

The Russell Society – Safeguarding Policy and Procedure v2.01

INTRODUCTION

The Russell Society (RS) actively promotes the sharing of mineral knowledge, conservation of minerals and mineral sites. It is an inclusive organisation welcoming all those with an interest in this subject. The RS organises events, typically as field trips, gatherings and lectures. This Policy and associated Procedures apply to everyone within the society whilst engaged in society activities and to all those working on behalf of the RS.

This policy establishes the framework through which safeguarding concerns will be identified, reported, managed, and is to be reviewed annually by the RS Committee.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Russell Society is committed to ensuring that everyone who interacts with our charity is treated with dignity and protected from harm, abuse, and neglect. This policy applies to everyone engaged in the Russell Society's activities.

'Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and adults at risk (also known as vulnerable adults) and protect them from harm'.

The purpose of this safeguarding policy is:

- To safeguard those at risk i.e. children, young adults under the age of 18 and adults at risk (also known as vulnerable adults) from harm and/or abuse when attending or engaged in RS activities. Also to promote a culture that respects the rights of all those at risk.
- To provide RS trustees, officers, volunteers and members with an overarching code of conduct and procedures to protect and safeguard those at risk.
- To comply with the requirements of the RS (Geological Association) insurance policy
- To comply with government legal requirements

KEY SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES

- **Zero Tolerance to:** Abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or adults at risk will never be tolerated.
- **Shared Responsibility:** Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, regardless of role.
- **Proportionate & Person Centred:** Any response to safeguarding concerns will be timely, balanced, and focused on the safety and well-being of the individual(s) involved.

DEFINITIONS AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Child, is defined in the Children's Acts 1989 and 2004, as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Child Abuse is 'any action by another person - adult or child - that causes significant harm to a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can just as often be a lack of love, care and attention'.

Adult at risk of abuse or neglect is defined under section 42 in the Care Act 2014 (England & Wales) as anyone aged 18 or over who may be vulnerable to abuse or maltreatment who meets all the following criteria:

- Has care and support needs,
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- As a result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from either the risk or the experience of abuse or neglect.

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Safeguarding Lead (SL) is the RS trustee, with responsibility for safeguarding. The Responsibilities Section describes the role of the SL.

Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) is the RS representative (see Responsibilities Section) present at any RS event, be it a conference, talk or field meeting.

Responsible Adult is the parent, carer or person responsible for the welfare of the person at risk.

This policy has been based on the law and guidance below: -

- **For Children:** Children Act 1989 & 2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children (Statutory Guidance), and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.
- **For Adults at Risk:** The Care Act 2014 (England & Wales) / Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 / Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, and the Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- **Vetting & Governance:** Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) / Data Protection Act 2018, and Charity Commission Guidance (Protecting People and Safeguarding).

CODE OF CONDUCT

This code of conduct is applicable to everyone engaged in the activities of the Society. Everyone has a responsibility to ensure that persons at risk participating in a RS event or activity are protected from harm or abuse. RS members who engage with children, young people and adults through the RS, including students, may be seen as role models by children, young people and adults at risk and must act in an appropriate manner at all times.

Do:

- Operate within and adhere to this policy at all times.
- Treat everyone with dignity, fairness, and respect, acting as a positive role model.
- Treat children and adults at risk fairly and without prejudice or discrimination. Make sure that favouritism is avoided.
- Where possible involve children and adults at risk in the planning of programmes and activities. Value and listen to their contributions.
- Operate in open environments where possible (avoiding unsupervised 1-on-1 situations behind closed doors with children or adults at risk). If this is not possible, ensure other adults are within sight or hearing distance and they know where you are and what you are doing.
- Monitor use of equipment making sure it is used safely for its intended purpose.
- Approach a child, young person or vulnerable adult in distress.
- Maintain clear personal boundaries and a professional conduct at all times.
- Respect a child's and adult at risk's right to personal privacy.
- Maintain a distance from physical contact.
- Follow procedures for allegations of abuse or bullying and refer concerns immediately.
- Promptly record and escalate any safeguarding concerns or disclosures to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) in a secure way so it can be investigated.

Do not:

- Form inappropriate personal relationships that involve a power imbalance.
- Patronise, threaten, and make sarcastic, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments in the presence of anyone including children, young people and adults at risk.
- Take photos or video recordings of any child or adult at risk without permission of the Responsible Adult, including in the background of any such media, and in no circumstances for personal use. If observed, discourage other adults from photographing children or adults at risk without the appropriate consent.

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- Share personal contact details or private social media profiles with children, young people or adults at risk.
- Travel alone in a vehicle with a child, young person or adult at risk unless specifically approved by the Responsible Adult.
- Take unnecessary risks when policy and good practice suggest a more prudent approach.
- Do things for them that are of a personal nature that they can do themselves or that a Responsible Adult can do for them. Always defer to the Responsible Adult for the individual/group.
- Allow or engage in any inappropriate touching of any kind. The main principle is touch should be initiated by the child or adult at risk.
- Investigate alleged abuse or confront alleged abusers yourself.
- Promise absolute confidentiality to anyone disclosing abuse (explain that you must report it to keep them safe).

Safeguarding Procedures

RESPONSIBILITIES

The role of the Safeguarding Lead (SL):

- Person responsible for safeguarding at the RS Council. i.e. the Vice President.
- Ensures that the safeguarding policy and procedure is reviewed annually at a minimum.
- Has overall responsibility for ensuring that RS members are aware of the RS safeguarding policy.
- Assesses Safeguarding training needs for RS members.
- Ensure safeguarding matters are reported to the relevant authorities including the Charity Commission.
- Ensures records and reports are kept confidential and in a safe place.
- Prepares a safeguarding report for every RS Council meeting.
- Ensure the Policy & Procedures are reviewed annually at a minimum.
- Consult with child and adult protection agencies, such as the police or NSPCC as necessary.

The role of the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):

- The DSO for an RS event is the chair of any indoor meeting, or in the case of a field trip, the Field Trip Coordinator.
- Ensures RS volunteers, members, other attendees and vulnerable individuals are aware of this Safeguarding Policy and alert to the requirements of vulnerable adults and children.
- In advance of the RS activity taking place, ensures that safeguarding is taken into account when risk assessments for RS activities are being drawn up.
- Receives and records information about safeguarding concerns and passes information thereon to the SL.
- Should a real or alleged safeguarding related incident occur during a RS activity, seeks to clarify the incident, taking detailed notes and then refers the case on to the SL with all documentation.

PROCEDURES

1 Child Care

All children attending an event **must** be accompanied by a responsible adult.

2 Missing person(s) at risk

2.1 If a Child or Adult at Risk is Reported Missing

Advise the DSO. Only share information about a missing person via phone or face to face.

Try and obtain the following details:

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- A physical description and name of the person at risk.
- When and where the person was last seen.

Reassure the Responsible Adult that you are assisting them and provide them with updates.

When the missing person has been found, always verify with them that they have been reunited with the parent/carer/person that brought them to the lecture, event or field visit.

The recommended maximum search time for a **localised search is 10 minutes** before a location wide search is instigated and more people are needed.

The maximum recommended search time for a **location wide search is 30 minutes** before calling the police. However, the DSO must use their best judgement based on the circumstances and the information provided as to whether they involve the police at an earlier or later stage than the recommended timings.

2.2 When a Child or Adult at Risk is Found

If you are the person who finds a child or adult at risk who has gone missing do the following:

- Assess whether it is practical for you to accompany the missing person back to the location of the RS activity or other nearby place of safety and if so, do so, explaining to the person what you propose and that you are taking them back to be reunited with their Responsible Adult. If you do not know who their Responsible Adult is, try to find out through gentle questioning.
- Before you set off, phone the DSO or any other person you know who is attending the same RS event as you and let them know where you are and that the missing person has been found, also telling them the name of the Responsible Adult. If you have assessed and agreed with the missing person that you and they have agreed to go together to the centre of the RS activity/other nearby place of safety, tell the DSO or other contact that this is what you will do. If not, describe where you are and make clear that you need the DSO, Responsible Adult or other(s) to come to your location. (for example, if the missing person is injured or very distressed and does not want to go back).
- If the missing person is injured and cannot or will not walk, consider whether you should call the emergency services.
- If you are not talking directly with the DSO, ask your contact to relay this information to the DSO who will find the Responsible Adult and update them on the situation and who should ask the Responsible Adult to go to the location where you are waiting with the missing person or have agreed to head to.
- In the case of a missing child, if anyone else is with the child when you find them, tell them who you are and that you are a person on the same RS activity as the child. Seek to find out who they are and how they came into contact with the child. Ask them to wait with you until the Responsible Adult is located and is reunited with their care, unless you have determined through step one above that the best course of action is to lead the missing person back to the centre of the RS activity/a nearby place of safety. You can ask the other person to accompany you if they want to.

All the while, follow good safeguarding practice:

- Reassure the vulnerable person that you are assisting them. If they need comforting, follow the code of conduct. Listen and provide information updates about what you are doing to locate their Responsible Adult
- Avoid any situations which might appear compromising and be aware that physical contact can be misinterpreted. Touch should only be initiated by the vulnerable person. Touch should always be appropriate to the age and stage of development of the child or vulnerable adult, for example, it would be appropriate to hold the hand of a young child if they offered it to you.

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- If the Responsible Adult claims responsibility and you do not know them and their role, verify with the child/adult that they know the person and they are who they say they are.

It is important to remain calm, to reassure the child/adult whilst waiting for the Responsible Adult.

3 Disclosure Procedures

3.1 What is a disclosure?

A disclosure is when somebody gives information that they have been or are being harmed.

Anyone who suspects that a child / adult is at risk of harm or abuse must take responsibility and act swiftly.

Delay may put vulnerable persons at further risk of harm. It is not the RS's responsibility to investigate a child or adult safeguarding complaint, but to refer concerns on to local authority social care services or the police.

3.2 Discovering a Safeguarding Issue

Concerns about adults and children may arise in different situations:

- A child or vulnerable adult may disclose something in conversation or ask to speak to you.
- You may witness or make an observation of harm or abuse.
- Other people may tell you or express a concern.

The following guidance must be followed if you receive a disclosure/allegation of a safeguarding concern.

3.3 Disclosure of a Safeguarding Concern

- **Listen carefully.** Avoid expressing your own views on the matter. A reaction of shock or disbelief could cause them to 'shut down', retract or stop talking. Give them time to explain.
- **Don't promise to keep a secret.** You cannot keep this a secret, so let them know that you will inform the DSO immediately. The welfare of the vulnerable person at risk is paramount and takes precedence over confidentiality. Even if the vulnerable person at risk stops disclosing to you a disclosure form still needs to be completed to record the incident.
- **Check your understanding** of the situation. Avoid asking questions and only ask questions if you do not understand something, for example a word they have used.
- **Do not ask leading questions**, for example, if they say they have been hurt follow up with 'Can you describe how that happened?', rather than 'Did someone hurt you?'
- **Tell them it's not their fault.** Abuse is never the vulnerable person at risk's fault and they need to know this
- **Say you believe them.** A vulnerable person could keep abuse secret in fear they won't be believed. They've told you because they want help and trust you'll be the person to believe them and help them.
- **Do not talk to the alleged abuser.** Confronting the alleged abuser about what you have been told could make the situation a lot worse.
- **Explain** what you'll do next. If age appropriate, explain to the vulnerable person you have a responsibility to report the abuse to the DSO.
- **Inform** the DSO, providing clear and accurate information as soon as possible and within 24 hours. Include to the best of your memory words said by you and the vulnerable person (see Attachment 1). Note anything that might be connected e.g. visible injuries.
- **If you are uncertain** whether what has been disclosed is a safeguarding issue, speak to the DSO.
- **Information will be kept confidential**, archived and only shared with relevant authorities as required.

4. Witnessing or making an Observation of Harm, Bullying or Abuse

- If there is a current risk, and you consider it appropriate and safe to do so, ask the abuser to stop what they are doing. If you are not comfortable doing this, contact the DSO immediately, or in an emergency, contact the police directly

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- If someone is in immediate danger or a crime is being committed, the DSO will contact the police straight away unless this has already been done.
- Record all the details immediately afterwards on the safeguarding reporting form including to the best of your memory words said by you, the abuser and the vulnerable person (see Attachment 1). Note anything that might be connected e.g. visible injuries.
- If you are uncertain whether what you have observed is a safeguarding issue, speak to the DSO or SL.

5. Confidentiality

Information sharing is vital to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a vulnerable person. When sharing information ensure:

- There is a legitimate purpose for you to share the information.
- It is shared only with those individuals who need to have access, normally the DSO or SL
- It is accurate and up-to-date.
- It is shared in a timely fashion.
- It is shared securely.
- It is shared by means of completion of the form Attachment 1
- There is a record of who you shared it with.

Once a disclosure has been made or a concern has been raised, it is confidential and will be managed accordingly. Issues and concerns should only be discussed with the DSO or SL.

Data Protection Exemption: Under UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 (Schedule 1, Part 2), sharing personal data without consent is legally permitted when done to protect an individual from neglect or physical, mental, or emotional harm.

6. DSO's and SL's Assessment and Reporting

Responsibility for investigating reports or allegations in respect of safeguarding rest in the first instance with the DSO/SL and not with individual RS members.

The DSO should make an initial assessment of any incident or safeguarding related allegation that they have been informed about to determine if further investigation is warranted

If it is determined by the DSO that further investigation is needed/warranted, the DSO will contact the SL, and together they will determine a course of action which may involve the SL and/or the DSO conducting further work to clarify the allegations and/or incident.

The SL and/or the DSO will record promptly all of the details of their discussions and any actions taken, including interview notes and decisions made between the SL and DSO. This may include reasons for referral for further investigation by the proper authorities. This information will be kept confidential, retained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the GDPR and only shared with relevant authorities as required.

Where the allegation is considered to be a criminal act or indicates that the vulnerable person has suffered, is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the matter should be reported directly and immediately to the Police. See attachment 2.

Note that where there is good reason to do so (e.g. to help to protect a child), the DSO may share information without consent with the SL and will record the reason for this. Safeguarding records are

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normally exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act, which means that children and parents do not have an automatic right to see them.

There may be occasions when the DSO determines that there is no safeguarding issue. In these circumstances reported concerns will still be taken seriously and the matter should still be reported to the SL.

The SL will prepare a safeguarding report for every meeting of the RS council.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

This procedure must be read in conjunction with the RS procedures on Health and Safety.

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Attachment 1

Concerns / Disclosure Report Form		Ref No	
Name of person at risk (if known)			
Location / Date / Time when information was shared			
What have you been told in the words of the child/adult at risk, or observed, or heard? Include anything you have witnessed and/or information from a third party that may be unsubstantiated. Provide a record of what they said and what you said. Has an allegation been made? Give details in their own words.			
Have you / they spoken to anyone else about this concern?			
Was any further action taken?			
Name of person reporting concern/disclosure		Role or member of public?	
Name of DSO		DSO Signature	
Date of Report			
Forms will only be held for as long as is needed to resolve or pass on the incident information. DSO to take action as required.			

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Attachment 2

Contact details of external organisations that need to be consulted or notified

Concerned or need advice about a Child in danger?	NSPCC	0808 800 5000
Concerned about an adult?	NHS Action on Elder Abuse	0808 808 8141
	Local Council authority	
Do you require advice from the police to report a crime?	Police	101
Concerned a child is at immediate risk of harm?	Police	999