



RTA Kids

Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

2026–2027

Organisation: Rom Theatre Arts Kids (RTA Kids)

Policy Lead / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Mikki Rom

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL): Bethany Brown

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Policy approved/reviewed: August 2026

Next review: August 2027, or sooner where legislation, statutory guidance or local safeguarding procedures change.

1. Our Commitment to Safeguarding

RTA Kids is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child and young person who participates in our classes, rehearsals, performances, workshops, competitions, trips and other activities.

For the purposes of this policy, a **child or young person means anyone under the age of 18**. A person's status does not change simply because they are aged 16 or 17, live independently or attend further education.

RTA Kids works with children from approximately **2 to 18 years of age** and recognises that safeguarding needs can vary considerably according to a child's age, development, communication ability, circumstances and individual needs.

Our approach is **child-centred**. The welfare and best interests of the child are at the heart of our safeguarding practice.

RTA Kids is committed to:

- Providing a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment.
- Listening to children and taking their views, wishes and feelings seriously.
- Creating an environment where children feel able to speak to trusted adults.
- Taking all safeguarding concerns seriously, however small they may initially appear.
- Acting promptly where there are concerns about a child's welfare or safety.
- Supporting children who may need additional help or early intervention.
- Working appropriately with parents, carers and relevant professionals.
- Sharing information where necessary to safeguard a child.
- Maintaining professional boundaries between adults and children.

- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely and appropriately.
- Providing appropriate safeguarding training and ongoing updates.
- Challenging discrimination, racism, prejudice and behaviour that may place children at risk.

All staff, volunteers and adults working with children should adopt the safeguarding principle:

“It could happen here.”

A concern does not need to be proven before it is reported. Staff must act on concerns and pass them to the appropriate safeguarding lead so that they can be considered and, where necessary, referred to the appropriate agency.

2. Statutory & Professional Framework

RTA Kids' safeguarding arrangements are informed by relevant legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding procedures, including:

- **Children Act 1989**
- **Children Act 2004**
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026**, where relevant and applicable as good safeguarding practice
- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Human Rights Act 1998**
- **Modern Slavery Act 2015**
- **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**
- **Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR**
- Relevant government guidance concerning information sharing and safeguarding
- **Essex Safeguarding Children Board / SET Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures**

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 is statutory guidance for organisations and agencies involved in safeguarding children in England and replaced the previous 2023 version.

RTA Kids will also have regard to relevant safeguarding guidance issued by the Department for Education and local safeguarding partners.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All RTA Kids students under the age of 18.
- All employees.
- Self-employed tutors and contractors.
- Volunteers.
- Chaperones.

- Apprentices and work experience students.
- Visiting professionals and practitioners.
- Directors and management.
- Any other adult who has contact with RTA Kids students through RTA Kids activities.

Parents, carers and visitors are also expected to behave appropriately and follow RTA Kids' safeguarding requirements while on RTA Kids premises or attending RTA Kids activities.

This policy should be read alongside RTA Kids' other policies, including:

- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety / Digital Communications Policy
- Photography & Filming Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- First Aid / Medical Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

4. Safeguarding Is Everyone's Responsibility

Safeguarding is not solely the responsibility of the DSL.

Every adult working with or around children at RTA Kids has a responsibility to identify and report safeguarding concerns.

Staff should:

- Know who the DSL and DDSL are.
- Understand how to report a concern.
- Remain alert to changes in a child's behaviour, presentation or circumstances.
- Listen to children.
- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Report concerns promptly.
- Record concerns accurately.
- Never assume that someone else will report a concern.

Staff must not investigate safeguarding concerns themselves.

The DSL will determine the appropriate next steps, including whether advice or a referral to children's social care, police, LADO or another agency is required.

5. Recognising Abuse, Neglect and Other Safeguarding Risks

Safeguarding concerns may arise from a child's home environment, relationships, online activity, school, community or from within RTA Kids itself.

Abuse and neglect can take many forms, including:

Physical abuse

Including hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning, suffocation, inappropriate restraint or otherwise causing physical harm.

Emotional or psychological abuse

Including persistent criticism, humiliation, intimidation, threats, controlling behaviour, rejection or behaviour that seriously affects a child's emotional development.

Sexual abuse

Including forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child understands what is happening.

This can occur **online or offline** and can involve adults or other children.

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or emotional needs where this is likely to result in serious impairment of health or development.

Other safeguarding risks

RTA Kids recognises that safeguarding concerns may also include:

- Child sexual exploitation.
- Criminal exploitation and county lines.
- Child trafficking and modern slavery.
- Domestic abuse.
- Teenage relationship abuse.
- Coercive or controlling behaviour.
- Online abuse and exploitation.
- Grooming.
- Sexting / sharing of nude or semi-nude images.
- Cyberbullying.
- Sexual harassment.
- Harmful sexual behaviour.
- Female genital mutilation (FGM).
- Forced marriage.
- Honour-based abuse.
- Radicalisation and extremism.
- Serious violence and weapon-related risks.
- Substance misuse.
- Self-harm or suicidal ideation.
- Mental health concerns.

- Missing children.
- Risks associated with gangs or criminal activity.
- Discrimination and hate-related incidents.

Working Together 2026 specifically strengthens the focus on issues including domestic abuse, coercive control, child sexual abuse, teenage relationship abuse, honour-based abuse, exploitation and online harms.

Staff do not need to determine which category a concern falls into before reporting it.

6. Children with Additional Vulnerabilities

RTA Kids recognises that some children may face additional safeguarding risks.

This may include children who:

- Have SEND or disabilities.
- Have communication difficulties.
- Are non-verbal or pre-verbal.
- Are looked after or previously looked after.
- Are experiencing family difficulties.
- Are experiencing domestic abuse.
- Are affected by parental substance misuse or mental health difficulties.
- Are involved with social care.
- Are experiencing poverty or housing instability.
- Are at risk of exploitation.
- Are isolated from support networks.
- Have experienced trauma.

Staff should consider the child's individual circumstances and communication needs when responding to concerns.

A child's behaviour may be an indicator of distress, abuse or an unmet need, particularly where the child is unable to communicate verbally.

7. Designated Safeguarding Leads

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Mikki Rom

Email: hello@rtakids.co.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Bethany Brown

The DSL and DDSL are responsible for:

- Providing safeguarding leadership within RTA Kids.

- Ensuring staff understand this policy.
- Receiving and assessing safeguarding concerns.
- Maintaining appropriate safeguarding records.
- Liaising with children's social care, police, LADO and other agencies.
- Supporting staff who raise concerns.
- Ensuring appropriate safeguarding training is completed.
- Keeping safeguarding procedures under review.
- Ensuring concerns are escalated where necessary.
- Promoting a culture in which safeguarding concerns can be raised without fear.

The DSL does not make safeguarding decisions in isolation where multi-agency involvement is required.

8. Reporting a Safeguarding Concern

Any member of staff who has a concern about a child must report it to the DSL or DDSL **as soon as possible and on the same day**.

If the DSL/DDSL is unavailable, staff must not wait if the concern is urgent. They should contact the appropriate safeguarding agency directly.

Immediate danger

If a child is in immediate danger, call **999**.

Essex Children's Services

For concerns about a child in Essex:

Children & Families Hub: 0345 603 7627

For an immediate safeguarding concern, ask for the **Priority Line**.

Outside normal hours:

Emergency Duty Team: 0345 606 1212.

RTA Kids staff may also seek professional advice from the Children & Families Hub where they are uncertain about the appropriate course of action.

Do not delay reporting a concern simply because you are unsure whether it meets the threshold for referral.

9. Responding to a Child Who Discloses a Concern

If a child tells a member of staff about abuse, neglect, exploitation or another safeguarding concern:

DO:

- ✓ Stay calm.
- ✓ Listen carefully.
- ✓ Take the child seriously.
- ✓ Allow the child to speak in their own words.
- ✓ Reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling someone.
- ✓ Explain that you cannot promise to keep the information secret.
- ✓ Explain that you will need to tell someone who can help.
- ✓ Record the concern as soon as possible.
- ✓ Report it immediately to the DSL/DDSL.

DO NOT:

- ✗ Promise confidentiality.
- ✗ Ask leading questions.
- ✗ Interrogate the child.
- ✗ Investigate the allegation yourself.
- ✗ Attempt to establish whether the allegation is true.
- ✗ Confront an alleged perpetrator.
- ✗ Contact the alleged perpetrator.
- ✗ Contact parents/carers before seeking appropriate safeguarding advice where doing so could increase risk or interfere with safeguarding action.
- ✗ Express disbelief or shock.
- ✗ Tell the child that everything will be okay.

The child's safety comes first.

10. Recording Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding concerns must be recorded accurately and promptly.

Records should include, where known:

- Child's name.

- Date and time.
- Date and time the concern was raised/observed.
- What was observed or disclosed.
- The child's own words wherever possible.
- Relevant witnesses.
- Actions taken.
- Who the concern was reported to.
- Any advice received.
- Any referrals made.

Staff should distinguish clearly between **fact, observation, information provided by another person and professional opinion**.

Records must be stored securely and accessed only by those with a legitimate safeguarding need to know.

Safeguarding records must not be stored casually on personal phones, personal email accounts or unsecured messaging platforms.

11. Confidentiality & Information Sharing

Safeguarding information must be handled sensitively and securely.

However, **confidentiality must never prevent necessary safeguarding action**.

Information may need to be shared without parental or child consent where there is a lawful basis and sharing is necessary to safeguard a child.

Staff should follow RTA Kids' Data Protection Policy and relevant information-sharing guidance.

The 2026 safeguarding framework reinforces effective information sharing as part of multi-agency safeguarding practice.

Staff should remember:

Safeguarding concerns should be shared with the right people, at the right time, for the right purpose.

12. Allegations Against Staff, Volunteers or Other Adults

RTA Kids takes allegations against adults working with children extremely seriously.

An allegation may relate to someone who:

- Has harmed a child.
- May have harmed a child.
- May have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.

- Has behaved in a way indicating that they may pose a risk of harm.
- Has behaved in a way indicating they may not be suitable to work with children.

In Essex, the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** should be contacted within **24 hours** where such an allegation is received.

Essex LADO

Email: lado@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 03330 139 797

RTA Kids will follow the Essex safeguarding procedures and LADO advice.

Staff must not conduct their own investigation or discuss an allegation with the person concerned unless advised to do so by the appropriate safeguarding authority.

Where appropriate, RTA Kids may temporarily remove an individual from contact with children while enquiries are undertaken. Any such action will be handled fairly and in accordance with employment/contractual obligations and safeguarding advice.

13. Peer-on-Peer Abuse

RTA Kids recognises that children can harm other children.

This can include:

- Bullying.
- Physical assault.
- Sexual harassment.
- Sexual violence.
- Harmful sexual behaviour.
- Sharing sexual images.
- Online abuse.
- Intimidation.
- Coercion.
- Exploitation.
- Hazing or initiation activities.
- Discriminatory abuse.

An allegation involving another child will **not automatically be treated simply as “bad behaviour”**.

The DSL will assess the circumstances, consider the needs and safety of all children involved and determine whether further action or referral is required.

RTA Kids will support both victims and children who have caused harm, recognising that children displaying harmful behaviour may themselves have safeguarding needs.

Where a criminal offence may have occurred, RTA Kids will seek appropriate advice and may refer to the police.

14. Online Safety & Digital Communication

RTA Kids recognises that safeguarding risks extend beyond the physical studio environment.

Staff must:

- Maintain professional boundaries online.
- Not communicate privately with students through personal social media accounts.
- Not use disappearing-message functions with students for safeguarding-related communication.
- Use approved RTA Kids communication channels where communication with students is necessary.
- Report concerns about online abuse, grooming, exploitation or harmful content.

Parents and students should report online safeguarding concerns to RTA Kids where they relate to RTA Kids activities or staff.

15. Professional Boundaries

Adults working for RTA Kids must maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

Staff should:

- Treat children respectfully.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact.
- Ensure physical contact is appropriate, proportionate and connected to the activity.
- Avoid unnecessary one-to-one situations.
- Where one-to-one teaching is necessary, ensure it takes place in an appropriate environment with suitable visibility and safeguarding arrangements.
- Never engage in sexualised, humiliating or inappropriate behaviour with a student.
- Never form inappropriate personal relationships with students.
- Never communicate with students through personal social media accounts.
- Never transport students privately unless this has been specifically authorised and appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place.

Staff must report concerns about their own conduct where they believe a boundary may have been crossed.

16. Mobile Phones, Photography & Filming

RTA Kids recognises that mobile phones and cameras can create safeguarding risks.

Students and staff must follow RTA Kids' separate **Mobile Phone, Photography & Filming Policy**.

Staff must not take photographs or recordings of children using personal devices unless specifically authorised under RTA Kids procedures.

Any photography or filming for promotional purposes must comply with RTA Kids' consent arrangements and data protection requirements.

17. Safer Recruitment & Vetting

RTA Kids is committed to safer recruitment.

Depending on the role, recruitment may include:

- Identity verification.
- Application and suitability checks.
- References.
- Interview.
- Employment history checks.
- Appropriate DBS checks.
- Barred list checks where legally permitted and applicable.
- Right-to-work checks.
- Qualification checks where relevant.
- Safeguarding expectations and professional boundaries being explained.
- Appropriate safeguarding induction and training.

RTA Kids will only request a DBS check where the role is legally eligible for the relevant level of check. Current DBS guidance confirms that organisations must not submit Standard or Enhanced DBS applications where the role is not eligible for that level of check.

Where a role constitutes **regulated activity with children**, RTA Kids will undertake the appropriate checks required for that role.

18. DBS & Barring

RTA Kids will comply with its legal obligations concerning DBS checks and barring referrals.

Where RTA Kids is acting as a regulated activity provider and the legal conditions for a DBS referral are met, RTA Kids has a legal duty to make the appropriate referral.

This duty applies where an individual has been removed from regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left, because they have harmed or pose a risk of harm to children and the relevant statutory conditions are met.

A DBS referral may be required even where another referral has been made to children's social care, police or the LADO.

RTA Kids will seek appropriate professional advice where necessary.

19. Safeguarding Training

All staff and relevant volunteers will receive safeguarding information appropriate to their role.

Training will cover:

- RTA Kids safeguarding procedures.
- Recognising abuse and neglect.
- Responding to disclosures.
- Reporting concerns.
- Professional boundaries.
- Online safety.
- Child exploitation.
- Peer-on-peer abuse.
- Mental health and wellbeing.
- Additional vulnerabilities.
- Local safeguarding procedures.

The DSL/DDSL will undertake appropriate higher-level safeguarding training and maintain up-to-date safeguarding knowledge.

Training will be refreshed in accordance with relevant statutory guidance, local safeguarding expectations and the requirements of the individual's role.

20. Early Help & Supporting Children

Safeguarding is not limited to responding to abuse.

RTA Kids recognises the importance of identifying concerns early and, where appropriate, supporting families to access additional help.

Where a child may benefit from additional support, RTA Kids may work with parents/carers and relevant professionals to seek appropriate early help.

This may include concerns relating to:

- Emotional wellbeing.
- Attendance.
- Behaviour.
- Family circumstances.
- Mental health.
- SEND.
- Domestic abuse.
- Exploitation.
- Social isolation.

Where there is a safeguarding concern, RTA Kids will follow the appropriate safeguarding route rather than relying solely on parental agreement.

21. Equality, Diversity & Anti-Discrimination

RTA Kids is committed to creating an environment where every child is respected and valued.

Safeguarding concerns can sometimes be connected to discrimination, racism, prejudice or exclusion.

RTA Kids will:

- Challenge discriminatory behaviour.
- Take allegations of racist or discriminatory abuse seriously.
- Promote equality and inclusion.
- Consider the individual circumstances and vulnerabilities of children.
- Avoid assumptions based on race, religion, disability, gender, sexuality, family circumstances or socioeconomic background.

Working Together 2026 specifically strengthens expectations around anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice.

22. Parents & Carers

Parents and carers are important safeguarding partners.

RTA Kids will communicate with parents/carers appropriately regarding safeguarding and welfare concerns unless doing so would:

- Increase risk to the child.
- Place another person at risk.
- Interfere with a police or social care investigation.
- Otherwise be contrary to safeguarding advice.

Where appropriate, RTA Kids may seek information from parents/carers to understand a child's circumstances.

23. Safeguarding During Performances, Trips & Events

Safeguarding arrangements apply equally to:

- Performances.
- Rehearsals.
- Competitions.
- Workshops.
- Trips.
- External venues.

- Theatre productions.
- Backstage areas.
- Chaperoned activities.

Before an event, RTA Kids will consider relevant risks, including:

- Supervision.
- Collection arrangements.
- Emergency contacts.
- Medical needs.
- Accessibility.
- Venue security.
- Dressing rooms/changing arrangements.
- Toileting arrangements.
- Photography/filming.
- Transport.
- Chaperone requirements.
- Contact with external adults.

Where children are performing under a **Body of Persons Approval (BOPA)** or other child performance arrangements, RTA Kids will comply with the applicable licensing, supervision and safeguarding requirements.

24. Safeguarding Records & Data Protection

Safeguarding records will be:

- Accurate.
- Relevant.
- Factual.
- Secure.
- Accessible only to authorised individuals.
- Retained in accordance with RTA Kids' retention requirements and applicable data protection law.

Safeguarding information will not be used for unrelated purposes.

25. Allegations, Complaints & Whistleblowing

RTA Kids encourages staff to raise safeguarding concerns without fear of retaliation.

A staff member should report concerns about:

- A colleague.
- A volunteer.
- A manager.
- The DSL.

- The organisation's safeguarding arrangements.

If the concern relates to the DSL, it should be reported to the DDSL or an appropriate external safeguarding authority.

If a staff member believes that a safeguarding concern has not been appropriately acted upon, they should escalate the matter rather than allowing the concern to remain unresolved.

26. Local Safeguarding Contacts – Essex

Emergency

Police: 999

Essex Children & Families Hub

0345 603 7627

Ask for the **Priority Line** where there is an immediate safeguarding concern.

Out of Hours

Emergency Duty Team: 0345 606 1212

Essex LADO

03330 139 797

lado@essex.gov.uk

RTA Kids will follow the **Essex SET Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures** when responding to safeguarding concerns. Essex confirms that these procedures set out how organisations across Southend, Essex and Thurrock should work together to safeguard children and young people.

27. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- At least annually.
- Following significant changes to legislation or statutory guidance.
- Following significant safeguarding incidents.
- Following relevant recommendations from safeguarding partners.
- Where RTA Kids' activities or operating arrangements change.

The DSL is responsible for ensuring that the policy remains current and that relevant staff are informed of significant changes.

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