Riding for the Disabled (Woodbridge & District Group)

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

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Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Telephone: **0300 123 2044** Email: LADO@suffolk.gov.uk
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	Telephone: **03456 061499**
Suffolk Constabulary Prevent Team	Email: prevent@norfolk.police.uk
ACT Early Support Line (24 hours)	Telephone: **0800 011 3764**
Other Support and Resources: • NSPCC (Mon-Fri 10am to 4pm) telephone **0808 800 5000** or email help@nspcc.org.uk • Childline **0800 1111** 24/7 • Samaritans **116 123** 24/7 • National Police Prevent Advice Line **0800 011 3764** • DBS helpline: **03000 200 190** or email contactus@dbs.gov.uk	

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Policy Statement and Ethos

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. 'Children' includes everyone under the age of 18. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should always consider what is in the best interest of the child.

RDA Woodbridge & District Group (the Group) recognise the moral and statutory responsibility placed on all staff and volunteers to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. We aim to provide a safe and welcoming environment in which children can learn, underpinned by a culture of openness where both children and adults feel secure, are able to raise concerns and believe they are being listened to, and that appropriate action will be taken to keep them safe.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Provide staff and volunteers with a framework to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people and ensure that all staff understand and meet their statutory responsibilities.
- Ensure consistent good practice.

Introduction

The Trustees recognise the need to ensure that the Group complies with its duties under legislation and this policy has regard to statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2025, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and locally agreed inter-agency procedures put in place by Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership.

This policy will be reviewed annually, as a minimum, and will be made available publicly via the Group website or on request.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as: providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge, protecting children from maltreatment whether that is within or outside the home, including online; preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

This policy is for all staff, parents, carers, volunteers and contractors and the wider RDA community. It forms part of the child protection and safeguarding arrangements for our Group and is one of a suite of policies and procedures which encompass the safeguarding responsibilities of the Group (see Supporting Documents). In particular, this policy should be read in conjunction with the RDA Code of Conduct, Safer Recruitment Policy, Behaviour Policy (which encompasses Child-on-Child Abuse), and Part Five of KCSiE 2025, copies of which will be provided to all staff on induction.

The Trustees expect that all staff will have read and understand this child protection and safeguarding policy and their responsibility to implement it. Staff working in regulated activity must, as a minimum, have read and understand Part One of Keeping children safe in education 2025. Trustees will ensure that they and senior staff have read and understand Parts One and Two of KCSiE 2025 as a minimum, and will ensure that those staff who do not work directly with children have read either Part One or Annex A of KCSiE 2025, together with Annex B.

The Trustees will ensure that arrangements are in place for all staff members and volunteers (including Trustees) to receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety) at induction that is regularly updated.

Compliance with the policy will be monitored by the Safeguarding Trustee, Centre Manager and designated safeguarding lead (DSL).

Statutory framework

To safeguard and promote the welfare of children, the Group will act in accordance with the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Care Act 2014
- Child and Social Work Act 2017
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (Amendment) Act 2012
- Equality Act 2010
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018
- Information Sharing Advice (HM Government) 2018
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Police Act 1997
- Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2012
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Sexual Offences (Amendments) Act 2003
- Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 (Wales)
- The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (as amended) for post 16 education providers
- The European Convention on Human Rights 1950
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused 2015
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

The Group recognises its statutory duty on governing bodies and proprietors to have policies and procedures in place that safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who participate in its activities. In accordance with statutory guidance: Working together to safeguard children 2026 the Group will work in accordance with the multi-agency procedures developed by the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership (SSP).

Key roles and responsibilities

Trustees

The Trustees have a strategic leadership responsibility for the Group's safeguarding arrangements and must ensure that they comply with their duties under legislation. They have a legal responsibility to ensure that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place, which have regard to statutory guidance, in order for appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children and young people's welfare. The Trustees will also ensure that the policy is made available to parents and carers by publishing this on the Group's website with paper copies available if requested.

The Trustees will ensure everyone in the Group are involved, ensuring safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development, and that all systems, processes and policies are transparent, clear and easy to understand and operate in the best interests of the child.

The Trustees will ensure that where there is a safeguarding concern the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems will be in place that are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for children to confidently report any form of abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously, and knowing they can safely express their views and give feedback.

The Trustees will ensure that the Group contributes to multi-agency working in line with statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 and that the Group's safeguarding arrangements take into account the procedures and practice of the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership.

The Trustees will ensure that, as a minimum, the following policies are in place to enable appropriate action to be taken to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people as appropriate:

- Online Safety
- Behaviour, including measures to prevent bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Supporting children with medical conditions
- Staff & Volunteers Code of Conduct
- Procedures that will be followed to address low-level concerns and allegations made against staff, whistleblowing and acceptable use of IT, including the use of mobile devices, staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.
- Procedure for responding to children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions (see Appendix C)
- Safer Recruitment

It is the responsibility of the Trustees to ensure that staff and volunteers are properly vetted to ensure that they are safe to work with the pupils who attend our Group and that the Group has procedures for appropriately managing safeguarding allegations made against, or low level concerns involving, members of staff (including the Centre Manager, coaches, contractors and volunteer helpers).

The Trustees will ensure that there is a named trustee for safeguarding, a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who is a senior member of the leadership team and has lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection.

The Trustees will have regard to their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty).

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL will take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety). The broad areas of responsibility and activities related to the role of the DSL are set out in Annex C of KCSiE 2025.

The DSL will have the appropriate status, authority, time, funding, training, resources and support they need to carry out the duties of the post effectively.

The Group also has an alternative DSL who is trained to the same standard as the DSL. The DSL and the alternative DSL will provide advice and support to staff and volunteer coaches and activity leaders in the Group and will liaise with the local authority and work with other agencies in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children.

The DSL and/or an alternate should always be available during normal operating hours for staff or volunteers to discuss any safeguarding concerns.

The DSL will undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills to carry out the role. This training will be updated every 2 years.

The DSL will liaise with the nominated Trustee for safeguarding to inform them of issues and in particular ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations.

Centre Manager

The centre manager will ensure that the policies and procedures adopted by the Trustees are fully implemented and that sufficient resources, time and training are provided to enable staff members to discharge their safeguarding responsibilities and contribute effectively to a whole school approach to safeguarding.

The centre manager will be responsible for ensuring a culture of safety and ongoing vigilance that fosters the belief that 'it could happen here'.

Other Personnel

'Personnel' includes paid staff, volunteer coaches and activity leaders.

All personnel have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn.

All personnel working in regulated activity with children must read and ensure they understand at least Part One of KCSiE 2025. Those staff that do not work directly with children must read and ensure they understand Annex A of KCSiE 2025.

All personnel must ensure they are familiar with the systems within group which support safeguarding, including the child protection and safeguarding policy, the code of conduct, the behaviour policy, the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education (see Appendix C), and the role of the DSL (including the identity of the DSL and any deputies). These will be explained on induction.

All personnel should be aware of indicators of abuse and neglect so that they are able to identify cases of children who may need help or protection. All staff should maintain a belief that 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned and if staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they must act on them immediately.

All personnel should be able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

All personnel should know what to do if a child tells them he/she is being abused, neglected or exploited, and/or is otherwise at risk of involvement in criminal activity, such as knife crime, or involved in county lines drug dealing.

All personnel should be aware of the process for making referrals to children's social care and for statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989 that may follow a referral, especially section 17 (children in need) and section 47 (a child suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm) along with the role they might be expected to play in such assessments.

Knowing what to look out for is vital to the early identification of abuse and neglect and specific safeguarding issues such as child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation. If personnel are unsure, they should always speak to the DSL (or deputy). If in exceptional circumstances the DSL (or deputy) is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Staff should consider speaking to a member of the board of Trustees and/ or take advice from children's social care Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) - Suffolk County Council Consultation Line. In these circumstances, any action taken should be shared with the DSL as soon as is practically possible. Details of the Group's safeguarding team are on the front this policy.

Induction & Training

The Trustees will ensure that all staff and volunteers receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety) which is regularly updated and in line with advice from the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership (SSP), and e-Safer Suffolk. In addition, all staff and volunteers will receive regular safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) updates (e.g., via email, staff meetings) as

required, but at least annually, to provide them with relevant skills and up to date knowledge of emerging and evolving safeguarding issues to safeguard children effectively.

This training will be regularly updated and in line with advice and guidance from RDA UK, and reference to the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership, including the SSP Training Overview and the Online Safety Toolkit.

All new staff members and volunteer coaches will undergo safeguarding and child protection training as part of their induction induction. This will include training on safeguarding and child protection policy, online safety, the code of conduct, the behaviour policy, the safeguarding response to children who are absent from education see Appendix C), and the role of the designated safeguarding lead. Copies of the Group's policies, procedures and Part One of KCSiE 2025 (Annex A for those staff and volunteers who do not work directly with children) will be provided at induction.

The Trustees will ensure that safeguarding training for staff and volunteers, including online safety training, is part of the Group's overall safeguarding approach and wider staff and volunteer training plan.

The Centre Manager will ensure that an accurate record of safeguarding training undertaken by all staff and volunteers is maintained and updated regularly.

In considering safeguarding training arrangements the Trustees will also take necessary steps to ensure coaches to have a clear understanding of the need to ensure a good and safe educational environment that meets the needs of all pupils.

Recognising concerns - signs and indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation

All staff and volunteers should be aware of the indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation (see below), understanding that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the Group, inside and outside of home, and online. Exercising curiosity and knowing what to look for is vital for the early identification of abuse and neglect so that staff and volunteers are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection.

All staff and volunteers should be aware that abuse, neglect, exploitation, and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events and cannot be covered by one definition or one label alone. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

All staff and volunteers, but especially the designated safeguarding lead (and deputies) should consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families. Extra familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual abuse (including harassment and exploitation), domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse), criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, county lines and radicalisation.

All staff should be aware that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues. Children are at risk of abuse and other risks online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse and other risks will take place concurrently both online and offline. Children can also abuse other children online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic/misandrist messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography to those who do not want to receive such content

In all cases, if staff are unsure, they should always speak to the DSL or deputy.

Indicators of abuse and neglect

Abuse is defined as a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse including where they see, hear or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or,

more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

The following indicators listed under the categories of abuse are not an exhaustive list:

Physical abuse: a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse: the 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. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue (also known as child-on-child abuse) in education and all staff should be aware of it and of the school's policy and procedures for dealing with it. (See section 7: Specific safeguarding issues) [schools should cross-reference their school policy/procedures for dealing with child-on-child abuse within the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy)

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy because of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Specific safeguarding issues

All staff and volunteers should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues such as of drug taking and/or alcohol misuse, unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education, serious violence (including that linked to county lines) radicalisation and consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos can be signs that children are at risk. Other safeguarding issues all staff should be aware of include:

Child-on-child abuse

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse). And that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

All staff should understand, that even if there no reports in school it does not mean it's not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such, it is important if staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse they should speak to the DSL (or deputy) and record these using the school/college's safeguarding system. (Schools/college to outline their local arrangements for doing this).

It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children, many of which are listed below, that are abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm; and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element)

All staff should be clear about the Group's policy and procedures with regards to child-on-child abuse, as set out in the Behaviour Policy and the important role they must play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse and both occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. CSE and CCE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others. As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always

recognised by adults and professionals (particularly older children), and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to.

It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. The indicators may not be the same, however staff should be aware that girls are at risk of criminal exploitation too. It is also important to note that both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet.

CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge e.g. through others sharing videos or images of them on social media.

CSE can affect any child, who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities. This includes 16- and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children may not realise they are being exploited e.g. they believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

Further information on signs of a child's involvement in sexual exploitation is available in Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or pattern of incidents. That's abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional. Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation (FGM) involves the non-medical removal of or injury to external female genitalia. FGM is classified as child abuse and a form of violence against women and girls. It is illegal under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, and specific legal and safeguarding duties apply.

Any staff or volunteer encountering suspected instances of FGM must immediately prioritise safety and refer to the DSL (or deputy). If a child is at risk of immediate harm or being taken out of the UK, call 999 for police assistance straight away.

For detailed information on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of FGM, refer to the NSPCC FGM Guidance.

Mental Health

All staff and volunteers should be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Staff and volunteers, however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

If staff or volunteers have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following the Group's policy, and speaking to the DSL or a deputy.

Serious violence

All staff and volunteers should be aware of the indicators which may signal that children are at risk from, or involved with, serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

Preventing radicalisation

Children may be susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse, protecting children from this risk should be a part of a schools or colleges safeguarding approach. Confidential advice can be obtained from the call the ACT Early Support Line. Referral to the Suffolk Prevent Team can be made via the Suffolk Constabulary online referral form. For further information see Page 157 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

Channel

Channel is a voluntary, confidential support programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being susceptible to being drawn into terrorism. Prevent referrals are assessed and may be passed to a multi-agency Channel panel, which will discuss the individual referred to determine whether they are at risk of being drawn into terrorism and consider the appropriate support required. For support or information email community.safety@suffolk.gov.uk. For further information see Page 158 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

Children potentially at greater risk of harm

The Trustees recognise that whilst all children should be protected there are some groups of children who are potentially at greater risk of harm and, in some cases, these children may find it difficult to communicate what is happening to them.

Alternative Provision

The Trustees also recognise that the cohort of pupils in alternative provision often have complex needs and are aware of the additional risk of harm our pupils may be vulnerable to and will have regard to the following statutory guidance:

- Arranging Alternative Provision - guide for LAs and schools
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school – DfE Statutory Guidance

Where a school places a child with an Alternative Education / Alternative Provision provider, the school remains responsible for the child's safeguarding. However, the Trustees acknowledge that the Group has an important operational role in delivering day-to-day safe practice, identifying concerns, sharing information, and supporting the school's oversight. The Trustees acknowledge that the school will expect us to:

- Provide a safe setting and safe day-to-day practice for the child while attending the placement.
- Confirming that safeguarding and employment checks have been completed for staff and volunteers working with children.
- Unless we have been notified in advance of a reason for their absence, notify the school immediately if a child fails to attend.
- Alert the school to any changes that could affect risk, for example staffing or volunteer changes o that might require further checks or review.
- Report safeguarding concerns promptly to the school, including welfare concerns, incidents, disclosures, unexplained absence, behavioural escalation, or emerging risks.
- Share attendance, progress, and pastoral information regularly so the school can monitor the placement and the child's safety and wellbeing.

- Contribute to reviews, including advising on progress, risks, required adjustments, and whether the placement remains appropriate.
- Working with the school's DSL / pastoral team and other agencies as needed, to support coordinated safeguarding and welfare planning. This is consistent with the guidance's emphasis on working together and active oversight

Children who need a social worker (Child in Need and Child Protection Plans)

Children may need a social worker due to complex safeguarding or welfare needs. Children may need this help due to abuse, neglect and/or complex family circumstances. A child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged in facing barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health.

The Trustees expect that the Local Authority will share the fact a child has a social worker, and the DSL will hold and use this information so that decisions can be made in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. This should be considered as a matter of routine. There are clear powers to share this information under existing duties on both LAs and school to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Where children need a social worker, this should inform decisions about safeguarding (for example, responding to unauthorised absence or to a child missing education where there are known safeguarding risks) and about promoting welfare (for example, considering the provision of pastoral and/or academic support, alongside action by statutory services.

Children absent from education

A child being absent from education, particularly repeatedly, can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. This might include abuse or neglect, such as sexual abuse or exploitation or child criminal exploitation, or issues such as mental health problems, substance abuse, radicalisation, FGM or forced marriage.

There are many circumstances where a child may be absent or become missing from education, but some children are particularly at risk. These include children who:

- Are at risk of harm or neglect
- Are at risk of forced marriage or FGM
- Come from Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller families
- Come from the families of service personnel
- Go missing or run away from home or care
- Are supervised by the youth justice system
- Cease to attend a school
- Come from new migrant families

It is important that the Group's procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who are absent from education are followed, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to children's social care and need a social worker (such as on a child in need or child protection plan, or as a looked after child), where absence from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community. As such, all staff should be aware of the Group's unauthorised absence procedures and children missing education procedures (see Appendix C).

Staff and volunteers will be trained in signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns which may be related to being absent, such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

A report must be made to the Suffolk Children Missing Education Team at cme@suffolk.gov.uk or calling 01473 265224 if a young person was absent for 10 days or more.

Further general information and advice can be found in the Government's Missing Children and Adults Strategy.

Children requiring mental health support

For children requiring mental health support, the expectation is that parents/carers and relevant professionals (schools in the case of Alternative Provision) retains overall responsibility for the child's education, safeguarding, attendance oversight and coordination of support,

The Trustees however acknowledge the Group's role in supporting a child's emotional wellbeing, observation, and communication. In particular to work with parents/carers and relevant professionals (schools in the case of Alternative Provision) to:

- Provide a calm, safe, supportive environment that is able to respond appropriately to the child's presenting emotional or mental health needs.
- Implement agreed day-to-day support strategies set, for example predictable routines, reduced triggers, trusted adult support, emotional regulation support, transition arrangements, or attendance support measures.
- Observe and report concerns promptly changes in presentation, distress, withdrawal, self-harm indicators, attendance difficulty, dysregulation, disclosures, or worsening risk.
- Share regular information on attendance, presentation, incidents, engagement and progress, so the school can monitor the overall picture.
- Contribute to review meetings and planning, including what is working, what is not, and whether additional support or referral may be needed.
- Follow agreed safeguarding and escalation procedures, including immediate reporting where a mental health concern becomes a safeguarding concern.

Further advice is available in DfE guidance documents:

- Preventing and tackling bullying
- Mental health and behaviour in schools

Looked after children and previously looked after children.

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse and/or neglect. The Trustees will ensure staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked after children safe.

The Trustees will expect the care network (parents/carers and relevant professionals – schools in the case of Alternative Provision) to share the information about the child's care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after the child. This must include details of the child's social worker and the name of the virtual school head in the authority that looks after the child.

The Group will implement agreed support strategies shared by the care network to provide a safe, stable and supportive environment, including behaviour support, emotional regulation approaches, predictable routines, attendance support, and report promptly any safeguarding, welfare or placement concerns.

A previously looked after child potentially remains vulnerable and all staff and volunteers should have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep previously looked after children safe. The Trustees recognise that when dealing with looked after children and previously looked after children, it is important that all agencies work together and prompt action is taken when necessary to safeguard these children, who are a particularly vulnerable group.

For children who are care leavers, the DSL should have details of the LA Personal Advisor appointed to guide and support the care leaver and liaise with them as necessary regarding any issues of concern.

Children with SEN and disabilities, or health issues

Children with SEN and disabilities, or health issues can face additional safeguarding challenges, both online and offline. The Trustees expect the child's care network, including parents/carers and relevant professionals, and where applicable the commissioning school, to share appropriate information about the child's needs, risks, required adjustments, healthcare arrangements and professional involvement so that the Group can support the child safely.

The Group will provide a safe and accessible environment, implement agreed day-to-day support strategies and reasonable adjustments, and remain alert to the additional vulnerabilities that may arise for children with SEND, disabilities or medical needs.

Staff and volunteers should avoid making assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury may relate to the child's disability or medical condition without further exploration.

Staff and volunteers should also be aware that these children may be more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children. Similarly, staff should be aware of the potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying without outwardly showing signs or being able to communicate how they are feeling.

Staff and volunteers also need to be mindful of children's cognitive understanding, for example, whether they can understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and the consequences of repeating the content/behaviours in school.

As such, any reports of abuse involving children with SEND will be reported promptly and managed in close liaison with the DSL and, where relevant, parents/carers, school SENCO and other involved professionals.

Further information can be found in the DfE's:

- SEND Code of Practice 0 to 25 years, and
- Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) NSPCC Learning
- NSPCC - Safeguarding child protection/deaf and disabled children and young people

Children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or gender questioning

The Trustees acknowledge that the fact that a child or young person may be lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning can be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who are.

Risks can be compounded where children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. Staff should therefore endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

The Trustees note that definitive 'Gender Questioning Children Guidance' has **not** been issued. The Guidance remains draft document under a consultation process.

Online safety policy

The Trustees recognise the Group's responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children and young people, including protecting them from online harms that may arise outside the Group or through personal devices, while noting that the Group's explicit operating policy is that children do not have online access while attending Group sessions or activities.

The Group's arrangements have due regard to the online safety expectations in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 and local guidance from Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership and e-Safer Suffolk, proportionate to the Group's role as an RDA setting rather than a school providing supervised internet access.

KCSIE describes the breadth of online safety risks as falling into four broad areas: Content, Contact, Conduct and Commerce. Although the Group does not provide children with internet access during sessions, staff and volunteers should understand these categories because online harms may affect a child before or after attendance, may be disclosed during a Group activity, or may influence a child's behaviour, wellbeing or safeguarding needs.

Content risks include exposure to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material online. This may include pornography, violent or hateful material, racism, misogyny, self-harm or suicide content, radicalisation, extremism, misinformation, disinformation, conspiracy theories, or other material that may distress, influence or harm a child. Staff and volunteers should be alert to signs that a child has seen harmful content and should report concerns to the DSL or alternate DSL without delay.

Contact risks arise where a child interacts with other users online and may be subject to harmful communication or pressure. This may include peer pressure, cyberbullying, inappropriate commercial approaches, or adults or other young people posing as someone else in order to groom, coerce, exploit, radicalise or manipulate a child for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes. Any disclosure or concern about harmful online contact must be treated as a safeguarding concern.

Conduct risks relate to the way people behave online and the potential for that behaviour to cause harm. This may include online bullying, harassment, abusive or discriminatory messages, sharing or receiving nude or semi-nude images, sharing pornography or other explicit material, or encouraging risky, harmful or abusive behaviour. Staff and volunteers must not dismiss online behaviour as separate from safeguarding: online abuse can occur alongside, enable or escalate offline harm.

Commerce risks include harms linked to online services, advertising or financial activity. Children may be exposed to online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing, scams, fraud, in-app purchases, pressure to spend money, or other exploitative commercial activity. Staff and volunteers should be alert to unexplained online-related worries, debt, secrecy, coercion or financial pressure affecting a child and should report any concern through the Group's safeguarding procedures.

The Group **does not** provide children or young people with access to the internet, computers, tablets, digital learning platforms, or Group Wi-Fi as part of its programmes. Children and young people attending the Group must not access the internet or Group networks while on the premises or participating in Group activities.

The Trustees recognise that some children may have access to the internet via personal mobile devices or mobile networks outside the Group's control. To support the Group's no-online-access policy, children and young people are not permitted to use personal mobile devices during Group sessions or activities. Any personal mobile device brought by a participant must be kept securely by their parent, carer, teacher, support worker, or other responsible adult.

Staff and volunteers must not connect with, 'friend', follow, or directly message participants through social media, gaming platforms, messaging apps, or other online communication channels. Staff and volunteers must not post identifiable details, session times, images, videos, medical information, educational information, or other sensitive information about participants on personal social media or online platforms.

No photographs or videos may be taken of participants for the Group's website, social media, publicity, training, or other purposes unless explicit, written, and specific consent has been obtained from parents or legal guardians and the image or recording is used only for the agreed purpose.

Our visitor Wi-Fi is password protected, separated from the Group's internal operational network, and intended for authorised adult use only. It must not be shared with children or young people. Filtering is used reduce access to harmful content, including adult content, drugs, hate, self-harm, weapons, violence, and gambling.

Access to the Group's internal operational network is password protected, restricted to authorised staff and nominated volunteers only, and must not be used by participants. Passwords and access details must not be shared with children, young people, parents, carers, visitors, or unauthorised adults.

If a child is found to have accessed the internet while attending, attempted to bypass the no-online-access arrangements, used a personal device during a session, accessed harmful material, or experienced any online-related concern, staff and volunteers must respond calmly, safeguard the child and others, preserve relevant information where safe to do so, and report the matter to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or alternate DSL without delay.

If a child makes a disclosure about online harm, including cyberbullying, online grooming, coercion, image sharing, exposure to harmful content, misinformation or disinformation, or contact from an adult or another child online, this must be recorded and reported directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or alternate DSL in line with the safeguarding reporting procedures in this policy.

The online safety lead is the nominated trustee for safeguarding, who has strategic oversight of the Group's online safety arrangements. The role includes ensuring that online safety is considered within safeguarding governance, reviewing the effectiveness of the Group's no-online-access arrangements, monitoring any online safety incidents or concerns reported to the DSL, supporting staff and volunteer awareness of online safety expectations, and reporting relevant matters to the Trustees so that risks are identified, managed and reviewed appropriately.

Procedures

If staff or volunteers notice any indicators of abuse/neglect or signs that a child or young person may be experiencing a safeguarding issue they should record their concerns on a recording form for safeguarding concerns (see Appendix A) and pass it to the DSL without delay.

What to do if you are concerned.

If a child makes an allegation or disclosure of abuse against an adult or other child or young person, it is important that you:

- Stay calm and listen carefully.
- Accept what is being said.
- Allow the child/young person to talk freely – do not interrupt or put words in the child/young person's mouth.
- Only ask questions when necessary to clarify, do not investigate or ask leading questions.
- Reassure the child, but don't make promises which it might not be possible to keep.
- Do not promise confidentiality.
- Emphasise that it was the right thing to tell someone.
- Reassure them that what has happened is not their fault.
- Do not criticise the perpetrator.
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told.
- Make a written record, which should be signed and include the time, date and your position in school.
- Do not include your opinion without stating it is your opinion.
- Pass the information to the DSL or alternate without delay.
- Consider seeking support for yourself and discuss this with the DSL as dealing with a disclosure can be distressing.

When a record of a safeguarding concern is passed to the DSL, the DSL will record the time and date the record of concern was received. The DSL will assess the concern and, taking into account any other safeguarding information known about the child/young person, consider whether it suggests that the threshold of significant harm, or risk of significant harm, has been reached or may be a child in need. If the DSL is unsure whether the threshold has been met, they will contact the MASH Professional Consultation Line for advice (0345 606 1499). Where appropriate, the DSL will complete and submit the SCC multi agency referral form (MARF).

Where the DSL believes that a child or young person may be at imminent and significant risk of harm, they should call Customer First immediately (0808 800 4005) and then complete the MARF within 24 hours to confirm the referral. In these circumstances, it is important that any consultation should not delay a referral to Customer First. **In an emergency situation, call the Police on 999**.

Where a safeguarding concern does not meet the threshold for completion of a MARF, the DSL should record how this decision has been reached and should consider whether additional needs of the child have been identified that might be met by a coordinated offer of early help including the school or college's local early help offer.

Information sharing, record keeping and confidentiality

Information sharing is vital in safeguarding children by identifying and tacking all forms of abuse and neglect, and in promoting children's welfare, including in relation to their educational outcomes. Schools have clear powers to share, hold and use information for these purposes.

As part of meeting a child's needs, the Group understands that it is critical to recognise the importance of information sharing between professionals and local agencies and will contribute to multi-agency working in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026. Where there are concerns about the safety of a child,

the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, and to keep the information they hold safe and secure, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing where there are real safeguarding concerns. Staff or volunteers should not assume a colleague, or another professional will take action and share information that might be critical in keeping children safe. Staff and volunteers will have regard to the Government guidance: Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers which supports those who have to make decisions about sharing information. This advice includes the seven golden rules for sharing information and considerations with regard to the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). If in any doubt about sharing information, staff should speak to the DSL or a deputy.

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. All concerns, discussions and decisions made and the rationale for those decisions should be recorded in writing. If in doubt about recording requirements, staff or volunteers should discuss this with the DSL.

The Group recognises that confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all matters relating to child protection. Information on individual child protection cases may be shared by the DSL or alternate DSL with other relevant members of staff. This will be on a 'need to know' basis and where it is in the child's best interests to do so.

Staff or volunteers must never guarantee confidentiality to anyone about a safeguarding concern (including parents/carers or pupils), or promise a child to keep a secret which might compromise the child's safety or wellbeing.

As well as allowing for information sharing, in circumstances where it is warranted because it would put a child at risk of serious harm, the DPA 2018 and the GDPR allow information to be withheld. This may be particularly relevant where a child is affected by domestic abuse perpetuated by a parent or carer, is in a refuge or another form of emergency accommodation, and the serious harm tests is met.

Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that a referral to local authority children's social care and if appropriate the police, (see NSPCC When to call the police guidance) is made immediately. Referrals should follow the referral process detailed above.

Safeguarding concerns or allegations made about staff, volunteers and contractors

The Group will follow the SSP arrangements for managing allegations of abuse against people who work with children or those who are in a position of trust if a safeguarding concern or allegation is raised against an adult in a position of trust which meets the harm threshold.

An allegation that may meet the harm threshold is any information which indicates that a member of staff /volunteer may have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he/she may pose a risk of harm to children; and/or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

This applies to any child the member of staff, volunteer or contractor has contact with in their personal, professional or community life. It also applies regardless of whether the alleged abuse took place on our premises.

Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold will be dealt with in accordance with the Group's policy for managing low-level concerns, as set out in section 3 RDA of the UK Safeguarding Policy.

If any member of staff or volunteer has concerns that a colleague, volunteer or contractor might pose a risk to children, it is their duty to report these to the Centre Manager. Where the concerns or allegations are about the Centre Manager, these should be referred to the Chair Trustees.

The Centre Manager / Chair Trustees should report the concern to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day. LADOs can be contacted via email on LADO@suffolk.gov.uk or by using the LADO central telephone number: 0300 123 2044 for allegations against all staff and volunteers. If advised by LADO a referral will be made to the Disclosures and Baring Service (DBS).

Whistleblowing

The Trustees recognises that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff or volunteers fail to do so. All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the Group's safeguarding regime and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team.

Whistleblowing is 'making a disclosure in the public interest' and occurs when staff or volunteers (or member of the wider RDA community) raises a concern about danger or illegality that affects others, for example, participants at the Group or members of the public.

The Trustees would wish for everyone in the school community to feel able to report any child protection/safeguarding concerns through existing procedures within Group, including the whistleblowing. However, staff or volunteers, who do not feel able to raise such concerns internally, there is a NSPCC whistleblowing helpline. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 (open from 8.00am to 8.00pm, Monday to Friday) or email: **help@nspcc.org.uk**

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

RDA Woodbridge & District Group Policies

- Behaviour Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Policy for the Prevention of Extremism and Terrorism
- Privacy and GDPR Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Volunteering Policy

External References

- BEF Safeguarding
- RDA UK Complaints Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)
- RDA UK Safeguarding Resource Library
- RDA UK Whistleblowing Policy
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

USEFUL CONTACTS

Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Professional Helpline: 0345 606 1499, webchat facility

LADO 0300 123 2044 or **lado@suffolk.gov.uk** or on the LADO pages on Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership website

Suffolk Social Services (Customer First) **0808 800 4005** (NOT 24 hours)
https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/how-social-care-canhelp/contact-adult-social-care

Customer First (Professional Referral Line) for use in **emergencies only**: **0345 606 6167**

Suffolk Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) **0345 606 1499** or report online at
https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/protecting-people-at-risk-of-abuse/report-abuse-of-an-adult

Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership www.suffolksp.org.uk

Suffolk Police main switchboard: 01473 613500

Suffolk Police Cybercrime Unit: 101

Childline 0800 1111

e-Safer Suffolk: www.suffolk.gov.uk/community-and-safety/staying-safe-online/e-safer-suffolk/

NSPCC 24-hour emergency helpline: 0808 800 5000

Police (emergency only): 999

Appendix A: SAFEGUARDING INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

This form must be completed where a Member Group is concerned about an incident involving a child or vulnerable person. It must be completed as soon as possible after the incident that causes concern and must be passed on to the relevant Authority i.e. RDA National Office, Children's Social Care Department, The Police.

Make sure you keep a copy.

Name of child / vulnerable adult	
Age and date of birth	
Disability	Any special factors
Parent's/carer's name(s)	
Home address (and phone number)	
Are you reporting your own concerns or passing on those of somebody else? Give details of that person including contact phone number and date this person advised you of their concerns/incident.	

Brief description of what has prompted the concerns: include dates, times etc. of any specific incidents. **** Continue on a separate sheet of paper if required and attached securely to this form***	
Any physical signs? Behavioural signs? Indirect signs?	
Have you spoken to the child / vulnerable adult? If so, what was said?	
Have you spoken to the parent(s)/carer(s)? If so, what was said?	
Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so, give details.	

Have you consulted anybody else? Give details.	
Your name and position and contact telephone number.	
To whom reported and date of reporting.	
Detail what action, if any, has been taken following receipt of this information.	
Signature	Time and date

NOTE: Confidentiality must be maintained at all times. Information must only be shared on a "need to know" basis i.e. only if it will protect the child/vulnerable adult.

Do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know.

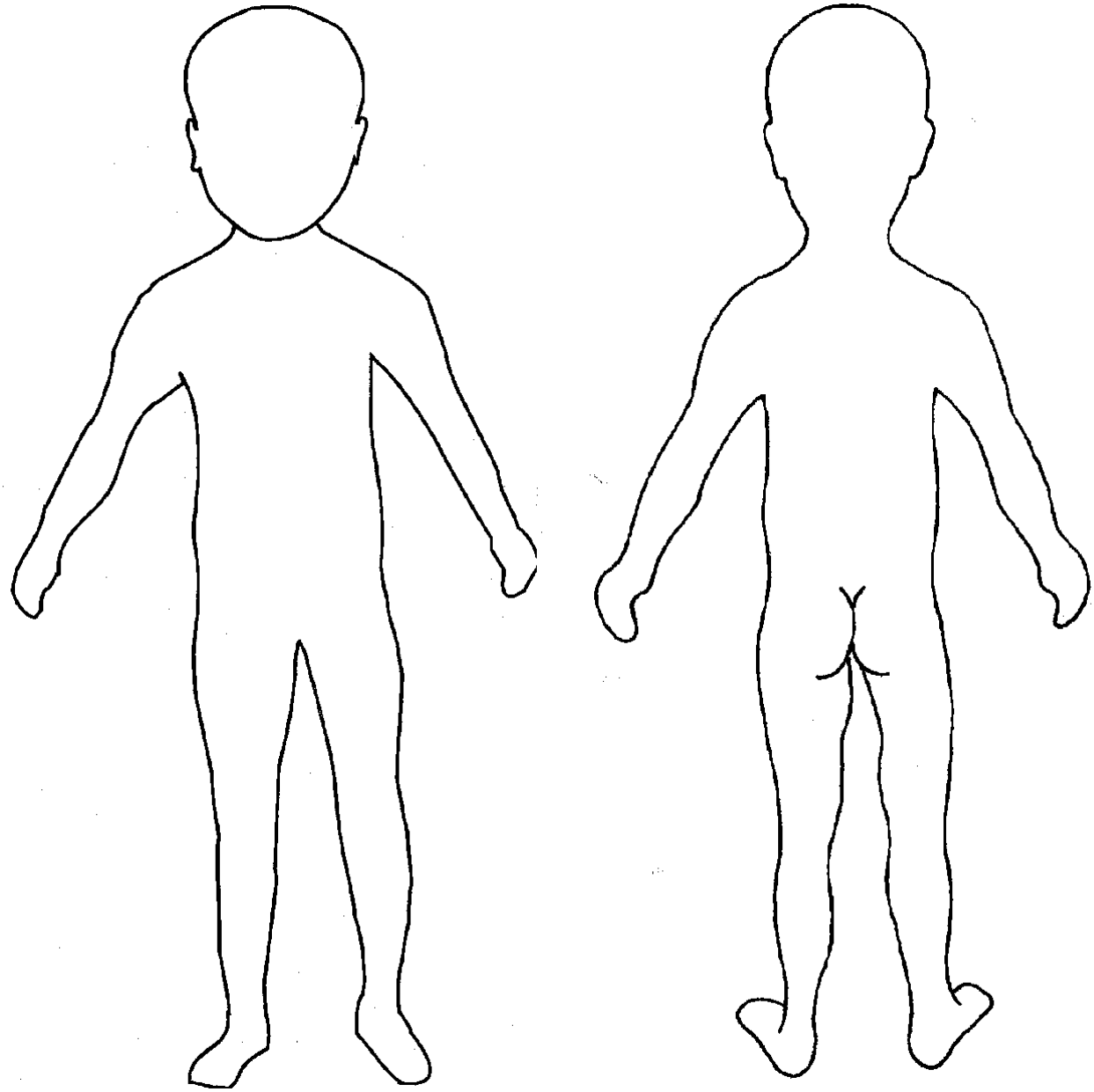
Appendix B: BODY MAP

(This must be completed at time of observation)

Name of Individual: ..... Date of Birth: .....

Name of Staff/Coach: ..... Job title: .....

Date and time of observation: .....



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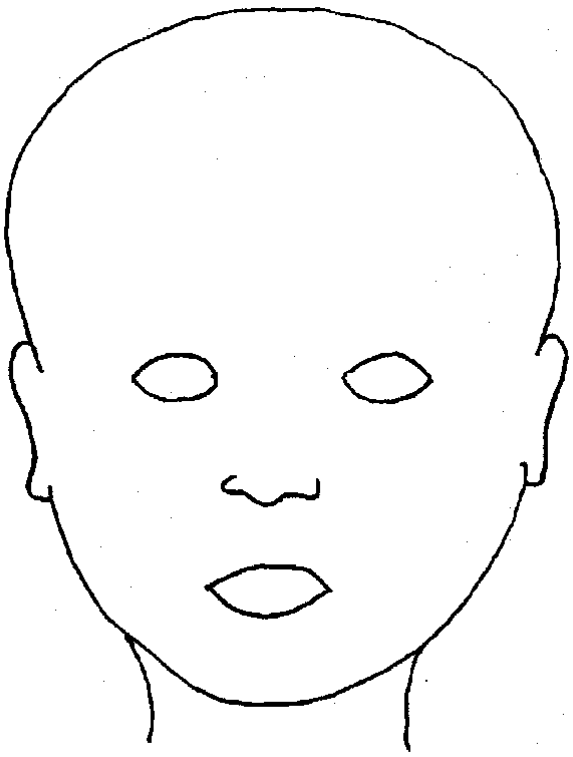
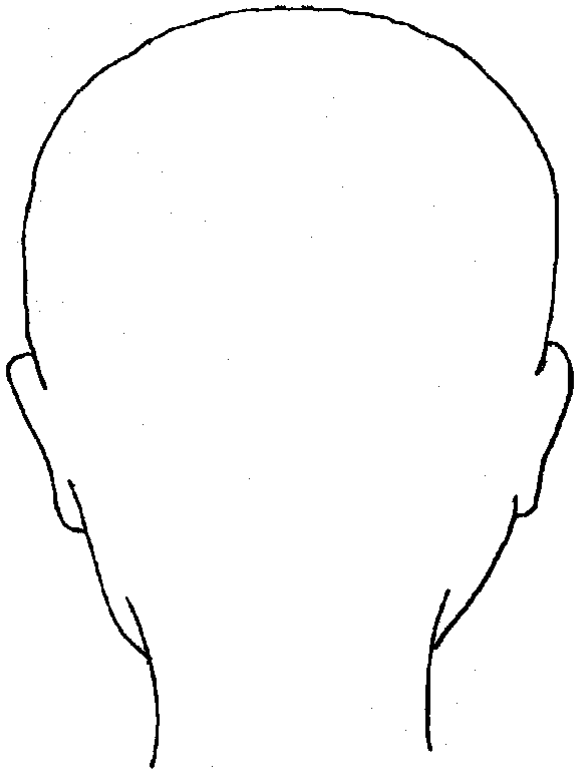
Date and time of observation: .....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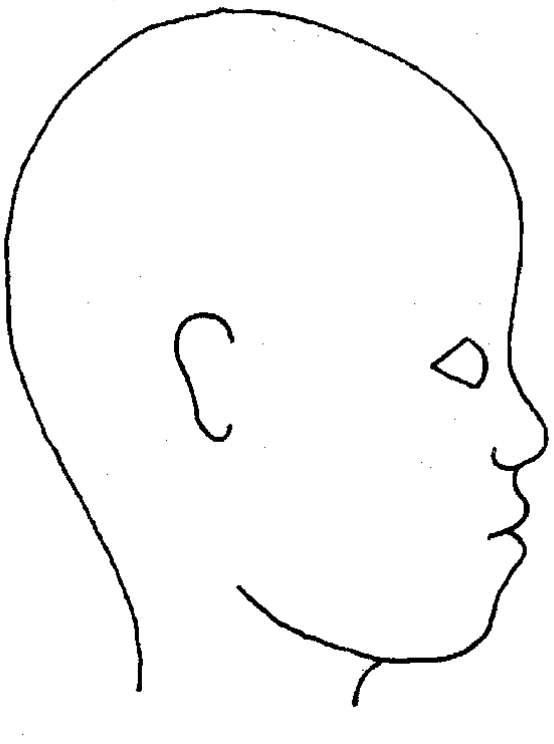
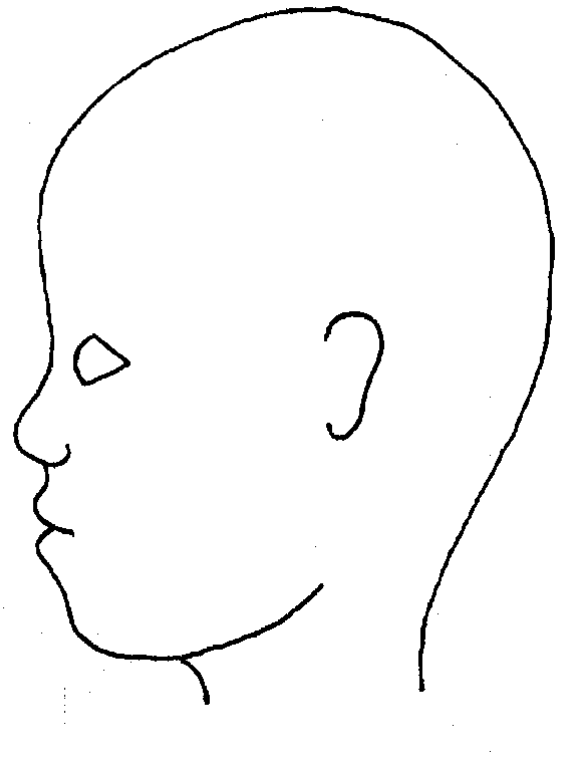
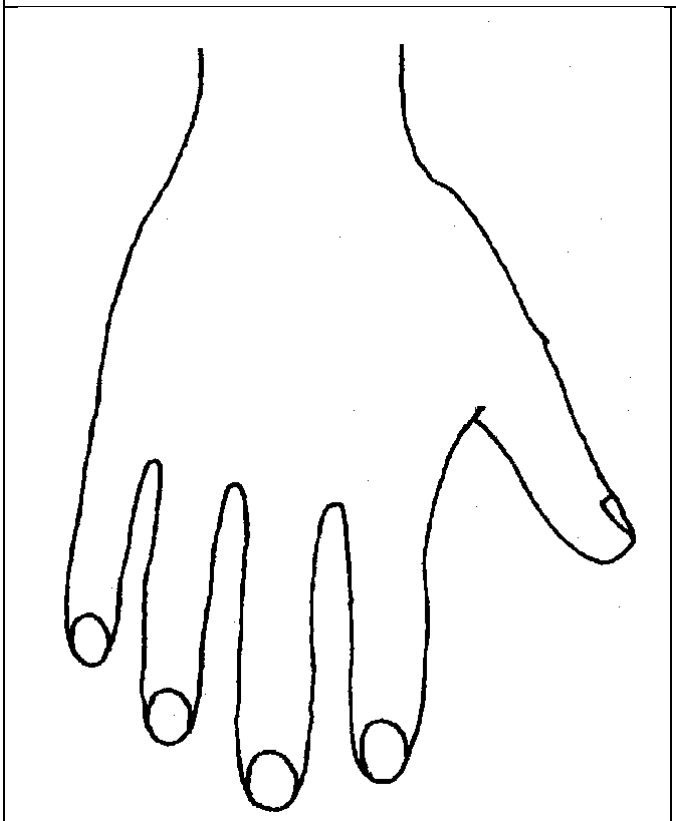
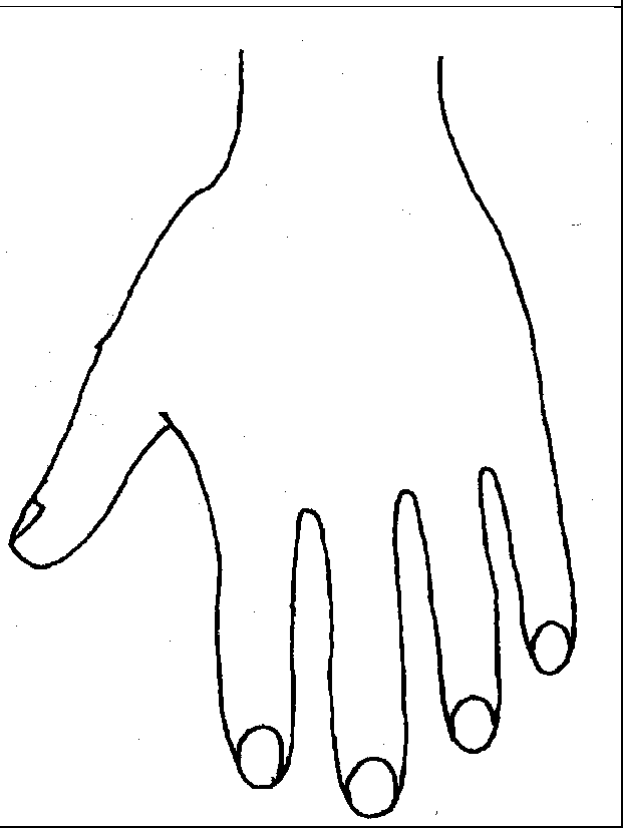
	
RIGHT	**LEFT**

Name of individual: .....

Date and time of observation: .....

BACK	
	
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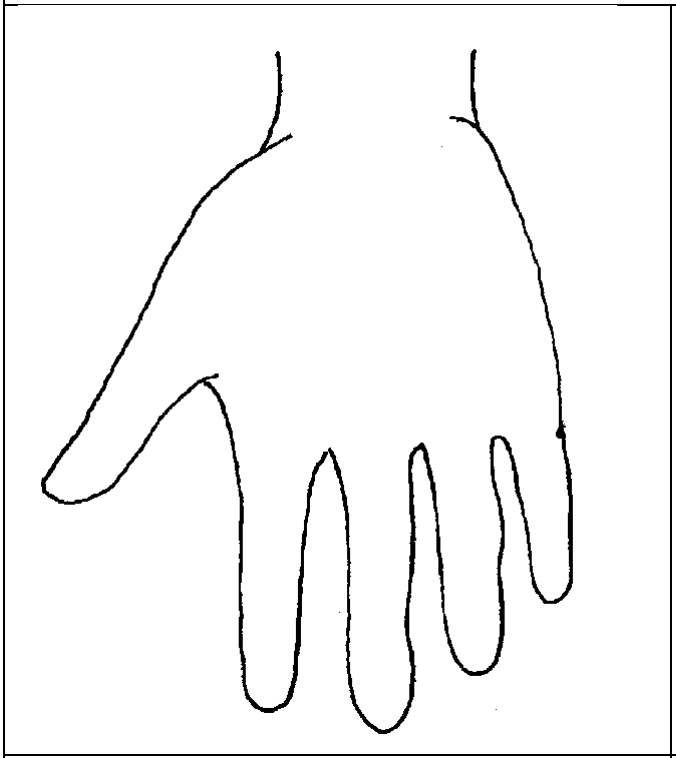	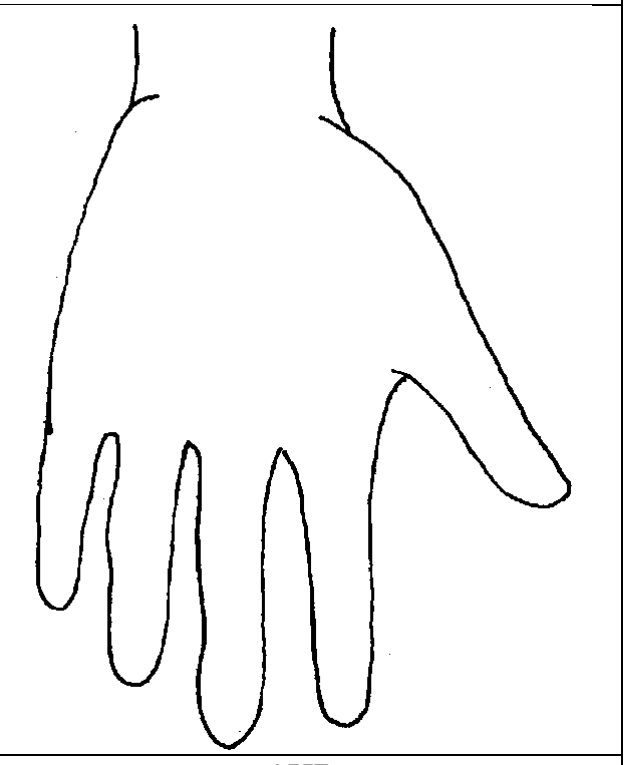
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Name of individual: .....

Date and time of observation: .....

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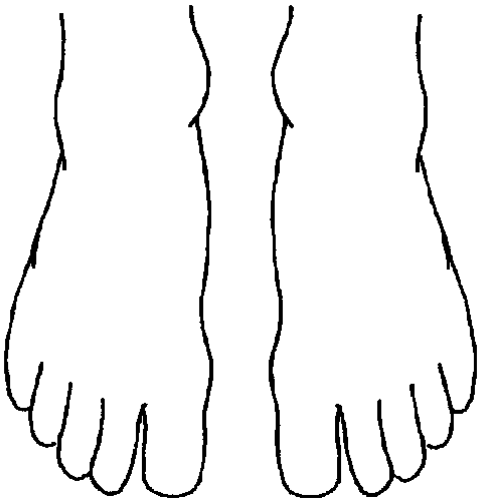	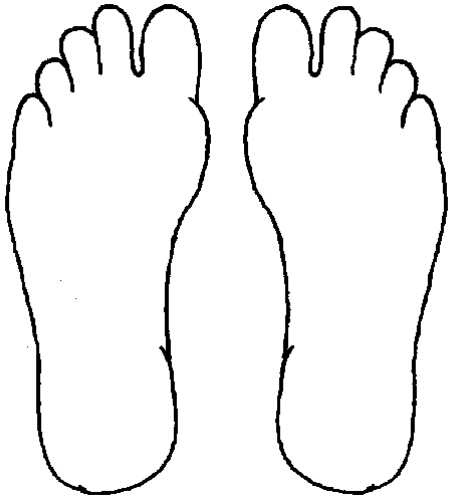
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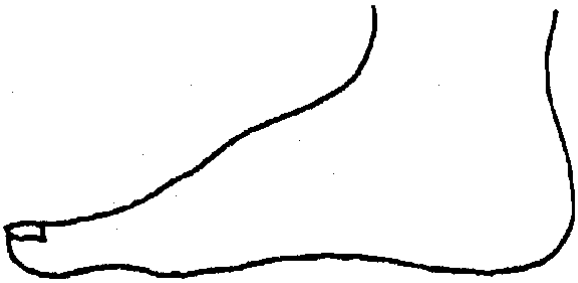
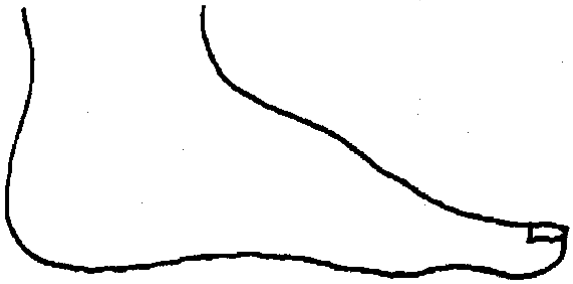
INNER	
	
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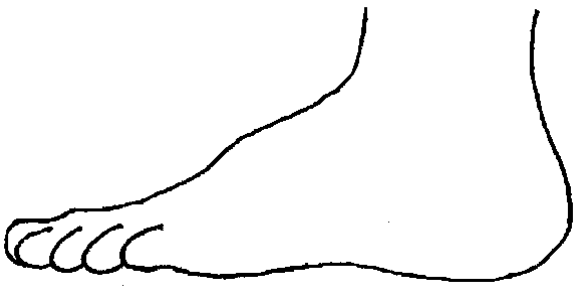
	
RIGHT	**LEFT**

Name of Staff/Coach: .....

Job title/role: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

Appendix C:
Safeguarding response and procedures for children who go missing from education

This appendix sets out the Group's safeguarding response where a child or young person is absent from, missing from, or fails to attend an RDA session or alternative provision placement. It should be read alongside the main safeguarding policy, the Group's attendance arrangements, any commissioning school's procedures, and local safeguarding arrangements. A child missing education may be at increased risk of harm, exploitation, radicalisation, neglect, poor health outcomes, and becoming not in education, employment or training later in life. The response must therefore be prompt, proportionate, recorded, and child centred.

1. Definitions

- **Child absent from education:** a child who is registered with a school or alternative education provider but is absent, particularly repeatedly or for prolonged periods.
- **Missing child:** a child whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or suggest that the child may be at risk of harm to themselves or others.
- **Alternative provision placement:** in the context of this policy, where a school, local authority, parent/carer, or other professional has arranged for a child to attend the Group as part of a planned education, therapeutic, enrichment, or support programme.

2. Immediate response when a child does not arrive as expected

1. Check the attendance register, booking information, session notes, and any messages received from the parent/carer, school, or responsible professional.
2. Inform the session lead, Centre Manager, DSL or alternate DSL as soon as the absence is identified.
3. Contact the parent/carer and, where applicable, the commissioning school or responsible professional to confirm the child's whereabouts and whether the absence is authorised.
4. If the child is expected to travel independently, confirm whether they left home, school, or another setting and whether they were expected to arrive at the Group.
5. Record the time the absence was noticed, the checks completed, who was contacted, and the outcome.
6. If the child's whereabouts cannot be established, or the circumstances suggest risk of harm, escalate immediately in line with Section 4 below.

3. Immediate response when a child goes missing during a Group session

1. Alert the session lead, Centre Manager, DSL or alternate DSL immediately.
2. Maintain supervision and safety of all other children, riders, horses, volunteers, and visitors.
3. Search the immediate area quickly and safely, including arenas, stables, toilets, car park, entrances/exits, and any known quiet or safe spaces.
4. Check whether the child has left with a parent/carer, teacher, support worker, transport provider, or another authorised adult.
5. Contact the parent/carer and, where applicable, the commissioning school or responsible professional.
6. If the child is not found promptly, or there is any concern that the child may be at risk of harm, contact the police on 999 without delay.
7. Record the incident, actions taken, times, people involved, and any known trigger or concern.

4. Escalation and safeguarding referrals

The DSL or alternate DSL must assess the circumstances of any unexplained or repeated absence through a safeguarding lens. The response should consider the child's age, vulnerability, SEND or medical needs, known risks, care status, social worker involvement, mental health needs, family circumstances, and any pattern of previous absence or missing episodes.

- **Police:** call 999 where the child is missing, at immediate risk, believed to have left the premises without a safe adult, may be harmed, or their whereabouts cannot be established, and the circumstances are out of character or concerning.
- **MASH / Customer First:** seek advice or make a referral where there is a safeguarding concern, a pattern of unexplained or repeated absence, concern about neglect, exploitation, radicalisation, domestic abuse, forced marriage, FGM, or where the child has a social worker or is subject to a child protection or child in need plan.
- **Commissioning school or education provider:** notify immediately where the child attends the Group as part of alternative provision or an agreed education programme. The school retains overall responsibility for attendance oversight and safeguarding, but the Group must share relevant information promptly.
- **Suffolk Children Missing Education team:** where there is reason to believe that a child of compulsory school age is not registered at a school and is not receiving suitable education otherwise, or has been absent for 10 days or more, the DSL should seek advice or make a referral to the local authority CME team at cme@suffolk.gov.uk or calling 01473 265224 if a young person was.

5. Repeated or concerning absence

Repeated or concerning absence must not be treated as an administrative issue only. The DSL will review patterns of attendance and absence, consider whether the child may be at increased risk, and agree appropriate action with the parent/carer, school, social worker, or other responsible professional as relevant.

- Identify whether there are known triggers, barriers to attendance, transport issues, anxiety, bullying, health needs, family difficulties, or safeguarding concerns.
- Review whether reasonable adjustments, risk assessments, supervision arrangements, or support plans need to be updated.
- Share attendance and welfare information with the commissioning school or relevant professional so that the wider safeguarding picture can be understood.
- Escalate concerns where absence is unexplained, persistent, increasing, or linked to other indicators of harm or exploitation.
- Record all actions, decisions, rationale, contacts, and outcomes securely.

6. Roles and responsibilities

- **All staff and volunteers** must act immediately if a child does not arrive as expected or goes missing, report concerns to the DSL or alternate DSL, and make factual records.
- **Session leads** must ensure attendance is checked, immediate actions are taken, and supervision of other participants is maintained.
- **The Centre Manager** must ensure registers, emergency contact details, session records, and communication arrangements are accurate and accessible during sessions.
- **The DSL or alternate DSL** must assess safeguarding risk, decide on escalation, liaise with parents/carers, schools and agencies, and ensure records are completed and stored securely.
- **Trustees** must ensure this procedure is implemented, reviewed, and included in induction and safeguarding training.

7. Recording, information sharing and review

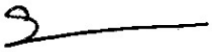
All concerns, discussions, decisions, contacts, referrals, and outcomes must be recorded factually and promptly. Records should include dates, times, who was involved, what was said, actions taken, rationale for decisions, and any follow-up required. Information must be shared on a need-to-know basis where it is necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of the child. Data protection legislation is not a barrier to sharing information where failure to share would place a child at risk of harm. Following any missing episode or significant absence concern, the DSL should review the incident with the Centre Manager and, where appropriate, the school, parent/carer, social worker, or other professional. The review should identify lessons learned, changes needed to risk assessments or support plans, and whether additional safeguarding action is required.

Review and Monitoring

This document will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary, in line with the legal and statutory framework, to ensure it remains current and effective. Feedback from staff, volunteers and stakeholders will be considered in the review process.

APPROVAL

Name: Kelvin Silburn	**Role:** Nominated Safeguarding Trustee
Signature:	**Date: 28 September 2026**

Name: Sharon Waldron	**Role:** Designated Safeguarding Lead
Signature: 	**Date: 28 September 2026**