



Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

RHL Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy February 2024 – Reviewed February 2025 and yearly thereafter

(or whenever significant changes or a local incident occurs which highlights that a review is needed)

This policy is displayed on our website and visible to all staff, volunteers and the general public

RHL considers it the duty of staff and volunteers to protect all children with whom they come into contact from abuse.

1. Introduction

RHL has obligations to strive to protect all children who it may believe to be abused or at risk of abuse or neglect. The policy and procedures have been developed to assist staff and volunteers in acting on reported or suspected abuse.

Depending upon the nature of particular services or the requirements of particular funders or partner agencies, the policy and procedures may be supplemented by local procedures.

The purpose of this policy statement is:

- to protect children who receive RHL's services from harm. This includes the children of adults who use our services
- to provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of RHL, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.

RHL is also committed to the provider principles advised by Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. Their guidance can be found here:

[7.11 Commissioning Standards | Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton \(hipsprocedures.org.uk\)](https://hipsprocedures.org.uk)

2. Definitions

Safeguarding children is defined in [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#) as:

- protecting children from abuse and maltreatment
- preventing harm to children's health or development
- ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.

Child protection is part of the safeguarding process. It focuses on protecting individual

children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This includes child protection procedures which detail how to respond to concerns about a child.

3. Categories of Abuse

Children may be vulnerable to neglect and abuse or exploitation from within their family and from individuals they come across in their daily lives. There are 4 main categories of abuse, which are: sexual, physical, emotional abuse, and neglect. It is important to be aware of more specific types of abuse that fall within these categories, they are:

- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Child sexual exploitation
- Child Criminal exploitation
- Child trafficking
- Domestic abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Grooming
- Historical abuse
- Online abuse

Safer Recruitment of Staff

- RHL is committed to safeguarding and protecting all children and young people by implementing robust safer recruitment practices (as guided by NSPCC)
- RHL will use safer recruitment procedures to identify and reject applicants who are unsuitable to work with children and young people
- RHL will respond to concerns about the suitability of applicants during the recruitment process
- RHL will respond to concerns about the suitability of employees and volunteers once they have begun their role
- RHL will ensure all new staff and volunteers participate in an induction which includes child protection
- RHL follow guidance from NSPCC at all times. Guidance can be found here: [Safer recruitment | NSPCC Learning](#)
- RHL also consider other policies such as Equality and Diversity and Equal Opportunities during our Safer Recruitment process.
- RHL will provide regular training (including updates to policies and procedures) to all new and existing staff
- Guidance for training and useful training tools can be found here: [Training - Hampshire SCP](#)

4. Responsibilities of staff and volunteers

RHL Chief Executive Officer is ultimately responsible for safeguarding and the Chair of trustees is the designated trustee/director with responsibility for safeguarding.

It is RHL's responsibility to protect from harm and abuse without exception, all children regardless of gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, faith or cultural background.

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a child. However, they are not responsible for diagnosing, investigating, or providing a therapeutic response to abuse. In addition, not all concerns relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what is known about the child and his or her circumstances.

5. Disclosure of Abuse

If a child discloses that they are being abused or any service user discloses that they are involved in abuse of a vulnerable person, action should continue as in Section 7. All action must proceed urgently and without delay.

6. Suspicion of Abuse

There may be circumstances when a volunteer or member of staff suspects that a child is being abused or neglected. It is vital that any anyone who suspects a child is being neglected or abused discusses the situation immediately with his or her line manager or another member of the management team. Action should continue as in Section 8.

7. Action on Disclosure of Abuse

There should always be the opportunity to discuss welfare concerns with and seek advice from colleagues, managers and other agencies, but:

- never delay emergency action to protect a vulnerable child
- always record in writing concerns about a child's welfare, whether or not further action is taken
- always record in writing discussions about a child's welfare
- at the close of discussion, always reach clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken
- at all times action must proceed urgently
- a staff member or volunteer informed of abuse should remind the service user that the RHL cannot guarantee confidentiality where a child is at risk of abuse or further abuse
- volunteers should consult with the staff member co-ordinating their service before taking any action
- additionally, all action taken following a disclosure of abuse should be discussed in advance with a member of the management team
- in circumstances where a service user declines to disclose, despite some work having been done towards disclosing, it may be necessary to report the alleged

abuse without the service user's agreement. In these circumstances, a service user must be notified in advance of the decision to report to social services

- any staff member may report a disclosure of abuse to social services irrespective of the opinion of other staff.

Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

8. Action on Suspicion of Abuse

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- never delay emergency action to protect a child
- always record in writing concerns about a child's welfare, whether or not further action is taken
- always record in writing discussions about a child's welfare.
- at the close of discussion, always reach clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken.
- at all times action must proceed urgently
- volunteers should consult with the staff member co-ordinating their service before taking any action
- additionally, all action taken following suspicion of abuse should be discussed in advance with a member of the management team
- in all cases of suspected abuse, the manager and staff member should discuss whether issues relevant to different cultures and lifestyles have any bearing on the matter
- as an organisation RHL welcomes the fact that people and lifestyles are diverse and does not make judgements about the acceptability or otherwise of lifestyles. However, it is important that this philosophy does not stand in the way of the organisation's responsibility to protect vulnerable children from harm
- any staff member may report a suspicion of abuse to social services irrespective of the opinion of other staff.

Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

9. Making a Referral

The Area/Local children Services office is responsible for co-ordinating the investigation of all cases of suspected abuse of vulnerable children within their areas unless the police assume that responsibility where a crime has been committed.

All RHL staff have the responsibility of informing the relevant Children Services Department of concerns over the abuse or neglect of vulnerable children. A member of

the management team should also be informed.

Managers should work within the following timescales for reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse:

- immediate if the child is at risk of serious physical harm, or a serious criminal act has taken place, and evidence will need to be kept safe
- within 24 Hours if it relates to a specific incident which is, or may be still going on, or may happen again
- within 7 Days if it is a more general concern, which does not indicate immediate harm.

RHL is committed to comply with national and local guidance and single and multi-agency policies and procedures to safeguard and promote the welfare of children including:

-[Children Act 1989 & 2004](#)

-[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) (2018 or 2023)

-[HIPS LSCP Child Protection Procedures](#)

-Disclosure, Vetting & Barring Guidance Criminal record checks: [guidance for employers](#)

-[Local Safeguarding Partnership guidance](#)

Current guidance for referrals to Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub can be found here:

[making referrals to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub \(MASH\)](#) and the [HIPS LSCP escalation policy](#)

10. Support to Staff and Volunteers

All RHL staff and volunteers will receive Safeguarding training. If the Children Services department need further involvement from staff or volunteers following a report of abuse, a member of the management team will discuss with the Children Services Department the nature of their needs and how they might be met.

11. Allegations of Abuse Made against a Staff Member of Volunteer

Staff and volunteers may be subject to abuse allegations:

- RHL and its staff are duty bound to follow and administer Safeguarding Children Policies and Procedures and will act strictly within the law at all times
- if the allegation is directly from the service user, we will provide information on how to escalate further either as a complaint against RHL or if a safeguarding issue, relevant contact methods for Safeguarding Teams authorities
- RHL will immediately contract the relevant Safeguarding Teams/LADO to advise of any allegation
- RHL will follow relevant internal disciplinary procedures against the individual including support until the allegation is resolved



- RHL will comply with any requests from the Safeguarding Teams
- an internal review will take place after resolution regardless of whether it was proven or unfounded.

Managing allegations against staff and volunteers guidance can be found here:

[6.1 Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers | Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton \(hipsprocedures.org.uk\)](https://hipsprocedures.org.uk)

12. Confidentiality and sharing of information

Confidentiality is central to the work of RHL and the attention of all staff and volunteers is drawn to the Confidentiality Policy. RHL cannot guarantee confidentiality where a child is at risk of abuse or further abuse. It may be necessary to report alleged/suspected abuse without a service user's agreement. In these circumstances, a service user must be notified in advance of the decision to report to social services.

13. Preventing Abuse by Staff and Volunteers

It is important that any staff or volunteers who are likely to be working alone with vulnerable people are thoroughly vetted before being employed. At RHL this means as well as references being checked there will also be a requirement for offences to be declared and an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check undertaken. It should be noted that having a criminal record does not prevent someone from being recruited as a staff member or volunteer in all circumstances. Staff should seek the advice of their manager in cases of doubt.

It may be difficult for a worker to report a concern about a colleague to a line manager but, as with all the other difficulties people will come across, the safety and protection of a vulnerable child must be the priority in any decision that is made.

14. Safeguarding Contacts

Hampshire Children Services

Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm, phone 0300 555 1384

At all other times, contact the out-of-hours service, phone 0300 555 1373

[Report child abuse | Children and Families | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://hants.gov.uk)

Berkshire

Berkshire covers 5 regions: Bracknell Forest, Slough, Royal Borough of Maidenhead and

Slough, Wokingham and West Berkshire. Each unitary council has its own Safeguarding Teams

and details can be found clicking on the link

[Pan Berkshire Local Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection Procedures Manual \(proceduresonline.com\)](https://proceduresonline.com)



Surrey

Phone: 0300 470 9100

Out of hours phone: 01483 517898 to speak to our emergency duty team.

[Contact Children's Services - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://surreycc.gov.uk)

RHL:

Safeguarding Lead: Jim Ruddy, CEO RHL

Contact No: 01252957430

Email: jim.ruddy@rhl.org.uk

Website: www.rhl.org.uk

Sign off:

Jim Ruddy

CEO

RHL

1st February 2025