



Royal Forestry Society Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

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Approved by	
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1. RFS Policy Statement

RFS believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or adult to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all by a commitment to practice which protects them.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of all is paramount
- All people have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- Working in partnership with other agencies is essential in ensuring the welfare of all

This policy seeks to ensure that the RFS undertakes its safeguarding responsibilities and will respond to concerns appropriately.

This policy applies to all representatives of RFS, including employees and volunteers.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To safeguard the welfare of children and adults who use the services of RFS
- To provide representatives of RFS with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect someone may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm
- To protect all persons working on behalf of RFS
- To ensure that the RFS responds to any concerns appropriately

We will seek to safeguard all individuals by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them in our interactions with them
- Recognising that victims may choose to disclose information about abuse to any person at any time
- Adopting safeguarding guidelines through policies and the staff, Teaching Trees and divisional handbooks.
- Recruiting employees and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- Sharing information about good practice with employees and volunteers and making it available to others on our website.
- Providing effective management for employees and volunteers through supervision, support, and training.

We are also committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Accessibility

A copy of the Safeguarding policy is freely available on our website and a printed copy can be provided on request.



2. Definitions

Principles of Safeguarding

- 1. Empowerment** - People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.
- 2. Prevention** - It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- 3. Proportionality** - The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- 4. Protection** - Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- 5. Partnership** - Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- 6. Accountability** - Accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

Safeguarding children is defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

In formulating a Safeguarding Policy, RFS has made reference to the Department for Education's Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 guidelines https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/729914/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children-2018.pdf

Safeguarding adults is defined in the Care Act 2014 as:

- protecting the rights of adults to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect
- people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect
- people and organisations making sure that the adult's well-being is promoted including, where appropriate, taking their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs fully into account when deciding any action.
- recognising that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear, or unrealistic about their personal circumstances and therefore potential risks to their safety or well-being.

Within the workplace, the RFS has a duty of care towards all of its employees and volunteers to ensure that they have a safe place to work and that they are protected from harm.

Definitions

- Child or young person: Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.
- Adult at risk: Anyone aged 18 or over who is unable to look after their own well-being, property, rights, or other interests and is at risk of harm (either from

another person's behaviour or their own behaviour) due to disability, illness, physical or mental infirmity.

- Employees: Anyone employed by the RFS, including agency employees, contractors and those on secondment or placement (including internships both paid and voluntary, and students).
- Volunteers: Anyone volunteering for the RFS, regardless of their role, including trustees.

What is Abuse?

Children and adults may be vulnerable to abuse or neglect from people or organisations that they come into contact with.

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect – when basic needs for love, food warmth, safety, education, and medical attention are not met.
- Sexual abuse including sexual harassment
- Bullying, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other types of discrimination are also forms of abuse
- Financial abuse
- Organisational abuse
- Online abuse including trolling, unsolicited messages, misrepresentation, harassment or the reveal of personal information (doxing).



3. Responsibility

All employees or volunteers have responsibility to follow the guidance laid out in this policy and related policies, and to pass on any welfare concerns using the required procedures.

We expect all employees or volunteers to promote good practice by being an excellent role model, contribute to discussions about safeguarding and to positively involve people in developing safe practices.

Specific Responsibilities

Trustees have responsibility to ensure:

- The policy is in place and appropriate
- That the welfare of children and adults is promoted within the organisation
- Support for the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- The policy is regularly monitored and reviewed annually at board meetings
- That there is a named Trustee with oversight of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. This position is held by Cheryl Lundberg.

The Chief Executive has responsibility to ensure:

- The policy is accessible to all employees and on the RFS website.
- The policy is implemented
- The policy is regularly monitored and reviewed annually.
- Sufficient resources (time and money) are allocated to ensure that the policy can be effectively implemented

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is the Learning and Outreach Manager. Their responsibilities are to:

- Ensure that all issues concerning the safety and welfare of children and adults who take part in our Learning and Outreach programmes, or activities run by the RFS, are properly dealt with through policies, procedures, and administrative systems.
- Make sure that all employees, volunteers, and partner organisations are made aware of the procedures, and what they should do if they have concerns about a safeguarding issue.
- Make sure that all employees, volunteers, and partner organisations have access to appropriate training/information.
- Receive and record information from anyone who has concerns about safeguarding relating to an attendee at an RFS event or participant in a programme.

- Receive and record information from anyone who has concerns about the actions or behaviour of an employee, volunteer or partner organisation working on behalf of the RFS.
- Take the lead on dealing with information that may constitute a child protection concern. This includes assessing and clarifying the information and taking decisions where necessary in consultation with colleagues, the chair of the board of trustees and statutory child protection agencies.
- Consult with, pass on information to and receive information from statutory child protection agencies, such as the local authority children's social care department and the police. This includes making formal referrals to these agencies when necessary.
- Consult with external agencies when support is needed.
- Report at each Board Meeting to the Chief Executive and the Board of Trustees.
- Be familiar with issues relation to safeguarding and abuse and keep up-to-date with new developments in this area.
- Attend training in issues relevant to safeguarding and share knowledge from that training with employees and the Board of Trustees.
- Work flexibly as may be required and carry out any other reasonable duties associated with safeguarding.

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is the School and Community Outreach Officer. Their responsibilities are to:

- Carry out DBS checks for employees and volunteers whose role involves working with children and or vulnerable adults. This will include all Education Officers and may be extended to other employees or volunteers as the Designated Safeguarding Lead feels is appropriate.
- Be familiar with issues relation to safeguarding and abuse and keep up-to-date with new developments in this area.
- Attend training in issues relevant to safeguarding and share knowledge from that training with employees and the Board of Trustees.
- Work flexibly as may be required and carry out any other reasonable duties associated with safeguarding.

Partnership Organisations

All organisations that the RFS works in partnership with on projects relating to children or vulnerable adults are expected to have a Safeguarding Policy in place.



4. Employment and Training

Safe recruitment

RFS ensures safe recruitment through the following processes:

- Interviews are conducted according to equal opportunity principles and interview questions are based on the relevant job description and person specification.
- All employees coming into regular contact with children will undergo a DBS check. RFS Education Officers' contact with children when leading sessions qualifies as regulated activity, i.e., frequent contact (3 days or more within a 30-day period). It is a criminal offence for individuals barred by the DBS to work or apply to work with children or vulnerable adults in a wide range of posts.
- Full references for all employees who have contact with children and vulnerable adults must be taken up before they undertake any work. No formal job offers are made until after checks for suitability are completed (including DBS and 2 references). In exceptional and justifiable circumstances where DBS clearance is delayed, employment/role could commence, but the individual may not be permitted to work or volunteer with children until clearance is obtained.
- All employees or volunteers will be given a full copy of the Safeguarding Policy and will be made aware of their duty to comply all times.
- Safeguarding will be part of new employees' induction and refresher training for existing employees will be carried out biannually. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will have specific training appropriate to their role.

DBS Service Gap Management

The organisation commits resources to providing Disclosure and Barring Service checks on employees whose roles involve contact with children and/or vulnerable adults.

In order to avoid DBS gaps, the organisation will:

- Encourage all contractors to register with the update service to allow checks to be refreshed annually.
- undertake a maximum 3-year rolling programme of re-checking DBS certificates are in place for staff who are identified as needing them.
- ensure existing employees who transfer from a role which does not require a DBS check to one which involves contact with children or vulnerable adults will be subject to a DBS check.



5. RFS Code of Conduct in relation to adults

The RFS is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all employees. Behaviours that make staff or volunteers feel unsafe are not tolerated in any form. These may include but are not limited to, bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination or intimidation.

Definitions

- **Sexual Harassment** is any unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive environment. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Unwanted advances
 - Inappropriate touching or physical contact
 - Making sexually suggestive comments or jokes
 - Sending explicit emails, texts, or other forms of communication
 - Displaying offensive materials, images, or videos
 - Making verbal or physical threats

- **Discrimination and protected characteristics**

The following characteristics are protected under law:

- Race including colour, nationality or ethnic origin
- Gender, sexual orientation or gender reassignment
- Disability
- Age
- Religion
- Marital status
- Pregnancy or being on maternity leave

Discrimination or harassment linked to these characteristics is unlawful. This may include bias in hiring, promotions, pay, training, or day-to-day treatment or situations such as verbal abuse, physical intimidation, inappropriate jokes or comments.

Employee Rights and Responsibilities

- Employees, volunteers and members should report any incidents that are in breach of this code as soon as they are able to do so.
- All individuals have the right to be protected from retaliation after making a complaint.
- Everyone is responsible for respecting others' boundaries and maintaining professional behaviour.

Training and Awareness

All employees and volunteers should receive training appropriate to their role as part of their induction

Consequences of Violating the Policy

- Violations of the code of conduct, including engaging in sexual harassment, can result in cancellation of membership, disciplinary action, reprimands, suspension, or termination of employment.

6. RFS Code of Conduct in relation to children

All children taking part in activities run by RFS are always accompanied by one or more teachers or group leaders, who at these times are their carers (legally responsible adult). However, representatives of RFS who work with children have a responsibility to protect both the children they work with and themselves.

- All representatives of RFS should demonstrate exemplary behaviour at all times in order to protect themselves from false allegations.
- RFS Education Officers should ensure that they are never left alone with a group of children/single child without their group leader or other school representative being present.
- If the supervising school staff member has to leave the group in an emergency:
 - make sure it is for as short a time as possible.
 - ensure you are accessible to others.
 - ensure that at least two children remain with the Education Officer.
- Persons working on behalf of RFS should not:
 - Be involved in any aspect of toileting.
 - Implement sanctions relating to children's behaviour. All behavioural issues are to be reported to and dealt with by group leaders and/or teachers. These issues could include: bullying, inappropriate language, or any action that puts the child or other people at risk of harm.
 - Have any physical contact with children – other than offering a hand if the child requests temporary assistance on uneven ground or when climbing up or down something. Otherwise, individuals should refrain from physical contact, unless a child needs to be saved from imminent serious harm such as falling in a lake.
 - Use personal electronic devices such as phones when children are present other than in an emergency situation for gaining assistance.
 - Take any photos or videos of children using personal devices. Personal electronic devices may only be used to take photos when there are no children present or with consent of the school staff and with no children in the shot e.g. photo of a rare slug
 - Use photographs shared with them by a school or group unless the photo consent form has been completed and returned.
 - Befriend or link with anyone on social media aged 18 or under who they have come into contact with through the work of the RFS.



7. What to do if concerns are suspected or reported

Schools and Colleges

Anything related to the school/visiting project or the child/young person should be reported to the teacher or group leader in the first instance and the Designated Safeguarding Lead made aware immediately.

If you believe that this may put the child at risk, then your concern should be directed immediately to the school's headteacher or Board of Governors. If there is serious cause for concern that you have not raised with the lead teacher from the school group, you should also contact your Child Protection Team at Social Services or the police as soon as possible.

Concerns about adults

Concerns about an adult should be reported directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

If someone discloses abuse to you

- Listen carefully and try to remember what was said.
- Keep calm and try not to express shock, even if the information is shocking.
- Give reassurance that you are taking them seriously
- Let them know that you will be talking to someone who needs to know.
- Do not ask leading questions, try to interpret what was said, or push for more information than they want to give.
- Do not agree to keep what you have been told a secret.
- As soon as possible afterwards write down exactly what was said: use their own words, not your interpretation of what was said.
- Inform the RFS Designated Safeguarding Lead of what has happened.

If someone makes an allegation about someone working on behalf of RFS OR if you are concerned about the behaviour of another adult, you should follow the above guidelines and:

- Inform the designated RFS Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible. If they are on leave contact the Chief Executive in their place.
 - As soon as possible after directly observing or hearing of a concern you must report the incident to the authorities. As before, it is important to keep a written record of any allegations made, using the person making the allegation's own words.
 - The RFS Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Chief Executive will contact either the police or social services on your behalf. If you feel that there is an immediate risk to a child, and they are uncontactable then you should contact the police. Serious breaches will be reported to the Charity Commission.
- Ensure that the individual concerned does not continue to have contact with children / vulnerable adults until the matter is resolved.**

Anyone reporting a safeguarding concern can use the Department for Culture, Media and Sport online reporting tool <https://www.charitysafeguarding.dcms.gov.uk/how-use-tool>



10. Further Sources of Advice

Regarding Children

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

LGBTQ+ Issues

<https://switchboard.lgbt/>

Disability

<https://www.scope.org.uk/>

Hate Crimes

<https://www.stophateuk.org/>

11. RFS Staff and Contractors Safeguarding Declaration

All staff and freelance contractors will be asked to sign the declaration below and a register of these signatures will be held at RFS Head Office.

I confirm that I have been made fully aware of, and understand the contents of, the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for RFS.

Please complete the details below and return this completed form to Becky Wilkinson.

Employee Name:

Name and provider of safeguarding training:

Date Safeguarding training completed:

Employee Signature:

Date: