



Refugees Welcome North Somerset Safeguarding Policy

March 2024

Context

RWNS is a community-based charity working alongside North Somerset Council and other partners to meet the needs of those arriving in local communities. RWNS has evolved since its inception in 2017, responding to needs as they arise.

Specific projects and activities considered within the scope of this policy include:

- Welcome Centre, Weston super Mare offering services, including welcome meals and free shop.
- 'Pop up' Welcome cafe in Nailsea and elsewhere as needed
- Befriending service for families and individuals in North Somerset
- Outreach to Home Office hotel and dispersal accommodation
- School support sessions
- Religious festivals and other celebrations
- Skills exchange workshops
- Social events and trips
- Work to ready houses for new arrivals.

Introduction

Safeguarding is the process of protecting adults with care and support needs, or children under the age of 18, from abuse or neglect.

RWNS is committed to ensuring that those who use our services are not exploited or abused and that working practices minimise the risk of abuse. Furthermore, RWNS recognises that, because of the nature of its activities, it is well-placed to identify abuse or neglect of its service users.

This policy outlines the steps that should be taken if RWNS staff or volunteers recognise, or receive a report of, abuse.

Legal Framework

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 defines, in Parts 1 and 2 of Schedule 4, regulated activities relating to children and adults (respectively).

RWNS does not, in the normal course of its activities, carry out regulated activities with respect to adults. It does offer tuition to children as part of its activity. Although employees and volunteers are advised that they should not be alone with children (and parents are required to agree to this), the provision is impractical to enforce. For safeguarding purposes, RWNS assumes that such employees and volunteers will be alone with children; RWNS recruits staff and volunteers, asks for 2 references and checks their DBS status.

The Care Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 places duties on local authorities to make enquiries, or cause enquiries, if they believe an adult is, or is at risk of, being abused or neglected. This means that local authorities must cooperate with each of their relevant partners and those partners must also cooperate with the local authority in the exercise of their functions relevant to care and support including those to protect adults. RWNS partners with the local authority in some of its undertakings, and so has a duty to ensure that it is able to support the local authority in the discharge of its responsibilities under the Care Act 2014.

Children's Act 1989 and 2004

The Children's Act 1989 provides a comprehensive framework for the care and protection of children. It defines parental responsibility and encourages partnership working with parents. Interagency co-operation is encouraged. The Children's Act 2004 supplements the 1989 Act and reinforces the message that all organisations working with children have a duty in helping safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 provides statutory guidance to organisations with safeguarding responsibilities, and focuses on ensuring that the organisations co-operate in an effective way to deliver safeguarding outcomes. It recognises that charitable organisations such as RWNS play an important role in safeguarding children through the services they deliver, and particularly mentions those that work with different races and faith communities.

Key Definitions

Below are the types of abuse recognised in legislation and guidance. Although both adults and children can suffer from all the types of abuse below, some are more prevalent among one or the other; this is indicated in brackets in the title. Although staff and volunteers should be on the lookout for all types of abuse, they should be particularly sensitive to the indicated types applicable to the age group they are working with.

Physical abuse (adults and children)

Includes assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

Domestic abuse (adults)

Includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour' based violence and coercive control. This is abuse that occurs in a domestic setting, within a marriage, civil partnership or cohabitation. It can also occur between family members, i.e. inter-generational.

Sexual abuse (adults and children)

Includes rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing

sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the individual has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Emotional or psychological abuse (children)

Emotional abuse is the ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse and can seriously damage a child's emotional health and development. Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare or humiliate a child or isolating or ignoring them.

Financial or material abuse (adults)

Includes 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.

Modern slavery (adults)

Encompasses slavery, human trafficking, and 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.

Discriminatory abuse (adults)

Includes forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender, and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

Organisational abuse (adults)

Includes 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 on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect of poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and acts of omission (adults and children)

Includes 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 (adults)

Covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

Roles

Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and offering advice on safeguarding matters. The Chief Executive Officer is also responsible for investigating allegations against staff or volunteers.

Although RWNS, by the nature of its activities, has limited statutory obligations with respect to safeguarding, it recognises that it may encounter situations or plan to undertake activities

where unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults is a possibility. The Chief Executive Officer is therefore responsible for ensuring that RNWS retains the ability to make informed safeguarding decisions and for reviewing activity on an ongoing basis with a view to ensuring that this policy remains relevant.

Safeguarding Lead

The Chief Executive provides safeguarding advice to staff and volunteers and is responsible for ensuring staff and volunteers have adequate training in the identification and reporting of abuse.

Volunteers

Where considered appropriate by Trustees and the Volunteer Coordinator, volunteers will be trained to recognise signs of abuse and will be responsible for reporting concerns about abuse.

Procedures

Confidentiality

In cases of disclosure of abuse by adults at risk, children, young people, parents or carers, RWNS is obliged to share the information and will refer its concerns to social care services and/or the police in an emergency. Staff and volunteers should not promise confidentiality.

Raising a Concern

If an employee of, or volunteer for, RWNS has concerns that a children or vulnerable person is at risk of harm or abuse, they should notify the Chief Executive Officer (safeguarding lead) or Support Manager.

If a child or vulnerable person is in immediate danger the police should be called by dialling 999.

An employee or volunteer may become aware of suspected or likely abuse by:

- Their own observations and concerns.
- Being told by another person that they have concerns about a person at risk.
- The person at risk telling them.
- The abuser telling them.

Children in particular may use an indirect method to tell others about their abuse, for example by writing stories, drawing pictures or acting out the abuse.

In cases of concern, the following four steps should be followed:

- Do not delay; report the concern immediately.
- Do not investigate. The Local Authority will investigate if appropriate.
- Seek advice from the Chief Executive Officer or Support Manager
- Make a careful recording of anything observed or reported.

If the potential risk has been raised by someone else (whether the affected person or a third party), the employee or volunteer should reassure that person that they have done the right thing by talking to them. However, as described above they should NOT promise that they will keep the disclosure secret.

It is likely that any records will be passed on to the Local Authority (or other investigating authority) to serve as evidence and so records should be:

- factual
- made on the same day as the disclosure
- detailed with what action has already been taken, and what information has been shared and with who
- timed and dated
- signed by the person making them (who should also include their name and role within RWNS).

Because the record may be submitted as evidence, it should not be made in a personal diary or notepaper.

Allegations

Concerns about the behaviour of employees or volunteers in the organisation should be referred without delay to the Chief Operating Officer who will contact social care services, or the police, if a crime may have been committed. If the Chief Operating Officer is unavailable, then the report should be made to the Support Manager.

If the report is about either the Chief Executive Officer or the Support Manager, the report should be directed to a Trustee.

Training of Staff and Volunteers

The Chief Executive Officer and the Support Manager will be trained in safeguarding legislation appropriate to adults and children.

All staff and volunteers interacting with potentially vulnerable adults and children will be provided with a basic level of safeguarding training. This will allow them to identify potential signs of abuse and raise their concerns with the Chief Executive Officer or Support Manager. This includes volunteers on the following programmes:

- Welcome Centre
- Welcome Cafe (Nailsea and elsewhere)
- Outreach in Home Office provided hotels and dispersal accommodation

Other programmes will be added to this list as considered appropriate by the Chief Executive Officer in conjunction with Support Manager.

Disclosure and Barring

Where RWNS carries out regulated activities (for example, providing tuition to children) on a frequent basis, a DBS check will be sought. RWNS will still make every effort to ensure that employees or volunteers are not left alone with children; however, it is recognised that this may be impractical to enforce. Thus, it will be assumed that employees or staff who volunteer with children in the Welcome Centre or in their homes may be left alone with those children.

Resources

If you're concerned about the well-being of an adult, call Care Connect on 01275 888801 Monday to Friday 8am–6pm.

If you are concerned about a child who might be at risk of being ill-treated or neglected, contact the council's Child Protection team on 01275 888808.

In evenings or at weekends, call the Emergency Duty Team on 01454 615165.

If a child or adult is at immediate risk, contact the police on 999.

Regular Reviews

This policy was introduced in August 2022.

The Chief Executive Officer will ensure that it is reviewed annually. In addition, it will be reviewed as needed if the legislative framework or the activities of RWNS change such that the validity of this policy is called into question.

Date of current review: 5 March 2024

Date of next review: 1 March 2025

Key Safeguarding Contacts

Chief Executive Officer: Donna King, donna.king@rwns.org.uk

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