



Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

(Aligned with BNU's Safeguarding Policy)

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out RHCAST's approach to safeguarding all students and vulnerable adults, ensuring a safe, respectful, and supportive environment that promotes wellbeing and personal development.

This policy aligns with the Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) Safeguarding Framework and reflects statutory guidance and local authority procedures within Suffolk County Council.

The policy aims to:

- Protect students and vulnerable adults from harm, abuse, or neglect.
- Ensure clear procedures for reporting and responding to safeguarding concerns.
- Promote a safeguarding culture embedded across RHCAST.
- Maintain compliance with the Care Act 2014, Children Act 1989, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023).

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All RHCAST staff, including freelance and visiting professionals.
- All students and participants on RHCAST programmes, outreach work, and community activities.
- Third-party contractors or external partners representing RHCAST.

Failure to comply with this policy may lead to disciplinary action under the relevant RHCAST Disciplinary Procedure.

Guiding Principles

RHCAST upholds the following principles in all safeguarding activity:

- **Empowerment:** Encourage individuals to make informed choices and decisions.
- **Protection:** Support those in greatest need through timely and proportionate action.
- **Prevention:** Take action before harm occurs.
- **Proportionality:** Respond in ways appropriate to the level of risk.
- **Partnership:** Work collaboratively with local safeguarding authorities and BNU.
- **Accountability:** Maintain transparency and oversight across all safeguarding processes.
- **Confidentiality:** Share information only on a need-to-know basis.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

RHCAST's safeguarding practice is underpinned by:

- *The Children Act 1989 & 2004*
- *The Education Act 2002*
- *The Care Act 2014*
- *Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (amended by Protection of Freedoms Act 2012)*
- *The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)*
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)*

RHCAST also adheres to Suffolk County Council's Safeguarding Partnership and Prevent Strategy 2021–2024.

Safeguarding Structure

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** *Principal, Andrea Lowde*
Email: andrea@rhcast.co.uk | Tel: 01284 655022
- **Deputy Safeguarding Lead (Onsite)** *Vice Principal Claire Louise Auguste*
- **Safeguarding Officers:**
 - *Mariana Sany*
 - *Grace Wellfare*
- **Local Authority Contact:** *Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership – Tel: 0808 800 4005*
- **Prevent Lead:** *Refer to Suffolk Prevent Strategy 2021–2024*

Safeguarding Procedures

1. Recognising and Reporting Concerns

- All staff and students must immediately report any concern or suspicion of abuse, neglect, or risk of harm.
- Concerns must be logged using the RHCAST Record of Safeguarding Concern Form (Appendix B).
- Never ignore a safeguarding concern or attempt to resolve it alone.

2. Identifying a Safeguarding Concern

Staff should remain alert to indicators of abuse, neglect, or radicalisation (see Appendix A). Concerns may relate to:

- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- Neglect or self-neglect
- Financial exploitation
- Radicalisation or extremist influence

3. Actions by Staff

- Report immediately to one of the Safeguarding Officers.
- Record factual information (what was seen, said, or heard).
- Avoid making judgments or promises of confidentiality.
- If immediate danger exists, contact emergency services (999).

4. Actions by the Safeguarding Deputy Lead or Safeguarding Officer

- Review the concern and assess the level of risk.
- Where risk is high or immediate, make a referral to Suffolk Social Services or the Police within 24 hours.
- Maintain full written records and inform the Principal.
- Liaise with BNU and external agencies as required.

5. Dealing with a Disclosure

When a student or staff member discloses harm or abuse:

- Listen calmly without interruption.
- Reassure them they have done the right thing.
- Record factual details — avoid leading questions.
- Explain that information may be shared for their safety.

6. Where Referral Is Not Deemed Necessary

If a case does not meet the threshold for referral, internal support must still be offered — e.g., counselling, wellbeing, or learning support.

All cases must still be recorded and monitored by the Safeguarding Deputy Lead and Safeguarding Officer. This can be posted on the Safeguarding forum on Moodle.

Specific Safeguarding Concerns

1. **Physical Harm** – injury, assault, or neglect of safety.
2. **Emotional / Psychological Harm** – intimidation, coercion, humiliation, isolation.
3. **Neglect or Self-Neglect** – failure to provide or seek necessary care.
4. **Sexual Abuse** – any non-consensual or exploitative sexual activity.
5. **Financial Abuse** – theft, coercion, or misuse of property/funds.
6. **Radicalisation** – influence by extremist ideologies or groups.

All safeguarding categories are assessed using Suffolk's Thresholds of Need Framework (Appendix A).

Rights and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of RHCAST

- Provide a safe and supportive environment.
- Ensure all staff are DBS checked and receive safeguarding training.
- Respond promptly and appropriately to all concerns.
- Report significant concerns to statutory authorities and BNU.

Responsibilities of Staff

- Know and follow this policy and safeguarding procedure.
- Report concerns without delay.
- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Declare relevant criminal convictions.

Rights of Students

- To feel safe and supported.
- To be heard and taken seriously.
- To be informed about actions taken regarding their welfare.
- To receive fair, sensitive, and respectful treatment.

Training and Induction

- All staff receive safeguarding and Prevent training at induction and refresher sessions annually.
- DSLs and Safeguarding Officers undertake enhanced training in line with statutory guidance.
- Students receive safeguarding awareness during induction and via their handbooks.

Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

- All safeguarding records are stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Records are factual, timely, and signed.
- Information is shared only with relevant personnel or agencies.
- Records are retained in line with RHCAST's data-retention schedule.

Monitoring, Review and Oversight

- The Principal and Safeguarding Officers review all safeguarding cases termly.
- Annual safeguarding reports are presented to RHCAST's Senior Management and shared with BNU.
- This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if legislative or procedural changes occur.
- Next review due: **August 2026**.

Appendix A – Assessing Levels of Risk

Four levels of need determine safeguarding response:

1. **Universal (Level 1):** No additional needs – monitored by tutors.
2. **Low (Level 2):** Emerging concerns – internal wellbeing support.
3. **High (Level 3):** Specialist intervention – referral to local services.
4. **Complex/Acute (Level 4):** Immediate danger – emergency referral (Social Services or Police).

Appendix B – Record of Safeguarding Concern Form

Student/Staff Name:

Date of Concern:

Description of Concern:

Immediate Actions Taken:

Estimated Risk Level (1–5):

Reported to:

Safeguarding Officer Signature / Date:

All concerns must be logged on the **RHCAST Safeguarding Forum** (Moodle).

Appendix C – RHCAST Safeguarding Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Lead / Principal:

Andrea Lowde – andrea@rhcast.co.uk – 01284 655022

Deputy Safeguarding Officer/Onsite –

Claire Louise Auguste viceprincipal@rhcast.co.uk – 01284 655022

Safeguarding Officers:

- Mariana Sany
- Grace Wellfare

Appendix D – Local Authority and Prevent Contacts

Suffolk County Council Safeguarding Partnership

- Website: www.suffolksp.org.uk
- Tel: 0808 800 4005

Suffolk MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub)

- Tel: 0345 606 1499
- Website: www.suffolk.gov.uk

Prevent Strategy 2021–2024

- Suffolk Prevent Strategy PDF

Office for Students Prevent Contact

- Website: www.officeforstudents.org.uk
- Tel: 0117 931 7150

Appendix E – Key Definitions

- **Child:** Anyone under 18 years of age.
- **Vulnerable Adult:** Anyone aged 18+ unable to protect themselves from harm due to disability, illness, age, or circumstance.
- **Abuse:** A single or repeated act causing harm, exploitation, or distress.
- **Radicalisation:** Process by which individuals adopt extremist ideologies.
- **Extremism:** Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values.
- **Student:** Any individual engaged in RHCAST activities or study.
- **Staff:** Anyone employed or contracted by RHCAST, including freelancers and visiting tutors.