

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

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31 March 2026

Next review
31 March 2027

Policy owner
Board of Trustees

Version
2.4 - 22 October 2026

1. Our commitment to children

Children must be safe, listened to and treated with respect in all our work. Roots for Change UK CIO, registered charity 1209308, will take steps to prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation, act on concerns and seek help early when a child needs support. The child's safety, dignity, views and welfare guide our decisions. This policy protects everyone under 18, including young volunteers, children who do not attend school and 16- or 17-year-olds living independently. Child protection duties still apply at 16 and 17; Mental Capacity Act principles may also be relevant to a particular decision, and staff must seek advice where needed.

Everyone acting for the charity must follow this policy: trustees, employees, volunteers, tutors, coaches, contractors, students and partners. It covers family learning and ESOL, sport, wellbeing, events, aid distribution, transport, home visits, online contact, publicity and overseas partnerships, including Uganda. It also applies when our work brings to light a concern about something happening elsewhere in a child's life.

In England, our work must follow the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, the relevant local safeguarding procedures, and applicable Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and data protection requirements. Regulated activities may carry further duties. Before work begins elsewhere in the UK or overseas, trustees must confirm the local law, referral agencies and safe reporting arrangements for that location.

2. Responsibilities and help

The Board of Trustees is responsible for safeguarding across the charity. Before any activity involving children starts, it must appoint a suitably trained Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), arrange trained deputy cover and identify a trustee without a conflict of interest to receive concerns about the DSL. The Board must give them the authority, time, secure records and specialist advice needed to do their work.

The activity lead must enter the DSL's name, cover arrangements and safe contact details in Annex C and explain them clearly to staff, volunteers, children and parents. An activity must not start without safeguarding cover, a working reporting route and the essential safety measures. Anyone can contact statutory services directly. Act promptly if the lead is absent or the post is vacant.

For a safeguarding concern, call the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) directly on +44 7960 287537. To request a confidential callback by email, write to info@rootsforchangeuk.com with a safe way to contact you. Do not send a child's identity, allegations, photographs or other case details to this general inbox. The telephone and email are not emergency services. If the DSL cannot be

reached or is implicated, contact the deputy, a trustee without a conflict of interest or the statutory services in Annex A. Do not delay urgent protective action while waiting for an internal response.

The DSL receives concerns, checks immediate safety, makes or supports referrals, records decisions and follows up the response. Activity leaders put the agreed safety measures into practice. Everyone working for the charity must recognise, respond to, record and report concerns. Trustees receive reports on safeguarding and only the case details they need to carry out their responsibilities.

3. Recruitment, checks and training

- Define each role and its contact with children before recruiting. Check identity, relevant experience and references, and discuss unexplained gaps. Assess suitability fairly and record the decision and who made it. Follow the Volunteer Policy where relevant. Confirm that people supplied by a partner or another organisation are suitable for their duties.
- Record which DBS checks the role is legally eligible for, considering the activities, frequency, location, workforce and any barred-list eligibility. Obtain and assess the appropriate check before authorising the duties. Never request a barred-list check for an ineligible role. A certificate is one part of the suitability assessment and does not guarantee that someone is safe to work with children.
- Explain any DBS requirement before the person applies. Ask only for criminal-record information that can lawfully be disclosed; do not require protected or filtered information. Assess any disclosure fairly, considering its relevance to the role, seriousness, time elapsed and current risk. Discuss concerns with the applicant, record the reasons for the decision and limit certificate access to authorised decision-makers. Give applicants access to these recruitment rules.
- Since 1 September 2026, supervision no longer removes the affected teaching, training, instruction, care or supervision of children from regulated activity where the statutory frequency or overnight conditions are met. Reassess affected supervised roles and put the required suitability checks and barred-list arrangements in place. Record the DBS guidance used and the decision about any new check.
- A person barred from the relevant regulated activity must not carry it out. Required checks and the suitability decision must be complete before regulated duties begin. DBS checks are unavailable for applicants under 16. Anyone under 18 remains protected by this policy and cannot count as an adult supervisor.
- For people with an overseas history, obtain the lawful local checks and references available. Record any gaps in coverage, the additional safeguards and the suitability decision. A UK DBS check cannot establish a complete overseas history.
- Before duties begin, explain this policy, reporting routes, conduct, online safety and the risks of the role. Check understanding, provide supervision and refresh safeguarding learning at least annually and after significant changes. The DSL and deputy need training in referrals, allegations and local procedures. Keep records of training and suitability, and reassess when duties, risks or relevant information change.

4. Running safe activities

Complete Annex C before each activity and review it when circumstances change. Set the maximum group size and staffing ratio according to the children's ages and needs, the activity, venue, emergency arrangements and relevant sector guidance. A group of unaccompanied children must have at least two suitable adults who have been briefed; increase staffing where the assessment requires it. At family sessions, explain whether parents retain direct supervision. The charity remains responsible for its own safeguarding duties.

Planned one-to-one work requires the DSL's approval, a recorded purpose and risk assessment, agreed times, and a setting where the work can be observed or otherwise supervised and accounted for. Provide a safe reporting route. If an emergency requires a departure from these arrangements, record what happened and why as soon as everyone is safe.

- Corporal punishment, humiliation, sexual conduct, grooming, secret arrangements, exploitation and exchanges of help for favours are prohibited. Do not form private relationships or give personal gifts that create dependency or favouritism.
- Use approved charity accounts. Do not use private messaging, disappearing messages or personal social-media connections with children for charity work. Any exceptional communication arrangement needs the DSL's advance approval, a recorded safeguarding reason, supervision and a record that can be checked.
- Physical contact must be necessary, appropriate to the task and responsive to the child's wishes. Explain any assistance and respect privacy. Staff must not provide intimate care, administer medication or use restrictive interventions without a specifically authorised plan, the necessary competence and the applicable legal safeguards. Call for emergency help when needed.
- Check changing and toilet arrangements, accessibility, first aid, allergies, safe collection, transport, home visits and online access. Confirm that drivers and vehicles have the appropriate licences, insurance and safety arrangements. Obtain activity and collection permissions and record who is responsible at each stage.
- Give children ways to report bullying, discrimination and harm by adults or other children. Take sexual harassment and harmful behaviour seriously, including behaviour described as play or banter. Protect and support every affected child, including a child alleged to have caused harm.

5. Recognising harm and listening to children

Signs of concern may include injury, persistent hunger or neglect, fear or withdrawal. Be alert to domestic and sexual abuse, bullying, discriminatory harm, exploitation, trafficking, online grooming, coercive control, harmful sexual behaviour, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and risks linked to radicalisation. Look at patterns and the child's wider circumstances, including anything making communication difficult. Disability, migration or poverty alone do not establish abuse. A child may show distress without being able to explain it in words.

Listen calmly and take the child seriously. Reassure them that they were right to tell you. Ask only the open questions needed to understand immediate safety; avoid leading questions and repeated interviews. Do not promise secrecy. Explain who needs to know and what will happen in words the child can understand. Arrange an appropriate independent interpreter if needed; do not use a suspected perpetrator or another child.

For immediate danger, serious injury or urgent medical need in the UK, call 999 and protect the remaining group. Do not confront an alleged perpetrator, investigate the allegation or delay help to obtain consent, a completed form or internal permission. Preserve existing evidence securely; do not

copy, forward or ask to view sexual images of children. Seek police advice about handling a device or suspected illegal material.

6. Reporting a concern and following it up

Tell the DSL without delay by calling +44 7960 287537. If the DSL is unavailable or implicated, contact the deputy or a trustee without a conflict of interest. If nobody suitable is reachable, contact children's social care or the police using Annex A. You do not need proof to report a reasonable concern. Refer concerns about the child's welfare to children's social care even if a separate referral to the local authority designated officer (LADO) is needed about an adult.

Use Annex B to make a factual record as soon as possible, normally before the end of the session or working day. Include the child's exact words, what you observed, dates, actions and who was told. Distinguish facts, information reported by others and your own opinion. Sign and date the entry, keep the original and add any corrections as dated additions. Do not delay a referral to complete the form.

The DSL must consider immediate safety, any other children at risk, the child's wishes and the family circumstances. Follow the relevant local procedure, refer suspected significant harm promptly to children's social care and involve the police where required. Seek early help or other support when needs are emerging. If the referral threshold is unclear, ask the relevant agency for advice.

Usually, explain the proposed referral to the child and their parent or carer. Speak to social care or the police first if telling them could increase danger, enable intimidation or prejudice an investigation. A necessary safeguarding referral can be made without parental agreement. Record the reasons for any decision to share information without agreement.

Confirm that the receiving agency has the referral and record the next steps and follow-up time. Check receipt by the next working day at the latest, and sooner if the concern is urgent. Chase a missing response. If risk remains unresolved, use the local procedure for professional disagreement or escalation. Keep the child and appropriate carers informed. If no referral is made, record the reasons, alternative support and a review date.

7. Concerns about adults working with children

Report immediately to the DSL or a trustee without a conflict of interest if someone working or volunteering with children may have harmed a child, committed an offence involving a child, posed a risk of harm, or behaved in a way that suggests they are unsuitable to work with children. This includes relevant behaviour outside work. Notify the appropriate LADO without delay and within one working day, and ask for advice if the threshold is unclear. Make any referral needed to protect the child as well.

The person the allegation concerns must not receive, investigate or decide their own case. Establish only what is needed to protect the child and make a referral, then seek LADO or police advice. Agree how to handle further enquiries, communication and any staff or volunteer process so that statutory enquiries are not prejudiced. Consider temporary changes to duties or suspension where proportionate; record the reasons and keep the decision under review. Protective action does not establish guilt. Support the person concerned and communicate fairly without unnecessary disclosure of confidential information.

Record concerns about boundaries even when they appear to fall below the LADO threshold. Ask for advice when unsure and look for patterns. A concern described as 'low-level' still needs attention. Escalate any new information or pattern that changes the assessment.

If the charity is a regulated activity provider and the legal conditions are met, it must make a DBS referral. Assess this duty when permission to carry out regulated activity is withdrawn, or would have been withdrawn had the person not resigned, retired or left. Referring to the police, social care or LADO does not remove this separate duty. Keep the relevant evidence and record the conditions considered, decision, action, responsible person and date.

Trustees must promptly assess whether to report a serious incident to the Charity Commission and whether any insurer, funder, regulator or professional body must be notified. Assess these duties without waiting for the outcome of a criminal case. Record the decisions and make urgent protection referrals first.

8. Information, photographs and records

Share information that is necessary, relevant and accurate with people who need it to protect a child or support their welfare. Verify the recipient and use a secure method. Record the purpose, recipient, information shared and lawful basis. Special-category information needs an Article 9 condition, and criminal-offence information needs the applicable authority or condition. In an urgent situation, share what is lawfully needed for safety and record the reasons promptly. Consent is one possible lawful basis for safeguarding information sharing, but other bases may apply.

When agreeing services, trustees must check whether the charity falls within section 16LA of the Children Act 2004, including through its service arrangements. Where it does, follow the information-sharing duty effective from 30 September 2026 and the accompanying statutory guidance. Share relevant information that may assist another relevant person's safeguarding or welfare functions, subject to the statutory exception where disclosure would be more detrimental to the child. Where the duty does not apply, use the lawful safeguarding basis and guidance relevant to the situation.

Keep safeguarding case records separate from attendance, fundraising and volunteer files. Limit access to authorised people, transfer information securely and record access or disclosure. Do not store cases in general email, shared publicity drives or personal devices and accounts. Report any loss or unauthorised disclosure immediately to the DSL and data protection lead. Follow Annex D and Annex A of the Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy.

Before taking photographs or recordings, explain the purpose and intended channels, establish a lawful basis and obtain the appropriate permissions. Respect the child's wishes; a parent's permission does not override the child's discomfort. Access to support must never depend on taking part in publicity. Do not publish identifying details about a child's vulnerability, precise routines, location metadata or other information that increases risk. Record permitted uses and withdrawals. Where consent is the basis for use, stop future use if that consent is withdrawn.

9. Missing children, collection and overseas work

Keep attendance records, emergency contacts and authorised collection arrangements. If a child goes missing, alert the activity lead immediately, establish when and where they were last seen, check the immediate area safely and maintain supervision of the other children. Call the police immediately if danger is suspected; otherwise seek police advice promptly. Inform the DSL and parent or carer unless the police or social care advise otherwise. Record searches, calls, times and the eventual safe handover.

If a child is not collected, keep them safely supervised and contact authorised carers and the DSL. Contact children's social care or the emergency duty team if a safe arrangement cannot be made. Do

not leave the child alone or release them to an unauthorised or unsafe person. Record decisions, including any emergency transport arrangements.

Before overseas work begins or funding is committed, trustees must check the partner's suitability, recruitment and safeguarding competence. Record the local reporting law, referral and emergency contacts, languages, independent escalation route and monitoring arrangements. Include these matters in a written agreement, together with prompt incident notification and access to necessary records. Complete Annex C for each location and agree safe data transfers before sharing personal information.

Partners must protect people receiving help, prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, avoid unsupervised donor contact with children and provide an accessible complaints route independent of anyone accused. Use local referral routes and make UK notifications where required. Seek specialist advice if a reporting route could itself put a child in danger. Stop or change the affected activity if essential protection cannot be provided. UK contacts and emergency numbers cannot replace safe arrangements in the country concerned.

10. Keeping this policy effective

The DSL must tell trustees about unresolved risks, overdue actions, training gaps and partner concerns, sharing identifying details only where needed. Trustees must keep safeguarding as a standing Board agenda item, check a suitable sample of records and ask children, families and volunteers whether reporting routes work. Learn from incidents and near misses without blaming people for raising concerns. Assign each improvement to a named person with a deadline.

Make this policy and short reporting instructions available in accessible formats, with language or communication support where needed. Protect anyone raising a genuine concern from retaliation. Complaints about how safeguarding has been handled can be raised under the Complaints Policy or directly with the appropriate authority. The complaints timetable must never delay protective action.

Policy date: 31 March 2026. Next scheduled review: 31 March 2027. Review sooner after a significant incident or a change in law, services or risk. Trustees must record approval of substantive revisions, give users the current copy and check contact details at each review and before work in a new area.

Annex A - Safeguarding contacts

In a UK emergency, call 999. For non-emergency police matters, call 101. Telephone immediately about an urgent concern and follow the authority's current professional referral instructions, including any council form required.

Use the authority responsible for the child's location and needs. Explain any cross-boundary circumstances and let agencies agree responsibility. For London or another area not listed, contact the local council and ask for children's social care or its emergency duty team. Do not delay an urgent report while resolving responsibility.

Area / purpose	Contact / referral route	Urgent, unavailable or out-of-hours route
Roots for Change UK - safeguarding	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): +44 7960 287537.	If the DSL is unavailable or implicated, contact the deputy, a trustee without a conflict of interest or the statutory services below. Emergencies: 999.
South Tyneside - child welfare	Children's safeguarding / MASH: 0191 424 5010	Emergency duty team: 0191 456 2093
South Tyneside - allegations about adults	LADO: 0191 424 4701; LADO@southtyneside.gov.uk	Immediate child risk: 999 or 0191 456 2093; notify LADO within one working day.
North Tyneside - child welfare	Front Door: 0345 2000 109. Ask for the professional referral procedure and required form.	Emergency duty team: 0330 333 7475
North Tyneside - allegations about adults	LADO@northtyneside.gov.uk. For advice and the referral procedure, call Front Door: 0345 2000 109.	Immediate child risk: 999 or 0330 333 7475; notify LADO within one working day.
Newcastle - child welfare	Children's Social Care: 0191 277 2500. Ask for the professional referral procedure and required form.	0191 278 7878: ask for Emergency Duty Team.
Newcastle - allegations about adults	LADO: 0191 277 2500; lado@newcastle.gov.uk	Immediate child risk: 999 or 0191 278 7878; notify LADO within one working day.

Annex D - Retention and secure disposal of safeguarding records

Use this schedule alongside Annex A of the Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy. At each review, decide whether the records are still needed. Keep evidence subject to a documented legal, regulatory or investigation hold. A child turning 18, a volunteer leaving or six years passing does not by itself authorise deletion.

Record	Retention decision and responsible person
Safeguarding case and allegations	DSL and data protection lead retain while protection, enquiry, review, proceedings or a justified hold requires it. At opening set a review date no later than 12 months. At closure record a case-specific reason and expected disposal or further review date, considering age, capacity, possible later disclosures, limitation issues and statutory/legal advice. Resolve uncertainty promptly with the appropriate adviser; review temporary preservation rather than retaining without a reason.
Routine activity and permission records	Keep only as long as needed for delivery, permission evidence, justified audit or claims purposes. Apply the relevant Privacy schedule category; transfer incident evidence to the restricted case file. Remove emergency/adjustment details when no longer needed, normally within three months of the final relevant activity unless a recorded reason requires longer.
DBS information and suitability	Follow the Volunteer Policy and DBS handling requirements. Destroy certificates and copies once the decision and any justified review are complete, normally within six months of the decision. Record the reason for any exceptional longer retention. Keep only the minimal permitted check and decision record for the justified period.
Disposal	Authorised owner confirms that no hold applies, securely deletes/shreds and records the category, date and authority for disposal without retaining the deleted sensitive content. Review copies and backups under the secure deletion process.