



**Safeguarding Children
Policy
October 2023**

Named Safeguarding Lead	Yvonne Kachikoti
Last Updated	March 2021
Date for Review	October 2023
Signed off by	CEO and Board of Trustees

This document sets out what employees and volunteers must do when there are concerns that a child is at risk of harm or has been abused. Refugee Action is required to act to safeguard and protect all children as set out in the Children Act 1989 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

Safeguarding Children Policy¹

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Introduction

Refugee Action believes that everyone has the right to live a life free from abuse; harassment and exploitation and we are committed to upholding that right whenever it is in our power to do so. We also recognise our specific responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people with whom we come into contact, whatever their circumstances or legal status.

We play an important role in supporting children and families through what can be a difficult and complex asylum journey, working with those with ongoing asylum claims, those whose claims have been rejected and those who are given leave to remain in the UK.

The increasingly hostile environment and continued use of hotel accommodation has to be noted as an area of risk that has a profound impact on some of the children and young people that we support. Our work in contingency and bridging hotels has increased and this brings new safeguarding challenges. In addition, increasing numbers of age-disputed young people are being housed in adult hotel environments. Although we don't have direct services to support age-disputed young people, our safeguarding remit understands the significant risks and aims to ensure that we are linking young people into the right support to keep them as safe as possible.

This is challenging and sensitive work and it is vital that our staff and volunteers understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know what to do if they are worried that a child is being hurt or harmed by someone responsible for their care.

Not all our services work directly with children, but we take the approach that, by supporting adults, we are inevitably supporting any associated children in matters of safeguarding. We aim to take a holistic family approach to ensure that children are kept safe.

Refugee Action will live our values through our safeguarding work in the following ways:

1. We are with refugees and people seeking asylum Our safeguarding work aims to be proportionate, empowering and led by the families at the centre wherever safe to do so.

See Policy Statement 2020

¹ Refer also to Refugee Action Practice Guidance

	<p>We work with some of the most resilient people and we aim to acknowledge this resilience by working through a strengths-based, trauma-informed lens.</p> <p>2. We are courageous We know that many of the systems around the people that we support create risks. We aim to not only use our safeguarding work to protect individuals from abuse and harm, but also to use safeguarding more broadly to create systemic change by using safeguarding as a tool of advocacy. Our training, data collection and professional expertise will allow us the confidence to challenge where appropriate and to ensure we keep the families that we are supporting, front and centre of our safeguarding approach.</p> <p>3. We are collaborative; We recognise our duty to recognise, respond, record and report safeguarding concerns and to ensure we create safety as an organisation. We know that we cannot do this in isolation and that multi-agency working is a key part of our safeguarding approach.</p> <p>Copies of this policy are available on SharePoint under Central Resources-Safeguarding-Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and on our website.</p>	
<p>2</p> <p>Legal Framework</p>	<p>Working Together is the statutory guidance which sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The guidance also sets out core legal requirements, which state what individuals and organisations should do to keep children safe and promote their welfare.</p>	<p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018</i></p> <p><i>Children Act 1989</i></p> <p><i>Equality Act 2010</i></p>
<p>3</p> <p>Organisational arrangements</p>	<p>Refugee Action has in place appropriate arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a clear line of accountability for the commissioning and/or provision of services designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; • a Senior Safeguarding Lead (SSL) to take leadership responsibility for the organisation’s safeguarding arrangements; • a Safeguarding Manager post to support the work of the SSL • a network of Designated Safeguarding Officer’s (DSO’s) • a comprehensive safeguarding strategy setting out our aspirations for excellent safeguarding practice • a safe environment in which children are listened to and 	

	<p>their views and wishes are taken into account;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arrangements which clearly set out the processes for sharing information, with other professionals and with the Local Authority • trained and knowledgeable staff within the organisation who can offer advice and support staff to recognise the needs and experiences of children; • appropriate supervision and support for staff, including undertaking safeguarding training. This includes a clear pathway of safeguarding training from induction to advanced understanding • robust procedures and practice guidance for staff, trustees and volunteers • specific guidance on digital safeguarding to support the change of service delivery prompted by the Coronavirus Pandemic 	
<p>4 Underpinning values</p>	<p>Refugee Action aims to provide a safe, responsive and supportive environment and service to its beneficiaries. Our safeguarding responsibilities are guided by the principles underpinning all our work and specifically through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believing that all people, and especially children, have a right to protection from abuse • Respecting and being sensitive to difference, while acknowledging that the expression of difference must be restricted if its practices are harmful to children • Understanding that, as an organisation, we have a responsibility to protect children from harm wherever we are able to do so. • Promoting the values of respect and partnership working with parents unless to do so would place a child at risk. 	<p><i>See also RA Vision, Values and Purpose document Feb 2013</i></p> <p><i>Children Act 1989</i></p> <p><i>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child</i></p> <p><i>Human Rights Act 1998</i></p>
<p>5. Procedures and Practice</p>	<p>The organisation has clearly defined procedures for identifying and acting where there are safeguarding concerns about actual or suspected incidents or abuse. We ensure that each Refugee Action client facing service has access to at least one designated safeguarding officer who is competent to advise staff and respond to safeguarding concerns, ensuring that our actions are always respectful, professional and based on what we know to be good practice. The organisation also has a specific safeguarding manager post to ensure training needs are met and safeguarding information is proportionate and relevant to the needs of staff and volunteers.</p>	<p><i>Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adult Procedures 2015</i></p>

	<p>We work with other agencies that have expertise in all safeguarding and child protection matters, including other specialist charities, the Police and the Local Authority. In 2022 we began working on the Homes for Ukraine scheme through contracts in Liverpool, Birmingham and Solihull. In addition to our overall organisational procedures, we created specific multi-agency procedures with the relevant LA and any associated sub-contractors. These procedures were created to ensure accurate and timely information sharing in matters of safeguarding and to ensure clarity on responsibilities.</p>	
<p>6. Managing Risks</p>	<p>The organisation operates an effective procedure for assessing and managing risks with regard to safeguarding children. There are specific practice guidance documents to support recognizing and responding to risks to children. The organization also has a comprehensive Whistleblowing policy.</p> <p>Early Help has been recognised as a key way to support our staff and volunteer team to manage risk and additional training has been accessed by certain staff members to ensure Early Help is a key part of our approach to safeguarding children. We also deliver an Early Help Service in Bradford and use learning from this service to help to manage risk across the organisation.</p>	<p><i>Refer to Refugee Action’s ‘Protected Disclosure’ (Whistleblowing) policy and Children’s Safeguarding Practice Guidance</i></p>
<p>7. Digital Safeguarding</p>	<p>Refugee Action offers hybrid and remote working options to staff and volunteers dependent on operational needs of the service. A strong safeguarding culture remains central to delivery of all services. Comprehensive Practice Guidance is in place to help staff and volunteers to safely work with adults and children online. Internal training has been developed to upskill staff and volunteers in online safety and there is a recognition of the importance of understanding the online world as an extension of the physical world and that this is not limited to the recent pandemic. NSPCC training and resources have helped to inform this area of work.</p>	<p><i>Refer to Refugee Action’s ‘Digital Safeguarding’ Practice Guidance</i></p>
<p>8. Code of Conduct</p>	<p>All adults working in either a paid or voluntary capacity within Refugee Action will adhere to specific codes of conduct where contact with children and young people is</p>	<p><i>Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adult</i></p>

concerned.

Such codes of behaviour are intended to safeguard the well being of children and young people and offer protection to staff and volunteer adults whose own vulnerability, in some situations, is recognised, for example:

- we would never be in a room alone with children.
- We encourage parents to take responsibility for their children at all times.
- we seek consent from parents/guardians if an activity involves working directly with a child.

*Procedures 2015.
Paragraph 8
Guidance for
Safer Practice*

*Refer to Refugee
Action's
'Behaviour at
work' Policy*

9. Records

Well-kept records are essential in situations where it is suspected or believed that a child may be at risk of harm.

Refugee action uses a GDPR compliant data storing and case management database, Apricot on most services and have recently introduced 'Advice Pro' for the National Immigration Advice Service. Other relevant Client documentation is stored on a password protected cloud storage system. The organisation has a clear policy on the management of records, confidentiality, and sharing of information. There is an expectation of confidentiality in the recording, use and management of personal information. Trustees, staff and volunteers are clear about what information can be shared with relevant people within and outside of the organisation.

Parents involved with Refugee Action will have access to information held about their children unless this will place a child at further risk. All offices ensure that effective systems are in place for the recording and maintenance of safeguarding records. Safeguarding concerns are recorded on the centralised Apricot database system. These records will be kept in a secure place separate from all other records pertaining to the child/family/adult. Safeguarding records should be kept for a period of not less than 7 years after the 18th birthday of the child. (*)

Each service will keep and maintain records, which detail allegations of abuse against any member of staff working in a paid or voluntary capacity, whatever the outcome of subsequent enquiries.

A report of Safeguarding incidents and concerns is presented to the Board of Trustees on a quarterly basis.

*Safeguarding
Children and
Vulnerable Adult
Procedures 2015
Paragraph 5
'Reporting and
Recording
Concerns'*

*Refugee Action
Safeguarding,
data sharing and
confidentiality
policy*

10. Recruitment and Selection of Staff and Volunteers

Refugee Action is committed to safe employment and Safer recruitment practices. The organisation consistently applies a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting staff and volunteers in line with legislative requirements and best practice. This ensures that all individuals, whatever their role are both competent and safe to work for the organisation.

The growing awareness of the possibility of abuse by people in positions of trust and the increased understanding of the vulnerability of children highlights the need for careful recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers.

All those responsible for employing and selecting staff and volunteers take every precaution to ensure sound and thorough vetting procedures. To encourage consistency across the organisation; all new staff and volunteer roles are assessed against the New Role Recruitment and induction Risk Assessment Framework. This process explores the level and type of risk inherent in each role, and sets out steps which can be taken to mitigate those risk at the point of recruitment and induction. Any role working directly with children is deemed high risk.

New roles, or roles subject to significant change are referred to an outsourced DBS checking provider for recommendation on the level of DBS check required and the role is signed off by the head of Service.

Refugee Action conducts values-based interviews to support safer recruitment processes. Care is always taken to ensure that references are taken up and obtained and that there is a focus on safeguarding throughout the recruitment process.

Support and supervision is provided to all staff and volunteers regardless of their role and Safeguarding is a standing agenda item for all operational staff and volunteers to ensure Safeguarding continues to be embedded throughout a person's volunteer or employment experience.

Refugee Action has also introduced a 'safety' email address where beneficiaries, staff and volunteers have the opportunity to email internally with any concerns related to organisational safeguarding. This is promoted in several languages and gives people the opportunity to share

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adult Procedures 2015. Paragraph 5 'Recruitment and Selection of staff and Volunteers.'

Refugee Action 'New Role recruitment and induction risk assessment framework'

<p>11. A skilled workforce</p>	<p>information openly.</p> <p>There are procedures in place for the effective management, support, supervision and training of staff and volunteers and there is a robust structure and process for support and supervision appropriate to roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Each team has access to at least one Designated Safeguarding Officer who is trained to recognise and respond to situations where a child may be considered to be at risk. Designated Safeguarding Officers, the Safeguarding Manager and the Senior Safeguarding Lead should update their training at two yearly intervals. Designated Safeguarding Officer collaborative meetings are held every 8 weeks as an opportunity for safeguarding learning and reflection.</p>	<p><i>Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adult Procedures 2015 'Supervision and Training of staff and volunteers'</i></p>
<p>12. Links with other Policies</p>	<p>The safeguarding policy is supported by other organisational policies and procedures aimed at promoting safe and healthy working practices.</p> <p>This document must be considered within the context of other policies in Refugee Action, which relate to work with children and young people. Staff will be aware of how other issues can have a bearing on child protection situations e.g. drug and alcohol abuse, domestic abuse and families where there are mental health concerns.</p>	<p><i>See relevant HR policies: -Anti-Harassment and Bullying -Behaviour at Work -Protected Disclosure</i></p>
<p>13. Policy Review</p>	<p>The safeguarding policy, procedures, and guidelines are subject to regular review to ensure that they are fit for purpose. These reviews take place following every safeguarding incident and at least annually.</p>	

This policy reaffirms the responsibilities of Senior Managers to ensure that all adults who work for and on behalf of Refugee Action are fully aware of the need to act continually to enhance the welfare and safety of children.

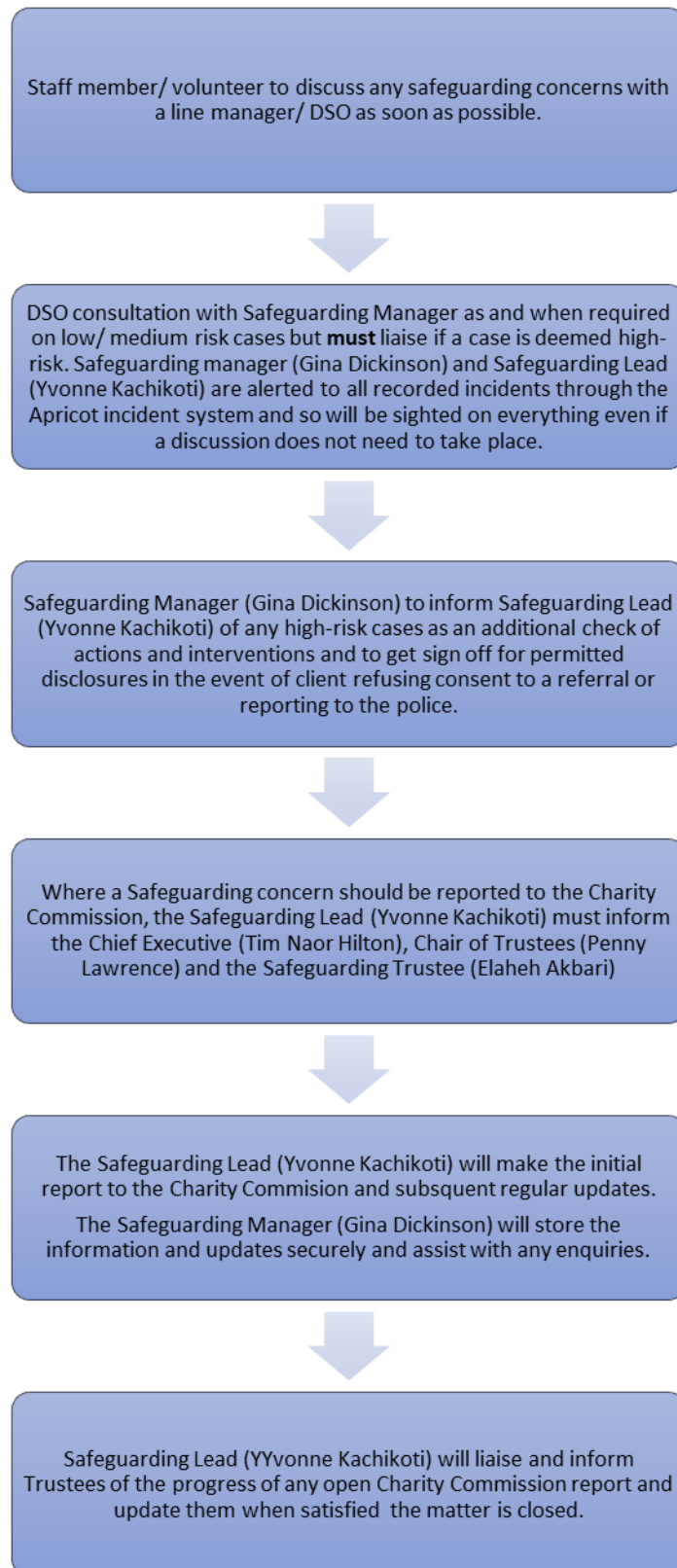
Agreed at Refugee Action Board of Trustees meeting 21/11/23

Signed CEO Tim Hilton

Appendix 1

Escalation Process

Please use in conjunction with DSO contact list.



Appendix 2

Safeguarding Training: Minimum Standards

Volunteers

Volunteer Recruited



Volunteer Induction Training before volunteering begins. Safeguarding section covering internal procedures, escalation policies and basic safeguarding information



Safeguarding General Training (2 hours) for all operational staff and volunteers (Held every 4 months or more frequently if needed dependent on recruitment of staff and volunteers). This covers adults and children's safeguarding. Focus on signs of abuse and neglect, professional curiosity, reflective practice, escalating risks and self-care.



Volunteer safeguarding peer support sessions held quarterly. Must attend 2 a year.

Mental Health and Suicidal Ideation Training. Compulsory for all asylum services volunteers and must be completed within 6 months of starting the role. Open to all Resettlement volunteers also.

Rolling program of themed safeguarding sessions e.g. domestic abuse, online safety and managing risks remotely

Staff

Staff member recruited- HR alert Safeguarding Manager who emails Safeguarding Policies



New staff induction day with talks from different departments. Safeguarding 15 min slot addressing culture of Safeguarding, DSO structure, escalation processes and general awareness raising of the importance of safeguarding to the organisation.

Operational Staff

Non-Operational Staff



3 hour Safeguarding General Training for all operational staff and volunteers (Held every 4 months or more frequently if needed dependent on recruitment of staff and volunteers). This covers adults and children's safeguarding. Focus on signs of abuse and neglect, professional curiosity, reflective practice, escalating risks and self-care

2-hour Adult and Children Safeguarding training- basic overview relevant to job roles of staff in areas such as finance and IT. Covering policies and procedures, signs of abuse and organisational safeguarding strategy. Held bi-annually.



Rolling program of themed safeguarding sessions e.g. domestic abuse, online safety and managing risks remotely

Mental Health and Suicidal Ideation Training. Compulsory for all asylum services staff and must be completed within 6 months of starting the role. Also open to all Resettlement staff.

Safeguarding training is open to any staff member on a voluntary basis. Specific trainings also developed for certain areas of work e.g. campaigns team and work with FhF's

***DSO's must take part in the above process but also engage in the 8 weekly DSO safeguarding reflective sessions and annual DSO-specific training. Safeguarding Manager must take part in continuous professional development and ensure up to date knowledge of relevant social care legislation and best practice**

Trustees

Refugee Action Safeguarding induction on commencement of trustee post delivered by Head of Safeguarding and Resettlement



Completion of NSPCC Trustee safeguarding training within 6 months of starting as a trustee. To be refreshed every 2 years. Safeguarding Policies and Procedures to be shared with all new Trustees and re-enforced at board meetings. This information to be re-sent whenever amended or updated



Annual Safeguarding Board report to be shared with all Trustees. Quarterly meeting and report with designated Safeguarding Trustee and main findings shared at board meetings to ensure open culture of safeguarding and safeguarding consistently on the agenda.