



Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy

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Purpose

The RSPCA is committed to ensuring that adults at risk who participate in its activities have a safe, positive and rewarding experience. All individuals, whatever their age, gender, language, disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and culture, have the right to protection from abuse and to be treated fairly. The RSPCA has a separate safeguarding policy for children and young people.

We recognise we have a duty to protect and promote the welfare of all adults at risk of harm. This duty also extends to those people we engage with through the work that we undertake. It is always unacceptable for anyone to experience abuse of any kind, including through social media or other online activity.

Although this is an adult safeguarding policy, we adopt a *Think Family* approach. We acknowledge that individuals do not live in isolation and that concerns about abuse or neglect may impact the wider family network. Where safeguarding concerns arise within a family context, we will consider the needs and risks affecting the whole family, regardless of whether the primary focus of our work is with an adult or a child.

Everyone has a legal right to protection from all forms of abuse, and we will ensure that all safeguarding concerns are taken seriously, and we will act in the best interests of the individuals concerned.

We are committed to safeguarding practices and procedures and to providing a welcoming, safe, positive and inclusive environment in which all can engage with the activities that the RSPCA provides. This commitment applies to all RSPCA activities, whether they take place on RSPCA premises or at any other location where RSPCA activities are delivered.

Our commitment also extends to those external organisations that our colleagues and volunteers engage with. Although these organisations are responsible for their own safeguarding arrangements, we will ensure that we are satisfied with the quality of their policies and procedures and that they are aware of the standards that we expect.

The RSPCA recognises that the Care Act 2014 established a legal framework for how Local Authorities, agencies and organisations must work together to protect adults at risk of abuse, harm or neglect. In line with the Act, we recognise that effective safeguarding requires multi-agency responsibility and strong partnership working.

We also work within the principles of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 to ensure coordinated responses where concerns involve both adults at risk and children,

and to consider transitional safeguarding needs for young people aged 16–25. In all safeguarding activity, we adhere to the six key principles of safeguarding: empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership and accountability.

We aim to empower people to speak out, with actions and outcomes tailored to the needs of the individual. All of the decisions made and the action taken will be in the best interests of the adult at risk.

Scope

This policy applies to all people working for the RSPCA or on our behalf, including trustees, employees at all levels, whether permanent or temporary, directors, agency workers, seconded workers, volunteers, interns, agents, contractors and external consultants.

The Board of RSPCA Assured has decided that it will adopt and apply this policy for its employees. For employees of RSPCA Assured, references in this policy to the RSPCA should be understood to refer to RSPCA Assured.

Roles & Responsibilities

Assistant Director Employee Experience is responsible for ensuring the policy is reviewed, updated and communicated.

Heads of Departments & Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that this policy is complied with.

All colleagues have an obligation to be aware of and comply with this Policy.

RSPCA Commitment to Adults at Risk

Colleagues, volunteers and those who represent the RSPCA recognise that ability and disability can change over time, such that some adults may be at risk of harm, for

example, those who have a dependency on others or have different communication needs. We also recognise that an adult with a disability may or may not identify themselves or be identified as an adult 'at risk'.

We expect all colleagues and volunteers or those representing the RSPCA who come into contact with adults who may be at risk to;

- Protect them from abuse whilst they are participating in any activity associated with the RSPCA
- Promote and prioritise their safety and wellbeing
- Create a culture where all adults at risk, parents, guardians, advocates, carers and others who may have a concern are encouraged to report their concerns about the abuse that has happened to them or others
- Have a clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities to safeguard adults at risk or those who may be at risk of harm
- Take appropriate action in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern.
- Ensure that appropriate safeguarding checks, including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks where required for a role, are completed in accordance with RSPCA procedures and relevant legislation.

Legislation & Statutory Guidance

The practices and procedures within this policy are based on the principles contained within the UK legislation and government guidance. They take the following into consideration:

- The Care Act 2014
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (Amendment) Act 2012
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Online Safety Act 2023

Definitions & Terminology

To support understanding of this policy, the following key definitions apply:

DSL - Designated Safeguarding Lead

Adult - An adult is anyone aged 18 or over.

Adult at risk - An adult who has needs for care and support, whether or not the Authority is meeting any of those needs, and is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs, is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect, or the risk of it.

Whilst not an exhaustive list, an adult who may be at risk of harm or abuse may include:

- An older person,
- A person with a physical disability, a learning disability or a sensory impairment,
- An individual with mental health needs, a personality disorder, or a cognitive impairment, including age-related conditions,
- A person with a long-term health condition,
- Someone who is substance dependent to the extent that it affects their ability to manage day to day living. In such cases, the capacity of an individual to make informed decisions (due to mental capacity-see Section 8.0) may be altered regularly.

People with care and support needs are not inherently at risk, but they may become vulnerable to the risk of abuse, harm or neglect at any point due to:

- Physical or mental ill-health
- Becoming disabled
- Getting older
- Not having support networks, appropriate accommodation or financial stability,
- Being socially isolated

Adults facing domestic abuse, coercive control, or exploitation may not meet the Care Act's definition of an 'adult at risk', but they are still entitled to protection and support under this policy, especially when abuse involves financial control, coercion, or the use of animals to threaten or harm.

Adult safeguarding - is protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse,

harm and neglect.

Harm - The ill-treatment or impairment of the health or development of an individual, including impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.

Concern - Any situation where there is information that an adult at risk has been harmed, or is at risk of being harmed or abused, by their own or someone else's behaviour.

If the information identifies the involvement of a colleague, volunteer or anyone representing the RSPCA, this will be known as a "Safeguarding Allegation". This will apply where a person, in connection with their employment or volunteering role, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed/may have harmed an adult at risk,
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to an adult at risk,
- Behaved towards an adult at risk in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to them,
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with adults at risk.

Capacity - refers to the ability of an individual to make a decision at a particular time. The starting assumption must always be that a person has the capacity to make a decision unless it can be established that they lack capacity (Mental Capacity Act 2005).

Policy Compliance Monitoring

The organisation is committed to supporting colleagues and volunteers to understand and apply this policy effectively. Compliance with the policy will be monitored through routine audits and safeguarding reviews. Where concerns about non-compliance arise, these will be reviewed and managed in line with the organisation's disciplinary procedures, with careful consideration of the individual circumstances of each case.

Contact

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this policy and its contents, please contact safeguarding.support@rspca.org.uk

Appendix 1: Types of Abuse

Based on the statutory guidance supporting the implementation of the Care Act 2014:

- Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons.
- Adults at risk may be abused by a wide range of people, including family members, professional staff, care workers, volunteers, other service users, neighbours, friends, and individuals who deliberately exploit those who may be at risk. Abuse may occur when an adult at risk lives alone or with a relative, within nursing, residential or day care settings, hospitals and other places assumed to be safe, or in public places

The following is not intended to be an exhaustive list of types of abuse or exploitation but an illustrative guide as to the sort of behaviour which could give rise to a safeguarding concern.

Types of abuse:

- Physical abuse - including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate physical sanctions
- Domestic abuse – including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so-called 'honour' based abuse and includes coercive, threatening and degrading behaviour. It also includes the use of pets or animals to control or intimidate.
- Sexual abuse - including rape, sexual assault, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, exposure to sexual images, subjection to indecent images or witnessing sexual acts. The adult may not have consented or may have been pressured into consenting
- Psychological abuse - including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal from services or supportive networks
- Financial or material abuse - including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits. People with learning disabilities or dementia are particularly at risk of this type of abuse

- Digital and Online Exploitation – includes online scams, romance fraud, extortion, or the use of technology to coerce or threaten adults at risk.
- Discriminatory abuse - including forms of harassment or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion
- Neglect and acts of omission - including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating
- Self-neglect – this covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. Self-neglect might indicate that the person is not receiving adequate support or care, or could be an indication of a mental health issue such as depression
- Organisational abuse – including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting, such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one-off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation
- Modern slavery – encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.
- Radicalisation – including attempts to influence, recruit, or coerce individuals toward extremist ideologies or actions, whether related to religion, politics, or other beliefs, through propaganda, manipulation, isolation, or intimidation.

Types of abuse not included in the Care Act 2014 but also relevant:

- Bullying (including 'cyber bullying' by text, e-mail, social media and such) - may be seen as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated or sustained over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. The bully may be another person who may have additional needs. Although anyone can be the target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons – being overweight, physically small, having a disability - or for belonging to a different race, faith or culture
- Mate Crime – a 'mate crime' is when those who may be at risk are befriended by members of the community who go on to exploit and take advantage of them. It may not be an illegal act, but it still has a negative effect on the individual. Mate Crime is carried out by someone the adult knows. There have been a number of

serious cases relating to people with a learning disability who were seriously harmed by people who purported to be their friends

- Cuckooing is when an individual or group takes over the home of a vulnerable person through coercion, exploitation, or intimidation, using the property for criminal purposes such as drug dealing, storage of illegal items, or other unlawful activity.
- Radicalisation - The aim of radicalisation is to inspire new recruits, embed extreme views and persuade individuals who may be at risk to the legitimacy of a cause. This may be direct through a relationship, or through social media. Whilst there is a National Prevent agenda, all concerns should be reported through normal Adult protection procedures.
- Female genital mutilation (FGM) - is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is also known as female circumcision or cutting. Religious, social or cultural reasons are sometimes given for FGM. FGM is dangerous and a criminal offence. There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It does not enhance fertility, and it does not make childbirth safer. It is used to control female sexuality and can cause severe and long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health

Appendix 2: Safeguarding Code of Safe Conduct

Working in a way that safeguards young people and adults at risk is central to the culture of the RSPCA. When working with or for children, young people or adults at risk, we are doing so in a position of trust and must act responsibly. Regardless of job role, all people who work or volunteer for or with the RSPCA will work to the highest standards of safeguarding practice, taking into account any specific issues listed below, which are included in their work.

Everyone representing the RSPCA will:

1. Have a good knowledge of, and adhere to, the RSPCA's safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.
2. Treat everyone with whom they come into contact with respect and challenge discrimination or prejudice should they see it.
3. Keep their private and professional lives separate.
4. Be aware of professional boundaries; any contact with a child or an adult at risk outside the work environment is never usually appropriate, including the sharing of personal contact details or having contact with them through social media.
5. Ensure that, where practical, there is always one other colleague present during any organised activities or official journeys. If at all possible, then two people should be present, but on those occasions where they can't then the person should take reasonable steps to mitigate any risks.
6. Exercise caution when discussing sensitive issues with children or adults at risk.
7. Report any safeguarding concerns about the behaviour of colleagues or members of the public to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy for safeguarding for the appropriate area without delay.
8. Be vigilant for, recognise and record any safeguarding concerns, allegations or disclosures made by a member of the public and report this, following the RSPCA's reporting procedures.
9. Treat any safeguarding issues with the strictest confidentiality, including with friends and family.

10. Only touch others when it is essential, for example, administering first aid and where possible in the sight of another colleague. Where such activities take place, they should be recorded.
11. Seek permission from parents or carers if colleagues want to take photographs, videos or other images of a child, young person or adults at risk during activities.
12. Do not give a child or adults at risk a personal gift of any kind, or accept one. All offers of gifts should be reported to the relevant line manager.
13. Speak with their line manager if they consider that their work may put them in a position that might lead to an allegation of professional misconduct.
14. Exercise their right to whistleblow, using the RSPCA's whistleblowing procedures, or if they are concerned that safeguarding issues are being mismanaged or ignored within the RSPCA.