



## Safeguarding Policy - Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

### Introduction

1. The Ripple Pond (TRP) volunteers and employees have a duty to do all they can to ensure the wellbeing and safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Their protection is paramount in all of the work we undertake.

### Policy Statement

2. The Ripple Pond recognises that all people regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religious beliefs or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse and is committed to safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable children and adults that we may come into contact with.

3. Safeguarding is a term used to denote duties and responsibilities that those providing a health, education or social service have to carry out to/perform to protect individuals from harm.

4. Best practice is that safeguarding duties extend to whole organisation policies, values and ethos and include all staff and volunteers.

5. Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult. Someone may abuse or neglect a child or vulnerable adult by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm

6. Individuals within The Ripple Pond need to be alert to the potential abuse of children and vulnerable adults, both within their families and also from other sources. There is an expected responsibility for all staff, volunteers and members of the organisation to respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a child or vulnerable adult.

### Guidelines

7. The following guidelines are intended to help you if you suspect that abuse or neglect has been, is or is at risk of taking place.

8. It is the responsibility of each TRP volunteer and employee coming into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults to be familiar with and adhere to their relevant safeguarding policy and procedure. Failure to follow procedure may result in termination of TRP membership for volunteers and disciplinary action and/or dismissal for employees.

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9. The Director has overall responsibility within TRP for all matters concerning safeguarding. This includes responsibility for ensuring that only volunteers and employees with adequate training work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
10. The Director is responsible for maintaining a strategic overview of all matters concerning safeguarding.
11. Decisions about whether to report a safeguarding concern should never be made by one person alone.
12. Volunteers and TRP employees who suspect that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has been, is or is at risk of being abused or neglected must immediately inform the Director.
13. In all cases, the Director must consult with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees in order to advise how best to proceed.
14. If for any reason the Director and/or the Chairman are unavailable the volunteer or employee must immediately contact the HUB on 01252 913021 and leave a message if out of normal office hours.
15. If the course of action agreed is a referral to the relevant authority's children's or adults' social care service, the Director is responsible for ensuring that the referral has been made and followed up in writing.
16. TRP volunteers and employees are trusted to use their common sense and deal with any situation as they see fit: this includes calling the police and relevant social care service. The priority is to ensure that there is no delay that might place the child, young person or vulnerable adult at further risk. Any such action should be recorded in writing and reported to the Director and/or the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.
17. Parents/carers should be notified where possible before making a referral unless to do so might contribute to placing a child, young person or vulnerable adult at risk of harm or jeopardise any subsequent police or social care investigation.
18. It is good practice to inform the child, young person or vulnerable adult that a safeguarding referral is being made. You must provide them with a means of being able to contact you, and be clear about how and when you will let them know what will happen next.

## Confidentiality

19. It is not easy for a child, young person or vulnerable adult to make a disclosure of abuse or neglect, and the consequences are likely to have a profound effect not only on them, but on other family members. It may therefore be difficult to get their agreement for a referral to be made to statutory services.

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20. All children, young people and vulnerable adults involved with TRP must be made aware from the outset that complete confidentiality is not possible where there is risk of significant harm to themselves or others. If they have not consented to the information being shared, then the reasons for the referral must be clearly explained.

21. A record must be kept of any decision regarding whether to breach confidentiality, including the reason. The record should be counter-signed by the Director and, in his/her absence, the Chairman.

22. Volunteers and employees must comply with any requests for information from police or social care services about a child or family known to them if it is in connection with an assessment of the need for protection under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. Any decision not to comply is a serious matter which must be sanctioned by the Director and recorded, along with the reason. In such instances an ongoing risk assessment will need to be maintained in consultation with the Director.

### **Making a referral**

23. A referral to the relevant authority's children's or adults' social care service is usually initiated by telephone in order to share information and seek advice. A written record of who was spoken to, the time, content and outcome of the conversation should be kept on file, signed and dated by the volunteer or employee. The authority's referral form should be completed and submitted immediately afterwards, with a copy kept on file.

24. The referrer should contact the social care service within two working days of submitting the form to find out what action has been taken, and should inform the Director if the response is considered inadequate or inappropriate.

25. The Director must then report his/her concerns to the social care service, both verbally and in writing. A record of all correspondence must be kept, along with evidence of the outcome.

26. All records must be held securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and must only be shared as necessary with the Director, the police or social care service.

27. If a case goes to court, whether for criminal or care proceedings, the judge may order that the case file is presented, and TRP volunteers or employees may be called to give evidence to justify what they have written. When putting anything in writing it is therefore important to make clear whether the information is factual, comes from a third party, or is opinion.

### **Allegations against TRP volunteers or employees**

28. In the unlikely event that an allegation of abuse or neglect is made against a TRP volunteer or employee, the alleged offender must not be alerted as it may prejudice any police investigation. Instead, volunteers and employees must immediately contact the Director.

29. The Director is responsible for deciding on the most appropriate course of safeguarding management action, which would normally be a referral either to the police or relevant social care service, and for reporting any such allegations to the Chairman. Any disciplinary or other action taken in regard to employees will be in accordance with the employee handbook.

30. The Director should also be informed if any volunteers or employees working with children, young people or vulnerable adults are subject to disciplinary procedures that may have safeguarding implications.