process should include safeguarding. New hires need to understand the requirements of the safeguarding policy, code of conduct and how to identify safeguarding risks and when to report concerns. To cross check that all steps are completed during this phase, use the [onboarding guide](#) and ensure that the new hire signs an [acknowledgement form](#) confirming that s/he understands the policies and implications of misconduct. A probationary period is strongly recommended for new hires and should be stated in the employment contract and employee handbook. In Nigeria, the probationary period ranges between 2 months to a year depending on nature of employment and employer.

A diagram of the employee lifecycle



Support and Supervision

Studies suggest that providing support and supervision to staff helps them perform better¹. Supervision is effective when it occurs regularly; when there is a two-way communication between supervisor and employee (supervisee); and when feedback is given immediately a task is completed. Because supervision sessions provide an opportunity for conversations between supervisor and employee, it serves as an ideal forum to discuss safeguarding. Supervisors can communicate desired values and behaviours, clarify expectations, correct actions, or inactions, and address supervisee concerns in understanding safeguarding and having the confidence to report concerns. Over time, employees' confidence to discuss safeguarding issues, raise concerns or disclose abuse will be built. All supervisors need to be sufficiently familiar with their organisation's safeguarding protocols and values to be able to oversee the new hires and answer their questions or concerns. Attention to supervisees needs is key, hence supervision sessions may take place every week for new hires and become less frequent with time. Taking notes is vital during sessions but should be kept confidential except in circumstances where a concern needs to be escalated.

¹ Role of leadership behaviours in safeguarding supervision: a literature review.

Learning and Development

Safeguarding trainings should be included when developing training plans. All staff must complete basic safeguarding training within 6 months of employment. Safeguarding training should be conducted by a trained Safeguarding Focal Point (SFP). Training should be appropriate to staff roles and prioritised for staff who are in contact with programme beneficiaries. For civil society organisations (CSOs) starting their safeguarding journey with no trained SFP, employees may enrol in a **free 5 module self-paced online course** developed by the Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (RSH).² Providing quiet spaces, laptops and internet will enable employees to focus and complete trainings. Annual refreshers on safeguarding should be mandatory for all staff.

Organisations that require more specialised training or guidance on safeguarding are encouraged to use the 'Ask an Expert' service provided by RSH.

Organisations can learn by including safeguarding as a standard item on meeting agendas. Employees should be encouraged to raise issues they have regarding how safeguarding is implemented as this will facilitate learning. Safeguarding policy, Code of Conduct and reporting mechanisms should be reviewed periodically to determine how well they are working and how well they have been implemented. All cases of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH), should be used as a learning opportunity to strengthen, where necessary, the HR systems and processes.

'Ask an Expert' Service for Nigerian CSOs!

CSOs in Nigeria can now access safeguarding advice, support and guidance at no cost to the CSO. This is an innovative service developed by RSH to help less resourced CSOs access safeguarding advice, support, and guidance at no cost to the CSO.

To access this service, [click here](#)

Performance Reviews

Performance reviews are a great way to hold employees accountable for their performance and conduct. Setting appropriate goals related to the adherence to safeguarding policies and code of conduct such as participation in mandatory safeguarding trainings will motivate employees to reach their goals. Collectively, these efforts contribute to creating safer workplaces. For a sample performance appraisal template [click here](#).

Rewards and Recognition

To further promote safeguarding, organisations should begin to recognise employees whose behaviours and actions align with the code of conduct. Recognising staff for such efforts sends a powerful message across the organisation. There are many ways to recognise staff: leadership

² An offline version is available for download and can be used when connectivity is poor.

could decide to make an announcement during staff meetings; [a letter of appreciation](#) could be written to the staff or names published on the notice board or website. Awards or annual bonuses could motivate staff further. Whatever the case, recognition is greatly appreciated by employees and will go a long way to socialise staff on safeguarding.

Disciplinary Measures

HR must enforce disciplinary measures whenever there is a breach of policy. This is possible where a robust employee handbook is in place and all staff have acknowledged in writing that they have read and understood the contents, and where organisations follow the disciplinary procedures. Up to date staff files must be kept, with details of the allegations and outcome of investigations.

Separation

Exit interviews have the potential to uncover information that may never come into the open otherwise. Over the course of employment, staff accumulate knowledge and views about an organisation based on their daily interactions and experiences in the organisation. Insights about cases of abuse or incidents they may have witnessed or heard about could provide useful leads for the organisation to determine how safe their staff and programmes are. If through an exit interview a case of abuse is disclosed, then it needs to be reported and handled accordingly. The [sample exit interview template](#) can be used as a guide for discussions with exiting staff.

On a final note

If organisations are to deliver their work effectively and safely, and Do No Harm to staff or beneficiaries (the ultimate purpose of safeguarding), systems and processes need to be in place to create safe workplaces. Robust safeguarding policies and codes of conduct and staff understanding of the requirements contribute to this. Furthermore, safeguarding will be established throughout the organisation if human resources – whose responsibility it is for the management of staff – collaborate closely with the designated safeguarding focal points and integrate safeguarding in HR activities.

References

This How-to-Note has been adapted from tools developed and published by Action Against Hunger. Available on the RSH website [here](#).

Another useful resource is the Safeguarding from Interview to Exit by Know How. Available [here](#).