

RICHMOND HOUSE

SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

2026–2027

Including Budleigh House Alternative Provision, outreach, home-based care and short break services

Policy owner	Hala Okasheh, Registered Manager
Approved by	Jay Al Karaki, Head of Service
Effective from	1 September 2026
Review date	1 September 2027, or sooner following statutory or local safeguarding changes
Policy reference	RHSCS DC-SC-07 / AP-SC-07
Status	Approved policy – controlled document

Document Control and Key Contacts

Role	Name	Contact
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Jay Al Karaki	07484 371525
Deputy DSL (DDSL)	Hala Okasheh	07761 540911
Deputy DSL (DDSL)	Pauline Bullement	07878 471242

Registered/service address: Richmond House, 96 Main Street, YO25 8LJ.

Operational safeguarding contacts should be checked against the relevant local authority safeguarding arrangements before making a referral.

1. Purpose and Policy Statement

Richmond House Social Care Services is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child and young person who uses or is affected by our services. This policy brings together the Child Protection Policy and the Safeguarding Children and Young Adults Policy supplied for review. It applies a whole-organisation, child-centred approach across Alternative Provision, outreach, short breaks, home-based care and community activities.

Our safeguarding commitment is based on five linked duties:

- Awareness – staff understand abuse, exploitation, neglect, safeguarding risks and the signs that may indicate harm.
- Prevention – safe recruitment, supervision, professional conduct, risk management and safe environments reduce opportunities for harm.
- Reporting – concerns are reported immediately and recorded accurately.
- Responding – appropriate action is taken promptly to protect children and young people.
- Partnership – Richmond House works openly and appropriately with children, families, local authorities, police, health, education and other safeguarding partners.

The welfare and best interests of the child remain central. Children's wishes and feelings are listened to and taken seriously, with their age, understanding and individual circumstances considered.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all Richmond House employees, managers, volunteers, students, agency workers, contractors and visitors where relevant;
- all children and young people accessing Richmond House services, including those aged 0–25 where the service provides support beyond statutory child protection duties;
- vulnerable adults where safeguarding responsibilities arise;
- all Richmond House premises, Alternative Provision, outreach, short breaks, home-based care, trips, community activities, transport and online/digital activity.

3. Statutory and Policy Framework – 2026–2027

This policy has been updated for the 2026–2027 operating year and reflects the following current England framework, alongside relevant local safeguarding arrangements:

- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 – statutory guidance on multi-agency working, help, support and protection.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE 2026), in force from 1 September 2026, where applicable to Richmond House Alternative Provision and education functions.
- Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, including relevant safeguarding and information-sharing provisions.
- Education Act 2002, where applicable.
- Care Act 2014, where safeguarding duties concerning adults at risk apply.
- Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998.
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 and associated mandatory reporting requirements.
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and Prevent duty guidance, where applicable.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, applied alongside safeguarding information-sharing duties.
- Relevant local safeguarding partnership arrangements and procedures for the areas in which Richmond House operates.

The 2026 Working Together guidance strengthens expectations around multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, information sharing, anti-discriminatory practice, domestic abuse, child sexual abuse, online harms and group-based exploitation. The policy therefore requires staff to consider multiple and overlapping sources of harm rather than treating concerns in isolation.

4. Safeguarding Principles

- Child-centred – decisions are based on the child’s needs, safety, wishes and best interests.
- Professional curiosity – unexplained changes, inconsistencies or patterns are explored appropriately rather than dismissed.
- Early help and prevention – concerns are acted on at the earliest appropriate point.
- Anti-discriminatory practice – racism, discrimination, stereotyping and bias must be challenged and must not affect safeguarding decisions.
- Trauma-informed and relationship-based practice – children are treated with dignity, patience and respect.
- Shared responsibility – safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility; no individual should assume someone else has acted.
- Information sharing – relevant information is shared lawfully, proportionately and promptly when necessary to protect a child.
- Accountability – safeguarding decisions, actions, referrals and outcomes are recorded and subject to management oversight.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Board / Directors and Senior Leadership

- Ensure safeguarding arrangements are effective, resourced and reviewed.
- Promote a culture in which safeguarding concerns can be raised without fear of reprisal.

- Ensure statutory guidance and local safeguarding arrangements are reflected in organisational practice.
- Monitor safeguarding themes, incidents, training, safer recruitment and learning.

5.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection.
- Maintain oversight of safeguarding records, referrals and actions.
- Provide advice and support to staff and liaise with safeguarding partners.
- Ensure staff receive appropriate induction and safeguarding training.
- Ensure concerns involving staff or volunteers are managed through the appropriate LADO process.
- Maintain awareness of local safeguarding arrangements and thresholds.

5.3 Deputy DSLs

Deputy DSLs support the DSL and may undertake delegated safeguarding responsibilities. They must escalate significant concerns to the DSL and act immediately where a child is at risk.

5.4 Managers

- Ensure staff follow this policy and associated procedures.
- Ensure safeguarding concerns are acted upon immediately.
- Maintain secure and accurate records and support staff supervision.
- Escalate concerns where action has not been taken or where risk remains.

5.5 All Staff, Volunteers and Contractors

- Read and understand the safeguarding policy and required safeguarding information.
- Remain alert to signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation and changes in behaviour or presentation.
- Report concerns immediately to the DSL/DDSL and act without delay if a child is in immediate danger.
- Never investigate allegations independently or promise confidentiality.
- Maintain professional boundaries and follow the Staff Code of Conduct.

6. Safer Recruitment, Induction and Training

- Richmond House will use safer recruitment procedures appropriate to the role, including identity checks, references, employment history, qualifications and right-to-work checks.
- Appropriate DBS and other pre-employment checks will be completed before staff undertake regulated or unsupervised activity, subject to the legal requirements applicable to the role.
- Recruitment processes will include safeguarding-focused questions and consideration of any concerns arising during recruitment.
- New staff will receive safeguarding induction and understand the identity and availability of the DSL/DDSLs.
- Safeguarding training will be refreshed at least annually and whenever required by changes in law, guidance, role or identified risk.
- DSL/DDSL training will be sufficiently advanced and refreshed in line with statutory expectations and local safeguarding arrangements.
- Training will include, as relevant, child protection, CSE, CCE, online safety, peer-on-peer abuse, domestic abuse, FGM, honour-based abuse, forced marriage, radicalisation/Prevent, sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour.

7. Recognising Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation

Abuse may occur in families, peer groups, institutions, community settings or online. It may be a single incident or a pattern. Staff must consider the full context and cumulative impact.

7.1 Physical Abuse

Deliberately causing physical harm, including hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning, suffocation or fabricated or induced illness.

7.2 Emotional Abuse

Persistent emotional maltreatment, including humiliation, intimidation, rejection, threats, scapegoating, coercive control or exposure to domestic abuse.

7.3 Sexual Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse

Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activity, including contact and non-contact abuse, grooming, sexual images and online abuse.

7.4 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

A form of child sexual abuse involving an imbalance of power through which a child is coerced, manipulated or deceived into sexual activity. It may involve exchange, status, money, gifts, affection, substances or other perceived benefits and may occur online or in person.

7.5 Neglect

Persistent failure to meet basic physical or psychological needs, including inadequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical care, education or emotional support.

7.6 Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and County Lines

Children may be coerced, controlled, manipulated or deceived into criminal activity, including drug supply, theft, violence or exploitation of accommodation. A child involved in offending may also be a victim of exploitation.

7.7 Online and Digital Abuse

Online grooming, cyberbullying, sexual exploitation, sextortion, coercive contact, harmful content and sharing of indecent images.

7.8 Peer-on-Peer Abuse and Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Bullying, sexual violence, sexual harassment, initiation rituals, coercion, abuse within relationships and other harmful behaviour between children or young people.

7.9 Domestic Abuse and Teenage Relationship Abuse

Children may experience harm through domestic abuse, controlling or coercive behaviour, violence or abuse within adolescent relationships.

7.10 FGM

Female genital mutilation is illegal and is a form of child abuse. Staff must follow mandatory reporting requirements where they apply and inform the DSL.

7.11 Honour-Based Abuse and Forced Marriage

Any concern that a child may be at risk must be treated seriously and reported immediately. Staff must not mediate, contact family members or undertake their own investigation.

7.12 Radicalisation and Extremism

Staff must remain alert to concerns relating to radicalisation and follow Prevent and local safeguarding procedures.

8. Recognising Indicators and Vulnerability

Indicators can include unexplained injuries, fearfulness, withdrawal, sexualised behaviour, missing episodes, unexplained money or possessions, changes in peer groups, excessive calls or messages, use of multiple phones, decline in education, poor hygiene, emotional distress, secretive online activity, self-harm or contact with controlling individuals. No single indicator proves abuse, and abuse may be present without obvious indicators.

Staff must consider additional vulnerability factors, including disability, communication needs, social isolation, care experience, exclusion from education, insecure accommodation, prior abuse or neglect, exploitation by peers or adults and barriers to disclosure.

9. Responding to a Safeguarding Concern or Disclosure

1. Listen calmly and take the child seriously.
2. Do not promise confidentiality. Explain that information may need to be shared to keep them safe.
3. Do not ask leading or investigative questions. Clarify only what is necessary to establish immediate safety.
4. Record the child's words and the facts as soon as possible, including date, time, location and relevant observations.
5. Report the concern immediately to the DSL or DDSL.
6. If there is immediate danger or a crime is in progress, contact the police on 999 and inform the DSL as soon as practicable.
7. The DSL will assess the concern, consider thresholds and make a referral to the appropriate local authority safeguarding service where required.
8. Continue to support the child and cooperate with safeguarding partners.

Staff must not investigate independently, confront an alleged perpetrator, or delay reporting while attempting to gather more evidence.

10. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Safeguarding information is confidential but is not secret. Richmond House will share relevant information lawfully, proportionately and promptly where this is necessary to safeguard a child. Staff must not allow uncertainty about data protection to prevent necessary safeguarding action. The organisation will follow the applicable statutory information-sharing requirements from September 2026 and maintain secure records with access limited to authorised persons.

11. Allegations Against Staff, Volunteers or Other Adults

- Any allegation that an adult working with children has harmed, may have harmed, or may pose a risk of harm to a child must be reported immediately to the DSL and managed under the allegations-against-staff procedure.
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) must be contacted in accordance with local procedures where the allegation meets the relevant threshold.
- Internal investigation must not compromise or precede appropriate LADO, police or children's social care advice where external involvement is required.
- Richmond House will cooperate fully with statutory investigations and protect children from further risk while maintaining fairness to staff.

12. Low-Level Concerns and Professional Boundaries

Concerns about adult behaviour that may not meet the threshold for an allegation but may indicate a breach of professional boundaries must still be reported and recorded under Richmond House procedures. Patterns and repeated low-level concerns must be reviewed by management. Staff must maintain professional boundaries, avoid inappropriate private contact and follow approved communication and online-safety arrangements.

13. Whistleblowing and Escalation

Staff may raise safeguarding concerns with the DSL, a DDSL, senior management or the appropriate external safeguarding authority. If a staff member believes a safeguarding concern has not been acted upon appropriately, they must escalate it rather than allow the matter to remain unresolved.

Internal contact	Details
DSL – Jay Al Karaki	07484 371525
DDSL – Hala Okasheh	07761 540911
DDSL – Pauline Bullement	07878 471242
Doncaster LADO	01302 737332 / LADO@doncaster.gov.uk
Barnsley LADO	01226 772341 / LADO@barnsley.gov.uk
Lincolnshire LADO	01522 554674 / lado@lincolnshire.gov.uk
NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice	0800 028 0285
Police	101 non-emergency / 999 emergency

14. Local Safeguarding Referral Contacts

Area / service	Contact
Doncaster MASH	01302 737777
Doncaster MASH out of hours	01302 796000
Doncaster Early Help Hub	01302 734110
Barnsley MASH / Integrated Front Door	01226 772423
Barnsley Emergency Duty Team (out of hours)	01226 787789
Barnsley Safeguarding Unit / Child Protection Conferences	01226 772400
Barnsley safeguarding enquiries	safeguarding@barnsley.gov.uk
Emergency Police	999
Police non-emergency	101
NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000
Childline	0800 1111

Local authority contact arrangements can change. The DSL will maintain a current contact list and staff must use the current local safeguarding arrangements when making referrals. Doncaster confirms that safeguarding concerns are referred by telephone to MASH on 01302 737777, with Early Help support available on 01302 734110.

15. Safer Working Practice and Code of Conduct

- Never use physical punishment, humiliating treatment or threatening behaviour.
- Never develop a sexual or otherwise inappropriate relationship with a child or young person.
- Do not arrange private or unauthorised one-to-one contact.
- Use approved communication systems and maintain professional online boundaries.
- Follow risk assessments, staffing arrangements, transport procedures and safeguarding controls.
- Do not use personal devices or accounts to communicate with children unless specifically authorised under organisational procedures.
- Report any breach of professional boundaries or safeguarding expectations immediately.

16. Trips, Transport, Off-Site and Community Activities

- Activities must have an appropriate risk assessment and safeguarding plan.
- Parental/carer consent must be obtained where required.
- Staffing must be appropriate to the needs and risks of the children attending.
- Transport must be lawful, safe, appropriately insured and fitted with seat belts; children must be supervised appropriately.
- Missing child, absconding, emergency and medical arrangements must be understood before departure.
- Children must not leave an activity or service without the appropriate authorisation and safeguarding arrangements.

17. Alternative Provision and Education Safeguarding

Budleigh House Alternative Provision must maintain safeguarding arrangements appropriate to an education setting. Staff must be alert to attendance concerns, children missing from education, exploitation, online harms, peer abuse, sexual harassment and barriers to learning. Attendance or absence concerns must be shared through the appropriate education and safeguarding pathways. KCSIE 2026 applies to schools and colleges and sets statutory safeguarding expectations for education settings; Richmond House will apply the relevant requirements to its Alternative Provision functions.

18. Children Missing, Exploitation and Risk Outside the Setting

Repeated absence, missing episodes, unexplained travel, sudden changes in possessions or peer groups, or unexplained contact with older individuals may indicate exploitation or other safeguarding risks. Staff must share concerns with the DSL promptly and provide relevant contextual information to safeguarding partners.

19. Record Keeping

- Safeguarding records must be factual, dated, signed or attributable to the author and securely stored.

- Records should include the concern, actions taken, referrals, decisions, outcomes and follow-up.
- Safeguarding records must be stored separately or clearly distinguished from general records and accessed only by authorised personnel.
- Records must be retained and disposed of in accordance with the Data Protection and Record Retention Policy and applicable legal requirements.
- Where a concern is ongoing, records must be updated so that the chronology and current risk are clear.

20. Monitoring, Audit, Learning and Review

- Safeguarding incidents, referrals, allegations, training and low-level concerns will be monitored by management.
- Safeguarding practice will be reviewed at least annually and following significant incidents, learning reviews or material changes in law or guidance.
- Learning from safeguarding incidents and near misses will inform training, risk assessments, procedures and service improvement.
- Children's, families' and staff feedback will be considered where appropriate.
- The organisation will contribute to local safeguarding partnership learning and reviews when required.

21. Related Policies and Procedures

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Recruitment and Selection / Safer Recruitment Policy
- Data Protection and Record Retention Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Online Safety / Acceptable Use arrangements
- Safeguarding Procedures – Children and Adults
- Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers Procedure
- Missing Child / Missing from Education procedures
- Behaviour and Positive Support procedures

Appendix A – Safeguarding Incident Report Form

Confidential – complete as soon as practicable and submit to the DSL/DDSL immediately.

Date and time of concern:

Name of child/young person and date of birth:

Parent/carer details:

Location:

Name and role of person reporting:

Nature of concern (tick where applicable): Physical abuse / Emotional abuse / Sexual abuse or exploitation / Neglect / CCE / CSE / Online abuse / Radicalisation or extremism / Peer-on-peer abuse / Domestic abuse / FGM / Honour-based abuse or forced marriage / Other.

Factual account – include what was seen, heard or disclosed, using the child's words where possible:

Immediate action taken:

Reported to DSL/DDSL – name, date, time and method:

External referral – agency, date/time, reference number:

DSL decision and rationale:

Follow-up actions and outcome:

Signature / date:

Appendix B – Key Safeguarding Expectations for All Staff

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- If you are worried about a child, report it immediately.
- If a child is in immediate danger, call 999.
- Do not promise secrecy or confidentiality.
- Record facts, not assumptions.
- Do not investigate allegations yourself.
- Share information when necessary to protect a child and follow safeguarding information-sharing requirements.
- Challenge discrimination and remain professionally curious.
- Follow the Staff Code of Conduct and maintain professional boundaries.

Approval and Review

Reviewed by	Hala Okasheh, Registered Manager
Authorised by	Jay Al Karaki, Head of Service
Effective date	1 September 2026
Next review	1 September 2027
Policy reference	RHSCS DC-SC-07 / AP-SC-07

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Authorised by: _____ Date: _____