

The Research & Evaluation Centre Children & Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy

The Research & Evaluation Centre
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Company Limited by Shares Incorporated in England and Wales

TO REPORT A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN, YOU CAN:

Visit: <https://therec.co.uk/misconduct>

Email: safeguarding@therec.co.uk

1. The REC's Child Protection Policy

The REC aims to improve lives through using evidence. Our work affects people of all ages. As a result, concern for the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults is an important part of The REC's work. Even when The REC's activities do not specifically target children or vulnerable adults, we recognise that this does not dissolve the effect of our work on them, whether directly or indirectly. The REC must proactively include a child and vulnerable adult safeguarding lens to its work to avoid potential harms caused to children and vulnerable adults through our presence and work in a way that focuses on child rights, child participation, and the best interest of the child, all the while taking an intersectional approach.

Everyone working for and with The REC is required to:

- recognise that all children are potentially at risk from abuse and exploitation from adults, another child or children.
- understand the problem of child abuse and their role and responsibilities in protecting children and preventing abuse.

This document sets out The REC's policy on working with children and vulnerable adults and managing issues of child abuse. The policy herein demonstrates The REC's commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults from all harm and abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse, physical abuse, verbal or emotional abuse, and neglect as laid in its **Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policies**. The aim of this policy is to ensure an open and aware environment where concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a child can be raised and managed in a fair and just manner, prioritising the best interest of the child.

Safeguarding is defined here as *the actions taken to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and staff, enabling them to live and operate, securely, safely and free of, abuse and neglect.*

A vulnerable adult here is defined as: *A person over the age of 18, with a medical condition, long-term disability or illness or impairment that limits their ability to care for or protect themselves.*

Please note that for the sake of completeness safeguarding here refers to Children & Vulnerable Adults.

2. Scope and Eligibility

The policy and guidance applies to all persons working on behalf of the REC in any capacity including, REC staff, directors, agency workers, seconded workers, volunteers, interns, agents, suppliers, contractors, external consultants, third party representatives, agents, business partners and any other REC representatives, both in the UK and abroad. Conduct towards children outside of the work environment every day of the year is also covered by the policy.

Our policy to safeguarding children & vulnerable adults, together with our approach to preventing and responding to any child safeguarding violation applies globally to all REC staff and those associated with the delivery of our work both during and outside normal working hours; including our supply chains, country programs and relationships with third parties. In countries where The REC's policy contravenes local legislation, local legislation must be followed with guidance from the affiliate equivalent to safeguarding team. Where the guidance in this policy conflicts with any applicable laws or regulations, the higher standard must be observed at all times.

3. Our Values, Principles & Policy Statement

3.1: A Child's & Vulnerable Adults Right to Protection

The REC believes that all children & Vulnerable Adults have the right.....

- To be safe; no one should take this right away
- To protect their own bodies; their body belongs to them
- To say no; it is alright to say no to someone if that person tries to do something to them that they feel is wrong
- To get help against bullies; tell children to enlist the help of friends, to say no without fighting and to tell an adult
- To tell; you must assure children that no matter what happens you will not be angry with them and that you want them to tell you of any incident that frightens or confuses them or makes them unhappy
- To be believed; when children are told to go to an adult for help they need to know they will be believed and supported. This is especially true in the cases of sexual abuse, which children very rarely lie about
- Not to keep secrets; teach children that some secrets should never be kept, even if they promised not to tell.

Any form of abuse of power towards children, including sexual violence, exploitation, harassment, intimidation, bullying and other forms of abuse or harm is a violation of their fundamental child and human rights and is prohibited behaviour within The REC. The REC does not allow any partner, supplier, sub-contractor, agent or any individual engaged by The REC to take part in any form of child abuse, bullying, intimidation, maltreatment or poor safeguarding practices. The REC takes a zero-tolerance to inaction approach to any such incidence within the organisation. This means that we will do everything in our power to prevent the sexual exploitation and abuse of children from happening, and will rigorously address it each and every time it happens.

3.2: Policy Statement

- The REC is a transparent and inclusive organisation. We aim to reduce any child vulnerability that could be caused by our activities, those of our representatives, or partnerships. We are committed to practices which protect children from abuse and harm, and recognise the importance of having child protection policies. We accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm in order to prevent them.

4 What is child abuse?

Child abuse is a general term used to describe situations where a child (defined as any person under the age of 18) may experience harm, usually as the result of failure on the part of the parent or carer to ensure a reasonable standard of care and protection.

Child abuse is universally classified into four categories: emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect and are defined below. However, The REC also recognises exploitation as a fifth category of abuse.

4.1 Definition of Child Abuse:

Physical abuse: The actual or direct (non-accidental) physical harm to a child, or a failure to take reasonable steps to protect a child. Physical abuse may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing non-accidental physical harm to a child. Physical harm can also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness or temporary, permanent injury or disability of a child.

Emotional abuse: Persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are

worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person; or where inappropriate expectations are imposed on them. Emotional abuse includes children who are regularly frightened, exploited or corrupted. It also includes (but is not limited to) any humiliating or degrading treatment (e.g., name calling, threats, yelling, screaming, cursing, teasing, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming etc.), failure to meet a child's emotional needs, and rejecting, ignoring, terrorising, isolating or confining a child.

Sexual abuse: Involves forcing or enticing a child to be involved in sexual activities. It could be online or in person. The sexual abuse of children may involve physical contact including assault by penetration (eg., rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. Non-contact sexual abuse includes involving children in looking at, or in the production of sexual images, viewing sexual activities or pornographic material, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways and, grooming a child for abuse (including through the internet). Sexual abuse can be committed by both men, women and other minors.

Neglect: The persistent failure, where there are means, to meet a child's basic needs (e.g., food, clean water, clothing, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care) and causing serious harm to health and/or development.

Exploitation: Child exploitation is a type of child abuse. It's an umbrella term used to describe the abuse of children who are forced, tricked, coerced or trafficked into exploitative activities. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a vulnerable adult, 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 perpetrators/facilitators. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activities appear consensual.

Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur with the use of technology. For The REC child sexual abuse and exploitation also includes child early and forced marriage.

Child Labour: The term "child labour" is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that: is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling and recreation. In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families and exposed to serious hazards and illnesses. (See ILO Child Labour, Guidelines).

If a young person, under the age of 18 is part of an apprenticeship scheme within the statutory law of the country and does not meet any of the above, this would not be considered by The REC as child labour. However, any partner, supplier, contractor or sub-contractor must inform The REC of the name of the apprentice who will be directly involved with our work.

For The REC it is not acceptable for any staff or representatives to engage anyone under the age of 18 for domestic help in their place of work or at home.

Child labour may also be a form of child slavery. **Child slavery** is the transfer of a young person (under 18) to another person so that the young person can be exploited

5 Our Approach to Preventing the abuse and exploitation of Children

The REC will meet its commitment to safeguarding children by putting in place and adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a staff code of conduct. We achieve it through the following means:

- **Awareness:** We ensure that all staff and those connected with The REC follow our safeguarding policy and are aware of the high standards of behaviour and conduct expected of them in order to protect children from any form of abuse or exploitation in their private and working lives. We also ensure that all staff and those connected to the REC are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children
- **Prevention:** We provide effective management for staff through supervision, support and training. We ensure all information about child protection, safeguarding standards and requirements are shared. We also ensure that the recruitment of staff reflects our child safety policy and commitment to safeguarding children.
- **Reporting:** We ensure that case management procedures for reporting safeguarding incidents are clear and child friendly. We also ensure that all staff and those who work with the REC are clear on the steps to take where suspicion or concerns arise regarding allegations of child abuse or exploitations. We also share information about concerns with the agencies who need to know.
- **Responding:** We ensure that immediate action is taken to identify and address reports of child abuse and exploitation, and to ensure the safety and well-being of the child(ren) involved. Moreover, any violation of REC's Child Safeguarding policy will be treated as a serious issue and will result in disciplinary action being taken, including termination and other available legal remedy.
- **Learning:** The REC is committed to reviewing its policy and good practice at regular intervals. We will continue to learn from research, investigations and others to incorporate best practices for child safeguarding in real time.

6 Code of Conduct with Minors

Staff must avoid actions, situations or behaviours that might be misconstrued, bearing in mind that even perfectly innocent actions can sometimes be misinterpreted.

In order to help you identify incidence of child abuse, exploitation or poor safeguarding practices below are examples of inappropriate behaviours and practices, which are not tolerated by The REC:

- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- Invite or take children to your home, especially when the child will be alone with you
- Give out personal information to minors, including contact details such as email addresses and personal phone numbers. Further, you should not add minors' names or photo to any social networking sites, blogs, web pages or instant messaging services. The onus is on you to distance yourself from any potentially inappropriate situation.
- Develop or engage in any physical/sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18, regardless of age of consent or local custom.
- Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children or younger people
- Allow yourself to be drawn into any inappropriate behaviour, or make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children or young people
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive in front of children or young people
- Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favouritism to any child/children to the exclusion of other
- Swear or make racist, sexist or blasphemous remarks
- Smoke or consume alcohol, in front of or in the company of students or their group leaders, or allow any effects of these practices to affect them in any way
- Take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach
- Endanger the well-being of minors through action or inaction, whether intentional or not
- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse a child
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse
- Have a child/children of children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised
- Sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working
- Do things of a personal nature for a child that they can do themselves
- Condone, or participate in, in behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviours. This includes exchange for assistance that is due to beneficiaries and their families
- Send private messages to children either through private messaging or mobile phones
- Engage anyone under the age of 18 in exploitative and harmful labour
- Cause the death of or seriously injuring a child due to reckless or careless driving
- Failing to follow the law or required procedures and regulations which results in the harm of a child

It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:

- Treat all children and young people with respect
- Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable whilst in your care
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned
- Be aware that any physical contact with a child or young person may be misinterpreted
- Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations and or suspicions of abuse or bad behaviour (e.g., bullying, alcohol, solvent, drug abuse, smoking)
- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage them
- Plan and organise work and workplace so as to minimise risks
- Be visible when working with children
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practices or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- Empower children – discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

7 Responding to Allegations of Abuse

If this policy is to achieve its intentions of preventing abuse and protecting children, it's essential that everyone understands their responsibilities to raise any concerns they may have or concerns which are reported to them regarding child safety. Concerns about "getting it wrong" must be outweighed by the welfare of the child and "what if I am right?"

It is essential that anyone connected to The REC who suspects or knows of abuse raises their concerns in line with the processes described in this document.

7.1 Confidentiality

Complaints can be made anonymously. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality throughout the complaint process. Staff are required to exercise extreme vigilance in passing on information through the reporting process described in this policy document. Information (including those that identifies individuals involved in the complaint) should only be passed on a need to know basis and will not be shared without consent of those involved, except if the risk of life is involved, or as required by law in consultation with legal counsel and where safe to do so

Non-identifying information will be shared as per donor and regulatory body reporting requirements.

In responding to issues and concerns regarding possible abuse it is essential to respect the need for confidentiality throughout the process. Staff involved may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. Failure to comply with The REC's confidentiality requirement will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. This is because the lack of confidentiality will likely have devastating effects on the lives of all those involved in the process, and others who work with the REC may have their relationship with the REC terminated. Note that in some instances, such confidentiality breaches may constitute breaking the law.

7.2 Responsibilities

All employees including partner organisations, Board members and directors must ensure that staff and others for whom they have line management responsibilities are aware of The REC's child protection policy and that the systems and procedures required to operate the policy is effectively in place.

It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure the full implementation of The REC's child protection policy, especially by raising awareness if they suspect that abuse is taking place. Failure to act on concerns or disclosures relating to child abuse and exploitation is not an option.

The Head of Compliance has overall responsibility for facilitating and monitoring the effective implementation of this policy within REC. Specific responsibilities for ensuring the implementation, and monitoring of this policy are consistent with the safeguarding responsibilities found in Section 5 of The REC's **PSEAH policy**.

7.3 Reporting: Raising a Complaint or Concern

All members - staff, volunteers or otherwise associated with the REC- have a responsibility to report any suspicion or concern relating to child abuse or exploitation. Anyone can raise a concern or complaint to the REC about an incident they have experienced, witnessed or heard about concerning REC staff or partners without fear of retribution. The relevant Safeguarding Lead will then take the complaint forward.

Complaints can be made verbally or in writing to the safeguarding lead or by using the whistleblowing reporting form on: <https://therec.co.uk/misconduct>. If you do not wish to use the online web form for reporting, or if you simply prefer, you can email your complaint to: safeguarding@therec.co.uk which is available to all REC's partners. Employees can also choose

to raise concerns with their line manager. Reports can be followed up with the submission of the Safeguarding form (Annex 1) as soon as possible.

It is best to raise a concern about child safeguarding issues as soon as it is detected. Concerns should preferably be in writing, highlighting the exact nature and details of the concern, together with supporting evidence if possible.

Unless specifically requested, at **NO** point should an attempt be made to investigate the allegation. Investigations are carried out by the appropriate authorities as necessary. The REC is an agent of referral and not of investigation. Decisions about a case concerning a child should be made in conjunction with their parent/guardian wherever possible.

7.3.1 When responding to a child making an allegation of abuse:

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully to what is said
- Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep any secrets
- Allow the child to continue at their own pace
- Ask questions for clarification only and always avoid asking leading questions (question that suggest a particular answer). Do not make assumptions or offer explanations
- Remember that an allegation of child abuse may lead to a criminal investigation, so do not attempt to personally investigate any allegations of abuse
- Even allegations that appear less serious must be taken seriously and followed up according to procedure
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared
- Do not ask the child to make a written statement
- Record in writing everything that was said as soon as possible, using the child's own words. Note date, time and names of persons to whom the information was given. Ensure that the record is signed and dated by these persons
- Report immediately to management or relevant others in order to assess the levels of risk to children
- Do not confront any person against whom an allegation has been made.

7.4 Retaliation Against Complaints, Survivors and Witnesses

The REC will take action against anyone, whether they are the subject of a complaint or not, who seek or carry out retaliatory action against complaints, survivors, other witnesses or the subject of complaint. Employees may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Others who work with the REC may be subject their relationship with the REC terminated.

7.5 Complaints about the REC's Partners

Where the REC receives a complaint about a partner organisation, the REC will expect the partner to respond safely, quickly and appropriately. The REC will assist the partner to ascertain its reporting obligations.

Where appropriate, The REC will work with partners to address the issue through an appropriate independent investigation. If the outcome is that abuse has occurred, ongoing work with the partner cannot involve the individual(s) concerned. If there is reason to believe that an allegation of abuse has been dealt with inappropriately by a partner, then they risk the withdrawal of funding or ending the relationship.

7.6 Receiving Complaints about External Organisations/Bodies

Safeguarding complaints raised to the REC about other organisation or bodies should be referred to the affiliate safeguarding teams, who will report cases to the relevant organisations involved where safe to do so. Referrals will need to consider circumstances that could indicate a potential risk of harm to an individual or others in the future. Complaints should be referred to the local PSEAH working groups, networks, and/or the police, donors where appropriate and safe to do so and/or in circumstances that could indicate a potential risk of harm to an individual or others in the future. The REC will not investigate cases related to other organisations, but does have an obligation to report.

8: Breaches of the Child Safeguarding Policy

Breaches of the Child safeguarding policy will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action, including termination.

The REC will take action against anyone, whether they are subject to a complaint or not, who seek or carry out retaliatory action (such as but not limited to harassment, intimidation, unfair disciplinary action or victimisation) against complaints, survivors or other witnesses. Employees who are found to do this will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Others who work for the REC may have their relationship with the REC terminated.

If an employee is found to have made an allegation that they knew to be false they will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Others who work on behalf of the REC will be subject to action that may result in the termination of their relationship with the REC.

9: Support for Children who have suffered Harm

Safeguarding teams will offer support to children who have suffered harm, abuse or exploitation, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation). Children can choose if and when they would like to take up the support options available to them. The REC will strive to provide support that is sensitive to the child's needs and seek it out wherever available elsewhere.

When available, appropriate, and in the best interest of the child, the REC's safeguarding teams will work closely with local child protection authorities, parents and guardians in offering support to children who have suffered harm at the hands of REC staff and affiliated personnel.

10 Related REC Policies & Procedures

Please visit <https://therec.co.uk/policies> for current safeguarding policies and procedures and other related documents.

Code of Conduct

Non-Staff Code of Conduct (Under Construction)

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (PSEAH)

Safeguarding Case Management SOP (under construction),

Whistle Blowing Policy

Workplace violence policy – Under Construction

11: Version Control

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or earlier as required with legislation or external changes. Existing policies that need to be reviewed, must comply with this policy on Organisational Policies.

Version	Summary of Change	Approved by	Approval Date	Revision Date
1	New Policy	Safeguarding	01 Oct 2024	01 Oct 2025

Annex 1: Safeguarding Reporting Form

About you	
Name	
Contact Details (address, email, telephone number)	
Role (in relation to The REC)	
Nationality	
Relationship with the vulnerable person	
About the vulnerable person	
Name	
Contact Details (address, email, telephone number)	
Role in relation to The REC (E.g., beneficiary, staff member etc.)	
Age	
About the allegation	
How did you come to have a concern	Was abuse observed or suspected? Was an allegation made? Did a vulnerable person disclose abuse?
Date, time and place of any incident(s)	
Nature of concern/allegation:	
Observations made by you:	(e.g. vulnerable person's emotional state, any physical evidence) Write down exactly – or as precisely as you can remember – what the vulnerable person said and what you said: Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.
Any other relevant information	(e.g. disability? Language? Were other people involved or aware?) Have you reported the incidents to the parents or carers of the vulnerable person or other staff at the REC or other external parties? If yes to whom and how. Kindly provide relevant details: What actions do you think should be taken by now by The REC?
For Internal Use (By Safeguarding Lead)	
Time & date of reporting Person(s) to whom report was made Advice given Action Taken	