



# Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership (WTRRP) Safeguarding Children Policy

Ownership:	WTRRP Trustees
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Governance Forum responsible:	WTRRP Committee
Version:	2
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Review date of policy:	01.02.2026 or sooner if legislation requires
Review frequency:	Annually

**This policy should be used in conjunction with the WTRRP volunteer handbook and WTRRP Safeguarding Adults Policy**

We have in place a safeguarding lead and a deputy safeguarding lead. The lead is the person responsible for reporting concerns of abuse and neglect to the relevant authority. In their absence the deputy safeguarding lead will take this action.

In addition, a member of our trustee board is assigned the responsibility of overseeing safeguarding for our organisation including reporting serious concerns to the Charity Commission and making decisions on safeguarding concerns about our staff and volunteers or children and adults at risk in their care.

Safeguarding Lead: Maggie Bryant

Deputy Safeguarding Lead: Tareq Ghaleb

WTRRP Trustee responsible for overseeing safeguarding: Tim Whittaker

## How should the policy be used?

This policy must be followed by all staff and volunteers, including senior managers and trustees. It also applies to anyone working on behalf of our organisation.

This policy focuses on safeguarding concerns that stem from interactions with clients and other people who access our service; however, the legal duties and principles outlined in this document also apply to children who aren't our clients. For example, the child of a client, anyone under the age of 18 who is volunteering, beneficiaries or other connections who meet our definition of children in relation to this safeguarding policy.

There is a separate policy for safeguarding adults.

No one should ignore allegations or suspicions of abuse which includes neglect. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

## Why do we have a policy?

We have a policy to:

- protect children and young people who access our services. This includes children in contact with adults who use our services
- detail what we will do to keep children safe and how we will deal with any concerns we have regarding a child's safety
- provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to children's safeguarding and child protection

It's important we have a policy because in the course of our day-to-day work, staff and volunteers may come into contact with children. In some instances, this will be incidental contact, for example when an adult client brings their child along to an appointment.

There may also be situations when staff and volunteers provide signposting or services to clients who are children.

We aim to keep children safe and prevent them from harm. We are committed to:

- having sound recruitment practices
- ensuring all staff and volunteers have an understanding and awareness of children's safeguarding
- ensuring all staff and volunteers know how to raise safeguarding concerns and feel confident doing so

## What do we mean by safeguarding?

'Safeguarding' typically relates to children (defined as individuals under 18) and adults at risk (also known as vulnerable adults), for which specific legislation and regulatory requirements apply.

Our regulator, the Charity Commission, considers safeguarding to be taking reasonable steps to protect people from abuse or harm that we come into contact with, whether working online or in person.

## Our legal and membership duties

It is a requirement of the Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership that we act within the relevant laws and regulations to safeguard people who come into contact with our service from harm and abuse.

Protecting people and safeguarding responsibilities are a governance priority for our organisation. It is a fundamental part of how we operate as a charity for the public benefit. Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone at our organisation.

The Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on agencies to co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. While section 11 of the act doesn't list charities as one of the organisations in scope, we acknowledge the Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership may receive their funding or be contracted to deliver services on their behalf and therefore essential that we understand our role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as part delivering a service.

Almost all of our service is to adults rather than children but when we do or if we choose to provide a service that is targeted at children, we use resources and follow standards from the NSPCC for safeguarding children.

Statutory guidance 'Working together to safeguard children' states that:

*'Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and*

*taking prompt action.*<sup>1</sup>

We will take these duties into account in our work with children who come into contact with our service and support local authorities to fulfil their statutory duties where possible.

This includes:

- protecting children from abuse and maltreatment
- preventing harm to children's health or development
- ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care
- take action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes

A key principle is that it is not your responsibility as a WTRRP volunteer or staff member to decide whether or not abuse of a child is occurring, but **it is your responsibility to report any concerns to the Partnership, so that it can take appropriate action.**

If, as a member of the Refugee Partnership, you are concerned that abuse may occur or has occurred, first **write down what you saw/heard, date and sign the note, then refer the matter immediately to the Partnership's Safeguarding Lead/Deputy [Safeguarding@wtrrp.org](mailto:Safeguarding@wtrrp.org)** or to another member of the Committee, who will decide whether or not to report the matter further.

If you **believe that a child is in immediate danger** then you should call the Police on 101 (999 if urgent), Social Services on 0300 1234 042 or Children's Services on 0300 1234 043 as appropriate. You may tell the parent you are reporting this issue, but it is not essential. You must keep the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy informed at all times.

## Who is protected by this policy?

Safeguarding and child protection applies to all children and young people under the age of 18. This includes our clients and children we come into contact with as part of delivering our service. Note that concerns about those over the age of 18 should be reviewed under our separate Safeguarding Adults Policy.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount as enshrined in the Children Act 2004
- all children regardless of age, race, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation have a right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse
- some children are especially vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues

## What is child abuse?

We follow guidance on child safeguarding and child protection set out by the NSPCC, who are a leading child safety charity.

The NSPCC has extensive information on child abuse, the different types of abuse and signs and symptoms of child abuse.

The indicators provided below are not an exhaustive list of signs and symptoms of a child suffering abuse and neglect but are a summary of the main types of child abuse for the purposes of this policy.

Type of abuse	Definition of abuse
Neglect / acts of omission	Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and the most common form of child abuse. A child might be left hungry or dirty, or without proper clothing, shelter, supervision or health care.
Domestic	Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. It can seriously harm children and young people and hearing/witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse.
Emotional / psychological	Emotional/psychological abuse involves the continual emotional mistreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse. It can involve deliberately trying to scare, humiliate, isolate or ignore a child.
Sexual	Sexual abuse is when a child or young person is forced, tricked or manipulated into sexual activities. They might not understand that what's happening is abuse or that it's wrong for the abuser to do this to them. They might be afraid to tell someone or behave as though this is normal for them to experience, both are valid for the child to be displaying. Sexual abuse can happen anywhere – and it can happen in person or online.
Child sexual exploitation (CSE)	Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Online	Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets and mobile phones. And it can happen anywhere online, including social media, text messages and messaging apps, emails, online chats, online gaming and live-streaming sites.
Physical	Physical abuse is when someone hurts or harms a child or young person on purpose. It includes hitting with hands or objects, slapping and punching, kicking, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning and scalding, biting and scratching, breaking bones and drowning.
Female genital mutilation (FGM)	FGM is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons. It's also known as 'female circumcision' or 'cutting' but has many other names.
Bullying / cyberbullying	<p>Bullying is intentional behaviour that hurts someone else. It includes name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone.</p> <p>It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It's usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally. Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Unlike bullying offline, online bullying can follow the child wherever they go, via social networks, gaming and mobile phone. A person can be bullied online and offline at the same time.</p>
Child trafficking	Child trafficking is where children are tricked, forced or persuaded to leave their homes and are moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold.

<p>Organisational / institution</p>	<p>Institutional abuse is a form of abuse covered by multi-agency practices, policies and procedures. Multi-agencies might be health, care, education or local authorities, for example. Institutional abuse sees vulnerable people being mistreated by the system that is designed to give them care and to safeguard them from abuse. In many ways both terms – organisational abuse and institutional abuse – are interchangeable; however, there are subtle differences. The main difference being that with organisational abuse it is the setting/organisation, its practices, policies, procedures and ways of working and the people within that setting/organisation that are perpetrating the abuse, whether intentionally or not. Whereas with institutional abuse it is the system that governs these settings/ organisations that is letting people down and inflicting the abuse.</p> <p>It is understandable that in most contexts both terms, organisational and institutional abuse, are used interchangeably as both contribute to the abuse of people from a position of power.</p>
<p>Grooming</p>	<p>Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. Children and young people who are groomed can be sexually abused, exploited or trafficked.</p>
<p>Modern slavery</p> <p>Note that if modern slavery is suspected we may also use the UK's <a href="#">National Referral Mechanism</a> as well as going through our safeguarding referral process</p>	<p>Modern slavery concerns the exploitation of people who are coerced, deceived, forced into, or expected to accept, a life of abuse, servitude, inhumane and degrading treatment.</p>
<p>Criminal exploitation and gangs</p>	<p>Criminal exploitation is child abuse where children and young people are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes.</p>
<p>Self-neglect</p>	<p>Although self-neglect isn't considered an official form of abuse by the NSPCC, it's important to consider things like a child self-harming or mentioning suicide as self-neglect. It could be a sign a child is experiencing another form of abuse or that they need mental health support.</p>

## Children and families at risk

Research shows that some children who've experienced abuse share similar characteristics making them more vulnerable. Having these characteristics doesn't necessarily mean they'll experience abuse or neglect, but we do know that these challenges are often interlinked and the more problems a child and their family are experiencing, the greater the risk of abuse (Cleaver, Unell and Aldgate, 2011).

- children experiencing parental mental health problems
- children experiencing parental substance misuse
- child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours (a 'looked after' child)
- Deaf and disabled children
- children in households where domestic abuse has/is taking place

As part of delivering our service we'll be especially vigilant for signs of child abuse where we're aware the above characteristics are present.

## Radicalisation and safeguarding

If we are concerned about a child becoming radicalised, we follow our safeguarding procedure; but also take into account the statutory guidance of the ['Prevent Strategy'](#). We acknowledge our responsibility under this guidance *'to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'*.

Our staff and volunteers will be mindful of radicalisation and report any concerns using our safeguarding adult and children policies.

## Confidentiality and safeguarding

Confidentiality is one of the founding principles of the Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership. It is important that our clients can trust us and know that the information they disclose is treated in confidence.

If a person aged under 18 is our client, then the details of the signposting given to them should remain confidential, even if their parent(s) or guardian asks.

However, if we have suspicions or information has been disclosed in relation to abuse, we have a responsibility to take action. Our principles do not override the need to protect children from abuse.

Where a member of staff or volunteer has a suspicion that a child is being abused or has information disclosed to them alleging abuse, they should follow the steps in the safeguarding procedure.



In accordance with the principle of empowerment, the thoughts and wishes of the person we're concerned about should be explored to inform our decision on whether to report a safeguarding concern; however, getting permission from a child in order to report a safeguarding concern may not always be possible or appropriate.

It is not necessary to discuss a safeguarding concern with a child before making a confidentiality disclosure and reporting to a local authority if doing so is in the child's best interests. However, in situations where a child has the ability/capacity to make decisions for themselves we will aim to discuss the concern with them. We will also make it clear to them during this discussion that even if they don't want us to, we may still need to report our concerns under our statutory obligations as a charity.

There will be situations when confidentiality between us and a client cannot be maintained. This includes:

- situations where the child we're concerned about is in serious and immediate danger and there's no time to get permission for a disclosure
- it's not possible to get permission or the child is not able to give permission (for example when the abuser is always present)
- it's not appropriate for us to get permission because it could put the child we're concerned about in more danger

In these situations, the wellbeing of the child takes precedence over our principle of confidentiality. Our safeguarding procedure details the process for making a confidentiality disclosure and raising a safeguarding concern.

## Screening staff and volunteers

We ensure that all staff and volunteers who work in roles which are legally eligible for a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check are screened, we will also ask for appropriate references as part of our screening process and reserve the right to await the results of DBS checks and references before allowing a person to start in that role. If a role is not eligible for a standard or enhanced check, our chief officer may choose to ask some staff or volunteers to undergo a basic check.

As an organisational policy, if a DBS check reveals an unspent conviction for a sexual offence against a child or vulnerable adult, the individual won't be taken on. We also won't take on anyone who performs a regulated activity as part of their role if they're barred from working with adults or children. Any other convictions will be considered on an individual basis.

We are legally required to report any incidents where a member of staff or a volunteer is disciplined or dismissed for inappropriate behaviour with or against a child to the Charity Commission and DBS.

Further information can be found in our DBS and ex-offenders' policies.

# Supervision, training and safeguarding

All staff and volunteers must complete our on-line Safeguarding Awareness Course prior to becoming active as a staff member or volunteer as part of their induction.

Thorough induction training will be provided to ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of good safeguarding practice alongside the service's core values and confidentiality.

Staff and volunteers will be given regular supervision and have their training needs assessed.

Regular case checking will take place and any unusual or excessive contact with a child will be investigated.

Appropriate safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff and volunteers. This may be in the form of:

- online learning
- policy awareness sessions delivered internally
- briefing sessions by a local authority or other relevant authority
- attendance at training arranged through partner agencies

## Staff and volunteer conduct

If a staff member or volunteer is suspected of inappropriate conduct, during the course of their role, that could put a child at risk of harm - this will be investigated immediately under the appropriate policy. They may be suspended during the investigation and we'll still aim to complete the investigation even if the staff member or volunteer resigns.

If a staff member or volunteer is dismissed from their role because of safeguarding concerns arising from their actions or inactions, we have a responsibility as a regulated activity provider to inform the Disclosure and Barring Service. We will follow the [guidance set out by the Disclosure and Barring Service](#) in these situations. It may also be appropriate to make a serious incident report to the charity commission, local authority and other relevant funders and regulators.

We reserve the right to share factual, fair and proportionate details of the situation with other employers if we're asked for a reference.

## Developing new services

Any new services in development will take account of the need to safeguard children. This may be achieved by:

- risk assessment of proposed activities

- agreeing safeguarding measures with partner organisations including information sharing protocols
- seeking specialist advice, for example from the local safeguarding children board

## Working with local statutory agencies

Safeguarding Boards may carry out reviews or investigations and may require us to supply information. The boards are made up of representatives from local authorities and other statutory bodies and partner agencies.

Our local Safeguarding Board is Hertfordshire:

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board:  
[Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) | [Hertfordshire County Council](#)

We will supply information requested by a safeguarding board under the following circumstances:

- the information must be requested for the purpose of enabling the board to perform its functions
- the person or body requested to supply the information must have functions or engage in activities such that the board considers it likely to have information relevant to a function of the board

In general, there is no bar to us taking part in a safeguarding review, a criminal investigation or a Serious Case Review if required to. This is in the context of our policy on client confidentiality, and the confidentiality process will be used.

## Working with local authority commissioners

Commissioners at local authority level sometimes want to see their own safeguarding protocols reflected in the WTRRP policies and actions.

The WTRRP:

- is aware of the local authority designated safeguarding lead and the functions of their team, and the local Safeguarding Children's Board and Safeguarding Adult's Board (England)
- participates in local authority safeguarding training or briefings
- review local authority safeguarding protocols to make sure our policy reflects local arrangements