

Safeguarding Policy

Royal Scottish Country Dance Society Cambridge & District Branch

Formally adopted at the Branch Committee Meeting on 6 February 2026. This document will be reviewed annually in May or at any time an issue arises or it is deemed necessary by the Branch Chair. Reviewed on 31 August 2026.

Outline

The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society Cambridge & District Branch (hereafter, 'RSCDS Cambridge', 'we' or 'us') is primarily a society of adult dancers. We do, however, welcome dancers under the age of 18 to our events and classes (those under 16 to be accompanied by a responsible adult) and, as such, have a moral and social responsibility to provide a safe environment for them.

In England, 'safeguarding' means 'protecting children (and vulnerable adults) from maltreatment and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes'.

This policy outlines the responsibilities and protocols necessary for the protection of children and other vulnerable people and should be read by all members of the Cambridge RSCDS committee, as well as any class teachers or other adults in a position of authority. The policy applies at all Society events (any event organised wholly or in part by RSCDS Cambridge), at any premises, in perpetuity.

The aims of this policy are:-

- ❖ to protect children and other vulnerable people
- ❖ to demonstrate best practice in safeguarding
- ❖ to maintain a culture of safeguarding.

This policy has been written primarily with respect to the safeguarding of children, but the same spirit and guidance apply to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults. Statements that apply to children but not vulnerable adults are clearly marked.

The headline message is:-

If you are worried about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult you have a duty to act. In almost all cases, the best thing to do is alert the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), a designated Point of Contact, or a member of Cambridge RSCDS committee.

Do not allow the worry that you may 'get it wrong', to prevent you from acting. Your concern will be assessed by the DSL or someone else with the appropriate training; you do not need to assess how serious the concern is yourself. If the concern does prove to be a false alarm, nothing bad will happen. Equally, do not assume that someone else will help the child.

The key principles underpinning this policy are:-

- ❖ The child's welfare is, and must always be, of paramount consideration.
- ❖ All children have a right to be protected from abuse regardless of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age.
- ❖ All suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to efficiently and appropriately.
- ❖ Staff and Committee members who meet children will be good role models.

- ❖ Working in partnership with other organisations, with parents or adults responsible for children and with children themselves, is essential.

Contact details

- ❖ **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Saskia Frisby. +44 7443 435888, sf58@cam.ac.uk. DSL is a technical term and refers to someone holding a level 3 safeguarding qualification*.
- ❖ **RSCDS Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer:** Katie Haigh (based at RSCDS HQ in Scotland), at cwpo@rscds.org.
- ❖ If the DSL is unavailable for any reason, you can seek advice from the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** at LADO@cambridgeshire.gov.uk. They will respond to your query within 24 hours.

* This qualification refers to the safeguarding of children specifically. For concerns regarding vulnerable adults, please defer to the LADO.

Policy in detail

Presence of Children

- ❖ Dancers under the age of 18 are welcome at RSCDS Cambridge and District Branch events.
- ❖ Dancers under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult, who will act as their main Point of Contact and be primarily responsible for their welfare.
- ❖ Dancers between the ages of 16 and 18, who are not accompanied by an adult, are asked to make themselves known to a committee member and/or the teacher or person running the event.

Good Practice

In general, you should:-

- ❖ Only physically touch a child when you have legitimate reason to do so, as well as their consent. For example:-
 - During a dance, as specified by the cribs / recap / manual.
 - “Not quite, can I show you how to hold your hands?”
 - “Well done! High five”?
- ❖ Share information on a need-to-know basis. You do not need to maintain confidentiality when sharing a welfare concern with the DSL. While hurtful behaviour should be challenged if directly observed, it is not acceptable (and may be hurtful) to address a concern via public discussion.
 - “Hi DSL, I’m not sure if you’ve heard from someone else, but C said D has been sending them weird messages”?
 - NOT [publicly] “D why are you sending C weird messages”?
- ❖ Avoid being alone with children (who you do not know outside dancing) for long periods of time unnecessarily. If you feel you need to check on a child in a vulnerable position, for example you

are concerned they have passed out in the changing room, bring another adult with you if possible.

- Obviously, there are times when this will be a judgement call. If you are worried that they have fallen and hit their head check on them first and shout for assistance.
- ❖ If you are alone with a child, make sure you are not standing between them and the room's exit.

Bad Practice

You should **not**:-

- ❖ Direct sexual remarks towards children or allow such remarks to go unchallenged.
- ❖ Be alone in changing rooms, shower blocks etc with children.
- ❖ Allow or engage in rough or sexual touching of any form.
- ❖ Reduce a child to tears as a form of discipline or control.
- ❖ Allow allegations made by a child to go ignored or undocumented.

If Approached

If a child approaches you with a safeguarding concern, whether applicable to themselves or another, you should:-

- ❖ Listen non-judgementally. Put your own feelings aside and listen as if the information is non-sensational.
- ❖ Allow the child to lead the conversation and speak freely. Do not interrupt them with lots of questions.
- ❖ Let them tell you at their own pace. Do not worry if the child or young person stops talking for a while - silences are okay.
- ❖ Accept what the child or young person says without challenge, even if what they are saying sounds untrue; the truth of their statements can be determined later.
- ❖ Provide reassurance that you are taking them seriously.
- ❖ Let the child or young person know that you understand how hard it is for them to tell you.
- ❖ Let them know they are doing the right thing by speaking out.
- ❖ Never ask questions that may make the child or young person feel guilty or inadequate.
- ❖ Never ask a child to remove or adjust their clothing to show you any marks of physical abuse.
- ❖ Respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and share information on a need-to-know basis.
- ❖ When they have finished speaking, you may ask clarifying questions, but do not lead them to any answers. Once you have established that they have been harmed or at risk, do not pursue the conversation further. This is important to ensure that questions cannot be raised later about possible manipulation of the disclosure. For example:-
 - "What did they say to you?" NOT "Did they tell you to ..."
- ❖ Do not promise to keep anything a secret. Be honest about who you are going to tell.
 - "I can promise not to tell lots of people or gossip, but I will have to tell [DSL]".

- ❖ Make some notes at the time if you can and record what happened as soon as possible, ideally in an email to the DSL. The DSL, Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer or LADO can help you ensure that these records conform to good record-keeping standards.
- ❖ **Most importantly, you MUST tell someone!** Either the DSL, or one of the other contacts listed above if they are unavailable. You should receive a response within 8 hours to inform you what has happened following the report being made. If you do not receive an update, contact the DSL again.
 - If the DSL are themselves the alleged abuser, go directly to the LADO.

During or following a disclosure, a child may feel:-

- ❖ Guilt: They may blame themselves for the abuse and often feel guilt for telling.
- ❖ Shame: They may feel mortified about the abuse itself.
- ❖ Confusion: They may be muddled about their feelings for the alleged abuser.
- ❖ Fear: They may fear the repercussions. They may fear the alleged abuser.

Be careful with physical contact, like hugging a child after a disclosure. Any contact should be initiated by them and they should be able to freely pull away.

Peer on Peer Abuse

It is important to remember that perpetrators of abuse can be other children or vulnerable adults.

- ❖ Proceed as normal: make notes of any concerns you have or disclosure a child comes to you with, and report to the DSL / LADO.
- ❖ Do not dismiss harmful actions performed by children / vulnerable adults purely on the grounds that they are children / vulnerable adults.
- ❖ The DSL will involve the children's parents as appropriate. You should still report your concern to them, not try to involve the children's parents directly.

Forms of abuse and their indicators

'Child abuse' is a term used to describe what happens when a person, or a group of people, intentionally harm, or fail to prevent harm of, a child under the age of 18. Children and young people may be abused in a family, institutional or community setting, by those known to them or by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children or young person. There are different types of abuse:-

- ❖ **Physical abuse:** intentionally causing bodily injury. Examples include hitting, shaking, poisoning and burning. It can also involve the fabrication of a child's illness by their parents or carers.
- ❖ **Neglect:** failure to prevent harm from happening to a child. Examples of neglect include failing to provide adequate supervision for a child or being unresponsive to a child's basic needs.
- ❖ **Sexual abuse:** forcing or enticing a child to engage in sexual activities. The abuse may not involve violence and the child might not be aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse includes physical contact and/or noncontact acts – such as involving children in the production of sexual images.
- ❖ **Emotional abuse:** the ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child. Examples include being unable to express opinions, overprotection and serious bullying. Emotional abuse can have a hugely adverse impact on a child's emotional and social development.

- Information about subtypes of abuse and their indicators can be found at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/> . Guidance on identifying the signs of radicalisation can be found at <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/radicalisation>.

Protecting Children with Disabilities

Young people with disabilities are at an increased risk of abuse. The greater the disability, the greater the risk. There are several factors that contribute to this, including:-

- ❖ Lack of friends and peer groups to support and protect.
- ❖ Intimate or physical and/or invasive medical care required. This can make it difficult for the child or young person to know what an acceptable and unacceptable 'touch' is.
- ❖ Lack of speech or limited communication. This makes it harder to report abuse.
- ❖ Multiple parents or people responsible for the child, which makes it harder to identify who may be abusing a child.
- ❖ History of being told what to do and not given choices.
- ❖ Being dependent on the abuser for a service or basic need.
- ❖ Having medical conditions that are used to explain injuries.
- ❖ Being less valued than their peers – poor care may be observed but tolerated by others. This might include such things as:-
 - Not speaking directly to the child.
 - Not offering choices.
 - Not moving and handling them safely.
 - Not respecting their privacy and dignity.
 - Not treating them according to their age.
 - Allowing physical restraint to occur.
 - Using derogatory language.

There is no one way to ensure that children and young people with disabilities are fully protected but the safest environments are those that assist children and young people to protect themselves by helping them to speak out. Everyone must do their best to stop abuse from happening and take responsibility for observing, challenging and reporting poor practice and suspected abuse. Safe environments for children and young people with disabilities are also safer for all children and young people.