



## ROOT AND BRANCH CHANGE

### Safeguarding **POLICY** for the work involving children and adults at risk of harm or neglect

January 2022

#### 1) Purpose

##### **Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk of harm or neglect.**

This policy defines how Root and Branch Change (the organisation) operates to safeguard children, young people, and adults at risk of harm or neglect.

As an organisation we have a duty of care and a strong commitment to the protection and safety of all children, young people, and adults with whom we work. Children and young people are defined as persons under the age of 18 years old and have an equal right to protection regardless of their age, racial origins, religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, personal characteristics, and gender identity.

We also have a duty of care and are committed to safeguard our staff, trustees, and volunteers.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, agencies, university students, stakeholders, visitors, and business partners in the UK, South Africa and people from other countries engaging with us. We are committed to always work together. Due to the nature of our work, there are no regulated working hours. Therefore, this policy applies inside and outside of working hours.

#### 2) Definitions:

##### **2.a Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children:**

- Protecting children from *maltreatment*
- Preventing impairment of children's health and development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes and grow into healthy and productive adults

*Maltreatment* means but is not limited to:

**Sexual abuse** the involvement of a child in sexual activities, inappropriate physical contact, non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse, abuse itself and rape.

**Physical abuse** Causing injury to a child other than by accident. This includes but is not limited to hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing non-accidental physical harm to a child.

**Emotional abuse** Causing harm to a child's emotional, intellectual, mental, or psychological development. Emotional abuse includes but is not limited to any humiliating or degrading treatment (e.g. name calling, threats, yelling/screaming/cursing, rejecting, ignoring, terrorising, isolating, or confining a child).

**Neglect** includes but is not limited to failing to provide adequate food, appropriate clothing, and shelter. Neglect is also failing to prevent harm; failing to ensure adequate supervision; failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment or providing inappropriate medical treatment; or failing to provide a safe physical environment (e.g. exposure to violence, unsafe sleeping practices, releasing a child to an unauthorised adult, failing to childproof a space that children will occupy).

## **2.b Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults/caregivers:**

### **Adults at risk of abuse or neglect**

Adults at risk refers to someone who is older than 18 years of age and who according to paragraph 42.1 of the Care Act 2014:

- Has care and support needs
- Is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect
- Is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it

Root and Branch Change is committed to promoting wellbeing, harm prevention and to responding effectively if concerns are raised. Adults will be included in swift and personalised safeguarding responses. It is also committed to inter agency collaboration on the development and implementation of procedures for the protection of adults vulnerable from abuse. It has a duty and responsibility for making arrangements to stop the abuse where it is happening and preventing abuse where there is a risk that it may occur.

There can be no excuse for not taking all reasonable action to protect adults at risk of abuse and mistreatment. All citizens of the United Kingdom have their rights enshrined within the Human Rights Act 1998, all South African citizens in the South African Human Rights Commission Act 40 of 2013. People who are eligible to receive health and community care services may be additionally vulnerable to the violation of these rights by reason of disability, impairment, age, or illness.

**Duty of care** and commitment to safeguard our staff, trustees, and volunteers: The trustees operate a regularly updated risk assessment and risk register where risks to staff, volunteers and trustees are identified, and mitigations defined. Staff and volunteers need to be protected from both deliberate and accidental harm and abuse, in the UK as well as in South Africa.

### **3) Zero Tolerance**

The organisation has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of mistreatment, abuse, and harm. The organisation recognises that under the Care Act 2014 (UK) it has a duty of the care and protection of adults who are at risk of abuse. It also recognises its responsibilities for the safety and care of

children under the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The relevant legislation in South Africa is the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

Every concern will be taken seriously and followed up with consequences where necessary. The same standards apply to everyone in the organisation regardless of their position or reputation within the organisation.

We are committed to an inclusive, supportive, and safe environment for all children we work with, and for staff and others closely associated with our work. Every individual has the right to be treated fairly and with respect.

Our staff, volunteers and partners require a DBS check in the UK, those in South Africa require the equivalent police check as outlined in our procedures.

#### **4) The organisation is committed to the following principles:**

- The welfare of the child, young person or adult at risk is paramount
- All children, young people and adults at risk have the right to protection from abuse
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: For services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their part
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse must be properly reported to the relevant authorities and dealt with swiftly and appropriately as outlined in our procedures
- Staff, contractors, and volunteers must be trained on appropriate behaviour and responses
- Whistleblowing procedures are suitably referenced in staff training
- All staff are aware of the policy and procedures for the protection of children, young people and adults at risk through appropriate safeguarding training, supervision and support for staff and for creating an environment where staff feel able to raise concerns and feel supported in meeting their safeguarding role
- Staff and volunteers are given a mandatory induction, which includes familiarisation with safeguarding responsibilities and procedures to be followed if anyone has any concerns
- A senior trustee to take leadership responsibility for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements in the UK and in South Africa.
- A designated lead for safeguarding at Root and Branch Change
- Safe recruitment practices are in place including when to obtain a DBS check in the UK and a police check in South Africa

#### **Taking ownership of safeguarding**

The best safeguarding is preventing harm and abuse from happening. This requires identification of risks and a culture of accountability. Prevention is best ensured but not limited to:

**Be alert and transparent:** Ensuring that all staff, representatives and third parties connected to Root and Branch Change are aware of the high standards of behaviour and conduct expected of them to protect children and vulnerable adults from any form of abuse and exploitation in their private and working lives.

**Prevent abuse from happening:** Ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that staff and those who work with Root and Branch Change minimise the risks of any form of child abuse and

abuse to vulnerable adults/ caregivers, including but by no means limited to conducting relevant vetting and background checks of staff as part of their recruitment process.

**Reporting:** Ensuring that all staff and those who work with Root and Branch Change, are well trained on what steps to take where suspicions or concerns arise regarding allegations of child abuse or abuse to vulnerable adults/caregivers, and who to report to as outlined in our procedures.

**Acting:** Ensuring that immediate action is taken to identify and address reports of child abuse and abuse to vulnerable adults/ caregivers, and to ensure the safety and well-being of the child/ren and/or vulnerable adult involved.

#### **5) The commitment we expect from our international partner organisations:**

Root and Branch Change expects the same high standards from all our partners, contractors, international volunteers, suppliers, foster parents and all third parties working with Root and Branch Change, including taking measures to prohibit their staff and representatives from engaging in any child sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or any other form of abuse or exploitation in their working and personal lives.

a) We expect a zero-tolerance policy on Child abuse and that all available measures are taken to prevent and respond to actual, attempted, or threatened forms of child abuse.

b) We expect that staff members and everyone connected with our partner organisation are fully aware of this policy and encouraged to report incidents of suspected or actual child abuse.

c) We expect that child abuse is reported immediately. Failure to report will be treated as a serious offence and may result in termination of any agreement with Root and Branch Change.

d) If anyone becomes aware of a child safeguarding concern, we expect the person to act quickly and immediately report suspicions or knowledge of a safeguarding concern or incident to a relevant contact at Root and Branch Change or in the case of non-emergencies to write an email to [rbcsafeguarding@gmail.com](mailto:rbcsafeguarding@gmail.com).

Adopted 6 January 2022