

Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy and Procedure

Date policy adopted by board	1/9/25
Policy review lead	Pritty Rana (Head Of Services)
Date of next review	August 28
Other relevant policies and forms	Safeguarding Adults Code of conduct Lone Working Whistleblowing Incident Management Domestic Violence Child Sexual Exploitation
Consultation	Trustees, CEO, Service Leads.

Purpose

- The **Children Act 1989** says that a child's welfare must always come first when decisions are made about their upbringing or property. This is called the **Paramountcy Principle**. It means that keeping children safe from harm is more important than any other consideration.
- At **RB Mind**, we fully support this principle. We are committed to working in ways that protect children and young people from abuse and neglect, and promote their overall wellbeing.

Background

This policy is based on laws and guidance designed to protect children from harm. It includes key legislation such as:

1. **Children Acts (1989 & 2004)** – the foundation of child protection law.
2. **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991)** – sets out children's rights.
3. **Sexual Offences Act (2003)** and **Protection of Freedoms Act (2012)** – help protect children from abuse.
4. **Children and Social Work Act (2017)** – focuses on improving child welfare services.
5. **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018 & 2023)** – national guidance for all professionals.
6. **London Child Protection Procedures (2021)** – local guidance for safeguarding in London.
7. **Information Sharing Guidance (2018)** – explains how and when to share safeguarding concerns.

This policy was developed using feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders including:

1. RB Mind Board of Trustees
2. CEO of RB Mind
3. RB Mind Senior Management Team
4. Service Leads
5. Service User Involvement Group
6. External Stake Holders (e.g. NHS Partner Services)

Scope

- This policy applies to all people working on behalf of Richmond Borough Mind including, but not limited to:
 1. The Board of Trustees
 2. CEO
 3. Paid staff
 4. Volunteers
 5. Agency workers
 6. Trainees
 7. Contractors

Even if your role doesn't directly involve working with children or young people, this policy still applies to you. That's because:

- RB Mind supports children and young people in schools and the community.
- We work with adults who may be parents or have contact with children.
- Some adults we support may be experiencing domestic violence, which can affect children in the home.
- We help young people transitioning from children's services to adult services.

Bottom line: If you work with RB Mind, you may come into contact with children or young people, so it's important to understand and follow this policy.

Responsibilities

At RB Mind, **everyone** has a role in keeping children safe. Here's how responsibilities are shared:

All Staff, Volunteers & Contractors

- You are responsible for promoting children's welfare and protecting them from harm.
- You must follow safeguarding procedures and report concerns immediately.

Board of Trustees

- Oversee the implementation of this policy.
- Make sure safeguarding systems and procedures are in place and working.
- Appoint a **Nominated Lead** for Child Protection and Safeguarding Adults.
- Ensure someone senior investigates allegations against staff or volunteers.
- Ensure everyone completes safeguarding training during induction.
- Make sure the **Safer Recruitment Policy** is followed.
- Act as a "critical friend" to review incidents and improve practice.

CEO

- Oversees all risks, including safeguarding and serious incidents.
- Ensures a senior manager is appointed as the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**.
- Makes final decisions on whether staff or volunteers have followed the policy.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) / On-Call Manager

- Ensures services follow safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Works with HR to monitor safer recruitment.
- Keeps the CEO informed if staff or volunteers are involved in safeguarding concerns.
- Supports staff and managers to follow correct processes and prevent abuse.
- Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the policy.
- Stays up to date with changes in safeguarding law and best practice.

Definitions

What You Need to Know

Understanding these terms helps us all respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns:

- **Child:** Anyone under the age of 18.
- **Harm:** As defined in the Children Act 1989, harm means ill-treatment or damage to a child's health or development.
- **Abuse:** A deliberate act—or failure to act—that causes or could cause harm to a child's safety, wellbeing, or development.
- **Neglect:** Failing to meet a child's basic needs, including physical safety, emotional wellbeing, food, clothing, and hygiene.

Types and indicators of abuse

Abuse and neglect can happen in any relationship. Anyone can be a perpetrator, including parents, carers, professionals, other children, or strangers. Below are the main types of abuse and some signs to watch for.

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The following categories of abuse have been identified in the key guidance Working Together To Safeguard Children 2018. The below table shows some of the signs and indicators of the different types of abuse. It is not an exhaustive list:

Abuse category	Definition	Signs/indicators
Physical abuse	What it is: Any action that physically harms a child (e.g. hitting, kicking, burning).	Physical: Bruises, cuts, broken bones, pain. Social: Child may wear clothes to hide injuries, avoid physical contact, or become withdrawn. Emotional: Low self-esteem, fearfulness, depression.
Sexual abuse	What it is: Forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activities, including non-contact acts like watching inappropriate material.	Physical: Pain, bleeding, infections, difficulty walking or sitting.

		Social: Inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviour, avoiding physical contact. Emotional: Anxiety, depression, self-harm, withdrawal.
Emotional/psychological abuse	What it is: Constant emotional mistreatment (e.g. bullying, belittling, gaslighting)	Social: Difficulty forming friendships, reluctance to go home, small or unusual social circles. Emotional: Feelings of being unloved, hopelessness, low self-worth.
Neglect	What it is: Failing to meet a child's basic needs (e.g. food, hygiene, safety).	Physical: Dirty clothes, malnutrition, poor health. Social: Taking on adult responsibilities, poor living conditions. Emotional: Aggression, sadness, sudden changes in behaviour.

Other Types of Abuse – What Staff Should Be Aware Of

In addition to physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect, there are other serious forms of abuse that staff should be aware of:

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

- Involves the deliberate cutting or injury of female genitals.
- Often linked to cultural practices.

- **Warning signs:** Extended trips abroad, especially to regions where FGM is practiced; family history of FGM.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

- A form of sexual abuse where a child is manipulated or coerced into sexual activity in exchange for something (e.g. gifts, money, affection).
- Can happen online or in person.
- **Warning signs:** Secretive behavior, unexplained gifts, older friends or partners.

Coercive and Controlling Behaviour / County Lines

- Includes threats, manipulation, and emotional abuse.
- **County Lines:** Gangs exploit children to transport drugs across regions.
- **Warning signs:** Sudden changes in lifestyle, unexplained travel, possession of multiple phones.

Forced Marriage

- When a child is pressured or threatened into marrying someone against their will.
- **Warning signs:** Talk of family pressure, fear of upcoming travel, withdrawal from school or social life.

Domestic Abuse

- Any controlling, bullying, threatening, or violent behavior between people in a relationship.
- Children may witness this at home.
- **Warning signs:** Anxiety, aggression, fearfulness, reluctance to go home.

Bullying and Harassment

- Can happen in person or online (cyberbullying).
- Includes verbal, physical, emotional, or digital abuse.
- **Warning signs:** Withdrawal, low self-esteem, reluctance to attend school or activities.

Radicalisation

- When children are groomed into extremist ideologies or belief systems.
- **Warning signs:** Sudden changes in views, isolation, use of extremist language or materials.

Self-Harm and Suicidal Behaviour

- Includes cutting, burning, restricted eating, overdosing, or other harmful actions.
- **Warning signs:** Visible injuries, expressions of hopelessness, saying they feel like a burden.

Disclosure

What to Do If a Child Opens Up

Children may share their experiences of abuse in different ways. This is called **disclosure**, and it can happen:

- **Directly** – the child tells you clearly what happened.
- **Indirectly** – they hint something is wrong without saying it outright.
- **Through behaviour** – acting out, withdrawing, or showing signs of distress.
- **Non-verbally** – through drawings, writing, or gestures.

Barriers to Disclosure

Children may struggle to speak up because:

- They don't realise what's happening is wrong.
- They're scared someone they care about will get in trouble.
- They feel embarrassed, ashamed, or hopeless.
- They worry about the impact on siblings or family.
- They fear they'll get in trouble or won't be believed.
- They're unsure about confidentiality.

How Staff Should Respond

Research from the NSPCC shows that children feel safer and more supported when adults respond with care. Here's how to do that:

➤ **Show You Care**

- Give the child your full attention.
- Use open and calm body language.
- Reassure them they've done the right thing by speaking up.

➤ **Take Your Time**

- Let the child speak at their own pace.
- Don't interrupt or rush them.
- Respect pauses and silence.

➤ **Show Interest and Reflect Back**

- Use open listening techniques.
- Repeat back what they've said using their own words to confirm understanding.
- Avoid leading questions or making assumptions.

➤ **Reassure Them**

- Let them know it's not their fault.
- Tell them they've done the right thing.
- Never speak to the alleged perpetrator—it could put the child at further risk.

Information sharing and consent

When and How to Share Concerns

Sharing information quickly and appropriately is **essential** to keeping children safe.

➤ Legal Duty to Share

RB Mind has a legal responsibility to report any concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing to the local authority. This is not optional—it's part of our safeguarding duty.

➤ Consent Matters

- We will **always try to get the child's consent** before sharing information, **if it's safe and appropriate to do so**.
- We will also seek permission from the **parent or carer**, unless doing so could put the child at greater risk.

➤ When You Must Share Without Consent

If there's a risk of **significant harm**, you must share the concern—even if consent hasn't been given. Protecting the child comes first.

➤ What to Share

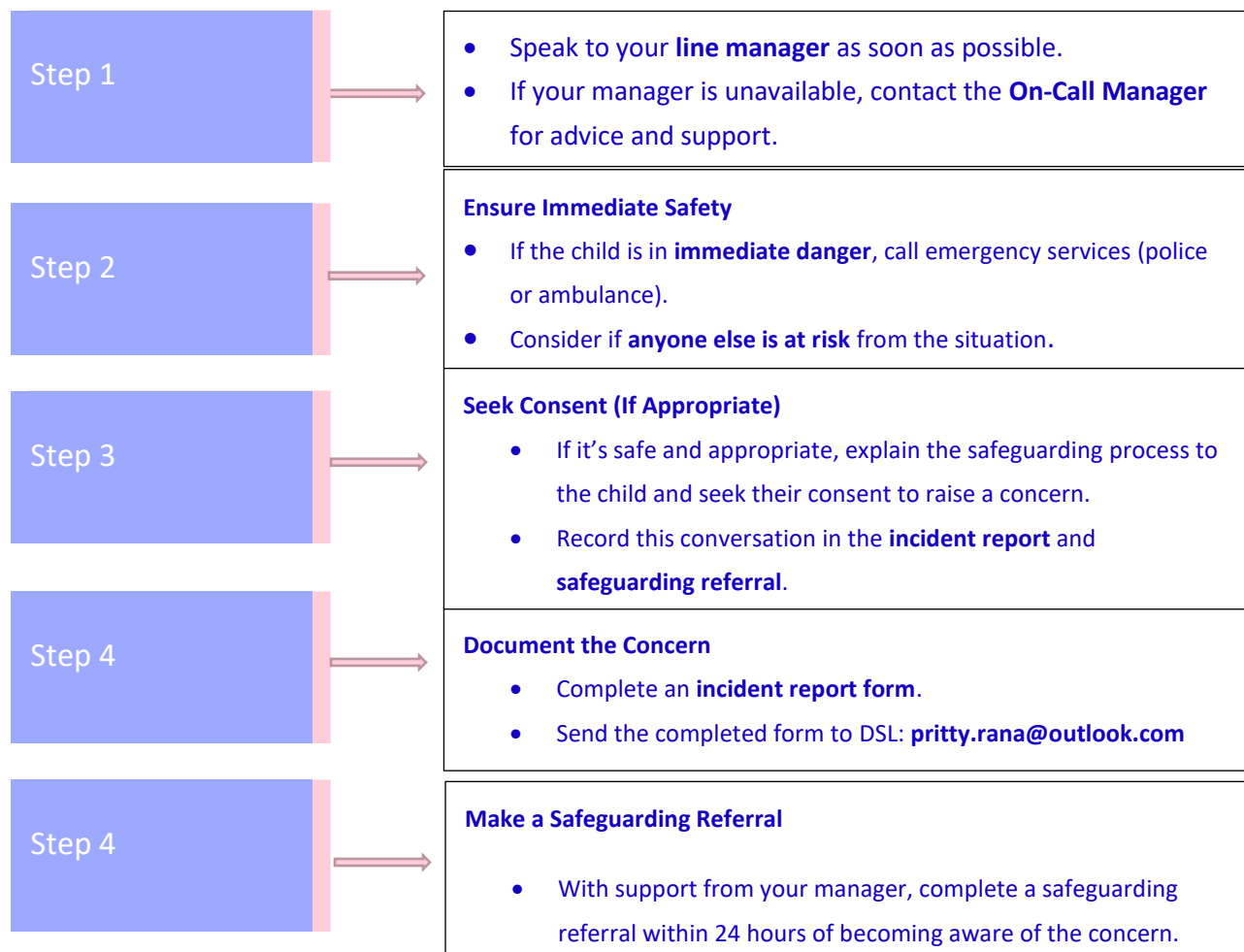
- Only share information that is **necessary, relevant, and proportionate**.
- Stick to **facts**, not opinions.
- Use clear, objective language when documenting or reporting.

➤ Who to Share With

- Your **line manager** or the **on-call manager**.
- The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**.
- The **Children's Single Point of Access (SPA)** team for Richmond and Kingston.

Safeguarding Procedure – What to Do If You Have a Concern

If you believe a child may be at risk, follow these steps **immediately**:



Safeguarding Referral Contacts for Richmond Borough

- **During office hours (8am–5pm):**
Call the **Children's Single Point of Access (SPA)** – **0208 574 5008**
- **Outside office hours:**
Call the **Emergency Duty Team** – **0208 770 5000**
- After the phone referral, follow up in writing within 24 hours using the referral form:
Make a referral to SPA – Richmond Council

[Make a referral to the Single Point of Access - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames](#)

Revisions and Updates – Keeping the Policy Current

RB Mind regularly updates this policy to reflect changes in law, best practice, and local safeguarding procedures. Recent updates include:

➤ Updated Guidance References

- Added **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023** - [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 \[gov.uk\]](#)
- Included **Children's Social Care National Framework** - [Children's Social Care National Framework \[gov.uk\]](#)
- Referenced the **Threshold of Need Matrix (Feb 2023)** to help assess risk levels - [Threshold of Need Matrix \(Feb 2023\) – Kingston & Richmond SCP \[kingstonan...hip.org.uk\]](#)

➤ Clearer Referral Procedures

- Clarified how and when to refer concerns using the Threshold of Need Matrix
- Added timelines for SPA decisions (usually within **24–72 hours**)
- Includes concerns such as grooming, discriminatory behaviour, and professional boundary violations

• References:

- [LADO Procedures – City of London \[cityoflondon.gov.uk\]](#)
- [Pan-London Child Protection Procedures – Chapter 7 \[londonsafe...ures.co.uk\]](#)

➤ Expanded Allegations Section

- Now includes concerns like **grooming, discriminatory behaviour, and professional boundary violations**
- References **LADO procedures** and **Pan-London Child Protection Procedures – Chapter 7**

➤ Child Protection Conference Models

- Added references to **Strengthening Families** and **Signs of Safety** models used in multi-agency meetings - [Strengthening Families Model \[gov.uk\]](#)

- Signs of Safety – Worcestershire Guide [[worcesters...ire.gov.uk](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk)]

➤ **Enhanced Definitions of Abuse**

Emphasised:

- [Online Abuse – NSPCC Guidance](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/learning-and-research/online-abuse-guidance/) [[learning.n...pcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/learning-and-research/online-abuse-guidance/)]
- [Online Safety Act 2023 – GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/online-safety-act-2023) [[gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/online-safety-act-2023)]
- Intersectionality and overlapping vulnerabilities

➤ **Stronger Information Sharing Guidance**

- Reinforced the importance of **timely sharing** and **multi-agency collaboration**

Reinforced importance of:

- [Timely Information Sharing – NSPCC Practice Points](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/learning-and-research/timely-information-sharing/) [[learning.n...pcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/learning-and-research/timely-information-sharing/)]
- [Multi-Agency Collaboration – Working Together 2023](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-agency-collaboration-working-together-2023) [[gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-agency-collaboration-working-together-2023)]