

RIGHT FIRST TIME UK LTD

Evidence, Research, Publication & Corrections Policy

Evidence. Context. Correction. Accountability.

Updated: 12 October 2026 **Version:** 1.1 **Review:** At least annually

Our commitments: Prefer primary sources; label allegations; give statistics context; protect children and confidential material; correct significant mistakes openly.

1. Purpose and scope

Right First Time UK Ltd (RFTUK) publishes public-interest research, evidence, analysis and campaigning information. This policy explains how we check sources, distinguish fact from allegation, approve higher-risk material, protect people and correct mistakes. It applies to website pages, reports, campaign hubs, petitions, briefings, consultation responses, letters, social media, videos, graphics and other official RFTUK publications.

Directors, Campaign Leaders, Campaigners, Volunteers, contractors and anyone preparing or approving material for RFTUK must follow the safeguards appropriate to their role. Strong public scrutiny must be based on what the evidence actually supports.

2. Our evidence standards

We seek reliable sources, accurate context and a clear distinction between verified fact, official record, reported allegation, lived experience, expert opinion, estimates and RFTUK analysis. We explain material uncertainty, preserve significant research records and avoid selective quotations that change meaning. An official document does not automatically validate every interpretation of it.

Where it matters to a claim, readers should be able to see the source, relevant time period and limitations. Headlines, captions and short posts must not make stronger assertions than the supporting material.

3. Primary sources and verification

For important legal, financial, statistical and public-administration claims we prefer primary material where reasonably available: legislation, published judgments, official statistics, regulators, government departments, Parliament, local authorities, original correspondence and identifiable Freedom of Information (FOI) responses. Journalism and social posts may help identify issues but should not replace primary sources for precise claims.

Before publication, check the source is genuine, current, relevant and accurately interpreted. Where practical record the publisher, title, publication or decision date, URL or reference and the date accessed. Treat screenshots and unattributed extracts cautiously: they may be altered, incomplete or out of date.

4. Statistics, calculations and public data

When publishing statistics, identify the relevant date range, geography, population, units, denominator and important limitations. Do not selectively use a figure that materially misrepresents the wider series. Separate official data from RFTUK estimates, forecasts, extrapolations and calculations; give enough information for a competent reader to understand the method.

Check spreadsheets and calculations for wrong formulas, repeated records, inconsistent dates, transcription errors and misleading comparisons. Significant calculations should receive a separate review where practicable. A calculated figure must not be called an amount "admitted" by an organisation unless it actually acknowledged that figure. We use the principles of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value from the Code of Practice for Statistics as a useful benchmark, not as a claim that RFTUK is an official statistics producer.

5. FOI responses, letters and public-body statements

An FOI response must be read with the original request, dates, exemptions, caveats and clarifications. A response saying that information is "not held" is not proof that the underlying event never happened. Disclosure under FOI does not automatically permit republication of personal information, confidential material or copyrighted work.

Quote government and public-body correspondence fairly. Distinguish what an officer wrote from a formal position adopted by an organisation. When a later communication corrects or qualifies an earlier one, do not knowingly publish only the earlier account in a misleading way.

6. Court decisions and ongoing proceedings

For judgments and tribunal decisions, identify the decision, date and passage relied upon where lawful and practical. Check relevant appeals, stays, set-aside orders and later authority. Do not suggest that a court decided a wider issue than its reasons support.

Active proceedings may engage contempt rules and other restrictions. Material that risks seriously prejudicing justice must be reviewed before publication. A claim appearing on social media does not make repeating it lawful or safe; seek appropriate legal advice when the position is uncertain.

7. Family courts and children

Family-court proceedings may be subject to reporting restrictions, confidentiality rules, court orders and anonymisation requirements. Possession of a document, permission to attend a hearing or a Transparency Order does not give everyone an unrestricted right to publish it. Check the applicable order and law before disclosing information from private proceedings.

Give particular protection to children. Avoid names, schools, addresses, images or combined details that could identify a protected child; even where lawful, ask whether identification is necessary and proportionate. Safeguarding and a child's welfare take priority over publicity. Refer to the official family-court transparency guidance for context.

8. Lived experience, witnesses and confidential sources

First-hand accounts may reveal important problems but must be represented faithfully, without exaggerating certainty or implying that one experience proves a system-wide pattern. A source may describe what they experienced without proving every allegation they make about someone else.

Before using a confidential or anonymous source for a serious claim, assess whether the person could know the facts, whether material is corroborated and whether the allegation can fairly be tested. Protect their identity on a need-to-know basis, but do not promise absolute legal confidentiality or anonymity that RFTUK cannot guarantee.

9. Allegations, public interest and defamation

Identify unproven allegations as allegations in the headline and throughout the publication. RFTUK must assess accuracy, meaning, proportionality, possible reputational harm, privacy and applicable legal restrictions before making serious claims about identifiable people or organisations.

Public interest is not a general exemption from defamation, data protection, contempt, copyright or safeguarding rules. The Defamation Act 2013 contains a serious-harm test and statutory defences, but these require assessment on the particular facts. High-risk allegations should be referred for additional review and legal advice where needed. See section 1 and section 4 of that Act.

10. Right of reply, fairness and urgent reports

Before publishing a serious adverse allegation, normally consider offering the identifiable subject a reasonable opportunity to answer, where practicable and safe. Give enough substance for a meaningful response and a suitable period having regard to urgency. Silence, a late response or a refusal to comment is not proof that a claim is true; fairly reflect material responses.

Exceptionally urgent publication may be appropriate for a serious, time-sensitive public-safety issue. Record why it could not wait, the checks actually completed, outstanding uncertainty and the planned follow-up. Urgency is not a reason to ignore legal, safeguarding or verification risks.

11. Quotes, copyright and media evidence

Quotations, clips, screenshots and extracts must retain their meaning and context. Check a disputed quote against the original document or recording. Respect copyright and licensing: linking, brief quotation, summarising and copying an entire work have different legal implications; seek permission when needed.

Images, audio and video can be altered, misdated, generated or shown out of context. Check provenance, place and time where they support a factual claim. Label illustrative or AI-generated media clearly where otherwise misleading; never present it as documentary proof that a real event happened.

12. AI-assisted research and publication

AI can assist with searching, drafting, summarising, coding, organising research and accessibility, but AI output is not independent evidence. Verify every material legal citation, quote, statistic, case and claim against an authentic source before relying on it. A human authorised by RFTUK remains responsible for the final publication and its tone, factual accuracy and legal safeguards.

Do not upload unnecessary personal information, safeguarding records or restricted court documents to external AI services unless the processing has been specifically assessed and authorised. Disclose material AI involvement when omission would create a misleading impression. Invented citations or unsupported AI claims must be corrected promptly.

13. Privacy, redaction and safeguarding

Research and campaigning do not justify publishing all personal information collected. Minimise identifying information such as contact details, signatures, dates of birth, bank details, medical records and child-related information. Check redactions for hidden text, document metadata and retained unredacted versions. Apply the Data Protection & GDPR Policy.

People facing homelessness, violence, poverty, ill-health or other vulnerability must be treated with dignity, not reduced to imagery or publicity. Consider consent, future harm and safer anonymised presentation. Do not delay a necessary safeguarding referral to finish a publication.

14. Campaigns, political content and independent findings

RFTUK may examine legislation, Ministers, MPs, councils, parties, candidates and public policy where relevant to evidence and accountability, while remaining institutionally non-party political. Public-interest reporting is not an invitation to use RFTUK content for party recruitment, candidate advertising or instructions on how to vote.

Before publishing election-period material, assess any applicable rules on non-party campaigning, spending and digital imprints. Donors, sponsors, campaign partners or political contacts must not buy findings, dictate conclusions or suppress evidence. Record and manage relevant conflicts; disclose a material funding connection where its omission would misleadingly suggest independence.

15. Publication approval and high-risk review

Routine, low-risk updates may be approved within normal delegated authority. Stronger checks should take place for serious allegations, children, family-court or criminal claims, confidential leaks, safeguarding material, complex financial or statistical accusations, election issues and significant legal or reputational risk.

Where proportionate, record the purpose, key sources, verification, outstanding uncertainty, right-of-reply steps, privacy and safeguarding checks, conflicts, legal input and who approved the publication. Do not allow campaign urgency to bypass a required review without recording the reason.

16. Drafts, audit trails and publication dates

Keep important source references, FOI requests and responses, calculation methods, relevant correspondence, interview notes, review decisions and correction history securely for an appropriate period under RFTUK retention rules. Mark drafts and embargoed or unverified materials so they are not mistaken for final official findings.

Show publication or last-updated dates where useful. Significant reports should have understandable version identifiers. For material revisions, consider a visible update note explaining what changed rather than leaving readers with conflicting older versions.

17. Correcting, clarifying and retracting material

When a material factual error is sufficiently verified, correct it proportionately and promptly. Minor spelling changes generally need no announcement, but serious changes should be visible enough to reach people who may have relied on the original claim. A clarification may be appropriate when words were technically accurate but created a misleading impression.

Retract or remove materially false, unsafe, restricted or unlawfully published content where justified. Consider a visible retraction rather than silently deleting a serious allegation. Keep relevant internal records where needed for complaints, legal obligations or an audit. If an external source is withdrawn or corrected, review any RFTUK article that relied on it.

18. Correction requests, complaints and legal correspondence

Anyone may ask us to reconsider evidence or correct material they believe is inaccurate, misleading, unfair or unlawfully disclosed. Identify the page or statement and the disputed point where possible. We will check the underlying record rather than automatically accepting or rejecting the request. Publication complaints follow the Complaints Policy, and requests relating to personal data also follow applicable data-protection requirements.

Serious complaints should be reviewed fairly, using an unconflicted person where reasonably available. Preserve material evidence, drafts and correspondence once a serious dispute or legal threat is raised. Escalate letters concerning defamation, privacy, contempt, copyright or data protection promptly; obtain legal advice when appropriate.

19. Parent Contribution Service (PCS)

Parent Contribution Service is operated by Right First Time UK Ltd; it is not a separate legal entity. Its calculators, cost assumptions, public guidance, research and statistics must meet the same source-checking and corrections standards. PCS provides voluntary parent-to-parent information and records, not official CMS determinations or court decisions.

Private PCS messages, parental records and child information must not be used as identifiable campaign evidence without an appropriate lawful basis, safeguarding review and effective anonymisation or other necessary permissions. PCS does not receive, hold or transfer parent-to-parent contribution money under its current model.

20. Responsibilities and related policies

Anyone publishing for RFTUK must check the claims within their authority, disclose material conflicts and raise concerns about unreliable information. Campaign Leaders should build source checks and proportionate risk review into their teams. Directors retain governance oversight. Volunteers and contributors must not represent a personal opinion or draft as an approved RFTUK finding.

This policy works alongside RFTUK's Complaints, Safeguarding, Conflict of Interest, Data Protection & GDPR, AI & Digital Tools, AI Images & Video, Political Independence, Disclaimer and information-security policies, and its Articles of Association.

21. Contact, official references and review

To request a correction, provide a response, question a source or report a publication concern, use our Contact Us page. Formal complaints can also be sent to complaints@rightfirsttimeuk.com. Please do not send confidential court or safeguarding material without checking that it is appropriate to share.

Useful primary references include the Defamation Act 2013, HMCTS family-court guidance, statistics Code of Practice and ICO accuracy guidance. Review this policy at least annually and sooner if law, research practices or publication risks materially change.

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