

Child Protection Policy

January 2026

Designated lead – RHET Executive Officer

If you have any queries regarding any aspect of the policy please contact RHET at Ingliston on 0131 335 6290

Review:

This Policy will be monitored and reviewed on the following occasions:

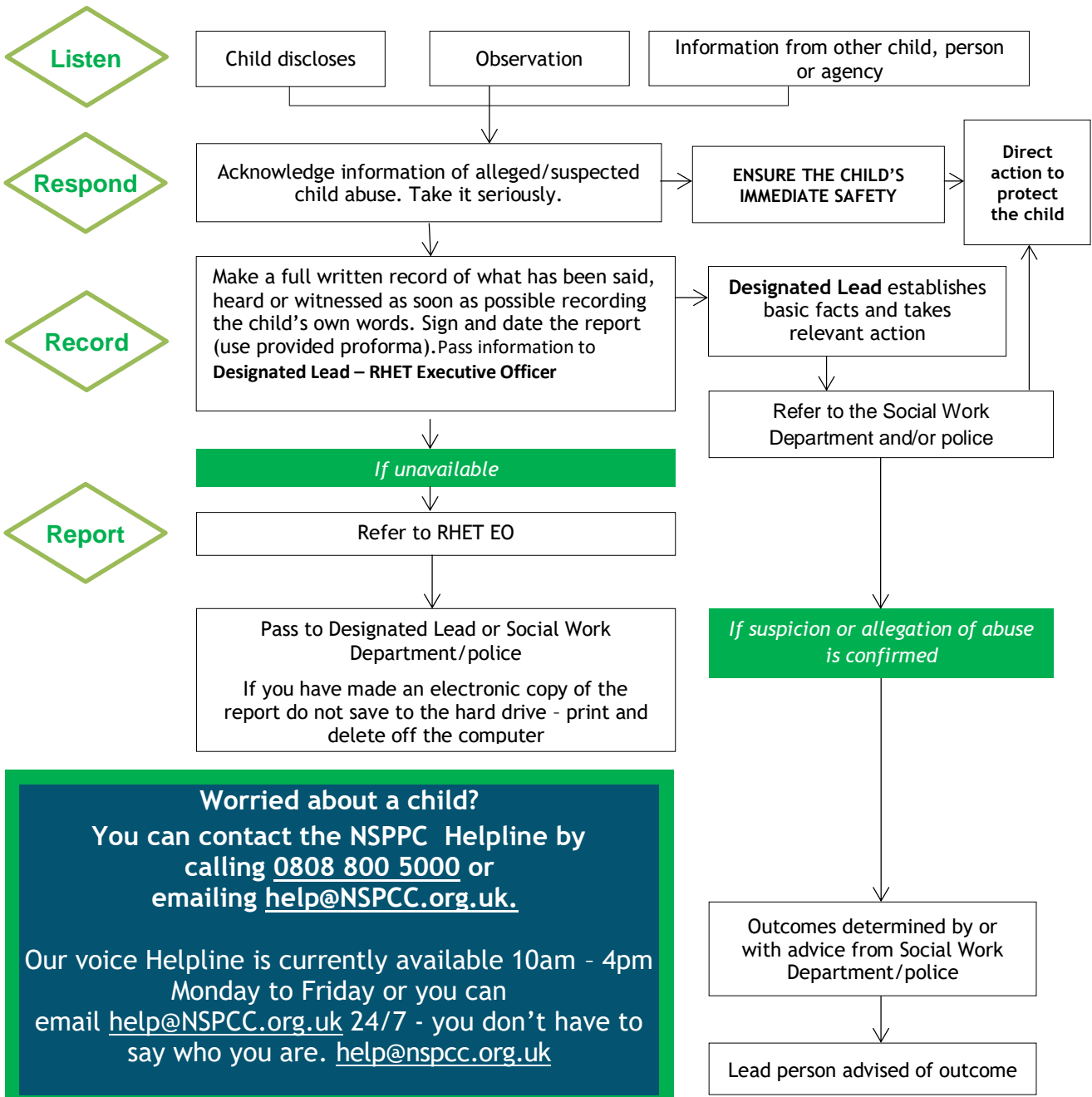
1. When there is a change in legislation or guidance on the protection of young people or changes within RHET
2. Following any issues or concerns raised about the protection of young people in this organisation.

In all other circumstances, the policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

What to do (summary)

Key Messages

- Listen carefully to the child.
- Take all concerns seriously and act promptly by passing the information to the designated Child Protection Lead.
- Refer—do not investigate.
- Record the details in writing as soon as possible.
- Always seek advice if you are unsure.



Worried about a child?
 You can contact the NSPPC Helpline by calling [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or emailing help@NSPCC.org.uk.
 Our voice Helpline is currently available 10am - 4pm Monday to Friday or you can email help@NSPCC.org.uk 24/7 - you don't have to say who you are. help@nspcc.org.uk

Introduction

In Scotland, the definition of a child varies across legal contexts. However, statutory guidance supporting the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014* includes all children and young people up to the age of 18.

RHET is committed to creating a safe environment for both young people and adults. We recognise our moral and legal responsibility to protect young people and will take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and safeguard them from harm, abuse, and exploitation (see Appendix 1: Child Abuse and Neglect).

This policy has been approved by RHET's Board of Directors and must be implemented by all staff, contractors, and volunteers working for or on behalf of RHET, following the guidelines outlined within it – the policy applies to all areas of RHET's work involving young people and vulnerable adults, and to anyone whose role includes contact with young people.

Everyone covered by this policy shares responsibility for ensuring the safety and welfare of young people participating in RHET activities, in line with the procedures set out. This document provides key information and outlines our approach to working with young people.

The primary reference for anyone working with children in Scotland is the [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#).

Background to Activities

RHET's work with young people focuses on three main areas:

- **School visits to farms**
- **In-school visits and sessions**
- **Events such as the Royal Highland Show and Food & Farming Days**

These activities take place at various locations across Scotland and involve staff, contractors, and volunteers. Responsibilities include setting up and delivering activities, ensuring participant safety, and providing instructions and background information.

It is rare for RHET activities to involve unsupervised access to young people. In almost all cases, teachers, classroom assistants, group leaders, or parents/guardians accompany young people during RHET events.

The work outlined above is reflected in the policy and guidance. As and when the focus of RHET's work changes the policy and guidance will be amended.

Child protection must be seen within the wider context of supporting families and meeting children's needs through Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)

- puts children's needs first;
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- ensures that children are listened to and understand decisions that affect them; and
- ensures that they get the appropriate co-ordinated support needed to promote, support and safeguard their wellbeing, health and development.

Our Policy is based on the following principles:

- The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#) directly incorporates the UNCRC into devolved domestic law in Scotland within the limits of devolved competence.
- Protecting young people is everybody's responsibility.
- All young people have the right to be protected from abuse regardless of their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity.
- All young people have a right to express their views on matters affecting them and these views should be taken into account when making decisions in relation to young people.

We will:

- Treat everyone with respect.
- Respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of young people.
- Provide time for young people to talk to us and listen to what they say.
- Encourage young people to respect and care for others.
- Respect confidentiality and only share information/concerns with the people who need to know in order to protect the child having regard to the provisions of the Data Protection Legislation.
- Take action to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour including bullying.
- Take all concerns/allegations seriously and respond appropriately. We will refer not investigate, investigation being the responsibility of other professional agencies.

The key messages from legislation and guidance are:

- Everyone has a responsibility to protect children and young people
- Every child has at all times a right to feel safe and protected from any situation or practice which could result in the child being physically or emotionally harmed

Above all, the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration and we must all work together to ensure children and young people are protected.

Creating a safe environment

The protection of children and young people is the **responsibility of everyone** (*Appendix 2 Child Protection and the law*), not just the people who run or manage the visit. The following measures can help to create a safe environment for both adults and young people. Policies and procedures will only be effective when they operate in a culture where young people are respected and given every opportunity to thrive and flourish.

1. RHET has a Child Protection Policy, which is issued to all staff and volunteers as part of an induction programme.
2. We have a code of conduct for those who work/volunteer with young people which clearly states behaviour which is acceptable and unacceptable (*Appendix 3 Code of conduct*).
3. RHET provide a flow chart to ensure that everyone involved with young people know who to speak to and what to do if they are concerned about a child or the conduct of a staff member/volunteer towards a child.
4. All staff and volunteers are subject to PVG checks (*Appendix 4 - PVG Scheme*) and volunteers receive adequate support and supervision including an induction.
5. Those who work/volunteer with young people on a regular basis undertake basic training in child protection.
6. Procedures are in place for dealing for concerns about a child/young person (*Appendix 5 What to do if you are concerned about a child/young person*) and for the conduct of staff/volunteers (*Appendix 6 What to do if you are concerned about a member of staff/volunteer*). Such concerns could be about poor practice, bullying or child abuse.
7. RHET have a procedure around taking photos and the use of social media
8. Policies and procedures are monitored and reviewed regularly.
9. RHET have a **Designated Lead for child protection – RHET Executive Officer** who will take a lead in ensuring that polices are being followed and are reviewed regularly.

Personal Information

Staff/volunteers should consider carefully whether to share their own personal details with volunteers. Staff who use social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, twitter) and should not 'friend' or follow **any** child or young person that they met whilst working/volunteering for RHET.

Photographing, videoing and filming

Publications and websites are a great way to promote the achievements of young people. However, there is evidence that some people have used activities as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people. Some young people may be subject to statutory Child Protection measures and revealing identity may place them at risk. Under the Data Protection Act 2018, RHET must gain permission before taking photographs, videos, films or any images of clearly identifiable young people.

The following measures are in place to contribute to a child's safe participation:

- Consent to photographing, videoing or filming the child should be obtained and details should be provided as to why the images are being taken/used. Consent is also required of any other person who may appear in the photograph/video/film.
- No unsupervised photographic/filming/videoing of sessions with a child are to be permitted unless this is absolutely necessary and has been approved in advance by the child, parent and designated lead.
- RHET reserves the right to prohibit the use of photography, film or video at any event or activity with which it is associated. However, parents, friends and family members can take photographs of their child participating in RHET events under a domestic purpose general

data protection regulation (GDPR) exemption. Any individuals taking the images of their own children should be aware that the footage is for personal and domestic use and no other use.

- Any concerns regarding photographs should be raised with the RHET designated lead.
- All photographs taken of young people at RHET events should be forwarded to the local project coordinator and then deleted from personal devices.

Publications and websites

RHET will always obtain consent before displaying pictures or information relating to that child, whether in a publication or on the internet.

- We will never include personal information that could identify a child or place a child at risk e.g. full name, home address, e-mail address, telephone number, date, place and times activities take place. When a photograph of an individual child is used, the child's first name should not be used in the accompanying text. Instead, the contact details of the group will be provided.
- RHET will never depict young people in an inappropriate manner and only use images of child in suitable dress, to reduce the risk of the images being used inappropriately.

Appendix 1 Child abuse and neglect

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021) states that ‘Child Protection’ encompassing **immediate action, investigation, assessment, and collaborative planning to safeguard children from significant harm (abuse, neglect, exploitation), focusing on a child's rights and needs through multi-agency work and partnership with families, rooted in the GIRFEC approach for early, holistic support.**

In a child protection context, there are several key different types of abuse:

- **Physical abuse** is the causing of physical harm to a child or young person.
- **Emotional abuse** is persistent emotional neglect or ill treatment of a child causing severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development.
- **Sexual abuse** is any act that involves the child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another whether or not it is claimed that the child either consented or assented.
- **Criminal exploitation** refers to the action of an individual or group using an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator
- **Child trafficking** involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt, exchange or transfer of control of a child under the age of 18 years for the purposes of exploitation.
- **Neglect** consists in persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development.
- **Female genital mutilation**
- **Forced marriage**

Protecting children is the responsibility of all who work with children and families, regardless of whether that work brings them into direct contact with children. The GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child) approach is a Scotland-wide programme of action to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people.

Appendix 2 Child protection and the law

The [National Child Protection Guidance in Scotland 2021 – updated 2023](#) describes responsibilities and expectations for all involved in protecting children in Scotland. The Guidance outlines how statutory and non-government agencies should work together with parents, families and communities to prevent harm and to protect children from abuse and neglect. Everyone has a role in protecting children from harm.

The Scottish approach to child protection is based upon the protection of children’s rights. The Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) policy and practice model is a practical expression of the Scottish Government’s commitment to implementation of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This requires a continuum of preventative and protective work.

There are consistent threads running between enabling, preventative and protective work applying the GIRFEC approach.

Core Principles & Framework

- **Universal Responsibility:** Everyone who comes into contact with children (health, police, third sector, education, etc.) has a role in keeping them safe.
- **GIRFEC Foundation:** Operates within the GIRFEC framework, focusing on the child's needs and rights.
- **Multi-Agency Working:** Supports local areas in developing policies and training for seamless, coordinated multi-agency work.
- **Rights-Based:** Aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Appendix 3 Code of conduct

RHET asks all staff and volunteers to follow this code of conduct:

You should:

- Always put the care, welfare and safety needs of a child as your paramount consideration.
- Respect a child's right to be involved in making choices and decisions which directly affect him / her.
- Respect every child's choice of pronouns (he, she, they) when speaking to or about them
- Respect a child's culture (e.g. faith and religious beliefs) and right to privacy.
- Respond sensitively to young people who seem anxious about participating in certain activities.
- Speak to someone in charge immediately if you are worried about a child.
- Be aware of and sensitive to the vulnerabilities of some young people taking account of minority backgrounds.
- Avoid being alone with young people. Ensure that when working with young people you are at least within sight and hearing of other adults.
- Listen carefully to any child who 'tells you' they are being harmed and report immediately to the person in charge / Child Protection Officer.
- Never dismiss what a child tells you as 'lies' or exaggeration.
- Always set an example you would wish others to follow.
- Always give constructive feedback and not negative criticism.
- Always ensure that people who have relevant training and qualifications in that field administer first aid.

You should not:

- Exaggerate or trivialise another member's concern about a child or ignore allegations or suspicion of abuse.
- Discuss personal issues about a child or their family with others except the Child Protection Officer where you are concerned about the child's well-being.
- Make derogatory remarks, gestures or use inappropriate language in front of young people.
- Allow a child to be bullied or harmed by anyone in the organisation.
- Allow young people to swear or use sexualised language unchallenged.

DO NOT AT ANY POINT

- Hit, push or grab a child or young person.
- Engage in sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allow others or yourself to engage in touching a child in a sexually provocative way.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Engage in rough physical contact with a child
- Form intimate physical or emotional relationships with young people.
- Harass or intimidate a child or worker/volunteer, particularly because of their age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, socio-economic class or disability.
- Invite or allow young people to stay with you at your home in the context of your role within the organisation.

Appendix 4 PVG Scheme

Statement on PVG Scheme

Disclosure Scotland manages the Scottish Government PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) scheme (introduced in February 2011). Under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 a PVG provides disclosure arrangements for people who work with vulnerable groups (i.e. children and vulnerable adults). Individuals working or volunteering with children and/or adults at risk of harm are required to join the PVG Scheme. Anyone with a known history of harmful behaviour will be barred from the PVG Scheme and will not be able to work with children and/or adults at risk of harm. An adult at risk of harm is defined as an individual aged 16 or over who is provided with a type or care, health or welfare service. The [Disclosure \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#), introduced "regulated roles" instead of "regulated work

The (PVG Scheme):

- helps to ensure that those who have regular contact with young people and protected adults through paid and unpaid work do not have a known history of harmful behaviour.
- Is live, providing RHET with changes in individual's status.
- strikes a balance between proportionate protection and robust regulation and make it easier for RHET to determine who they should check to protect their client group.

Regulated Work

Regulated work is the term used by the PVG Act to define the types of work which barred individuals must not do. The PVG Scheme specifically deals with people who undertake Regulated Work.

Regulated Work is defined by three basic principles;

1. It has to be work (i.e. not a personal relationship) and includes paid/unpaid
2. It has to be with either children (under 18) or adults at risk of harm (over 16)
3. The work has to include;
 - A particular type of activity such as caring for or teaching a child or protected adult
 - Work in a particular establishment, such as a school or a care home, which involves contact with children or adults at risk of harm.
 - Holding one of the specified positions, such as member of a children's panel or chief social work officer

All RHET staff and volunteers are PVG checked for the work they deliver on behalf of the organisation. If staff/volunteers leave/stop volunteering with RHET, the individual is responsible for ensuring they inform Disclosure Scotland.

Appendix 5 What to do if you are concerned about a child/young person

If a child or young person discloses i.e. gives you information that might suggest he/she is being abused or you have concerns about the child, you should:

Remain calm, no matter how difficult it is to listen to the child – think of how hard it must be for the child to make the disclosure. Some things are very difficult to talk about; you've been chosen because the child feels he/she can talk to you. If you show anger, disgust, disbelief then the child may stop talking for fear of upsetting you or may feel that your negative feelings are being directed towards them.

Listen to the child and take him/her seriously. Reassure him/her they have done the right thing by telling you.

Allow the child time to speak. Never interrupt or make suggestions to the child. Avoid asking questions other than to clarify your understanding. You must never interview the child or investigate. This is the job of trained professionals.

No matter how well you know the child, spare them having to repeat themselves over and over. Apart from anything else, the child may begin to think that you don't believe them.

Be honest, tell the child that you cannot keep what has been disclosed secret and that you have a responsibility to talk to someone who can help.

As soon as practical, record in writing everything the child told you using the child's own words (appendix 2). Pass the information to the Child Protection Lead as soon as possible. Thereafter the information should only be shared with those who need to know in order to protect the child.

If the Child Protection Lead is not available, then the information should be passed to the CEO who will contact the Social Work Department or police without delay. Do not be afraid to contact them for advice and guidance. Remember – you may not be the only one to have concerns. All referrals are discussed thoroughly by professionals prior to any action being taken. Your concerns will be treated sensitively.

**It is not your job to decide if a child has been abused.
It is your responsibility to report concerns.**

If you consider that the child's circumstances are such as to require immediate action e.g. if the child is too frightened to go home or you have serious doubts as to the child's safety, contact the Social Work Department or the police immediately. The designated CP lead should be informed immediately and can coordinate the response.

If the concerns are of a more general nature covering the child's welfare, they should initially be discussed with the organisation's Designated Lead, who would then make a referral to Social Work Department if considered appropriate.

Appendix 6 What to do if you are concerned about a member of staff/volunteer

Concerns about the behaviour of a member of staff/volunteer must be reported to the organisation's Designated Lead immediately. If necessary, he/she will seek advice from Social Work Department and/or the police immediately and take any appropriate action to protect the child concerned. If the concern is about the Designated Lead, the matter should be reported to the person in charge of the organisation.

WHEN ABUSE BY A MEMBER OF RHET STAFF OR VOLUNTEER IS DISCLOSED OR SUSPECTED

An allegation may be made against a RHET worker that he/she has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he/she may pose a risk of harm to children.

In such instances, the following action is required:

The matter will be immediately referred to the Designated Lead who will then inform the CEO.

The police will be informed if the alleged abuse is such that a criminal offence may have been committed.

The staff member or volunteer who is alleged to have abused or is suspected of abuse will be suspended immediately from work on full pay (if applicable). It is important to explain to the individual that such action is neutral and does not assume that the allegations are true. This action is designed to protect the victim allegedly involved and also to protect the alleged perpetrator from any further allegations or harassment/intimidation of the alleged victim or witnesses.

Appendix 7 Useful contacts

NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000
NSPCC website	www.nspcc.org.uk
CHILDREN 1 ST	www.children1st.org.uk
Disclosure Scotland	https://www.mygov.scot/organisations/disclosure-scotland/
National Guidance for Child Protection Scotland 2021 - updated 2023	https://www.gov.scot/policies/child-protection/national-child-protection-guidance/
Child Exploitation and on-line protection centre (CEOP)	https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/
Children in Scotland	www.childreninscotland.org.uk
UNCRC (United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child)	https://www.cypcs.org.uk/incorporationuncrc/

Child Protection Pro-Forma

To be completed **as soon as possible** after concern reported / incident

Today's date	
Name of child	
Gender	He She They
Service/organisation	
Is the main carer (eg group leader/ teacher) aware of the referral?	State reason Yes No
Does the child know a referral is being made?	State reason Yes No
Reason for concern State briefly what the child said or what you observed that caused concern.	
Who have you spoken to and what was said? It is not your role to investigate	

State what action was taken and when	
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Print Name:

Signature:

Position:

Date

Print Name:

Signature:

Position:

Date