



## **Rising Horizons Occupational Therapy Services**

### **Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedure**

**Service Type:** Independent Paediatric Occupational Therapy

**Policy Version:** 1.0

**Effective Date:** September 2026

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## Purpose

Rising Horizons Occupational Therapy Services is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people who access our services.

We recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. As an independent occupational therapy service working with children, young people, parents/carers and education settings, we have a professional responsibility to identify safeguarding concerns, respond appropriately, record concerns accurately and share information when necessary to protect a child or young person.

This policy sets out the safeguarding arrangements that guide our practice.

Our safeguarding practice is informed by:

- current HCPC Standards of Proficiency for Occupational Therapists;
- HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- current Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP) procedures;
- relevant local authority safeguarding procedures;
- relevant education-setting safeguarding procedures where we work within schools or colleges;
- our confidentiality, data protection, lone-working and risk-management arrangements.

## Scope

This policy applies to all children and young people receiving services from Rising Horizons, including those seen:

- in their family home;
- in schools, colleges and nurseries;
- in clinics;
- in community settings;
- remotely/online;
- through local authority or other commissioned work;



It applies to safeguarding concerns identified during:

- occupational therapy assessment;
- intervention;
- parent/carer interviews;
- school observations;
- home visits;
- telephone conversations;
- email communication;
- online consultations;
- communication with other professionals.

### **Our Safeguarding Responsibilities**

As a professional occupational therapy service, we are responsible for maintaining safe safeguarding practice.

We will:

- maintain appropriate safeguarding knowledge and training;
- understand and follow relevant local safeguarding procedures;
- remain alert to possible indicators of abuse or neglect;
- listen to children and young people;
- take concerns seriously;
- record concerns accurately and promptly;
- seek safeguarding advice where required;
- make appropriate referrals;
- share relevant information when necessary to safeguard a child;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- maintain confidentiality while recognising its safeguarding limitations;



- participate appropriately in multi-agency working;
- seek professional supervision and advice when appropriate;
- maintain appropriate professional records;
- review and update our safeguarding arrangements regularly.

Where a safeguarding decision requires professional judgement, the responsible practitioner will ensure that appropriate action is taken and documented.

### **Child-centred Safeguarding**

The welfare, safety, voice and best interests of the child will remain central to our safeguarding practice.

We will consider:

- the child's wishes and feelings;
- their age and developmental stage;
- communication needs;
- disability and neurodevelopmental differences;
- their ability to understand and communicate information;
- their relationships and environment;
- known vulnerabilities;
- the potential impact of any action or inaction.

Where a child communicates differently, we will make reasonable adjustments to support their communication. A child's autism, ADHD, learning disability, developmental delay, communication difficulty or behavioural presentation will not automatically be assumed to explain away changes in behaviour, distress, injuries or other potential indicators of harm.



## **Recognising safeguarding concerns**

Safeguarding concerns may arise from:

- something a child tells us;
- something a parent/carer tells us;
- information from another professional;
- direct observation;
- changes in behaviour or presentation;
- unexplained injuries;
- concerns about the child's environment;
- concerns about supervision or care;
- concerns about exploitation;
- concerns about online safety;
- concerns about domestic abuse;
- concerns about neglect;
- concerns about sexual or physical abuse;
- concerns about emotional abuse;
- concerns about harmful sexual behaviour;
- concerns about criminal exploitation;
- concerns about trafficking;
- concerns about radicalisation;
- concerns regarding a person who has access to the child.

We will consider safeguarding concerns in the context of the child's overall circumstances rather than relying on a single indicator.



We will not attempt to conduct our own investigation into an allegation of abuse.

Immediate danger- If we believe that a child is in immediate danger or there is an immediate risk of serious harm:

We will contact the emergency services by calling 999 where emergency intervention is required.

We will not delay emergency action while attempting to obtain consent, contact another professional or complete documentation.

For children living in Kent, we will follow the current Kent safeguarding arrangements and referral procedures.

### **Making a safeguarding referral**

Where we believe that a child may require safeguarding intervention, we will follow the safeguarding procedures applicable to the child's local authority.

For a child living in Kent, we will use the current Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership procedures and relevant Kent children's services referral arrangements.

Where the child lives outside Kent, we will identify and follow the relevant local authority's safeguarding arrangements. Where we are uncertain whether a concern requires referral, we will seek appropriate professional safeguarding advice rather than ignoring or minimising the concern.

### **Consent and safeguarding**

We will normally seek appropriate consent when sharing information.

However, safeguarding concerns may require information to be shared without consent.

We may share information without consent where this is necessary and proportionate to protect a child or another person from harm or where required by law or professional responsibility.

We will consider whether seeking consent could:

- place the child at greater risk;
- place another person at risk;
- compromise a safeguarding response;
- result in evidence being lost;



- otherwise undermine the child's safety.

Where information is shared without consent, we will record:

- what information was shared;
- with whom;
- why it was shared;
- whether consent was sought;
- why consent was not sought, where applicable;
- any professional advice received;
- the outcome or next action where known.

### **Confidentiality**

We respect the privacy and confidentiality of children, young people and families.

However, confidentiality is not absolute. We will explain to parents/carers, where appropriate, that information may need to be shared where there is a safeguarding concern.

We will only share information that is:

- relevant;
- necessary;
- proportionate;
- accurate;
- shared with an appropriate person or agency.

Our confidentiality arrangements are designed to protect personal information while allowing appropriate information sharing where this is necessary to safeguard a child.



## **Safeguarding records**

Safeguarding records will be factual, objective and contemporaneous wherever reasonably possible.

## **Working with parents and carers**

We will work openly and respectfully with parents and carers wherever appropriate.

However, we will not automatically inform a parent/carer about a safeguarding concern before seeking advice where doing so could increase the risk to the child or otherwise compromise safeguarding action.

Our priority will remain the safety and welfare of the child.

## **Working with schools and colleges**

When providing services within an educational setting, we will familiarise ourselves with the setting's safeguarding arrangements and identify the relevant Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Where appropriate, safeguarding concerns will be communicated to the DSL.

However, responsibility for safeguarding does not transfer to the school simply because we are working on school premises.

Where a concern requires direct referral to children's social care or another agency, we will take appropriate action.

Where Rising Horizons works within a school or college, the setting's safeguarding policy will also be followed where applicable.

## **Home visits**

Before undertaking home visits, we will consider relevant risks.

During home visits, we will maintain appropriate professional boundaries and remain alert to any environmental risks or unsafe conditions.

If we identify a safeguarding concern during a home visit, we will follow this policy and seek appropriate advice.

If remaining at the property creates an immediate safety risk, the practitioner may end the visit and seek appropriate assistance.



## Professional boundaries

Rising Horizons maintains clear professional boundaries with children, young people, parents/carers and other professionals.

We will:

- use professional communication channels;
- maintain appropriate contact with families;
- maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries;
- avoid inappropriate gifts or financial arrangements;
- maintain professional records;
- ensure communication remains relevant to the child's care.

## Online safeguarding

Where consultations or professional communication take place online, we will:

- use appropriate professional platforms;
- maintain confidentiality;
- maintain professional boundaries;
- ensure appropriate parental/carer involvement where required;
- consider who is present during the consultation;
- avoid inappropriate direct communication with children;
- record relevant safeguarding concerns;
- follow the same safeguarding procedures as for face-to-face work.

## Safeguarding and neurodivergent children

Rising Horizons works with children and young people who may have autism, ADHD, developmental coordination difficulties, learning disabilities, communication difficulties and other additional needs.

We recognise that some children may experience additional safeguarding vulnerabilities, including difficulties with:



- communicating concerns;
- recognising unsafe situations;
- identifying inappropriate behaviour;
- understanding social boundaries;
- reporting abuse;
- being understood when their communication is atypical.

We will consider each child's individual communication and support needs when responding to safeguarding concerns.

We will avoid interpreting safeguarding indicators solely as manifestations of neurodivergence or disability.

### **Exploitation, online harm and radicalisation**

Safeguarding concerns may include:

- criminal exploitation;
- sexual exploitation;
- grooming;
- trafficking;
- online grooming;
- harmful online content;
- extremist or radicalising influences;
- coercion;
- peer-on-peer abuse.

We will follow relevant local and national safeguarding procedures where such concerns arise.



## **Concerns about another professional or adult**

If we become concerned that an adult working with children may pose a safeguarding risk, we will seek appropriate safeguarding advice.

This may involve:

- the organisation's DSL;
- children's social care;
- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- police;
- another appropriate safeguarding professional.

Where a concern relates to a practitioner within Rising Horizons, appropriate external safeguarding and regulatory processes will be followed.

## **Professional disagreement and escalation**

If we believe that another professional or organisation has not responded appropriately to a safeguarding concern, we will respectfully challenge the decision and escalate where necessary.

Professional disagreement will not be allowed to delay action required to protect a child.

We will follow the relevant local safeguarding escalation and professional challenge procedures.

## **Safeguarding training**

We will maintain appropriate safeguarding knowledge and undertake safeguarding training relevant to our work with children and young people.

Training will be refreshed in accordance with relevant professional and local requirements.

Evidence of safeguarding training and continuing professional development will be maintained as part of our professional governance arrangements.



## **DBS and safer working**

Rising Horizons will maintain appropriate DBS and professional registration arrangements relevant to the services provided.

Where a commissioning organisation, school or local authority requires additional checks, training or safeguarding documentation, we will comply with those requirements where applicable.

## **Lone working**

Because Rising Horizons provides services in homes, schools and community settings, safeguarding is considered alongside lone-working safety.

We will maintain appropriate arrangements for:

- assessing risks before visits;
- communicating visit details where necessary;
- maintaining access to communication;
- leaving unsafe environments;
- reporting incidents;
- responding to unexpected situations.

Lone-working arrangements will complement, but never replace, safeguarding procedures.

## **Kent safeguarding arrangements**

For children living in Kent, we will follow the current Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership procedures. We will use the current Kent Children's Services referral arrangements when a safeguarding concern requires referral.

Immediate danger: 999

Current safeguarding contact details and referral arrangements will be checked regularly as local procedures may change.



## Children living outside Kent

Where a child lives outside Kent, we will identify and follow the safeguarding arrangements of the relevant local authority.

The location of the Rising Horizons business does not automatically determine which local authority should respond to a safeguarding concern.

## Policy review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if:

- legislation changes;
- national safeguarding guidance changes;
- KSCMP procedures change;
- professional standards change;
- there is a safeguarding incident;
- learning from an incident identifies a need for change;
- the nature of Rising Horizons' services changes.

The policy will be updated to reflect current safeguarding requirements.

## Our commitment

Rising Horizons Occupational Therapy Services is committed to creating a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which children and young people are listened to, valued and protected.

## Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

We will take safeguarding concerns seriously, respond appropriately and work with relevant professionals and agencies to promote the safety and welfare of children and young people.

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