



Safe Events 360

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A Guide to Safer Events

Drinks trade events are an essential part of our industry; bringing together colleagues, clients, and consumers to network, share knowledge, and build business. But when not designed and managed with care, they can also present risks.

The presence of alcohol, late-night hours, and cross-organisational participation can create circumstances where professional boundaries are blurred and individuals feel unsafe. Too often, these risks are unmanaged or underestimated—particularly for women and marginalised groups.

This guide sets out simple, proactive steps to help you safeguard everyone attending your event—whether they are employees, partners, suppliers, or guests. From long-term planning through to event-day coordination and post-event reflection, these actions can reduce harm, promote inclusion, and build trust.

Use it as a starting point—and remember: safety and respect should be built into the DNA of every event, not treated as a reactive response.

Guiding Principles for Safer Events

These core principles underpin all the guidance in this resource. They are designed to help leaders and organisers embed safeguarding as standard practice.

- **Prevention is better than reaction:** Planning ahead is the best way to reduce harm.
- **Transparency supports confidence:** People feel safer when expectations are clear and consistently enforced.
- **Accountability protects culture:** When issues are addressed, it shows people that their wellbeing matters.
- **Everyone has a role to play:** A culture of safety is shared, not siloed.

Build a Safer Culture Year-Round

Truly safe events begin long before the event is even imagined. Organisations that prioritise inclusion and safety year-round are far more effective at managing safeguarding risks when events occur. Establishing the right culture, policies, and training in advance means employees are more likely to speak up, risks are more likely to be managed, and your duty of care is more likely to be fulfilled.

1. Culture & Feedback

- Foster an open culture where staff feel safe raising concerns, including about past events or trips.
- Create regular feedback channels—anonymous if needed—where concerns can be surfaced early.
- Ensure employees feel backed by management when unsafe situations arise.

2. Training & Capacity-Building

- Deliver regular training that supports safe behaviours, such as:
 - Sexual harassment awareness
 - Assertive communication
 - Boundary setting
 - Effective bystander intervention
 - Inclusive leadership and allyship
- Look for “Sexual Harassment Training Template” by Drinks United on the resource hub.

3. Policies & Legal Readiness

- All staff and third parties (e.g. freelancers, contractors) should sign a Code of Conduct upon onboarding.
- Ensure your organisation is up to date on its legal duty to prevent sexual harassment, including under the Worker Protection Act (2024).
- Have clear safeguarding policies in place—these should include both prevention and reporting pathways.
- Look for “Code of Conduct Template” by Drinks United on the resource hub.

4. Employee Voice

- Involve your team—ask what would make them feel safer at events.
- Consider making this a regular activity for your ED&I committee or internal staff forums.

Pre-Event Checklist

Risk cannot be eliminated entirely, but a well-planned event can significantly reduce harm and improve the experience for all attendees. The key is to assess risks early, establish clear expectations, and ensure your team knows how to respond if something goes wrong.

Use this checklist to guide your planning process:

1. Assess the Risk Level

Consider the following to determine what safeguards are needed:

- Will alcohol be served?
- Is the event social or structured (e.g. seated dinner vs. free-flowing networking)?
- Will food be available throughout?
- What time of day will it take place?
- Will members of the public or external guests attend?
- Are there any clear power dynamics between attendees (e.g. clients, senior leaders, junior staff)?

2. Review Your Policies

- Are your safeguarding and harassment policies up to date?
- Do they cover both employees and third-party attendees?
- Have relevant staff reviewed the policies recently?

3. Set Clear Expectations

- Share a code of conduct or behavioural expectations with all attendees.
- Tailor your messaging by audience (e.g. employees, clients, contractors).

- Include how people can raise concerns and who to contact on the day.
- Provide reassurance that support and follow-up are in place.

Look for the “Code of Conduct Template” by Drinks United on the resource hub.

4. Brief the Safeguarding Lead

- Assign a dedicated safeguarding contact for the day of the event.
- Ensure they are briefed on your policies, have authority to act, and are confident in handling disclosures.
- Identify and brief 1–2 backup contacts in case they are unavailable.

5. Coordinate with Security (if present)

- Ensure event security staff are briefed on expected conduct, alcohol management, and how to escalate concerns.
- If no security is present, agree who will handle situations involving safety concerns or intoxication.

During the Event

On the day of the event, all the preparation you've done comes into play. While most events run smoothly, it's the small decisions made in real time that can determine whether people feel safe. The role of the safeguarding lead and general vigilance of organisers and hosts, is key.

Key Actions for a Safe Event

1. Stagger or Moderate Alcohol Availability

- Consider delaying alcohol service until after key speeches or structured activities.
- Limit high-ABV drinks or shots, especially early in the event.
- Offer non-alcoholic options at the same level of visibility and quality as alcoholic ones.

2. Monitor the Environment Actively

- Ensure safeguarding leads and event hosts are clearly identifiable (e.g. with lanyards).
- Watch for early signs of discomfort, inappropriate behaviour, or intoxication.
- Check in with staff working the event—especially younger or junior team members—throughout.

3. Keep Water and Food Flowing

- Make water stations and soft drinks easily accessible and regularly replenished.
- Ensure food is available and scheduled throughout the event—not just at the start.

4. Liaise with Security Regularly

- If security is present, maintain communication throughout the event.
- Encourage a calm, visible presence—especially at entrances, exits, and high-traffic areas.

Common Safeguarding Flashpoints

Safeguarding leads should pay special attention to:

- Isolated individuals, especially near exits or in smoking areas
- Escalating behaviour when alcohol is over-consumed
- Clients or external guests crossing boundaries with staff
- Staff being left alone to manage intoxicated attendees

Even minor interventions, such as checking in or offering water, can defuse situations before they escalate.

After the Event

An event's impact doesn't end when the last guest leaves. Following up with care shows that your commitment to safeguarding is genuine—not just performative. It also helps you improve safety and inclusivity at future events. Even if nothing went wrong, asking for feedback and checking in with staff builds a stronger, more trusted culture.

1. Debrief Internally

- Hold a short team debrief within a few days of the event.
- Discuss what went well and whether any concerns or incidents arose.
- Invite feedback from those who had formal roles (e.g. safeguarding lead, hosts, bar staff).

2. Provide Safe Channels for Reporting

- In post-event comms, include a reminder of who to contact to raise concerns—this may be a safeguarding contact or HR lead.
- Reassure attendees that concerns will be taken seriously and handled confidentially.

3. Follow Up on Any Issues

- Respond promptly to any disclosures, observations, or concerns raised.
- Make sure those affected are supported and informed of what actions were taken.
- Update policies or practices if any gaps were identified.

4. Gather Feedback

- Ask attendees (especially staff) if they felt safe and supported.
- Include a short anonymous survey or open question box if appropriate.

5. Look Ahead

- Invite ideas on how to make future events safer and more inclusive.
- Keep a log of what was learned and what actions were taken, to support continuous improvement.

What 'Good' Looks Like

- ✓ Concerns are acknowledged and logged.
- ✓ Those who report issues are followed up with and supported.
- ✓ Safeguarding leads are debriefed and asked what they need.
- ✓ The team feels confident and better prepared for the next event.

Final Note: Embedding Safer Practices Across the Industry

Creating safe, inclusive events is not just a legal or reputational concern—it's a leadership responsibility and a cultural opportunity.

When we take safeguarding seriously, we send a powerful message: that everyone in our industry deserves to feel respected, protected, and welcome. This guide offers a starting point—but safer events are achieved through consistent effort, clear expectations, and open dialogue over time.

By embedding these practices across your organisation, you not only reduce risk—you contribute to building a stronger, more resilient drinks industry for all.

For further tools, templates and training providers, visit the Drinks United Resource Hub.

Have something you wish to add? Get in touch with us at hello@drinksunited.co.uk and we'll include it in the next revision.

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