

Rutland Therapists

RT004 – Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy

Policy Name: RT004 – Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy

Policy Owner: Rutland Therapists

Written and Agreed: August 2026

Review Date: August 2027

1. Purpose

Rutland Therapists is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all clients and recognises its responsibility to protect children, young people and adults at risk from abuse, neglect, exploitation and avoidable harm.

This policy sets out how therapists working with Rutland Therapists will recognise, respond to, record and report safeguarding concerns while respecting clients' rights, dignity, autonomy and confidentiality.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Therapists will act upon concerns appropriately and will not assume that another person or organisation has already taken action.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all therapists working with Rutland Therapists and applies to:

- adults;
- adults at risk;
- children and young people under 18;
- face-to-face therapy;
- online and telephone therapy;
- information received directly from a client;
- concerns arising through observation or therapeutic work;
- information received from parents, carers or third parties; and
- concerns relating to the safety of another person disclosed during therapy.

3. Safeguarding Principles

Rutland Therapists will:

- prioritise the welfare and safety of clients and others where there is a risk of serious harm;
- listen to and take safeguarding concerns seriously;
- respond proportionately to the nature and level of risk;
- respect client autonomy and involve clients in decisions wherever safe and appropriate;
- maintain confidentiality wherever possible while recognising that information may need to be shared to protect someone from serious harm;
- share only information that is relevant and necessary;
- maintain clear and accurate records of safeguarding concerns and decisions;
- seek appropriate professional consultation or supervision where circumstances allow; and
- act without unnecessary delay where someone may be at immediate risk.

4. Children and Young People

For the purposes of this policy, a child or young person is anyone under the age of 18.

The welfare and safety of the child or young person will be a primary consideration when safeguarding concerns arise.

Therapists working with children and young people will maintain appropriate knowledge of safeguarding responsibilities and will consider the child's:

- age and developmental stage;
- level of understanding;
- capacity to consent;
- wishes and feelings;
- family and care arrangements;
- communication needs;
- disability or additional needs;
- vulnerability and individual circumstances; and
- best interests.

Gillick competence will be considered where relevant when working with children under 16.

Parental responsibility, consent and the involvement of parents or carers will be considered alongside the child's competence, confidentiality, best interests and safeguarding needs.

Safeguarding arrangements will also be reflected, where applicable, within the **Children & Young People Counselling Contract, Parent/Carer Agreement and Child/Young Person Agreement**.

5. Adults at Risk

An adult may be at increased risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation because of their individual circumstances and their ability to protect themselves from harm.

This may include, but is not limited to, circumstances involving:

- physical or mental illness;
- disability;
- learning disability;
- cognitive impairment;
- age-related needs;
- dependence upon another person for care or support;
- domestic abuse;
- coercion or controlling behaviour;
- financial dependence;
- isolation;
- exploitation; or
- other circumstances that may reduce the person's ability to protect themselves from harm.

Therapists will not assume that an adult lacks capacity simply because they are considered vulnerable or at risk.

Where possible and appropriate, an adult client's wishes, autonomy and consent will be respected when considering safeguarding action.

Where there is concern about a person's capacity to make a particular decision, the therapist will act in accordance with relevant legal and professional requirements and seek appropriate advice where necessary.

6. Types of Abuse and Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding concerns may include, but are not limited to:

- physical abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- emotional or psychological abuse;
- neglect or acts of omission;
- domestic abuse;
- coercive or controlling behaviour;
- financial or material abuse;
- discriminatory abuse;
- organisational or institutional abuse;
- exploitation;
- sexual exploitation;
- criminal exploitation;
- modern slavery;
- trafficking;
- online or digital abuse;
- bullying or harassment;
- self-neglect;
- radicalisation; and
- harmful behaviour towards or by a child, young person or adult at risk.

Therapists should remain alert to patterns, changes in behaviour or circumstances and information arising within therapy which may indicate abuse, exploitation, neglect or significant risk.

7. Responding to a Disclosure or Concern

Where a client discloses abuse, neglect or another safeguarding concern, the therapist should:

- listen carefully and remain calm;
- take the disclosure seriously;
- allow the person to describe what has happened in their own words;
- not investigate the allegation themselves;
- remain mindful of the agreed limits of confidentiality and, where a safeguarding concern may require information to be shared, discuss this openly with the client wherever safe and appropriate;
- explain, where appropriate, what may need to happen next, including any safeguarding action that may need to be considered, and involve the client in those discussions wherever safe and appropriate;
- consider whether the client, or another person, is at immediate or ongoing risk of harm and whether any urgent action is required to support their safety;
- work collaboratively with the client, wherever safe and appropriate, to understand their wishes and determine the most appropriate course of action;
- support the client to participate in decisions about safeguarding action wherever possible;
- make an accurate record of the concern and any action taken; and

Where possible, the therapist should distinguish clearly in their records between what the client has said, what another person has reported, their own observations and their professional assessment.

Where safeguarding action or information sharing is necessary without the client's agreement, the therapist should, wherever safe and appropriate, explain the reasons for this and what action will be taken.

8. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Safeguarding information will normally be treated confidentially.

However, confidentiality is not absolute.

Information may need to be shared without a client's consent where this is necessary and proportionate to protect the client, a child or another person from serious harm, or where disclosure is required by law.

Where safe and appropriate, the therapist will discuss the need to share information with the client before doing so.

Where this is not appropriate, for example because doing so could increase risk, compromise the safety of another person or interfere with a safeguarding response, information may be shared without prior discussion.

Only relevant and necessary information should be shared with appropriate persons or agencies.

Safeguarding disclosures and information sharing will be managed in accordance with **RT003 – Confidentiality Policy**.

9. Immediate Risk and Emergencies

Where a therapist believes that a client or another person is at immediate risk of serious harm, safeguarding action should not be delayed in order to obtain supervision or consent.

Depending upon the circumstances, this may include contacting:

- emergency services;
- children's social care;
- adult safeguarding services;
- police; or
- another appropriate statutory service.

Where an online client is at immediate risk, the therapist should use the location and emergency information available in accordance with **RT007 – Online Therapy Policy**.

The therapist should record the circumstances, information considered, action taken and rationale for their decision.

10. Self-Harm and Suicide Risk

Expressions of self-harm or suicidal thoughts will be taken seriously and considered individually.

Therapists should explore the nature and level of risk appropriately within their professional competence, including relevant factors such as:

- current thoughts or intentions;
- immediacy of risk;
- plans or access to means where relevant;
- previous behaviour;
- protective factors;
- available support; and
- any risk to other people.

The existence of suicidal thoughts or self-harm does not automatically require disclosure of confidential information.

Where the therapist believes there is an immediate or serious risk of harm, proportionate action may be taken to protect the client, including contacting emergency or other appropriate services where necessary.

Therapists should seek supervision or appropriate professional consultation when circumstances allow and should clearly record their assessment, decisions, actions and rationale.

11. Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control

Therapists should be alert to signs or disclosures of domestic abuse, coercive control and other forms of interpersonal abuse.

The safety and wishes of an adult client should be considered alongside any risk to children, adults at risk or other people.

Where children are present within a household affected by domestic abuse, the therapist should consider whether there are safeguarding concerns for those children.

Where a disclosure indicates an immediate or serious risk, the therapist will consider appropriate safeguarding action in accordance with this policy.

12. Safeguarding Concerns Involving Children

Where there is reasonable cause for concern that a child may be experiencing, or be at risk of, abuse, neglect or significant harm, the therapist will consider referral to the appropriate children's safeguarding service.

The child or young person's wishes and views should be considered in accordance with their age and understanding, but their consent is not always required before safeguarding information is shared.

Parents or carers should normally be informed of safeguarding action where appropriate.

They should not be informed before a referral or disclosure where doing so may:

- place the child or another person at greater risk;
- compromise an investigation;
- result in evidence being destroyed or altered; or
- otherwise be contrary to the child's safety or best interests.

Where uncertainty exists and there is no immediate danger, the therapist may seek safeguarding advice or consultation without unnecessarily identifying the client.

13. Safeguarding Concerns Involving Adults at Risk

Where an adult may be experiencing or at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation, the therapist will consider:

- the nature and seriousness of the concern;
- the adult's wishes;
- their ability to understand and make relevant decisions;
- whether other people are also at risk;
- whether there is an immediate risk of serious harm; and
- whether information should be shared with adult safeguarding or another appropriate service.

Where the adult has capacity, their wishes should normally carry significant weight.

There may nevertheless be circumstances in which information needs to be shared without consent, including where another person is at risk, there is an immediate risk of serious harm or disclosure is otherwise required or justified by law.

14. Allegations or Concerns About a Therapist

Any allegation that a therapist working with Rutland Therapists has harmed, abused, exploited or behaved inappropriately towards a child, young person or adult at risk will be taken seriously.

The therapist who is the subject of an allegation should not attempt to investigate the matter themselves.

Appropriate safeguarding procedures will be followed and, depending upon the circumstances, this may include contacting:

- the relevant safeguarding authority;
- police;
- the therapist's professional body;
- professional indemnity insurer; or
- another appropriate organisation.

Where an allegation relates to work with a child or young person, consideration will be given to whether the matter meets the threshold for referral to the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or equivalent safeguarding process.

15. Record Keeping

Safeguarding concerns and actions must be recorded clearly, accurately and promptly.

Records should include, where relevant:

- the date and time of the concern or disclosure;
- the person's own words where significant;
- relevant observations;
- the nature of the concern;
- assessment of immediate risk;
- advice or consultation sought;
- decisions made;
- information shared and with whom;
- actions taken;
- the rationale for decisions; and
- any agreed follow-up action.

Safeguarding records will be stored securely and handled in accordance with **RT003 – Confidentiality Policy** and applicable data protection requirements.

16. Supervision and Professional Consultation

Safeguarding issues should be discussed within clinical supervision where appropriate.

Therapists should seek additional safeguarding or professional advice where they are uncertain about the appropriate course of action.

Supervision or consultation must not delay necessary action where there is an immediate risk of serious harm.

Responsibility for safeguarding decisions remains with the individual therapist and cannot be transferred to a supervisor.

17. Safeguarding Training and Professional Development

Therapists working with Rutland Therapists are responsible for maintaining safeguarding knowledge and competence appropriate to the clients with whom they work.

Therapists will:

- undertake appropriate safeguarding training and regular updating;

- maintain awareness of relevant safeguarding legislation and guidance;
- undertake additional training appropriate to working with children and young people or adults at risk where applicable;
- maintain an appropriate current Enhanced DBS check;
- use clinical supervision to reflect upon safeguarding concerns and practice; and
- ensure that they work within the limits of their professional competence.

18. Online Therapy

The same safeguarding responsibilities apply to online and telephone therapy as to face-to-face work.

Therapists should maintain sufficient information to enable appropriate action to be taken where an online client is at immediate risk.

Online safeguarding arrangements, including client location and emergency information, will be managed in accordance with **RT007 – Online Therapy Policy**.

19. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where:

- safeguarding legislation or statutory guidance changes;
- BACP or NCPS guidance changes;
- a safeguarding incident identifies a need for review;
- professional indemnity insurance requirements change;
- services provided by Rutland Therapists change; or
- experience indicates that existing arrangements should be amended.

Relevant Professional and Legal Frameworks

- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

- Care Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Human Rights Act 1998
- BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions
- BACP safeguarding guidance for children and young people
- BACP safeguarding guidance for vulnerable adults
- NCPS Code of Ethical Practice

Policy Agreement

We confirm that we have read, understood and agree to follow **RT004 – Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy**.

Name: Kim Searle _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Name: Lou Burt _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Name: Catherine Andrew _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____