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**Safeguarding Policy**

RWPN owes a duty of care to its members, its registrants, its staff and volunteers.

Vision Rehabilitation Workers and Habilitation Specialists (hereafter referred to as “vision professionals”, as registrant members of RWPN, owe a duty of care to the people they work with, their colleagues and to others. Exercising this duty of care may include taking action to report certain circumstances to others. The principles that underpin the professional practice of registrants are laid out within RWPN’s Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

**Reporting a safeguarding concern about a client**

Registrants have a professional duty to report their concerns if they have an honestly held belief that a person, (adult or child), is suffering harm, or is at risk of harm. All four nations of the UK have statutory provision requiring that appropriate bodies are in place to manage safeguarding concerns. You must abide by the law in force in the country you work in.

RWPN members and registrants must raise their concerns with the relevant adult or child safeguarding lead in their organisation. If they do not have an organisation lead, they must contact the Local Authority safeguarding contact. They will review all the information provided and make a decision if the matter needs to be formally reported and escalated. Safeguarding is a statutory obligation and this duty to protect your clients from all forms of abuse, harm and/or neglect overrides any duty of confidentiality.

**What RWPN will do if a safeguarding concern is highlighted in the course of its own activities**

Any member of the public, member of RWPN (including registrants), member of staff or volunteer can report a safeguarding concern. RWPN has a designated individual to whom any safeguarding concerns can be reported directly and their contact details are published on the RWPN website.

Where a safeguarding concern is reported to - or picked up by - any other representative of RWPN, that person will record the details and forward the information to the designated safeguarding lead.

Staff and representatives must decide if any immediate action is required to keep the person safe. They must record and pass on what information they have found out, even if the informant has only divulged a little or will not give their details. The information may join up with reports from someone else. All information should be treated as confidential and staff and representatives must not to talk about this information with anyone other than RWPN’s designated safeguarding lead, as rumour spreads quickly, can be damaging and might even hinder any investigation that may result. This information should be passed to the designated lead within 24 hours.

The following guidance must be followed if a representative receives an allegation of abuse or if a disclosure or allegation of abuse is being made to them by the person in question. The representative should: listen to what is being said with an open mind; not ask probing or leading questions designed to get them to reveal more; never stop a person who is freely recalling significant events; check their understanding of the situation, without being investigative; explain that they cannot keep such information confidential, and that they have a responsibility to report what has been said to RWPN. It is important to record if the person has consented to having the information shared. The representative should make a note of the discussion, taking care to record the timing, setting and people present as well as what was said. They should ensure that any medical attention needed is addressed as a priority.

**Safeguarding within RWPN’s Concerns and Complaints policy**

RWPN has a Concerns and Complaints policy that applies to vision professionals on its professional register and any such concerns or complaints should be addressed using this form. If, in the course of investigating a concern or complaint, it appears that there is a safeguarding concern, the chair of RWPN’s Registration and Professional Standards committee will contact record the information in the manner described above and contact RWPN’s designated safeguarding lead. The vision professional will then be contacted and an Interim Suspension Order may be applied through the Concerns and Complaints policy pending further investigation. An Interim Suspension Order is imposed in the interests of public safety or in the interests of the registrant and is not a finding of guilt or innocence.

**The role of the designated safeguarding lead within RWPN**

The designated safeguarding lead will be the point of contact for all RWPN staff and volunteers where they have a concern around safeguarding. The name of the designated safeguarding lead will be provided on the website alongside this policy.

The designated safeguarding lead will:

* ensure that the information they have taken directly or received from a representative has as much information about the situation as possible
* make a decision about what action to take
* ensure that all information, decisions and actions are recorded accurately, held and communicated securely

with respect to the vulnerable person, the designated safeguarding lead will:

* be responsible, where appropriate, for passing on the information to the safeguarding lead within the relevant local authority within 24 hours of receiving the information. The name of any vision professional (registrant) whose involvement is part of the allegation and their employer, should also be included

**What happens if allegations are made against a representative of RWPN**

If any safeguarding concern is being made against a representative of RWPN, we can be contacted link.

In all instances, representatives must inform RWPN and the matter will be referred to the designated safeguarding lead within RWPN.

If RWPN receives an allegation against a representative, they will inform the representative in question and may suspend them from their role while the matter is investigated. Any allegation will be scrupulously investigated, having regard to confidentiality.

**Awareness of RWPN’s safeguarding policy**

This policy will be available to view on our website and all representatives of RWPN will be required to have read this policy, abide by it and be familiar with the steps required to report a safeguarding concern.

Date of Policy: April 2021