

Safeguarding Policy and Procedure for Rotherham U3A V1.0

1. Policy statement

This policy and procedure is written to enable the Ru3a and its members to address issues where there are safeguarding concerns that become apparent during Ru3a activities, regarding vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding issues may include: incidents between vulnerable members, concerns regarding abuse or neglect that a Ru3a member may be experiencing inside or outside of the Ru3a, health related issues.

Ru3a has a duty of care to its members but does not hold any statutory authority. Matters of concern will be reported to the relevant safeguarding authorities and charity regulatory authorities, as appropriate.

Ru3a recognises that some people are potentially at risk of abuse and neglect. Where abuse or neglect of a vulnerable person is suspected/reported, the Trustees of Ru3a will aim to respond in a prompt and efficient manner to any situation where there is a risk of, or perceived risk of harm.

Ru3a recognises that there are various forms of abuse which can be perpetrated by others including: volunteers, members, relatives, friends and neighbours. Always determine if the issue is actually a Safeguarding issue or a Code of Conduct issue or other by speaking with the Safeguarding Officer.

Ru3a will neither condone nor tolerate any form of abuse or neglect of those deemed vulnerable and believes that members should be able and, where necessary, enabled to exist in an environment which is safe and free from harm.

It is not appropriate for Ru3a to take the lead role in any Safeguarding Enquiry under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014. Where there are serious concerns regarding abuse or neglect the Trustees will seek advice and support from the Third Age Trust, where possible, and will contact the relevant statutory authorities, as needed. The Trustees will monitor the implementation of this policy annually and formally review the procedure every 5 years.

In following this safeguarding procedure, members of Ru3a and the Trustees will strive to uphold the principles that those involved in safeguarding incidents are entitled to:

- privacy
- be treated with dignity and respect
- lead an independent life and to be enabled to do so
- choose how they live their lives
- the protection of the law
- have their human and civil rights upheld regardless of: ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religious or cultural background.

1.1 The principles enshrined within the Care Act 2014 should be respected, namely:

- **Principle 1 – Empowerment** – whereby the approach is focused on the individual making their own decision and gaining informed consent, where possible.
- **Principle 2 – Prevention** – seeking to take steps to prevent issues from arising or escalating.
- **Principle 3 – Proportionality** – responding in a proportionate way to the issue/s being presented.
- **Principle 4 – Protection** – seeking to keep the membership safe and protection for those deemed to be at risk.
- **Principle 5 – Partnership** – reporting incidents to the relevant statutory bodies and liaising with Third Age Trust.
- **Principle 6 – Accountability** – accurate recording of incidents. Reporting incidents, as required, to the Trust and relevant regulatory authorities.

2 Dealing with Disclosure

If someone discloses a safeguarding concern to you:

2.1.1 Do

- Stay calm and try not to show shock or disbelief.
- Listen carefully to what they are saying.
- Be sympathetic (I'm sorry that this has happened to you').
- Be aware of the possibility that medical evidence might be needed.
- Tell the person that:
 - They did the right thing to tell you.
 - You are treating the information seriously. It was not their fault.
 - You are going to inform the appropriate person.
 - You/ will take steps to protect and support them.
- Record and report the disclosure in line with the procedure.

2.1.2 Do not

- Press the person for more details; this will be done at a later date.
- Stop someone who is freely recalling significant events (Don't say 'hold on, we'll come back to that later'; they may not tell you or anybody else again).
- Promise to keep secrets; you cannot keep this kind of information to yourself.
- Make promises you cannot keep (Such as 'This will never happen to you again').
- Make contact with the alleged abuser unless they are also a RU3A member and it is necessary to do so to safeguard other members and/or the alleged abuser.
- Be judgemental.
- Pass on the information other than to those with a legitimate 'need-to-know' under this policy and procedure.

3 Procedure

The Ru3a Board has a responsibility to ensure that all its Trustees and all group coordinators/leaders understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

Depending on the nature of the allegation and the identified risk, Ru3a will support the alleged vulnerable victims and the alleged perpetrators of any abuse, in so far as this does not compromise any safeguarding enquiry or investigation into the allegation, or place other adults at risk.

Every effort will be made to respect the confidentiality of any information that is disclosed under this policy and procedure. However, due to the seriousness of allegations confidentiality is not absolute. Information will be recorded and stored securely in accordance with data protection as per the GDPR Act 2018. However, information may have to be shared, on a 'need-to-know' basis only, to prevent:

- Danger to a person's life
- Danger to a person's health
- Danger to others
- Danger to the community

Where a serious safeguarding concern becomes apparent, steps should be taken, to ensure the safety of adult/s at risk is secured as a first priority. In the first instance, it is likely that a member will become aware of a safeguarding concern and they should seek appropriate advice.

The member or Group Coordinator should raise the safeguarding concern with the Ru3a Trustee responsible as a Safeguarding Officer whenever possible.

The steps taken to address the issue will be discussed and agreed within the Board in the first instance. No Trustee, Group Coordinator or member should act in isolation when dealing with a safeguarding concern.

Where the Board becomes aware of a safeguarding concern, the first step will be to gather as much information as possible to assist with the decision as to the next steps. An initial safeguarding plan will be developed and recorded as soon as possible after the concern comes to the attention of the Trustee. Where it is deemed that the risk is high and immediate action needs to be taken, the Trustee will contact the relevant local authorities and – where appropriate – Third Age Trust for advice and support.

As far as possible, the vulnerable adult's wishes will be respected, as to whether or not to refer any concerns to the local authority as a Safeguarding Enquiry under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014. However, it may be necessary to override their wishes in the best interests of other adults at risk.

In developing the initial safeguarding plan, the Trustee will take advice and consider the level of risk and the action that needs to be taken accordingly. Assessment of risk will include:

- Risk to the individual member
- Risk to other members within initial Ru3a
- Reputational risk for RU3A and the movement as a whole

Where appropriate, the Trustee will contact Third Age Trust to discuss the concerns and seek additional assistance in developing the initial assessment. Assistance will always be sought before moving to exclude any member from Ru3a on the basis of an outcome of the safeguarding assessment.

Once the initial safeguarding plan is completed, the Trustee will decide as to the most appropriate course of action.

This could include:

- excluding members from certain groups i.e. groups held in people's homes
- requesting that a member attends Ru3a with a carer or
- excluding a member from a specific group

Depending on the nature of the allegation it may be necessary to pursue the incident following Ru3a grievance procedure. Where it is decided that this is the best course of action the matter will not be investigated by any party that was privy to the initial reporting of the incident. All actions taken will be recorded. Any records will remain confidential unless a prior decision has been taken to share the record with the relevant statutory bodies.

4 Key Definitions

4.1 Adult at risk

Is any vulnerable person, who is over 18 years of age and who has need for care and support, is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or risk of it.

4.2 Contact:

safeguarding@rotherhamu3a.uk

Rotherham Adult Social Services on TEL: 01709 822330

Rotherham u3a Ru3a Safeguarding Policy & Procedure		The Third Age Trust
Version	Description of changes	Date
0.1	Draft document created	03/04/2025
0.2	Peer Review MM entered into approved Rotherham Template	05/04/2025
1.0	Adopted and minuted at Trustee Meeting	6 th June 2025

Signed: H J Mallan

Role - Trustee Safeguarding Officer