

ADULT & CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY



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Safeguarding Policy for RFA Beauty Foundation

Introduction and Commitment to Safeguarding

RFA Beauty Foundation is a charity dedicated to supporting vulnerable mothers and their infants in Stoke-on-Trent. We believe every mother and child has the right to be safe, valued, and protected from harm. In line with our mission to ensure no parent struggles alone and our values of compassion, dignity, empowerment, community, and integrity, we are fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and adults at risk who come into contact with our services. This commitment reflects our user-led, trauma-informed, and empowerment-based ethos – we listen to service users' needs, involve them in decisions, and handle all concerns with sensitivity to past trauma. We foster a culture where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and "everyone has the right to live free from fear of abuse, neglect, and exploitation".

Scope: This policy applies to all RFA Beauty Foundation staff, volunteers, trustees, service users, and any partners or contractors. It covers both children (anyone under 18) and adults at risk (sometimes called vulnerable adults). We adhere to all relevant UK safeguarding laws and guidance, including the Children Act 1989/2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children, the Care Act 2014, and Charity Commission requirements. We work in cooperation with local safeguarding bodies in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire to protect people from harm.

Our Commitment: RFA Beauty Foundation will protect children and adults at risk from abuse or neglect, take prompt action on any safeguarding concerns, and promote a safe, trusted environment within our charity. We are committed to preventing harm, responding effectively to any allegations, and empowering our service users by involving them in safeguarding plans wherever possible. We will ensure that safeguarding is a priority in all our activities, reflecting our belief that the wellbeing of mothers and their children is paramount to fulfilling our vision of helping families thrive.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

We have appointed a Designated Safeguarding Lead to oversee and coordinate safeguarding across the charity:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead: Maria Adegeye
- Position: Safeguarding Lead (Trustee)
- Email: info@rfabeautyfoundation.co.uk
- Telephone: 01782 899092

Maria Adegeye is the primary point of contact for ANY safeguarding concerns or queries relating to both children and adults at risk. All staff, volunteers, service users, and partners should report any safeguarding issues to the DSL without delay (see Reporting Procedures below). The DSL is responsible for implementing this policy, advising on safeguarding matters, and liaising with external agencies. In Maria's absence, concerns should be escalated to the Chair of Trustees or a deputy appointed by the Board.

Definitions of Abuse and Neglect

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and right to live safely, free from abuse and neglect. Abuse and neglect can occur in any context and often involve an abuse of power or trust. For the purposes of this policy, we use the following definitions aligned with statutory guidance and Charity Commission expectations:

- **Child:** Legally, a "child" is anyone under 18 years old. This policy covers all children and young people with whom we work or come into contact.
- **Adult at Risk:** An adult (18 or over) who has needs for care and support, is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and is unable to protect themselves because of those needs. This includes (but is not limited to) adults with disabilities, mental health needs, learning difficulties, the frail elderly, or those facing domestic abuse or other vulnerabilities. We sometimes refer to "adults at risk" as "vulnerable adults" in this policy.

Types of Abuse – Children: The main categories of child abuse, as defined in UK statutory guidance, are:

- **Physical Abuse:** Inflicting physical harm on a child. This includes hitting, shaking, throwing, beating, poisoning, burning or otherwise causing physical injury.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as bullying, shaming, threatening, isolating or rejecting a child. It harms a child's self-esteem and emotional development (for example, constant criticism, intimidation or exposure to domestic violence).
- **Sexual Abuse:** Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child understands or consents. This includes direct sexual contact, as well as non-contact activities (e.g. exposing a child to sexual content). Child sexual exploitation (CSE) – manipulating or coercing a child into sexual acts in exchange for something – is a form of sexual abuse.
- **Neglect:** The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or emotional needs, likely to result in serious impairment of health or development. This includes failing to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care or supervision.

Note: Witnessing domestic abuse is recognized as a form of harm to children – if a mother is being abused at home, her infant or child is also at risk of emotional and physical harm. Other specific risks to children include child trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and online exploitation; RFA Beauty Foundation is aware of these issues and will report any such concerns following national guidelines.

Types of Abuse – Adults at Risk: Adults can experience similar forms of abuse, with some additional categories defined in the Care Act 2014 :

- **Physical Abuse:** Any intentional use of force or violence – including hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication or restraint – that causes bodily harm or distress.
- **Domestic Abuse:** Any incident or pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening, violent or abusive behavior between adults who are (or have been) intimate partners or family members. Domestic abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual, or financial, and includes so-called "honour-based" violence.

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- **Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual activity where an adult at risk has not given consent, cannot consent, or is pressured into consenting. This includes rape, sexual assault, or sexual acts the person does not want or cannot understand .
 - **Psychological/Emotional Abuse:** Acts that cause emotional pain, fear or distress – e.g. verbal abuse, threats, humiliation, intimidation, isolation, coercive control or harassment .
 - **Financial or Material Abuse:** Misuse or theft of an adult’s money, property or assets. Examples include fraud, scamming, coercion in relation to financial affairs, or withholding access to funds .
 - **Neglect and Acts of Omission:** Failing to meet an adult’s basic needs. This includes ignoring medical, physical or care needs, not providing necessary food, shelter or care, or denying access to needed services .
 - **Self-Neglect:** When an adult neglects their own health or safety, such as not attending to personal hygiene, health, or home environment, to the extent that it poses a risk (e.g. hoarding behavior) .
 - **Discriminatory Abuse:** Harassment, unfair treatment or abuse targeting a person’s protected characteristics – such as age, disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or identity . This includes racist or sexist remarks or any form of hate crime.
 - **Organisational/Institutional Abuse:** Poor care or abuse that occurs within systems or institutions (e.g. care homes, hospitals, or even charities), through neglect or rigid regimes. It is the failure of an organization to provide appropriate care and safeguard people, often due to policies or practices that deny dignity, choice or independence .
 - **Modern Slavery:** Exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. This includes human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude, or slavery-like practices where adults are coerced, deceived and held in abusive conditions .

These definitions are in line with statutory guidance (Working Together 2018, Care Act 2014) and Charity Commission advice. Abuse can be a single act or repeated acts, and it can be perpetrated by anyone: family members, partners, people in positions of trust, peers, or strangers. All forms of abuse are unacceptable, and RFA Beauty Foundation will take every report seriously, whether the abuse is recent, ongoing, or occurred historically.

Safeguarding Procedures and Response

RFA Beauty Foundation has clear procedures to ensure concerns are reported and handled appropriately. All staff and volunteers are required to follow these steps whenever they have a safeguarding concern or if someone discloses abuse. Our procedures cover internal reporting, responding to emergencies, whistleblowing, and managing allegations against those within the charity.

Reporting Concerns or Disclosures

How to raise a concern: If any person (staff, volunteer, service user, or member of the public) has a concern that a child or vulnerable adult may be experiencing abuse or neglect, or if any safeguarding incident is disclosed, they should report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). You can report concerns in person, by phone, or in writing (email or an incident form). We encourage a culture of openness – no concern is too small to report. Remember that safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility and it is far better to report a concern that turns out to be unfounded than to overlook a potential abuse situation .

If someone discloses abuse to you (staff/volunteer):

- Listen calmly and attentively. Let them speak and do not interrupt or probe with many questions – allow them to share in their own words. Use active listening and show empathy.
- Reassure them that they did the right thing by telling you. Emphasize that what happened is not their fault and that they are right to seek help.
- Do NOT promise confidentiality or that you will keep secrets. Explain that you will need to share this information with the Safeguarding Lead (and possibly authorities) so that you can get them help and keep them safe.
- Record the details of the disclosure as soon as possible (see Recording section below). Note the date, time, those present, exactly what was said (in the person's own words), and any visible injuries or relevant observations.
- Report the disclosure immediately to the DSL. If the DSL (Maria) is not available, contact the Chair of Trustees or, if necessary, the local authorities directly (see external contacts below). Do not delay reporting.

Internal reporting process: The DSL will assess all concerns reported. This may include gathering a few more details from the reporter or the individual involved, only to the extent necessary to determine the appropriate action. The DSL will then decide on the next steps, which could include: managing the concern internally (with support or minor actions), seeking advice from or reporting to external agencies, or, where no grounds for concern are found, logging the issue and taking no further action. All steps will be documented by the DSL. We ensure that any actions prioritize the safety of the individual and are in line with local safeguarding procedures. Service users will be involved in decisions about their protection whenever it is safe and appropriate (especially for adults, we follow the principle of empowerment and Making Safeguarding Personal, seeking their wishes and consent where possible).

Confidentiality: We handle all safeguarding concerns with strict confidentiality, sharing information only on a “need-to-know” basis. This typically means only the DSL, relevant authorities, and if appropriate, those directly involved (e.g. a supervising manager or a social worker) will be informed. Information will not be shared with any other staff, volunteers, or third parties without proper authority. (See Information Sharing section below for details on how we balance confidentiality with safety.)

Emergency Situations (Immediate Danger)

If a child or adult is in immediate danger or needs urgent medical attention, dial 999 (Police or Ambulance) immediately. This includes situations such as: a person has sustained a serious injury, is at immediate risk of serious harm, or if a crime is in progress. Act to secure safety first. If you call emergency services, inform them of all critical information (location, nature of threat, individuals involved). After calling 999, as soon as it is safe, you must inform the DSL of the situation and actions taken.

For non-life-threatening but urgent situations, you can also call the Police non-emergency line at 101 (for example, if you suspect a crime has occurred but the perpetrator is not present). The key principle is: do not wait – protect the individual from harm and involve authorities right away if needed. Once the immediate crisis is handled by emergency services, our DSL will follow up with standard reporting procedures to social services or other agencies as appropriate.

How to Report Externally (Statutory Authorities)

Our DSL (or a delegated staff member in their absence) will report safeguarding concerns to the statutory authorities promptly, in line with local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. We follow the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire referral pathways for reporting abuse:

- **Reporting concerns about a Child:** If we have reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, the DSL will contact the local Children's Social Care services. In Stoke-on-Trent, referrals are made through the Integrated Front Door. We can call Stoke Children's Social Care at 01782 235100 (Monday–Thursday 8:30am–5:00pm, Friday 8:30am–4:30pm) . In Staffordshire (outside Stoke), the First Response number is 0800 1313 126 . Outside of normal hours, we will call the Emergency Duty Team at 0345 604 2886 which covers out-of-hours child protection for both Stoke and Staffordshire . We may also use the online reporting portal if appropriate. The DSL (or staff) will provide all known details about the child, the family, and the concern to the social worker. We cooperate fully with Children's Services and, if needed, the Police Child Protection Unit. If the concern involves an allegation against someone who works with children (including our staff/volunteers), the DSL will also inform the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) via the same Integrated Front Door contact (01782 235100) . The LADO will advise on managing allegations against adults in positions of trust (see below for our internal approach to such allegations).
- **Reporting concerns about an Adult at Risk:** If we believe an adult with care/support needs is being abused or neglected (or at risk of it), the DSL will raise a safeguarding alert to the local Adult Safeguarding team. In Stoke-on-Trent, contact the Adult Social Care Safeguarding Team at 0800 561 0015 (Mon–Fri 9:00am–5:00pm) . In Staffordshire, contact Adult Protection via 0345 604 2719 (Mon–Fri 9:00am–5:00pm) . Outside office hours for either, the Emergency Duty Service on 0345 604 2886 should be used . The DSL will give full details of the concern, the individual's circumstances, and any immediate action taken. We will normally seek the adult's consent to make the report, unless it is not safe or they lack capacity – however, we recognize that if an adult is being coerced or is unable to protect themselves, we may report without consent in their best interests (following the empowerment and proportionality principles). The local authority's Safeguarding team will then decide on any further investigation or action. RFA Beauty Foundation will support the adult at risk throughout the process, respecting their rights and wishes as much as possible.
- **Documenting external reports:** Whenever the DSL (or any staff) make a referral to an outside agency, they will document the date, time, person spoken to, and advice or actions given. This record is kept in the secure Safeguarding file.

Whistleblowing Policy

- We promote a culture of transparency and accountability where staff, volunteers, or others can raise concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing within the charity, especially relating to safeguarding, without fear of reprisal . All members of RFA Beauty Foundation's team are encouraged to voice any concerns they have about how safeguarding issues are being handled, or any suspicion that someone within the charity is not following proper procedures or may be harming a beneficiary.

Key points of our whistleblowing protocol:

- **Internal whistleblowing:** If you have concerns about the behavior of a colleague, volunteer, trustee or any practice within RFA Beauty Foundation that you feel is unsafe or improper, you should report this to the DSL or directly to the Chair of Trustees. This includes if you feel a reported safeguarding incident is not being addressed appropriately. The charity will treat such reports in confidence and investigate thoroughly. We guarantee that whistleblowers acting in good faith will not suffer any form of retribution or disadvantage for coming forward – even if the concern is not substantiated, your raising of it is appreciated and protected.
- **Escalating externally:** If you feel unable to report internally (e.g., your concern is about senior management, or you believe it has not been dealt with properly), you can report your concern to appropriate external authorities. This could include contacting the Charity Commission, the local authority safeguarding board, or the police. For concerns specifically about child safety in a charity, the NSPCC operates a Whistleblowing Advice Line (tel: 0800 028 0285) which staff can call for advice or to report a serious issue confidentially. We include this contact in our training materials and on posters.
- **Whistleblowing Policy:** RFA's detailed Whistleblowing Policy (available on request and in our staff handbook) outlines these procedures and provides contact details for external bodies. We ensure every team member is aware of it. We view any effort to silence or victimise whistleblowers as a serious disciplinary matter.

Remember: Speaking up early about a problem could prevent harm. We want an environment where everyone “feels able and empowered to report any suspicious or concerning behaviour”. Whistleblowing is a key part of keeping our charity safe and accountable.

Handling Allegations or Concerns Involving RFA Staff, Volunteers or Trustees

Allegations against people in our charity (or associated with it) are taken extremely seriously. This includes any situation where a staff member, volunteer, trustee, or someone acting on behalf of RFA Beauty Foundation is suspected of harming a child or adult, or otherwise behaving inappropriately in a way that poses a safeguarding risk. We have specific procedures to ensure such allegations are handled fairly, quickly, and in line with statutory guidance:

1. **Immediate Action – Ensure Safety:** If an allegation is made (for example, a service user discloses that a volunteer hurt them, or a staff member witnesses a colleague behaving abusively), the first priority is to ensure any child or adult at risk is safe and away from the person in question. If the individual is present, arrangements may be made to supervise or remove them from duty immediately, without prejudice, until further investigation. If a crime may have been committed (e.g. sexual assault or physical abuse), the police should be informed at once.
2. **Report to DSL/Chair:** Any allegation involving an RFA representative must be reported to the DSL and to the Chair of Trustees (or another senior trustee if the Chair or DSL is implicated). If the allegation is about the DSL themselves, staff should go directly to the Chair of Trustees. If the allegation is about the Chair or a trustee, the DSL will notify the rest of the Board and consider informing an external authority for investigation oversight.
3. **External Notification:** We will inform the appropriate external agencies within 24 hours of an allegation:

- For child-related allegations against a person in a position of trust, the DSL will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in Stoke-on-Trent . The LADO will advise on next steps, which may involve a strategy meeting with police and social services. We will not conduct any internal investigation of a child abuse allegation without first consulting the LADO/police, to avoid interfering with evidence.
 - For allegations involving adults at risk, we will inform the Adult Safeguarding Team at the local authority and seek their guidance. The police will be informed if a crime is alleged.
 - We will also notify our major funders or regulators as required (see “Oversight and Reporting” below). Serious incidents, especially any that result in suspension or media interest, will be reported to the Charity Commission as a Serious Incident Report .
- **Investigation and Outcome:** RFA Beauty Foundation will cooperate fully with any external investigation (police, social services, LADO). Internally, the Trustees may also commission a separate investigation (for example, a HR investigation) once cleared to do so by authorities. The accused person will usually be suspended from their role (without prejudice) pending the outcome, to ensure no contact with beneficiaries and protect their rights as well. Suspension is a neutral act to allow a fair inquiry. We will ensure support is offered to all parties – the person who raised the concern, any victim, and the person accused (who may need information on process or emotional support). After the investigation, appropriate action will be taken based on findings: this could include disciplinary action (up to dismissal) if the allegation is substantiated, or reinstatement with training/supervision if not substantiated (or if it was a misunderstanding that can be addressed). In any case, we seek to learn and improve from the incident.
 - **DBS Referral:** If an RFA staff member or volunteer is dismissed or removed from their role due to harming (or posing a risk of harm) to a child or vulnerable adult, or would have been removed had they not left, the charity will refer that person to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for consideration of barring, as required by law . We acknowledge our legal duty to make such referrals so that individuals who pose a safeguarding risk can be identified and barred from working with vulnerable groups in future.

Safer Recruitment Practices

RFA Beauty Foundation recognizes that robust recruitment procedures are a vital part of safeguarding, to prevent unsuitable individuals from working or volunteering with mothers, babies, or any vulnerable participants. We have adopted safer recruitment practices in line with national guidance . These include:

- **Commitment in Advertising:** All job adverts, volunteer role descriptions, and application packs include a clear statement of our commitment to safeguarding and that background checks will be conducted. For example: “RFA Beauty Foundation is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. All applicants will be subject to thorough screening.”
- **Application & Self-Disclosure:** Applicants must complete an application form including work history (with explanation of any gaps) . They are asked to declare any criminal convictions or relevant information. (We handle this information in line with GDPR and have a lawful basis for requesting it, as roles involve contact with vulnerable groups).

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- **Interviews:** We use structured interviews that include questions designed to probe candidates' attitudes toward safeguarding and working with vulnerable families. We ask scenario-based questions to gauge how they might handle child protection or difficult situations, and look for values alignment with our ethos (e.g. empathy, appropriate boundaries, commitment to empowerment).
 - **Identity & Right to Work Checks:** We verify each candidate's identity (photo ID such as passport or driver's license) and their right to work/volunteer in the UK . We also require proof of relevant qualifications or certifications where appropriate.
 - **References:** We always obtain at least two references for staff and long-term volunteers, including one from the most recent employer or organization. We specifically ask referees about the candidate's suitability to work with children/vulnerable adults and any safeguarding concerns. Any discrepancies or vague feedback is followed up by phone. We do not accept unsighted/open "to whom it may concern" references.
 - **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks:** All staff and volunteers who will be in contact with children or adults at risk are subject to an appropriate DBS check before they start unsupervised work .
 - Roles involving direct work with families (e.g. support workers, project leaders, anyone in our "Mother's Nest" sessions) require an Enhanced DBS check with Barred List for working with children and adults. The level of check is determined by a risk assessment of the role . We follow DBS eligibility guidelines and use the DBS online update service where possible for ongoing monitoring .
 - For trustees and certain administrative roles that may have less direct contact, a Basic DBS check is obtained at minimum (unless they qualify for enhanced). We also check that trustees are not disqualified from holding that position (e.g. due to certain convictions) by obtaining the relevant declarations .
 - Where someone has lived or worked overseas and DBS checks might not cover that period, we obtain an overseas police check or Certificate of Good Conduct as needed .
 - **Safeguarding Interview/Induction:** Before confirming appointment, candidates meet with the DSL or senior staff to review our safeguarding policy and code of conduct. They must read and sign an acknowledgment that they understand our safeguarding standards and will abide by them . This is part of their induction.
 - **Probation and Supervision:** New staff/volunteers undergo a probationary period where their conduct is monitored closely. They are never left alone with service users until all checks are completed and we are satisfied of their suitability. We provide extra supervision and support during the initial period to observe their values in action.
 - **Ongoing Checks:** We re-check DBS for staff/volunteers periodically (at least every 3 years or use the Update Service). We also require staff/volunteers to promptly disclose any new police matters (arrests, charges, etc.) that arise during their tenure. Any issues arising that call into question a person's suitability will lead to a risk assessment and potentially suspension pending investigation.

Safeguarding Training and Awareness

Training is critical to ensuring that our team has the knowledge and skills to safeguard children and adults effectively. RFA Beauty Foundation is committed to providing regular and comprehensive safeguarding training for all staff, volunteers, and trustees. Our training commitments include:

- **Induction Training:** Every new staff member, volunteer or trustee receives a safeguarding induction when they join. This covers our Safeguarding Policy, how to recognize signs of abuse, how to respond and report, the code of conduct, and key contacts (DSL, authorities). They are given a copy of the policy and must sign to confirm they understand their duties. We address both child protection and adult protection, highlighting any differences in procedures.
- **Formal Safeguarding Training Courses:** All those in regular contact with families (and all trustees) are required to complete a safeguarding training course within their first 3 months. We utilize reputable training providers (such as NSPCC, local Safeguarding Boards, or accredited online courses) to deliver Level 1 Child Protection and Adult Safeguarding basics. The DSL maintains a training log to ensure compliance.
- **Advanced Training for DSL and Key Staff:** The DSL (Maria) undertakes advanced multi-agency safeguarding training on a regular basis (typically every 2 years) to keep up to date with best practices, legal changes, and local procedures. If we have deputy safeguarding leads or particular project leaders, they also receive higher-level training or briefings (for example, training on managing allegations, safer recruitment, trauma-informed care, etc.).
- **Refresher Training:** We conduct annual refresher training (at least once every year) for all staff, volunteers and trustees. This may be an in-house workshop or e-learning module that reviews key policies and updates. We also circulate safeguarding updates throughout the year – for example, changes in law (such as updates to Working Together guidance), learning from any incidents or case reviews, or specific topics like online safety or domestic abuse awareness. Our aim is to keep knowledge fresh and remind everyone of their responsibilities.
- **Specialized Training:** Where relevant, we arrange additional training on specific issues pertinent to our service users. For example, training on domestic violence and coercive control, mental health first aid, trauma-informed support approaches, or cultural competency (given the diverse backgrounds of our beneficiaries). This helps staff respond better to the situations our mothers and infants might face.
- **Volunteer Briefings:** Volunteers who help occasionally (e.g. at events or packing kits) receive a short briefing on safeguarding each time and are always supervised. We ensure at least one trained staff member is present in any activity involving children or vulnerable adults.
- **Recording and Testing Knowledge:** We keep records of all training completed. We also use team meetings to pose scenario questions or mini-quizzes to ensure ongoing awareness. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item in staff meetings, so it stays at the forefront.
- **Culture of Learning:** We encourage staff and volunteers to ask questions and seek clarity on any safeguarding topic they are unsure about. The DSL is available for consult at any time. Posters and quick-reference guides (like the “5 Rs” of safeguarding: Recognise, Respond, Report, Record, Refer) are displayed in our office to reinforce training content in everyday work.

Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Sharing information appropriately is vital for effective safeguarding. RFA Beauty Foundation is committed to handling personal information about service users and safeguarding cases with great care, in line with data protection laws (GDPR), while also ensuring that important information is shared lawfully to protect people from harm. We follow the principle that the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult overrides the need for confidentiality in safeguarding matters, as permitted by law.

Key points of our information-sharing protocol:

- **Consent and Transparency:** Wherever possible, we seek consent from the individual (or parent/carer, as appropriate) before sharing information with other agencies. For example, if a mother confides a difficulty, we would explain the benefits of referring her to a support agency and ask her permission to do so. For adults with capacity, their wishes are respected – we follow a “no decision about me without me” approach in line with empowerment. However, if we believe that seeking consent would increase the risk to someone, or if consent is refused but there remains a serious risk of harm, we may share information without consent. We will only do this in strict accordance with safeguarding guidelines (e.g. Working Together and the Care Act guidance) and will record our rationale. In general, we are transparent with service users: we inform them at first contact that we have a safeguarding policy and may need to share information with authorities if we believe someone is at risk.
- **Necessary, Proportionate, Relevant:** When sharing information, we ensure that we share only the information that is necessary for the purpose of protecting the individual, and only with those who need to know it. We will share factual, accurate, and relevant details – not gossip or personal opinions. For example, if referring a case to social services, we provide a clear account of what was observed or disclosed, the individuals involved, and any immediate actions taken. We include the minimum personal data required (name, age, contact info, etc.) and not extraneous details.
- **Secure Handling:** All records containing personal or sensitive information are kept securely. Paper records (e.g. incident report forms) are stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to the DSL and the Director. Electronic records are password-protected and access-limited. When sharing documents with external agencies, we use secure methods (encrypted email or secure portals) whenever possible. We comply with our Data Protection Policy regarding storage and retention of records. Typically, safeguarding records are retained for a significant period (at least 6 years or as advised by our safeguarding board) due to the potential need for future reference, even if the service user leaves.
- **Inter-agency Cooperation:** We work on the assumption that effective safeguarding often requires multi-agency collaboration. We will share information with the local authority, police, health services, or other relevant agencies without delay when it is necessary to protect a child or adult. We follow the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent multi-agency information sharing protocols. If another agency requests information from us as part of a safeguarding enquiry, we will verify their identity/legitimacy and then comply, as long as it's lawful and in the individual's interests to do so. We recognize that charities are expected to cooperate with statutory bodies during investigations.

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- **Confidentiality to whom?:** Within the charity, we stress that confidentiality must not be confused with secrecy. Staff and volunteers should not promise to keep secrets, and they must share safeguarding concerns with the DSL. Beyond that, information is only shared internally on a need-to-know basis. This means a volunteer who raised a concern might be informed that action is being taken, but they will not receive full details if they don't need them. Gossiping or sharing details of a case out of curiosity is strictly forbidden and can lead to disciplinary action.
 - **Support and Privacy:** We handle sensitive information about our service users with respect. For example, if a mother discloses historic abuse, that information is kept confidential and only used to help safeguard her and her child – perhaps by tailoring our support or referring her to counselling. We do not label or treat service users differently beyond what is needed for safety. We aim to build trust, so women feel safe to share concerns with us knowing we will handle their information professionally.

Record-Keeping, Reporting and Referral Mechanisms

Accurate and prompt record-keeping is an essential part of safeguarding. RFA Beauty Foundation maintains a clear system for recording concerns, actions, and outcomes, ensuring we have a documented audit trail for all safeguarding issues. Good records help us monitor cases, share information with other agencies, and learn lessons.

Our recording and reporting mechanisms include:

- **Incident Reporting Form:** We use a standardized Safeguarding Incident/Concern Report Form for logging any concern or disclosure. (See Appendix for template.) Staff or volunteers who raise a concern are expected to fill out this form as soon as possible after the event (with assistance from the DSL if needed). The form captures key information: name of child/adult, date, time, location of incident, details of what was observed or said (with direct quotes when possible), names of people involved, and any immediate actions taken. It also has a section for the DSL to document follow-up actions and decisions. This form ensures we don't miss important details. Even if a concern seems minor, completing a form helps build a bigger picture if there are repeated issues.
- **Confidential Safeguarding Log:** The DSL maintains a confidential Safeguarding Log (sometimes called a Cause for Concern register). Every incident form or concern is logged with a case reference, date, individuals, summary of concern, and status/outcome. This log is kept securely. It allows the DSL and Trustees to review all concerns in aggregate – to spot patterns (e.g. multiple low-level concerns about one family or staff member), and to ensure proper closure of each case. The log is reviewed periodically by the DSL and the designated safeguarding trustee to ensure all necessary steps have been taken in each case.
- **Referral Process:** When a decision is made to refer a concern to external agencies (children's social care, adult safeguarding team, police, etc.), the DSL documents the referral details: when and how it was made, who it was made to, and any reference numbers or advice given. Copies of any written referrals (like a multi-agency referral form) are kept on file. We also note any feedback from the authorities (e.g. "accepted for assessment" or "no further action"). If no response is received within a reasonable time, the DSL will follow up proactively. We persist in raising concerns if we still believe the person is at risk, even if an initial referral did not result in action – we will escalate or re-refer if the situation worsens.

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- **Internal Reporting to Trustees:** Serious safeguarding cases (for instance, those reported to police or social services) are reported to the Chair of Trustees immediately by the DSL. Additionally, the Board of Trustees receives regular anonymized reports on safeguarding. In every quarterly board meeting, safeguarding is on the agenda. The DSL provides a summary of number of concerns raised, number of referrals made, any ongoing serious cases, and general themes (without identifying individuals' names unless necessary for governance). This ensures the Trustees have oversight and can allocate resources or interventions as needed. The Board also reviews whether all required referrals have been made (for example, to DBS or Charity Commission) and that policies were followed. This aligns with best practice for governance oversight .
 - **Incident Reporting to Funders/Regulators:** In line with funder requirements and Charity Commission guidance, RFA Beauty Foundation will report serious incidents to relevant parties. A serious incident is typically one which resulted in significant harm to a beneficiary, or an allegation against our staff/volunteers, or any situation that might pose reputational risk to the charity. We will complete a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission if criteria are met (following their guidance on what to report) . We will also inform major funders like The National Lottery Community Fund and Henry Smith Charity if a serious safeguarding issue arises in a project they fund (as required under grant terms) . We aim to be transparent and proactive in such communications, demonstrating that we are handling the situation responsibly.
 - **Storage and Retention:** All safeguarding records (incident forms, referral copies, meeting notes, etc.) are stored securely as noted. Access is restricted to DSL and the CEO (if applicable) or Chair. We retain records at least until the youngest child involved turns 25, or for 7 years in adult cases, or longer if advised due to ongoing relevance. Electronic records are backed up securely. When disposing of old records, we shred or permanently delete them. We also abide by any specific instructions from authorities about record-keeping in particular cases (e.g., preserving evidence).
 - **Monitoring and Review of Cases:** The DSL regularly reviews open cases to ensure follow-up actions have been completed. We do not close a case until we're satisfied that risks have been mitigated or handed off appropriately. In complex cases, the DSL might call multi-agency meetings or case discussions (especially if multiple agencies or charities are involved in the family's support) – we document these discussions and outcomes.
 - **Incident Report Template Availability:** The Safeguarding Incident Form template is available to all staff and volunteers (provided in induction and also kept in our office and via our shared drive). We train staff on how to fill it out. A copy of the template is attached to this policy (Appendix) for reference, and additional copies can be requested from the DSL at any time.

Oversight, Quality Assurance, and Policy Review

Governance and oversight of safeguarding at RFA Beauty Foundation is taken seriously at the highest level of the charity. Our trustees and leadership monitor the implementation of this policy and ensure continuous improvement. We also commit to regular reviews of the policy itself to keep it up-to-date and effective.

- **Trustee Responsibility:** The Board of Trustees has ultimate accountability for safeguarding in the charity. Safeguarding is a standing item in trustee meetings and is included in our risk register. The board has appointed a Lead Safeguarding Trustee (currently the Chair or another designated trustee) who works closely with the DSL to monitor safeguarding practice. This trustee receives reports on any significant concerns and may conduct spot checks or ask questions to assure that procedures are followed. The trustees ensure that sufficient resources (time, training, budget) are allocated to safeguarding efforts. They also set the tone for a safe culture by actively promoting safeguarding and ensuring it is “everyone’s business” .
- **Internal Audit and Checks:** We periodically carry out internal reviews of our safeguarding practice. For example, once a year the DSL and Safeguarding Trustee may audit a sample of case records to check that actions were taken promptly and appropriately . They may also gather feedback from service users and staff on whether they feel safe and know how to raise concerns . Any learnings from these audits (e.g., need for additional training or tweaks in procedure) are documented and acted upon.
- **Review of Policy:** This Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed at least annually and more frequently if needed . The next formal review is due by (insert date one year from now). The review will be led by the DSL and Safeguarding Trustee, and will consider: changes in legislation or local procedures, feedback from implementation, any incidents or “near misses” in the past year, and best practices promoted by safeguarding authorities or funders. We also commit to reviewing the policy whenever a major incident occurs – after any serious case, we will do a “lessons learned” exercise and update the policy/procedures if improvements are identified .
- **Approval and Updates:** Any revisions to the policy must be approved by the Board of Trustees. We track versions of the policy and communicate changes to all staff, volunteers, and relevant stakeholders. Everyone in the team will be required to read and acknowledge the updated policy whenever significant changes are made . We also share updates with service users in an accessible way if it significantly affects how they report or receive support.
- **Implementation Assurance:** We ensure the policy is not just a document but is actively implemented (“put into practice” per Charity Commission guidance) . Strategies for this include: regular training (as described), supervision meetings where safeguarding is discussed, asking service users if they know how to raise concerns, and unannounced observations of program sessions to ensure safe practices. The trustees receive confirmation that these activities occur. The Henry Smith Charity expects that safeguarding policies are embedded across service delivery and regularly discussed at governance level , which we fulfill through these mechanisms.
- **External Standards:** We align our safeguarding oversight with external standards such as the Charity Commission’s safeguarding guidance and the expectations of funders like the National Lottery. For instance, the National Lottery Community Fund expects grant holders to “promote a culture of safeguarding; keep people safe; respond to safeguarding incidents; have a tailored policy; and report serious incidents” – we use these as benchmarks for our own performance.

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- **Reporting to Regulators and Funders:** As noted, we will report significant safeguarding matters to the Charity Commission and funders. We see this as part of oversight – being transparent and accountable externally. We also comply with any Safeguarding Adults Board or Safeguarding Children Partnership requirements for reporting (for example, contributing to Safeguarding Adult Reviews or Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews if ever requested).
 - **Continuous Improvement:** Safeguarding is an evolving field, and we strive for a cycle of continuous improvement. We keep an eye on new developments (e.g., new government guidance, emerging risks such as online safety issues) and update our training and policy accordingly. We welcome feedback from anyone – staff, volunteers, service users, or partner agencies – on how we can improve our safeguarding. This collaborative, learning approach reflects our ethos of empowerment and community: we do not assume we have it perfect, we continuously seek to do better in protecting those we serve.

Best Practice Commitments and Funder Expectations

RFA Beauty Foundation understands that major funders and regulatory bodies expect us to exemplify best practice in safeguarding. We are committed to meeting – and where possible exceeding – these expectations as part of our promise to keep people safe.

Some key best practice commitments include:

- **Aligning with Funder Safeguarding Standards:** We have reviewed the safeguarding expectations of funders such as The National Lottery Community Fund and The Henry Smith Charity, and ensured our policies address their requirements. For example, Henry Smith Charity expects partners to have a Designated Safeguarding Lead, proper training for all, regular policy reviews, and reporting procedures – all of which are covered in this policy. The National Lottery expects a “culture of safeguarding” and prompt incident handling; we foster this through training and leadership oversight. We will notify funders of any serious safeguarding issues in projects they fund (if permissible by law) and work with them openly. We recognize that funders may ask for evidence of our safeguarding measures when we apply for or manage grants, and we are prepared to provide policies, training records, and even facilitate site visits to demonstrate our commitment.
- **Publicly Available Policy:** In line with best practice, we make this Safeguarding Policy available to the public. A copy will be published on our website and printed copies are available at our service sites. We communicate to service users that we have a safeguarding policy and they can request to see it. Making it public not only fulfills funder requirements but also increases trust with the community by showing transparency.
- **User-Friendly Information:** While this full policy is detailed, we also provide a user-friendly summary for the women and families we support (e.g., a leaflet or poster in our community center) highlighting key points: our commitment to safety, how they can report concerns, and that we will support them.

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- **Embedding Safeguarding Day-to-Day:** Safeguarding is built into our daily operations. For example, we have codes of conduct for interacting with children (like not being alone in closed spaces with a child, appropriate touch, use of photos etc.), and safe environment guidelines (ensuring venues are child-friendly and free from hazards). Staff and volunteers are reminded of these practical measures often. We encourage a supportive atmosphere where staff can openly discuss dilemmas and share learnings. This proactive approach is part of maintaining a strong safeguarding culture, which funders expect and which ultimately benefits those we serve.
 - **Empowerment and Trauma-Informed Practice:** As a user-led and trauma-informed charity, we incorporate those principles into safeguarding. This is also recognized as best practice in working with vulnerable groups. For instance, we practice trauma-informed safeguarding – understanding that a mother who is a survivor of abuse may respond in certain ways, so we handle her case with extra care and collaboration, often involving specialized agencies for support. We also honor the voice of the service user: in adult safeguarding, this aligns with Making Safeguarding Personal, ensuring the adult's own outcomes and choices are central. In child safeguarding, we seek the parent's partnership and the child's perspective appropriate to their age. We avoid paternalistic approaches; instead, we empower families to be part of the solution, which can lead to better outcomes.
 - **Partnership Working:** We know we cannot do safeguarding alone. We actively participate in local safeguarding networks, share information appropriately, and seek expertise when needed. Our collaboration with other organizations (for example, referrals to Women's Aid for domestic violence, or working with our sister charity Ark of Hope for housing needs) means we contribute to a holistic safety net for the family. We aim to follow the protocols of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Boards and be a valued partner in safeguarding in our community.
 - **Serious Case Reviews and Learning:** If ever a critical incident involves our charity, we will fully cooperate with any Safeguarding Adults Review or Child Safeguarding Practice Review. We would treat it as an opportunity to learn and improve, not to defend ourselves. Internally, we debrief any incidents or near-misses and adjust practices accordingly. We also keep an eye on published case reviews nationally to glean lessons that might apply to our work.

Signposting to External Agencies and Support

RFA Beauty Foundation is part of a broader network of care in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire. We recognize the importance of signposting women and families to external sources of help, both for safeguarding and for general support. Below are key agencies and resources we align with or recommend:

- **Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board (SSASPB):** This board coordinates local adult safeguarding strategy. We align our policies with SSASPB guidance and procedures, ensuring our actions fit into the wider multi-agency framework. The SSASPB website (www.ssaspb.org.uk) provides information on how adult safeguarding works in our area. If you are a member of the public with a concern about an adult, you can find instructions there or use the contact numbers we've listed above. RFA participates in training or forums provided by SSASPB when possible to stay updated.
- **Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board / Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership:** These bodies (often referred to as the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership) publish child protection procedures that we follow. The Stoke Safeguarding Children website (safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk) has details on reporting concerns and local support.

- **NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children):** The NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000 is a free national service that anyone can call if they're concerned about a child, need child protection advice, or want to report abuse. NSPCC can offer guidance and take reports anonymously. We display the NSPCC number on our parent bulletin board. We also make use of NSPCC resources and training materials to strengthen our practice. ChildLine (0800 1111) is the NSPCC's helpline for children and young people themselves – we would share this with any older children/teens we come across who might need someone confidential to talk to.
 - **Women's Aid / Domestic Abuse Support:** Many mothers we support might be survivors of domestic abuse. We frequently signpost or refer women to specialist domestic violence agencies, as part of safeguarding them. Stoke-on-Trent Women's Aid and services like Arch North Staffs can provide refuge accommodation, legal advocacy, and counseling. The National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247 (run by Refuge) is a 24-hour number we give out for immediate advice on escaping abuse. Our partnerships allow a warm handover when needed – for example, if a mother discloses abuse, with her consent we will call our contact at Women's Aid to arrange support. Domestic abuse not only endangers the mother but also the child; by engaging professionals in that field, we help protect the whole family.
 - **Local Authority Social Services:** Aside from safeguarding departments, we might direct families to general social services for help. For instance, if a mother is struggling with mental health or disability and needs an assessment, or if a family needs Early Help services for children, we help them contact the relevant teams. Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council have family support services that can be accessed via the same "Front Door" as safeguarding referrals.
 - **Police (Staffordshire Police):** In emergencies, we encourage calling 999. For non-emergencies, local police can be reached at 101. The police have dedicated safeguarding units for children and vulnerable adults. We work with the police if needed (for example, if a crime has been committed against a service user). They also offer prevention advice – we've had community officers speak at our sessions about online safety and personal safety, which we may do again as needed.
 - **Healthcare Services:** Health visitors, midwives, and GP surgeries are key allies in safeguarding young children. We often signpost mothers to their GP or health visitor if we notice health or developmental concerns in the baby. We maintain links with local health clinics; for instance, if a baby we see seems malnourished or a mother shows signs of postnatal depression (which is a risk factor for safeguarding), with consent we will connect them to healthcare professionals. In urgent mental health crises, we have information for the Staffordshire Mental Health Helpline or crisis team.
 - **Other Support Charities:** We collaborate with and refer to many community partners.
- A few examples:**
- - Ark of Hope Foundation (our sister organization) – for housing support, particularly if a mother is homeless or in unsafe housing.
 - Local Foodbanks and Baby Banks – if a family needs additional food or baby supplies beyond what we provide, we signpost to Stoke-on-Trent Foodbank or "Blessings" Baby Bank. This ensures no child goes without essentials (which itself is a safeguarding matter in terms of neglect prevention).
 - Counseling Services – e.g., Savana in Stoke (for sexual abuse survivors), or local perinatal mental health support groups.

Staffordshire Cares / Stoke Community Directory – these directories help find support for various needs (housing, disability, etc.).

Approval and Review: This Safeguarding Policy was approved by the RFA Beauty Foundation Board of Trustees and will be reviewed yearly, or sooner if there are significant changes in guidance or a serious incident occurs. All staff, volunteers, and trustees will be required to adhere to this policy. We stand united in our commitment: to provide a safe, supportive environment where vulnerable mothers and their babies can thrive, free from abuse or harm.

Appendix A – Key Contacts & Referral Pathways (RFA Beauty Foundation)

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Name: Maria Adegeye

Email: info@rfabeautyfoundation.co.uk

Tel: 01782 899092

Emergency services (immediate danger): 999

Police (non-emergency): 101

NHS 111 (urgent medical advice): 11

LADO (allegations about people in positions of trust – children):

- Stoke-on-Trent LADO via Integrated Front Door: 01782 235100

National helplines:

- NSPCC Helpline (adults worried about a child): 0808 800 5000
- Childline (for children/young people): 0800 1111
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247
- Modern Slavery Helpline: 08000 121 700

Local partnerships:

- SSASPB (Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board): www.ssaspb.org.uk
- Stoke/Staffs Safeguarding Children Partnership websites: <https://www.staffsscp.org.uk/>

Appendix B – Safeguarding Incident / Concern Report Form

Case Ref (assigned by DSL): _____ Date/Time of concern: //____ :

Person at risk

- Name: _____ DOB/Age: _____
- Address (or location): _____
- Parent/Carer (if child): _____ Contact: _____

Reporter (you)

- Name/Role: _____ Phone/Email: _____

Nature of concern (tick): ☐ Child ☐ Adult at risk ☐ Domestic abuse ☐ Neglect ☐ Physical
☐ Sexual ☐ Emotional/Psychological ☐ Financial ☐ Self-neglect ☐ Online safety ☐ Other:

Details of what happened / was disclosed (use the person's words where possible):

Injuries/Indicators observed (describe & location; attach body map if used):

Immediate actions taken (incl. 999/first aid/supervision changes):

Other people present / witnesses: _____

Consent & information sharing (adults):

- ☐ Consent obtained to share ☐ Not obtained (reason): _____

Reporter signature: _____ Date: //____

FOR DSL USE ONLY

- Decision: ☐ Record only ☐ Monitor ☐ Early Help ☐ Refer to Children's Social Care ☐
Refer to Adult

Appendix 4: Body Map

This body map is just a tool to log physical injuries seen or reported, it IS NOT a substitute for a professional medical record.

