

RFSA Safeguarding Statement and Policy

2018

Safeguarding Policy Statement

The RFSA Foundation acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with Charities Commission best practice.

Our policy recognises that the welfare and interests of children, young people and vulnerable adults are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, gender, religion or beliefs, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or socio-economic background, those in contact with the RFSA are protected from any and all forms of abuse. We acknowledge that some children and adults can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding relates to the actions taken to promote the welfare and well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and to protect them from abuse, harm and neglect. We acknowledge that some children and adults can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare. We are committed to ensuring our own safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with Charities Commission best practice.

The Trustees have the primary responsibility for safeguarding beneficiaries, staff and volunteers, and must take all the necessary steps to ensure that their organisation is operating in a safe and secure environment.

The RFSA Foundation takes the safeguarding of children and adults at risk seriously and we expect organisations applying for our grant funding to have a safeguarding policy which is up-to-date, publicly accessible and relevant to their beneficiaries. If you apply for an RFSA Foundation grant you will be asked for a copy of your organisation's safeguarding policy or a link to its location on your public website. When we request a copy of a grant applicants safeguarding policy we are looking for assurance of an organisation's commitment to protecting their beneficiaries, staff and volunteers from any abuse.

Useful contacts

UK Government Services and Information – Safeguarding children and young people

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-young-people/safeguarding-children-and-young-people>

UK Government Services and Information – Disclosure Barring Service

<https://www.gov.uk/dbs-check-applicant-criminal-record>

Definitions

Children and young people - those aged under 18 years

Vulnerable or at risk adults - anyone aged 18 and over have the potential to be vulnerable or at risk (either temporarily or permanently) for a variety of reasons and in different situations. An adult may be vulnerable or at risk if he/she:

- Has a learning or physical disability
- Has a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs
- Has a reduction in physical or mental capacity
- Is in the receipt of any form of healthcare
- Is detained in custody
- Is receiving community services because of age, health or disability
- Is homeless, living in sheltered or residential care home
- Is a refugee or asylum seeker
- Is unable, for any other reason, to protect himself/herself against significant harm or exploitation.

If you are unsure whether your organisation supports adults at risk, please speak to your local Council for Voluntary Service organisation or a similar infrastructure body in your area to seek advice.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- raise awareness of our responsibilities towards children and vulnerable adults
- encourage good practice amongst our own staff and trustees, as well as our grant holders

Monitoring and Review

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees, or in the following circumstances:

- changes in legislation and/or
- government guidance as a result of any other significant change or event.

Procedure in the Event of a Disclosure

The RFSA Foundation does not have direct contact with children or vulnerable/at risk adults, with its primary purpose being the awarding of grants to adult educational organisations in Greater London. However, should Trustees, staff or volunteers come into contact with a vulnerable adult during the course of their work for the RFSA, the following procedure shall be followed in any situation where they are concerned about the welfare of a vulnerable or at risk adult.

(i) Observe

Observe to be as clear as you can about the cause of your concern. Consider the common signs of abuse set out in Appendix 1.

If a vulnerable adult tells you directly that s/he is being abused or bullied:

- Listen carefully. If possible, write down the child's/vulnerable adult's exact words so that you can report them accurately.
- Do not try to probe or lead.
- Assure the vulnerable adult that you have taken seriously what they have said and that you or another appropriate person will respond to them soon.

(ii) Report

Report your concerns to the Foundation Secretary as quickly and clearly as possible.

If you feel that a vulnerable adult is at immediate risk, and/or you cannot inform the Foundation Secretary, you can take action by calling relevant emergency services (police, ambulance or social services).

It is not up to you to decide whether abuse has taken place (this is for doctors, social workers, the police and ultimately the Courts to assess) and you should not spend a long time gathering observations before you report your concerns: you just need to be as clear and specific as you can about what you have seen or heard. The more precise and concrete you can be in giving examples or evidence, the easier it will be for child or vulnerable adult protection professionals to respond appropriately.

Vulnerable Adults: Do NOT promise the vulnerable adult that you will keep the information secret. Make it clear that you will have to discuss the concerns with your line manager. If a vulnerable adult expresses the wish for the concerns raised not to be pursued, if possible, this should be respected. However, the decision to respect the individual's wishes should be made depending on the level of risk to the individual and their capacity to understand the decision.

(iii) Record

Record your concerns in writing as soon as you can. If time allows, write notes about your observations before you report them. This will help you to be as precise as possible in making your report. If your concern is based on what a child/vulnerable adult or someone else has said, write it down immediately so that you can report the exact words, and keep these notes, as (in rare serious cases) they may be needed later as evidence.

Be as factual and precise as you can. If you wish to comment or draw conclusions, distinguish these clearly from the factual information (eg by writing "In my opinion,").

(iv) Respond

In general, the responsibility of RFSA staff/trustees ends with reporting and recording. It is the job of other professionals to take action to protect the vulnerable adult.

If you can see that a vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, dial 999 and ask for the police. Police have the power to remove a child/vulnerable adult to a place of safety if necessary.

Appendix 1

Recognition of Abuse or Neglect

Abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult is caused by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children or vulnerable adults may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting: by those known to them or more rarely by a stranger.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms, of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as, fabricated illness by proxy or Munchausen Syndrome by proxy.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or vulnerable adult such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's or vulnerable adults emotional development. It may involve conveying to the child or vulnerable adult that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children or vulnerable adults.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.