Guidelines for RSC employees and freelancers during the COVID 19 crisis

These temporary guidelines should be read alongside the main RSC Safeguarding Policy for Children and Adults at Risk and our Social Media Policy. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide additional information to supplement both policies during the Covid 19 crisis and specifically focuses on creating a safe environment in which to continue our work with children and young people.

It is a temporary extension of the guidance provided in 5.8 (Online Safety) of the RSC Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk policy.

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1. **Context**

During this period of lockdown, we will work digitally to connect, create work with and support children and young people in partner schools and independently. The following guidelines provide protocols for that work, ensuring that the safeguarding of children and young people is our paramount consideration.

2. **Adults at Risk**

An important difference between safeguarding adults at risk and safeguarding children is an adult's right to self-determination[1]. Adults may choose not to act at all to protect themselves, and it is only in extreme circumstances that the law intervenes. This will often only happen when an adult is assessed to lack capacity in that area, or where the concerns may extend to children, such as when they are living in the same household. Therefore, for the purposes of this guidance, the focus is on children and young people. If RSC staff believe that a piece of online content may have been made by an adult at risk, they should consider how that adult is included in any further decision making about the sharing of that content.

Where we are working online with over 18s who do not fall into an 'at risk' category but with whom we are working in a position of trust (for example, providing distance learning for

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[1] https://www.anncrafttrust.org/resources/why-have-different-policies-and-procedures-for-safeguarding-children-and-adults/

University students) a discussion between the line manager and responsible person or practitioner will take place to agree appropriate adaptations of the guidelines.

3. Live communication via digital platforms

RST staff may run live virtual sessions with children and young people during this period and will therefore adopt and maintain the following additional safeguarding measures.

- Written permission (including via email) from parents/carers will be sought for all live chat communication with children via digital platforms. Where permission is not given by the parent/carer, the child will not participate in the digital sessions.
- All parents/carers will be informed of the platform/s to be used in the session along with the dates and times of sessions and the names of the authorised adults who will be participating in these sessions.
  - o RSC staff and artists and authorised personnel will be the only adults present during RSC digital live chat communication with young people
- When communicating with young people via digital platforms RSC staff will use RSC accounts and phones and ensure that the personal numbers of young people and freelancers are kept confidential and not shared with any other group member.
- All live chat sessions (for example using Zoom) will be password protected.
- The staff member hosting the session will use the waiting room feature before a session starts. ensuring no access is given to anyone besides authorised staff and young people.
- RSC staff will ensure the following safety measures are in place when running any online chat session:
  - o Before the session commences, the RSC staff member responsible for the session will send the following advice to the children and young people participating in the session:
    - Make sure that people you live with know you are on a live video chat. Please do not include them in the chat.
    - Please wear appropriate clothing, even on parts of you that you think won't be seen.
    - Please consider the background of the room you will be speaking from to ensure it is appropriate (for example, a bedroom may not be suitable).
- During all live chat sessions, RSC staff will ensure that:
  - o Two DBS checked adults will be present for the duration of every session; one of these will be designated as the session host and the other will provide active support as needed.
  - o A Waiting room function will be switched on so that the host can monitor who is joining
  - o The host will disable the chat function that enables members to chat between each other
  - o The host will be the only user able to share their screen
  - o The host will remind young people that this is not a private space and whatever they share online will be seen by the group.
  - o Where whiteboards are used, these will be autosaved for future reference and retained by a designated RSC member of staff for a six-month period

- o At the end of each session, the host will share a final plate/whiteboard with participants that contains signposts to further wellbeing support. This will show on screen until the final participant has left the session. See Appendix 1.

- At the start of each live chat with young people, RSC staff will establish a code of conduct / group contract for the session including:
  - o A wellbeing briefing at the start of the session that acknowledges the context and additional anxieties this may bring, and lets participants know that our website contains signposts to useful sites that can provide further support. These will also be shared on a final plate at the end of the session.
  - o Reminding participants about respecting others and not to do anything online that they would not do if the group were together
  - o Introducing the platform technology to the group, explaining that everyone will have their microphones on mute when they are not speaking. Any 'raise your hand' / response features will also be introduced.
  - o Reminding participants that they must not record or take photos of anything during the session
  - o Reminding participants that any chat function is disabled and there will be no private chat between group members.
  - o Young people and parents/responsible adults will be advised about the process for reporting online abuse via CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) part of the national Crime Agency https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/

4. Video content including children and young people

There are two ways in which the images of children and young people may appear in online RSC content.

A. Where it is submitted by a parent or child via our open social media channels

B. Where it is submitted via email or on other platforms as part of an RSC curated creative project

We will take a different approach in each context.

1. Content submitted via our open social media channels

Where it is deemed that a child or young person has submitted content on RSC social media channels and where the content includes the child or other children, the RSC will not retweet or respond to the content. Where content containing children has been submitted on RSC channels by an adult who refers to themselves as the parent of the child, the RSC may choose to retweet and/or respond to the parent.

Where a child has submitted content that does not feature any children or adults, the RSC may subsequently share that content, redacting anything that could identify the child, including their twitter handle.

2. Content submitted via email as part of an RSC curated creative project

Where the RSC has asked young people to submit content as part of a creative project the following protocols will be used:

- The content will be submitted to an email address that contains the project name, as opposed to the name of an individual staff member
- The person/s accessing the email address will be DBS checked adult/s

Young people will be advised:

- Not to submit material that uses or discloses their full name
- Not to film or submit things that might reveal their exact address, school or somewhere they go regularly (e.g. a sports club or activity)
- Not to film anyone else under the age of 18
- To wear appropriate clothing
- To keep themselves safe – i.e. not to share content that feels too personal, complicated or sad.

5. **Sharing work made by young people online**

Where the RSC has invited young people to create work online, for example in response to a digital challenge, RSC staff will:

- Use the RSC parental consent form to gain consent from the parent/guardian for their child to participate in the project, making clear that it involves the submission of photos or video content made by the child or young person
- Share the final edits with the children, young people via their parents/guardians before sharing more widely.
- Not use any child's surname in photography or video content.

6. **Wellbeing and content choices**

During this health crisis, young people may experience greater levels of anxiety. One in eight children and young people already have a diagnosable mental health condition, and research suggests that the majority of those believe that the pressures created by the crisis are exacerbating their needs[2].

Others – including those who have experienced bereavement, abuse or domestic violence – are likely to require additional support. The fear of becoming ill or seeing a loved one become ill, the loss of routines, the difficulties of social connection, the impact of loneliness, the disruption to education and the challenges of living in difficult or dangerous situations are creating additional pressure for young people across the country. Young people who belong to groups that are already marginalised or disadvantaged may be particularly at risk.

The choice of text extracts used for engaging with young people should therefore be given careful consideration. For example, extracts that focus on death, dying, suicide or abuse may be less appropriate at this time. Practitioners should give careful consideration to the choice of passages used. All artists and practitioners working directly with young people or

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[2] Young Minds Impact of Covid on Young Peoples' mental Health, Mar 2020

adults at risk online should be briefed to ensure that they are aware that the mental well-being of participants is paramount.

7. Receiving a disclosure online or via a mobile phone

This guidance should be read alongside Section 7 of the RSC Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk policy.

We recognise that at times, and duaring this crisis, young people, for example, might disclose information to RSC staff members digitally.

If a staff member receives a message that they think may indicate that the young person communicating with them is at immediate risk during or outside of work hours, they should immediately follow the actions set out in section 7.11 of the RSC Safeguarding Policy.

8. Safeguarding contacts (temporary changes due to furloughing in red text)

Some Designated Safeguarding Officers are furloughed due to Covid 19. Therefore the named Safeguarding Officers during this period are:

RSC Designated Safeguarding Officer

Director of HR   **Jo Pitman** ███████████████████████

RSC Designated Safeguarding Officers

RSC Nursery   **Kate Robinson** ████████████████████████

Children's Data   **Chris O'Brien** ██████████████████████

Front Facing   **Liz Wainwright** ████████████████████████

Participation   **Jacqui O'Hanlon** ████████████████████████

9. Useful website and further information

The following links provide up to date information about the terms, conditions and safety features of the most popular video conferencing sites including minimum age requirements (e.g. Zoom, Teams, Adobe Connect, Google Hangout).

https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/video-conferencing-children-safeguarding-and-privacy-overview

https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/keeping-children-happy-and-safe-online-during-covid-19

In addition, the UK Safer Internet Centre, Co-funded by the European Commission, runs The Professionals Online Safety Helpline (POSH). It was set up in 2011 to help all members of the community working with or for children in the UK, with any online safety issues they, or children and young people in their care, may face. The phone line will be operation Monday – Friday 10 – 4pm during this period: 0344 381 4772. This helpline can assist

with any online safety issues or concerns any professional working with children and young people may have. For help and support, please email: **helpline@saferinternet.org.uk**

The latest advice for parents and children from Gov.UK is here: COVID-19 – staying safe online

The following websites can provide practical support for young people or adults who are experiencing mental health issues.

https://www.headstogether.org.uk/

www.themix.org.uk

Young Minds

APPENDIX 1

THANK YOU FOR JOINING TODAY'S SESSION WITH THE RSC

Please remember these can be difficult times and we wanted to share some details of where you can go if you need support, someone to talk to or immediate help in a crisis.

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THE SAMARITANS

Phone: **116 123**

Email: **jo@samaritans.org**

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CHILDLINE

Phone: **0800 1111**

Text: **SHOUT** to **85258**

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Support is available 24/7, every day of the year.

There are also some websites that can provide practical support:

www.headstogether.org.uk

www.themix.org.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk