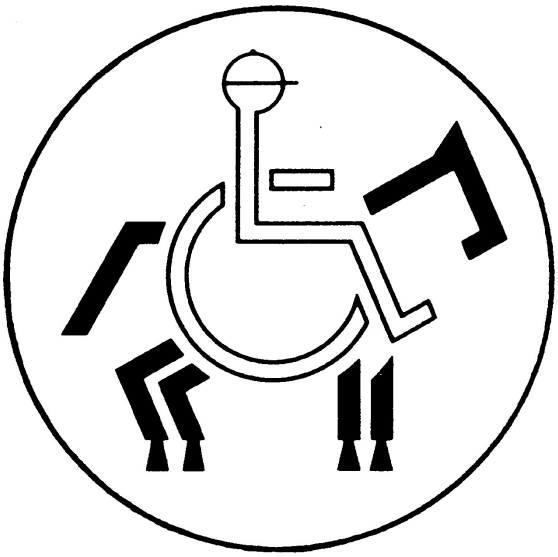
Epsom RDA



Helper Training Notes

Stage 1
Understanding our Horses

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Horse Awareness

Horse Instincts

Fear	**Unhappiness**	**Attentive**
Nervousness/Unsure	**Interest**	**Fighting for dominance**
Anger	**Excitement**	
Pain	**Naughty**	
Contentment	**Playful**	

In a horse these emotions are shown by physical indications such as body language and noises. Fit the emotion to the pictures below (note: I haven't put in a picture to show pain or fighting)

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

Horse Behaviour

Horses reflect the way they are handled; they are susceptible to our moods and behaviours.

Be aware of the horse and his feelings and how that individual horse needs to be handled.

Horses learn good and bad manners; always be aware of how you are handling a horse in any situation be it tacking up, catching in, riding or in the stable.

Communication – be clear when dealing with a horse, they quickly become confused if you are changeable with your demands. Since our horses are handled by many different people, trying to achieve consistency in approach to the best extent that we can is important.

Correction and reward using your voice is a good way to teach discipline, reprimand bad behaviour and reward good behaviour. Be stern/confident but never harsh.
Horses are very sensitive to tone of voice e.g. don't confuse them by saying "GOOD BOY"in a loud booming staccato voice - instead a long soft"Gooood boy" will be much more effective and easy to distinguish from a short sharp "BAD BOY".

Typical voice commands are:

- "Goooood boy/girl" - long and soft
- "BAD boy/girl" – sharp staccato tone
- "Steady" – in a soothing voice to calm/slow them down
- "Back" or "back up" – said short sharp voice to move them back, useful when they are standing up against theior stable door when they resting a back foot, , possibly accompanied by pressure with your thumb or hand on the centre of their chest/base of neck
- "Whoa" – long and soft
- "Walk on" – sharp like you mean businesswith lots of emphasis on the 'k' and 't's

Horses are wild animals that have been domesticated and trained but still possess their basic instincts.

FRIGHT FLIGHT FIGHT

If a horse is frightened by a noise or your actions then they will try to run away. If they can't run they will fight you…and they will win! Effective use of your voice and steady nerves (try not to be startled yourself) can help to relax your horse and provide them with confidence in uncertain situations.

All horses are born innocent; if they behave badly then humans are to blame. If a horse is handled firmly and kindly from a young age then they will turn into calm and loving gentle creatures. If they are handled roughly and experience pain on a regular basis or are given inconsistent messages on the correct way to behave then they may become nervous and difficult to handle and may even become aggressive. This is particularly important to remember in an environment like ours where the horses are handled by many different people every day.

Handling the Horse

Horses are living animals, they have instincts and characteristics that determine the way they act.

- They are prey animals (not predator)
- They do not logically work things out
- Their senses are more developed and finely tuned then humans
- They have instinctive defensive mechanisms that cause them to react in an unpredictable manor causing injury or even death
- Awareness is essential at all times even with familiar or trusted horses and ponies

Horses should be handled in a careful considerate way, if an action that causes pain is constantly repeated then they will act accordingly. The only way they can let us know is by facial expressions, posture and sounds. If a horse becomes desperate he will use his strength to warn us as that is all they have left.

Working around horses

- Always be aware
- Always restrain with a head collar and lead rope if working with a horse in the stable
- Work slowly and quietly around the horse
- Never put yourself in a vulnerable position

The Green Card guidance notes provided to volunteers on joining provides further guidance on health and safety, rules of the yard and basic handling such as putting on a headcollar, leading etc. If you have recently started working with horses it is worthwhile refreshing your memory on the pointers provided then. Additional copies can be provided on request.

Psychology

As we know horses behaviour and actions are based on instincts inherited from their ancestors. Therefore it is necessary to understand their psychology to know how they react and to be aware of their body language and warning sounds. We learn this to be safe, to prevent danger or injury.

What is the horse's natural lifestyle?

- They would roam grasslands, pastures, hills and moorlands in search of food and water.
- They live in a herd for safety and are protected by the dominant stallion, his job is to warn the herd of approaching danger.
- Their reflexes are sharp and quick to survive. If they are cornered they will fight by rearing, kicking or biting.
- They have sharp hearing, good peripheral vision and speed.

Examples of what this means for our work with horses:

Always approach a horse quietly while talking to him. If you approach the shoulder, the horse can watch you all the way as you draw closer. If you approach from behind you may startle them, or directly in front they may lose sight of you when you are immediately in front of him since his eyes are set to the side to improve peripheral/rear vision.

If one horse in the group is startled by something, it may set the others off (a herd response), so be alert but remain calm and provide reassurance since they will respond to your own mood/reactions as well as that of their horsey companions.

Characteristics

The horse has qualities and traits that are part of its nature:

1. Herd animal – travel in herds and hate to be left on their own
2. Nomadic – wander in search of food
3. Grazers – 16 – 20 hours a day; it is vital for their digestive systems
4. Defensive – they are prey animals
5. Curious – can be used to catch difficult horses
6. Dominant – you have to be pack leader
7. Imitators – they pick up bad behaviour from other horses
8. Have a good memory – for pain and bad treatment mostly

The Six Equine Senses

1) Smell
The horses sense of smell is very strong, it allows him to recognise other horses and people and to evaluate the situation.
Relax if he wants to smell you, the rider or any equipment. Allow him to review the situation. Do not carry treats in your pocket- the horse WILL be able to smell them! The scent of fear can be given off by humans so stay calm, relaxed and unhurried. Do not wear strong perfumes when working in the yard since it can unsettle some horses.

2) Hearing
The horse's hearing is very acute, he wants to see what he hears. Horses are wary when they cannot see what they can hear.
Reassure him with your tone of voice, walk quietly and do not tighten your hold on the lead rein. If the friction is caused by other horses, walk away from them.

3) Sight
The horse's eyes are set either side of the head so that he has good peripheral vision but cannot see directly behind or in front. He may move his head to get a better look.
Always approach the horse's shoulder. When leading, reassure him and where appropriate allow him to look and see the object is harmless. Remain calm and firm and proceed normally. Just because something was not scary on the way out, does not mean that it will not be scary on the way back! This is particularly true when viewed from their other eye e.g. if working on the opposite rein, since it might appear differently to them. We acclimatise our new horses and ponies to games equipment gradually on both sides so that they get accustomed to unusual sights (and often sounds).

4) Touch
Horses are sensitive to any unusual touch. Ensure the horse is not hurt or irritated by the rider pinching or pulling hair.

5) Taste
Taste is linked to their sense of smell, which may cause the horse to lick or nibble, so watch your fingers!

6) Evaluation
Horses can evaluate the disposition of those around them. Treat them with love and respect. Be calm, confident but firm. Horses respond well to kindness, not apprehension, fear or anger.

Dealing with Horse / Pony Emergencies

These guidelines are intended to give broad guidance to the person in charge for dealing with a serious horse injury or illness.

The person in charge will be:

- the horse and pony manager or her deputy if present
- the session leader or deputy if present
- a group instructor if present

If no such person is present, the keyholder present will be in charge of managing the situation but must contact the horse and pony manager, her deputy or another session leader as soon as possible.

Make an assessment of the situation. You will need to be able to tell the vet:

- How long ago the injury occurred / when you found the horse
- What symptomsthere are

Call the vet – Priory Veterinary Surgeons – 01737 242190

- If out of hours, an answerphone will tell you the emergency number to call

Ask the vet:

- for a mobile no. in case you need to call again before he / she arrives
- what they want you to do while waiting for them to arrive
- how long they will take to get there

While you're waiting for the vet:

- Follow the vet's instructions. If you are unsure, or can't do something they have asked, for example, because the pony won't co-operate, phone the vet back for further instructions.
- NEVER put yourself or helpers at risk even if you are trying to follow the vet's instructions.
- Ask someone to check the diary - has the horse got any relevant recent history?
    - Ask someone to telephone the Horse and Pony Manager, or if she is unavailable, her deputy. Phone numbers are by telephone in coffee room.

After the emergency:

- A brief description of the incident should be placed in the diary, along with any medical treatment that needs to be given in the future.
- A detailed written report must be given to the horse and pony manager.
- Any injuries to people must be recorded in the accident book.
- Helpers present at the incident must be fully debriefed by the session leader / person in charge.

Basic First Aid
Always follow the vet's advice on the day but in general:

Colic
- Take the pony into the indoor school if possible as the surface is soft and you are out of sight of riders and visitors
- Keep the pony walking if possible, but only use gentle encouragement
- Keep away from the sides of the school / obstacles in case the pony lies down
- If the pony lies down and will not get up with gentle encouragement, try to keep him quiet and calm. Remove any hazards which may injure the pony if he rolls.
- If the pony starts rolling, make sure the area is clear from hazards and keep out of the way – NEVER put yourself at risk. If in doubt, let the pony go free.
- DO NOT OFFER FEED OR WATER

Cuts
If the cut is recent , relatively clean and there is active blood flow:
- Copious quantities of cold water under pressure (from hose) for 10-15 mins
- Apply intracyte gel (if available) and reduce mobility with bandaging, the following are guidelines but use what is available:
    - Allevyn – 1 layer
    - Cotton Wool – 2 layers
    - Nephlex
    - Elasticated bandage eg Vetwrap
- If an arterial haemorrhage, apply direct pressure
- Remove any large contaminents eg leaves but DO NOT remove any large pieces of wood or similar embedded in the wound
- Wear rubber gloves
- DO NOT USE WOUND POWDER OR CREAMS
- Do not walk the horse

All equipment is available in the emergency horse first aid kit kept in the H&PM Room.

Pony Care

Grooming

The key principles of grooming and pony care are covered in Green Card guidance notes.

One of the benefits of grooming is to check the horse's health. Signs of good health include:

- Normal behaviour for that horse/pony (so you may wish to work consistently with one or a few of our herd so that you get to know them, and they you)
- Alert to your presence and interested in you and surroundings
- Breathing regularly and no sign of sweating
- Eating hay or feed when offered
- Normal droppings which are firm, round, separate lumps which break apart on hitting the ground

Please notify your session leader if you spot anything unusual e.g.

- Cuts or swelling
- Discharge from eyes or nose
- Lying down in the stable (this could be a sign of colic)
- Excessively smelly or flaky/spongy hooves when picking out (this could be a sign of thrush)

If you're unsure of anything please do speak up – our horses and ponies work very hard for us and we would always prefer to monitor and find nothing wrong, then miss possible signs of poor health.

Tack Care

Daily Care

- Wash bit after use.
- Brush girth and numnah and leave on top of saddle after use.
- Use damp sponge/cloth to remove any mud or dirt.

Weekly Care

Your session will be allocated weekly care of the tack for one or more of the herd therefore you should be aware of how to clean tack as below.

- Dismantle both saddle and bridle checking stitching and wear and tear on leather (especially stirrup leathers)
    - Saddle: remove girth, girth guards, stirrup leather and stirrup irons.
    - Bridle: Undo all buckles and mounts (place each part systematically on table or rack to help when putting back together).
- Use damp (not wet) sponge and warm water (no detergents or hot water as they will damage the leather).

- Clean all leather parts (including leather lining of saddle) to remove all dirt and grease. DO not soak the leather.
- Apply saddle soap. If using bar soap, dip the end of the bar in the water and run it on the sponge. If using saddle soap in a container put dry sponge on the soap. If the sponge is wet the soap will lather. If necessary, a few drops of water can be added to the soap.
- Rub soap into both sides the leather using a circular movement.
- Lift up all saddle flaps and apply to 'rough' side of the leather.
- Rub up and down both sides of the bridle straps.
- Wash bit in clean water and dry thoroughly.
- Wash stirrup irons and rubber treads and dry.
- When reassembling the bridle, loop reins through the throatlash to secure them.
- Place girth and numnah on top of the saddle, dirty side up.

Rugs and Rugging up

Types of rug

- New Zealand / turn out rug. Has a tough, waterproof outer layer.

- Stable rug or fleece
    - Used when the horse is in the stable if he is clipped or if the weather is cold.
    - Can be put over a saddle if it can be fastened properly.

- Exercise sheet
    - Used when riding in wet or cold weather.

- Fly rug
    - Used in the summer to protect from midges

Fastenings

- Front – buckle or Velcro.
- Rear – fillet string or leg straps
    - Fillet string is a single strap which sits under the tail
    -
    - Leg straps must be adjusted so that the horse's legs cannot get caught.
    - Fasten the first leg strap around the horse's leg. The second strap goes **through** the first strap before being fastened around the other rear leg.
    - Leg straps should be no tighter than 1 hand width.
    -
- Underneath – cross surcingles
    - Surcingles must be crossed.
    - Surcingles should be no tighter than 1 hand width.

Leading
(taken from RDA National Training Notes)

Warming Up

- Warm up in hand
- Good opportunity to iron out any problems before riders get on board
- Look for any signs of lameness
- Get pony walking out
- Pony must be tracking up in walk
- Make the pony work well in a slower pace rather than going faster

The Horse's Paces

Walk	4 time movement	Outside hind Outside fore Inside hind Inside fore
Trot	2 time movement	Outside hind and inside fore Inside hind and outside fore
Canter	3 time movement	Outside hind Inside hind and outside fore together Inside fore (leading)
Gallop!!!	4 time movement	Outside hind Inside hind Outside fore Inside fore

It is important to understand the way the different paces feel and the effect they have on our riders.

All of our horses, where appropriate, are schooled by a team of able bodied riders to improve their way of going for the benefit of all our riders.

Leading to the mounting block

- Check the horse.
- Check the tack.
- Before moving off, check the girth is tight, run the stirrups down and place the of side stirrup over the saddle.
- Ask the horse to walk on, keeping level with his shoulder.
- When turning, prepare the horse and turn him away from you as this will help keep him more balanced.
- Lead the horse in a straight line towards the mounting block ensuring he does not injure himself.
- Stand in front of the horse's head while the rider is mounting.
- Hold onto the reins either side of his head, near the bit.
- Ensure the horse stands still while the mounting is taking place.
- As soon as the rider feels safe and balanced, move forwards in a straight line.
- Move into the school and recheck the girth.
- Check the rider's stirrups to make sure they are level.
- Check the rider is sitting in the centre, balanced and ready to go.

Leading in a ride

If there is a side helper, they will communicate with the rider. It is the leader's job to manage the horse and obey instructions from the rider, side helper or instructor.

- Hold the lead rope away from the clip.
- Do not hold the horses head too tightly as he needs to be able to move his head freely.
- Never wrap the rope around your hand – if the horse pulls unexpectedly this could injure your hand/fingers.
- Hold the slack of the leading rope in your spare hand.
- Walk next to the horse's shoulder (unless you have a side walker behind in which case it is usually appropriate to stand level with the horse's head). Never walk in front of him.
- If the horse is not walking on a whip may be carried to be used as a stronger aid.
- Listen and allow the rider to follow the commands of the instructor wherever possible.
- Do not make sudden or sharp turns unless instructed to do so. It will unbalance your rider.
- Always move off in a straight line.
- Make smooth transitions allowing and encouraging the rider to do them independently.
- Always have at least half a horse's distance between yourself and the horse in front.
- Where possible lead from the inside.
- Anticipate and learn you horse's reactions to other horses, noise or any other activity.
- Learn basic school figures, commands and location of the letters in the school.

Side Walking

Aims of providing support to the rider

- To enable the rider to sit centrally (symmetrically), with as normal a posture as possible.
- To allow as much movement as possible.
- To enable the rider to do as much as possible for themselves, within safe boundaries.

The **pelvis** is the key point for achieving a centred rider, so try and ensure that:

- Weight is distributed evenly through both seat bones (as viewed from behind) as the movement of the horse will then influence both sides of the body symmetrically.
- The pelvis is in neutral tilt (as viewed from the side) as this will allow freedom of movement in the lumbar (lower) spine and hips.

In order to allow movement through all weight bearing joints and the spine, the rider needs to be positioned in approximately mid-joint range.

- Make sure the horse is standing square (standing on each leg evenly).
- Observe the rider from the side and behind before altering their posture.

Rider support

AVOID HOLDING wherever possible. Once the rider has achieved a good position allow the horse's movement and the rider to work together to maintain it. However there are times when support is required.

Ask yourself:

- Are you doing it to give your rider confidence?
- Are you giving stability in one part of the body in order to facilitate movement in another part?
- Do you want to stimulate a particular movement response?

Whatever the reason, always remember to:

- Keep the support 'soft' to allow some movement- do not fix your rider. Support needs to allow the rider to learn to move with the horse and to balance themselves.
- Constantly reassess what you are doing- can you try reducing your support during the ride, or a certain command?
- NEVER lean on the horse when supporting your rider.
- NEVER allow a rider to lean on your support.

Helper position

- Always stay level with the rider and keep you eyes on them.
- Do not walk behind the 'line of the rider' as some horses are sensitive and may kick out.
- If there are 2 side walkers, the support they are providing should be symmetrical (the same on each side), however there may be exceptions.

Key posture control points:

- Behind the heel OR in front of the foot.
- Over the knee (NOT on the thigh).

OBSERVE – ANALYSE – ADAPT

Is it safe?

Does it work?

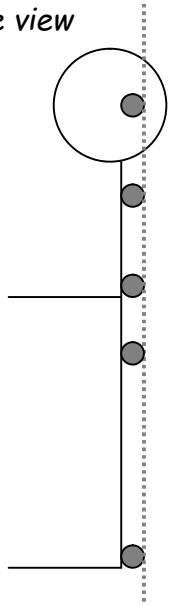
Posture and alignment

All the things that youwould see when someone is standing straight, you should be looking for when they are sitting on a horse.

Below are the 3 straight lines you should be aiming to achieve, however a rider's position will always change so remember to KEEP CHECKING.

Standing

Side view



Ear

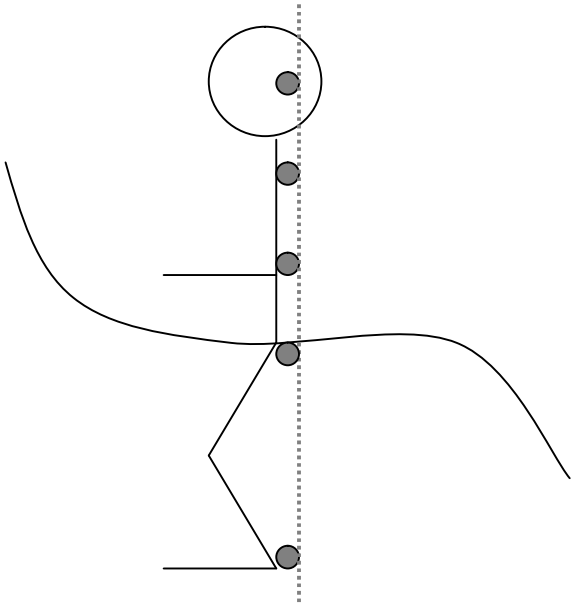
Shoulder

Elbow

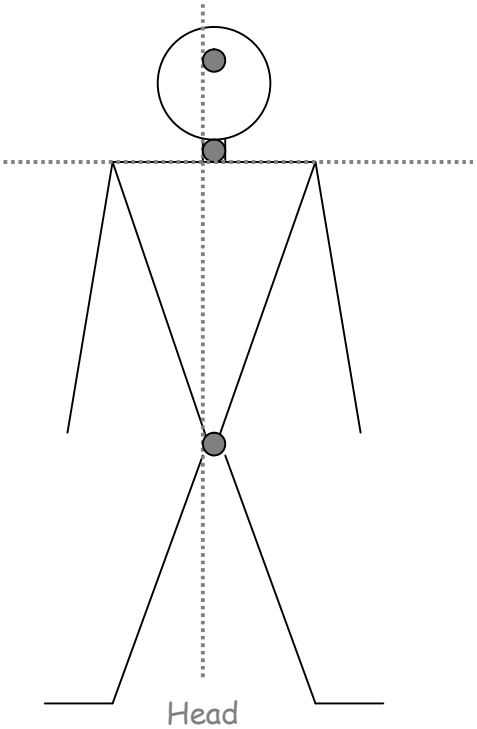
Hips

Heel

Riding

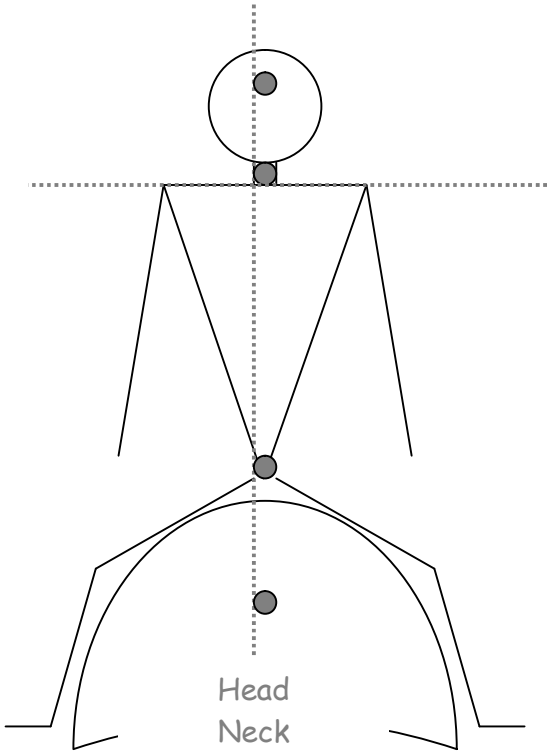


Rear view



Shoulders level

Head
Neck
Hips
Spine



Head
Neck
Hips
Rider's Spine
Horse's Spine

Safeguarding at RDA

Safeguarding refers to the proactive approach to keeping children, young people and adults at risk safe from harm. At Epsom RDA we work with all of these groups (both as riders and volunteers); it is therefore vital that we fulfil our duty of care and have an awareness of safeguarding practices and policies.

General health and safety and rules of the yard are covered during our Green Card training – please refresh your memory of the procedures in place to protect the health and safety of everyone on the yard.

Along with our **Health and Safety Officer**, we have a lead **Safeguarding Officer** responsible for our overall approach and to whom any concerns can be notified – contact details are displayed on the notice board.

All our coaches/instructors have completed face-to-face training/qualifications for safeguarding and protecting children, and volunteers' references and DBS checks are conducted before joining.

As a volunteer you are placed in a position of trust. It is important that all our volunteers behave in a manner which complies with the RDA Code of Conduct summarised below.Any breach of the code could lead to you, and participants linked to you, being asked to leave the Group.

Good Practice; always:

- Treat everyone equally with respect and dignity.
- Place the safety and welfare of participants as the highest priority.
- Set an example you would wish others to follow.
- Be publicly open when working with children/young persons and an adult at risk.
- Take care when working with and particularly when manually handling children/young persons and an adult at risk.
- Ensure that where possible parents/carers are responsible for children/ young persons and an adult at risk whilst using the toilet.
- Behave in an exemplary manner and be a role model for excellent behaviour.
- Motivate participants through positive and constructive feedback.
- Create a safe and enjoyable situation.
- Obtain written consent from parents when young children are required to be transported by coaches, trustees, staff or volunteers.
- Maintain a written report of any incident or injury together with any subsequent treatment and immediately complete an accident report form.
- Pass on any concerns to the Group Safeguarding Officer.

Practice which is never to be condoned:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Make sexually suggestive remarks to a child/young person or an adult at risk – even in fun.
- Allow inappropriate language to go unchallenged.
- Allow allegations made by a child/young person or an adult at risk to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Depart from the premises, leaving children, young persons or an adult at risk alone and unsupervised.
- Do things of a personal nature for a child/young person or an adult at risk if they can do it for themselves, unless you have been requested to do so by the parents (do so with the utmost discretion).
- Abuse your privileged position of power or trust with children or adults.
- Cause a participant to lose self esteem by embarrassing, humiliating or undermining the individual.
- Have favourites.
- Form a relationship with a child or young person that is an abuse of trust.
- Hesitate to pass any genuine concerns to your Group Safeguarding Officer.

You should never be in a situation where you are alone with one child, young person or an adult at risk.

It is impossible to establish guidelines for every situation – common sense should be used at all times and if you are unsure please speak with your session leader in the first instance since they will have completed face to face training referred to above. If you have any genuine concerns, please don't hesitate to contact the Group Safeguarding Officer.

Further information and an e-learning course is available on RDA National website.