

Children's Safeguarding and Protection Policy

Last Reviewed May 2025

Effective until May 2026

Rural Arts believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people, by a commitment to practice, which protects them.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, careers and their agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare

The purpose of the policy is:

- To provide protection for the children and young people, who receive services, including the children of adult members or users
- To provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm

This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers and the Board of Trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of Rural Arts.

We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made, and following our Safer Recruitment Policy
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers

- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training

Please see the following pages for our safeguarding policy for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. We are also committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Safeguarding Guidelines: Introduction

Rural Arts has a duty to ensure that **everyone** involved in its work is able to feel that they work in an **open and safe environment** where they are treated with respect and dignity and that children are protected from harm. Rural Arts takes pride in its work with children and young people.

The aim of these 'Safeguarding Guidelines' are to ensure that all staff, employees, volunteers and participants at Rural Arts are **confident** about their own good practice when working with children, young people and vulnerable adults and are aware of how to distinguish good practice in their colleagues' behaviour.

Definitions for the purposes of these Guidelines

Children / child: A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Young person: A young person is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday (this term takes account for teenagers who may not wish to be referred to as a 'child')

Vulnerable adult: Anyone who requires special consideration due to a disability.

Adult: At 18 a child legally becomes an adult. Note that in some projects 25 is the cut off age when organisations consider young people to have become adults. However, this is not a legal definition.

Good Practice: Behaving in an appropriate manner towards all the above.

Position of Trust: A **position of trust** is any **position** (paid or voluntary) that requires its holder to enjoy the **trust** of those around them. People in a position of trust need to carefully consider their relationships with children or vulnerable adults. It is an offence for



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a person aged 18 or over to have any sexual activity with a person under the age of 18 if the older person holds a position of trust as such sexual activity is an abuse of the position of trust.

- 'Designated Safeguarding Lead' (DSL) refers to the post of Chief Executive, currently **Ian Read**.
- The role of Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is assumed by the Head of People and Culture, **Catherine Gray**. In cases when the Designated Safeguarding Lead is unavailable, for example when on annual leave or in transition between postholders, the Deputy DSL is first point of contact.
- In the unlikely event of both the DSL and the Deputy DSL being unavailable, the Chair of Trustees becomes the DSL.

What and whom these guidelines cover

This policy applies to ALL children and young people, regardless as to why they are involved in the work of Rural Arts, including:

- Audience members
- Customers
- Club or project Participants
- Online (Website/ E comms)
- Create Tour participants
- Young promoters
- Arts Award participants
- Café staff and volunteers
- Participants in any other outreach/education projects in the future

Good Practice Guidelines

ALL staff and volunteers are expected to work within these guidelines. Failure to do so could result in allegations of poor practice, which would then be dealt with as a misconduct issue.

- Treating all children and young people with **respect** and dignity
- Always working in an **open environment** (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)

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- Putting the **welfare** of all children and young people first
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual **trust**
- Being an excellent **role model**
- Giving enthusiastic and **constructive feedback** rather than negative criticism
- Being aware of any **special needs** of any child or young person whether this is due to cultural, religious, physical, emotional or other needs, prior to working with them
- Ensuring that, if any form of **physical contact** is **required** due to the nature of the work (e.g. putting on aprons, practical drama session), it should be provided openly, and the young people should always be consulted, and their agreement gained
- Ensuring that physical contact **at any other time** is **avoided**

Practice never to be sanctioned (Poor Practice)

- **Never** engage in rough or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- **Never** share a room or a dressing room with a child
- **Never** allow or engage in any form of inappropriate **touching**
- **Never** make **sexually suggestive** comments to a child, even in fun
- **Never** reduce a child to **tears** as a form of control
- **Never** allow **allegations** made by a child to go unrecorded or not acted upon
- **Never** do things of a **personal nature** for children that they can do for themselves
- **Never** spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others

Any suspicion that a child has been abused, or is at risk of being abused, by either a **member of staff** or a volunteer should be reported **immediately** to the DSL (or the deputy in their absence) *only*, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.

Internal & External Procedures

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The following page details the procedures, which Rural Arts will follow in relation to the Child Protection Policy.

Action if there are concerns

1. Concerns about Good Practice (i.e. if someone is *not* following the Good Practice Guidelines):

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about a lack of Good Practice, the allegation will be reported to the Chief Executive.

2. Concerns about suspected abuse (i.e. if any member of staff or adult involved in Rural Arts' work is taking part in Poor Practice):

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused, or is at risk of being abused, by either a member of staff or adult should be reported to the Chief Executive, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk

Reporting Allegations

If an allegation is made, or concerns are raised, they should be brought to the immediate attention of the Chief Executive, whose contact details are below.

CEO, Rural Arts, 01845 526536

Please note that no staff working for Rural Arts are trained to deal with situations of abuse or have the power to decide if abuse has occurred.

Action if a Child Discloses Information

When a child or young person discloses (says) something to you that causes concern, it is important to clearly record this information. Any concerns about a child or young person should be recorded regardless of whether or not it will be ultimately passed on to the statutory authorities.

If a child or young person talks about possible abuse, the member of staff or volunteer **should:**

- Try to react calmly
- Remember that the child is likely to be frightened or anxious



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- Reassure the child but do **not** promise confidentiality. They should explain that they will have to speak to someone else who can help
- Tell the child that they were right to tell and are not to blame
- Listen carefully and take what the child says seriously
- Recognize the inherent difficulties interpreting what is said by young children
- Try and use the same words and phrases as the child e.g. for body parts etc. rather than interpreting what they think the child means
- Ask no more questions than are necessary to ensure that they are clear enough about what has happened to pass the child's concerns on. The child may also be asked to recount their story to social services or the police
- Do not prevent a child from recalling events
- Make a full written record of what had been said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible. Also make an accurate record of any questions that you ask along with the date and time the record was made
- Remember that young or disabled children may not be able to express themselves verbally. Communication differences may mean that it is hard for them to complain or be understood. Sometimes abuse of disabled children has gone unrecognized because behavioral clues were interpreted as part of their disability

The member of staff or volunteer **should not**:

- Panic
- Make promises or agree to keep secrets
- Allow their shock or distaste to show
- Speculate or make assumptions about what has happened
- Make negative comments about the alleged abuser
- Approach the alleged abuser

To help you remember use **The Four Rs**:

Receive: Listen to the child / take it seriously / keep an open mind

Reassure: "You've done the right thing" / be honest about outcomes/ Never promise confidentiality

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React: Stay calm, stay professional / Ask open questions/ don't criticize / Explain Next Steps / Inform someone

Record: Make brief notes immediately and keep them / Record words used by the child / Record impartiality

Taking pictures or films

Unless written permission has been granted by the parent / career of children / young people / vulnerable adult, you are **not allowed to take pictures or film**. Rural Arts will need to be satisfied that you have all the relevant documentation **before** you can take pictures or film.

Appendix 1: Rural Arts' Policy to Support the Prevention of Extremism and Radicalisation (PREVENT)

1. INTRODUCTION

The current threat from terrorism and extremism in the United Kingdom is real and severe and can involve the exploitation of vulnerable people, including our learners.

This policy is designed to provide a clear framework to structure and inform our response to safeguarding concerns for these vulnerable people.

Radicalisation is defined as the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases to then participate in terrorist groups.

Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance.

All staff should have an awareness of the PREVENT agenda and the various forms of radicalisation. Staff should be able to recognise signs and indicators or concern and respond appropriately. Training is provided for staff and PREVENT is discussed at every staff meeting.

2. VULNERABILITY/RISK INDICATORS

There is no such thing as a 'typical extremist' and those involved in extremism come from a range of backgrounds and experiences:

Vulnerability

Identity crisis	Distance from heritage/culture and uncomfortable in society
Personal crisis	Family tensions, isolation, low self-esteem, searching for answers
Personal circumstances	Migration, sense of grievance, experience of racism
Unmet aspirations	Feelings of failure and/or rejection
Criminality	Experiences of prison, involvement with criminal groups

Access to extremist influences is also a risk factor.

3. REFERRAL AND INTERVENTION PROCESS

Any concerns identified **MUST** be reported to the named Designated Safeguarding Lead **IAN READ** who will deal with the matter according to procedures agreed with North Yorkshire County Council.

Individuals should also refer to the Anti-Terrorism hotline: 0800 789 321 and the website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>

In the event of an emergency, call 999.

Appendix 2: Working Online with Children and Young People

For activity for children and young people taking place online, Rural Arts' staff and freelancers should have appropriate training and familiarisation to understand the potential risks of software and platforms being used, and how to efficiently manage any issues that develop during the activity (e.g., removing participants). Consent from parents / guardians must be obtained for their child to use online platforms, and they should be advised as to the Privacy Policy of the platform. All the same principles for in-person activities with young people should be followed for online activity.

Video Meeting Platforms (e.g., Teams, Zoom etc.)

When using video meeting platforms for activity with children and young people, the following guidance should be adhered to:

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- meeting hyperlinks must not be published or shared publicly
- organisational accounts rather than personal accounts should be used for hosting (and attending)
- the waiting room function should be used to ensure attendees are those who have confirmed attendance / are expected
- 'breakout rooms' should not be used, unless two Responsible Adults are present in each meeting space
- private messaging between participants should be disabled
- screensharing function by participants should be avoided, and other image and video sharing by participants (such as personalised screen images and background images) should be disabled

Social media

Rural Arts' staff and freelancers should not accept or encourage social media 'friend requests' or 'followers' from young people (including audiences, as well as participants) from their personal social media accounts. Private messaging between young people and Rural Arts' staff and freelancers from personal social media accounts should not take place.

If a participant contacts you directly through social media, you should not reply but tell them in person that you are not able to connect with them on social media. We recommend protecting yourself by reviewing your privacy settings and keeping personal information private.

Participants are at liberty to set up any group network that they mutually agree on and initiate themselves.

Staffing

Groups of 10 or more young people require a minimum of two adults, both of whom hold an Enhanced DBS, present at all times

When working with a school or youth organisation, a member of staff from that organisation should be present at all times on the call

Participants should never be left unsupervised on a call

If working from home, make sure any people you are living with know you are on a live video. Ask them to avoid appearing on video or making noise that can be heard during the call

If working from a public space, use headphones for the duration of the call and position your screen so it is not publicly visible to those around you. Try to call from a space with a neutral background, otherwise blur your background or use a plain virtual background. Wear appropriate clothing even on parts of you that you think won't be seen

When the activity ends, you should remove each young person until only the employees, artists, or freelancers remain and then close the call, thus ensuring no-one is left alone with a young person and no young people are left in a shared digital space unsupervised.

Participants

Make sure the participants are aware of what they're participating in. Information should be shared at least 24 hours in advance of the work. This should include:

- How to join
- Dates and times
- Any plans to record the session – you should avoid recording sessions at all costs
- Which adults are to be present on the call
- Relevant contact details of staff
- Any behavioural guidelines or codes of conduct you expect the participants to follow

You should inform participants in one of the following ways:

- When working with a school or youth organisation, directly contact a teacher or youth leader
- When working directly with participants aged 16+ you may contact them individually.
- When working directly with participants aged 15 and under you should contact their parent/guardian individually

You should make clear in the joining instructions that participants should not use their full name as their screen ID or when they speak; first names will do.

Participants aged 16+ and the parents/guardians of participants aged 15 and under should be made aware that they are responsible for their own equipment.

Reserve the right to remove any participant sharing inappropriate/offensive imagery or behaving in an abusive manner

If a young person says they want to speak to a member of staff online privately, arrange it so another staff member is online at the same time with the young person's knowledge. If this is not happen, organise to have the meeting in person, again with another adult present if possible. If not, follow Rural Arts' usual procedures for solo meetings with young people.

Content

It is easy to misinterpret tone, humour, and intention when interacting online and you should always be cautious with your content. Identify the age-range and relative experience of your participants in advance of a session. If you have any doubt that your content may not be suitable for the participants, it is best not to use this content without prior discussion with Rural Arts

If you are sharing links to images or websites, please ensure that they are safe for all to view. If they contain or refer to any issues that some people may find upsetting, please think twice about using them

Be mindful that the issues you may discuss online may cause distress so ensure young people have a way of communicating this to you. When introducing more challenging discussions remind participants to be mindful both of themselves and others in the group and not to feel pressured to share anything they feel uncomfortable with.

Remember that despite virtual distance and online anonymity, what would be unacceptable in person is equally unacceptable online. Remain alert to all signs of abuse, including discriminatory insults based on a protected characteristic.

Email

You should only use your work email account to contact participants. Participants should never be emailed from personal accounts under any circumstances. It may be appropriate to copy in another employee for transparency.

In all cases, use formal, simple language to avoid any misunderstanding.

Phone calls, texts, and WhatsApp chats

Phone calls, texts, and WhatsApp chats involving participants should be avoided as much as possible.

Phone calls with participants should only be made when another staff member is in the room or another responsible adult is on the line for the duration of the call, such as the participant's teacher, youth leader, or parent/guardian.

You should never text (or WhatsApp etc.) a child or young person. You should communicate with their parent, unless they are over 16. If they are over 16, you should call them, as detailed above.

Saving information

You may only download or save participant's personal details or images on devices provided by the Rural Arts for work use only. These devices should be password protected and all information should be stored on SharePoint, rather than directly on devices. Documents should be password protected where appropriate.

SAFEGUARDING GUIDELINES DECLARATION

All staff and / or volunteers are required to sign and return the following declaration. The completed form will be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

I, (*print full name*), have read and understood Rural Arts North Yorkshire Safeguarding Guidelines.

I agree to work in line with the Safeguarding Guidelines.

I understand that I may be required to undertake an Enhanced DBS check should my role require it.



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I understand that Rural Arts will fully support and protect anyone, who, in good faith, reports their concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child or vulnerable adult.

Signed:

Date:

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