



# Safeguarding Policy

v01

## Introduction

The RSPCA is committed to protecting children and vulnerable adults at risk from harm. The RSPCA aims to adopt the highest standards and will take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and welfare of young and vulnerable people with whom we come into contact and to ensure that staff and volunteers know how to conduct themselves in their interactions with these individuals.

This policy has the following aims;

- To promote the safety and welfare of children or adults at risk who come into contact with RSPCA staff and volunteers (either working for us or with us).
- To protect and promote the reputation of the RSPCA and public trust and confidence in it
- To ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of both the [Code of Good Practice - Appendix 1](#) and the [Legal Framework - Appendix 2](#) in relation to interactions with children or adults at risk.
- To ensure that the RSPCA provides a clear procedure for reporting any suspected risk of harm to children or adults at risk

Some of our staff and volunteers are invited into people's homes to carry out RSPCA work. This policy is an important step in safeguarding vulnerable groups, RSPCA staff and representatives and the organisation as a whole and as part of the Society's risk management strategy. The policy should enhance the confidence of staff and volunteers in knowing what is expected of them and others when coming into contact with children and adults at risk in the course of their work.

## Scope

This policy applies to anyone who works for or carries out activities for the national Society (including Freedom Food), including;

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Trustees
- Agency workers
- Consultants
- Contractors

This policy specifically excludes anyone working or volunteering in RSPCA Branches, who will need to refer to their individual branch for further information about Safeguarding. It covers aspects of the RSPCA's work involving children or adults at risk including (but not exclusively);

- Training and supporting vulnerable groups in caring for animals
- Involving them in a variety of fundraising events
- Providing work experience (please refer to [Appendix 3 - Involving young volunteers](#))
- Providing literature and information through websites, publications and social media.
- The Society will provide training for staff and volunteers to enable them to promote the welfare of the children and adults at risk that they come into contact with and to ensure that they are aware of the Society's expectations in terms of good working practice.
- This policy is non-contractual

## Questions about this policy

This policy is not intended to cover every situation, and the RSPCA recognises that people may have questions and concerns relating to Safeguarding. It is the Society's policy to encourage open discussion with staff and volunteers to ensure that questions can be resolved as quickly as possible.

**We recommend that people first raise any issues with their line manager. If they are unable to help, then the 'subject matter expert' for this policy is the Safeguarding Officer for the National Society. This is the L&D Training Manager with specific expertise in this area, [Chris Simpson](#), 07825 386572 who can provide further information and advice.**

Please also see Incident reporting & support available and [Appendix 4 - Referral procedure](#) for further information about reporting incidents.

## Definitions

The following definitions are used in this policy

“**Children**” means any young person under the age of 18 years

“**Adults at risk**” (who used to be termed “Vulnerable adults”) means:

The safeguarding duties (Care Act 2014) apply to an adult who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect
- “**Abuse**” is normally defined in one of four ways:
  - Emotional abuse – where a person is caused distress, emotional trauma or psychological damage by severe or persistent verbal abuse, disparagement or neglect.
  - Physical abuse – where a person is caused pain, hurt or injury, by direct physical force, by the use of some instrument, or by neglect.
  - Sexual abuse – where a person is used to gratify the sexual desire of another person, physically or otherwise.
  - Neglect – is the persistent failure to meet a person’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the individual’s health or development.
- “**Harm**” means the ill treatment or impairment of health or development (including for example impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of others - human or animal)
  - “Harm” is taken to include not only ill treatment (including sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment which are not physical) but also the impairment of or an avoidable deterioration in physical or mental health and the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development:
- Harm or exploitation may be:
  - Physical
  - Psychological / mental / emotional
  - Financial or material
  - Sexual
  - Neglect and acts of omission
  - Discrimination
  - Abuse of trust
  - Institutional
  - Self-neglect
  - Modern Slavery

## Responsibilities

### The Society

Although this policy is owned by the Assistant Director of People, the ultimate responsibility for Safeguarding sits with the national Society Trustees.

The Society will take all practicable steps to safeguard children or adults at risk while they are in contact with the Society, observing government guidance, the RSPCA Fundraising Policy on Vulnerable People, the Institute of Fundraising’s code of practice and legislation on health & safety and safeguarding children.

### Managers

All line managers are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with the policy and ensuring they conduct themselves in a manner consistent with its requirements.
- Ensuring that the people they manage (staff, agency workers, contractors and volunteers) are aware of and have access to the policy, that they understand the content and are aware of the need to safeguard the welfare of children or vulnerable groups.
- Notifying the appropriate agencies if abuse is identified or suspected.

- Supporting and, where possible securing, the safety of individuals and ensure that all referrals to services have full information in relation to identified risk and vulnerability
- Ensuring that where staff or volunteers are to have regular contact with children or adults at risk as part of their work, they are recruited, supervised and trained as recommended in the government guidance and that any required Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are carried out.

### **All staff and volunteers (including managers)**

All staff and volunteers are expected to become familiar with this policy and its appendices and to ensure that they conduct themselves in a manner consistent with its requirements by:

- Developing an awareness of the issues outlined in this policy which may cause young or vulnerable people harm.
- Maintaining a duty to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable groups.
- Taking appropriate actions to identify and report abuse in line with this policy.
- Taking steps to ensure that children or adults at risk come to no harm when visiting our centres, or when we enter their homes (please refer to the appropriate Risk Assessment form in the [Health & Safety Manual](#))
- Doing everything reasonably possible to ensure the safety and welfare of young or vulnerable people while they are in contact with the RSPCA (by any form of communication, including face-to-face, by telephone or electronically)
- Not intervening in an abusive situation unless this can be achieved without unreasonable risk to yourself, another member of staff/volunteer or the person being abused. If you have any doubt about the appropriateness of an action, please consult with your line manager immediately (or in their absence, a member of the HR team)
- Acting in accordance with the [Code of Good Practice - Appendix 1](#).

### **Incident Reporting and Support Available**

Anyone who:

- Suspects that a child or adult at risk has been, or is at risk of being abused; or
- Has had a disclosure of abuse made to them;

Must make notes and follow the [Safeguarding Referral Procedure at Appendix 4](#).

Anyone making a complaint, allegation or expressing concern, whether they are staff or volunteers, service users or members of the general public should be reassured that they will be taken seriously. Comments will be treated confidentially unless their content needs to be shared with the appropriate authorities for legal reasons.

If you have witnessed something or had something reported to you that you believe contravenes this policy or the [Code of Good Practice - Appendix 1](#) then in the first instance please speak to your manager as soon as possible (if this relates to your line manager, then please speak to their line manager). You may also refer the matter to the RSPCA Safeguarding Officer (please see [Questions about this policy](#) above).

If you have previously reported something that you believe contravenes this policy, and no subsequent action has been taken, please refer to the Society's "[Disclosures in the public interest](#)" policy.

Witnessing any instances of harm or abuse can be traumatic. In such circumstances, dedicated support is available via the Society's [Employee Assistance service](#).