

# RE:ACT SAFEGUARDING POLICY

## Commitment to safeguarding

The safety and well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults are paramount in all areas of RE:ACT's operations. We recognise that we must hold ourselves to account, ensuring that we provide a safe and trusted environment for our staff, volunteers, those we work with, and anyone that comes into contact with our work.

RE:ACT has a safeguarding framework in place (see appendix B), which contains a number of policies and standards of behaviour that RE:ACT staff and volunteers must uphold. Everyone has the right to be guarded against risk to their safety, health and well-being and everyone has the responsibility to safeguard others against such risks. We treat any allegations related to safeguarding extremely seriously. We strive to learn and identify areas in which we could improve, and welcome feedback from any stakeholders.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions taken shall apply:

- **Safeguarding:** a term used to denote measures to protect the health, well-being and human rights of individuals, which allow people — especially children, young people and vulnerable adults — to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.
- **Child(ren):** a child is deemed to be a person under the age of 18 years. (Age of consent is a separate issue and is defined locally).
- **Vulnerable Adult:** a vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who is at greater than normal risk of abuse because they may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves against harm or exploitation. This may be due to their condition, circumstance or environment. They may have learning difficulties, physical disabilities or mental illness or are dependent on someone else, because of a disability, age or illness.
- **Abuse:** any act or omission which results in harm to a child or vulnerable adult. Abuse is generally accepted to usually fall into one of five categories: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and financial abuse but may occur in any form.
- **Beneficiaries:** Where the term beneficiary is used this refers to someone in receipt of RE:ACT's assistance or within a community which is receiving support.
- **Volunteers, Staff or Interns:** Where volunteers, staff or interns are specifically referred to in this document, these groups of people are included. The term 'member' may be used to collectively refer

to volunteers, staff and interns. All RE:ACT members must comply with the terms of this policy at all times.

## Safeguarding responsibilities

- **Board of Trustees:** RE:ACT has a designated safeguarding focal point trustee. The board of trustees reviews and approves the organisational safeguarding framework and associated policies annually.
- **CEO:** sets the organisational culture of safeguarding and ensures organisational compliance with safeguarding policies and procedures and that the Safeguarding Lead is appropriately resourced.
- **Safeguarding Lead:** is responsible for oversight of safeguarding policies and procedures, is the strategic lead for safeguarding across RE:ACT, and provides operational support and advice on safeguarding across RE:ACT. Ensures Safeguarding training is in place for all staff, interns and volunteers, appropriate to their roles. Effective and secure record keeping in respect of staff, intern and volunteer allegations and referrals. Such written records will be held separately from a staff, intern and volunteer's personnel records.
- **Director of Humanitarian Operations:** provides support and advice for safeguarding across RE:ACT operations, oversees RE:ACT operations in country, is responsible for implementing the safeguarding framework on deployment, responsible for the response to safeguarding incidents and concerns on deployment and liaising with external agencies where appropriate.
- **All volunteers, staff and interns:** are responsible for promoting and upholding safeguarding standards, and reporting complaints, concerns and incidents.

## Application

Safeguarding recognises that some people may be more vulnerable and therefore in need of additional considerations or protection in certain situations to ensure they are not harmed or taken advantage of.

Whilst abuse and exploitation can occur anywhere, it is accepted that as an international humanitarian organisation, children and vulnerable adults within the communities with whom we work may be particularly vulnerable. The physical, mental or emotional effect that a disaster event may have on someone has the potential to make anyone temporarily vulnerable and that vulnerability may last hours, days or months and years after the event.

It is recognised within the sector that any international organisation, conducting work in proximity to vulnerable people, may be targeted by potential abusers. RE:ACT has a range of measures in place, which are

set out in its Safeguarding Framework (see appendix B) aimed at mitigating this risk as far as possible. RE:ACT is committed to the protection of the people it works with from harm, abuse and exploitation and will take a zero tolerance approach.

Safeguarding applies to everything RE:ACT does as an organisation not just on operations e.g. Fundraising – We do NOT accept donations from any person who may not be in a position to make an independent, informed decision.

RE:ACT will meet its duty of care to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse through Prevention, Recruitment, Reporting and Responding.

## Prevention

RE:ACT will seek to minimise the risks to children and vulnerable individuals in the course of its work by implementing the following:

- **Safer Recruitment:** Best practice is used in safer recruitment and selection when recruiting staff, interns and volunteers to ensure their suitability to work with children and adults who may be vulnerable and when dealing with others who visit/use RE:ACT sites or come into contact with RE:ACT on operations. This includes a DBS check on all staff, interns and volunteers before any employment or deployment commences. All staff are subject to a probationary period to further assess their suitability.
- **Training:** All new staff and volunteers will be given an induction which includes a briefing on the standards of behaviour within the RE:ACT Code of Conduct and other RE:ACT Policies including the Safeguarding Framework. Managers will be provided with further support regarding the implementation of these policies. In addition, relevant training will be provided to those with specific Safeguarding responsibilities e.g. IC for operations, Safeguarding Lead, HR Managers responsible for conducting investigations and focal points responsible for some reporting.
- **Culture:** RE:ACT and its representatives will seek to create and promote a culture of respect and an environment where concerns can be reported openly and without prejudice. Guidelines and procedures around communicating safely, particularly around the collection and consent, storage and use of information and images will include careful consideration of how this applies to children and vulnerable adults.

## Reporting

RE:ACT recognises that it is not just written policies and procedures that contribute to ensuring a safe and trusted environment. We commit to respectfully listening and supporting individuals who want to raise a

concern or make a complaint. RE:ACT will ensure rigorous and inclusive reporting and complaints processes and that staff, volunteers and the other people that it works with are clear on what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children or other vulnerable individuals.

All RE:ACT representatives have a duty and a right to report a suspected incident of abuse. Allegations should be made in good faith. Any frivolous or malicious allegations which are without foundation or allegations made for the purposes of personal gain will not be tolerated. Anyone who is found to have deliberately or accidentally withheld information or prevented full and thorough reporting to have taken place could face disciplinary action.

All suspected cases of abuse must be reported to the Safeguarding Lead directly or via in-country line manager or directly to the HQ reporting email. Where this is not appropriate, concerns should be raised with the next in-line manager, to the HQ HR Team, CEO or to the relevant Trustee focal point. Anyone who is unclear about their role or responsibility should contact their line manager, Safeguarding Lead, or a member of the HQ HR team to discuss this. For more detail on reporting a concern please see RE:ACT Grievance (Complaints) Policy.

Under UK law, all serious issues must be reported by RE:ACT to The Charity Commission, via RE:ACT's Board of Trustees. RE:ACT has a legal responsibility to report incidents of and its management response to all safeguarding issues. The Commission's role is to ensure the charity's trustees are responsibly managing the incident, and where necessary, putting in place improved governance and internal controls, in order to protect the charity and its beneficiaries from further harm.

## **Whistleblowing**

RE:ACT staff and volunteers can report concerns about certain categories of serious wrongdoing (public interest disclosures) directly to the Charity Commission. RE:ACT staff and volunteers have some protection in law under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 from detrimental treatment or victimisation from their organisation if, in the public interest, they report concerns about serious wrongdoing at RE:ACT, provided that the concerns they report meet the conditions in the Act for a 'protected disclosure'. For full details see the RE:ACT Whistleblowing Policy.

## **Responding**

RE:ACT takes all concerns and reports of abuse seriously and immediate action will be taken. Those who report concerns will be supported throughout the process. The information you provide will be kept

confidential as far as possible and all steps will be taken to ensure you are supported by management and that your protection is considered in any actions taken.

RE:ACT will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children or vulnerable adults where concerns arise. RE:ACT views any breach of this Policy, the Code of Conduct and related policies as serious matters. These policies are reinforced by RE:ACT's Disciplinary Policy, which ensures that all matters are investigated and dealt with appropriately. We will ensure that all genuinely held reported concerns will be thoroughly investigated.

Where concerns are raised over possible abuse by RE:ACT staff, it is mandatory for senior management to take such concerns very seriously and ensure that appropriate action is taken. In relation to vulnerable adults only, it is always difficult to balance the duty to protect vulnerable people and prevent further harm with empowering adult survivors to make their own choices about how their allegations are handled. It is important to give this careful consideration at the point an issue arises/a complaint is received, before making the decision to proceed to investigation. It is important in considering any complaint to take into account the best interest of the survivor and ensuring survivors are central to our safeguarding response.

If the decision is made to conduct a full and proper investigation, this will involve appointing an appropriate Investigating Officer whose responsibility will be to:

- Conduct an investigation to establish the facts of the matter and gather evidence to either substantiate or refute the allegations made
- Ensure that any immediate risks to the child/vulnerable adult are managed. Where serious concerns exist and there is immediate risk, action must be taken straight away in order to mitigate any further risk.
- Conduct investigatory meetings with any relevant individuals.
- At the conclusion of the investigation, make a recommendation which could include:
  - disciplinary action,
  - informing national authorities,
  - providing support for the child(ren)/vulnerable adult(s) involved, and/or,
  - recommending further investigation.

It is essential to consider the needs of the child/vulnerable adult - use plain language when communicating with survivors; give written explanations of the principles and process of investigations; be transparent and share progress of the investigation and validate complainants' reactions to investigation outcomes.

It may also be necessary to inform and co-operate with relevant national and local authorities. The decision to inform local authorities will be taken on a case-by-case basis considering the circumstances and the relevant laws and norms of the country in question. RE:ACT's duty of care towards the survivor and the perpetrator will be taken into consideration including the confidentiality and human rights of both parties.

Depending on the seriousness of the situation, it may be deemed necessary to convene a Crisis Management Team (CMT), Incident Management Team (IMT) or similar other mechanism to ensure that the situation is comprehensively managed and that appropriate communication with all stakeholders takes place. This body will monitor the progress of the investigation and give guidance if necessary and appropriate.

### **Confidentiality**

Any concerns raised will be treated with sensitivity and discretion. The identity of the person raising the matter will be kept confidential if so requested, for as long as possible provided that this is compatible with a proper investigation.

RE:ACT has an obligation to ensure that any member who makes a disclosure will not be penalised or suffer any adverse treatment in doing so. RE:ACT will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect members when they raise a concern in good faith and use the procedures available to them. All suspicions, allegations and investigations will be kept confidential and shared with only those who need to know in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018).

### **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there has been a breach. The review will ensure the policy remains up-to-date in line with UK legislation and best practice, as well as assessing the effectiveness of how the policy is working in practice and taking action to address any identified issues.

## Appendix A – RE:ACT Safeguarding Contacts

Name	Role	Direct Email
Sue Castleton	Safeguarding Lead	<a href="mailto:sue@castletonhr.com">sue@castletonhr.com</a>
Ben Lampard	Interim Chief Executive Officer	<a href="mailto:ben@re-act.org.uk">ben@re-act.org.uk</a>
Kate Holt	Trustee Safeguarding Focal Point	<a href="mailto:kateholt@mac.com">kateholt@mac.com</a>

# SAFEGUARDING FRAMEWORK

