

Safeguarding Good Practice Guide

Handling safeguarding disclosures and procedure for reporting concerns and allegations of abuse and neglect

This Good Practice Guide sets out important guidelines for University staff and all other individuals acting on behalf of the University (e.g., volunteers, contractors, third party employees, temporary/interim staff members, consultants, etc.) to follow when working with anyone who is U18s or Adults at Risk. It should be read in accordance with the University's Safeguarding Policy.

Incidents of abuse may come to light in different ways. You may have noticed some indicators of abuse, you may witness abuse taking place and in some cases abuse may only come to light because a person discloses it to you directly. A disclosure is the process by which someone starts to share their experiences of abuse with others.

Disclosures about safeguarding matters relate to **the actual or suspected abuse or neglect of children (i.e. Under 18s) and adults at risk**. Adhering to these guidelines will help to ensure that information disclosed about possible abuse or neglect is handled promptly and appropriately.

In cases of immediate danger or harm

- Where an U18 or adult at risk is perceived to be at **immediate risk of harm to themselves and/or are endangering others**, contact University Security 333 (Singleton) or 6010 (Bay) (Externally: 01792 604271) and/or the emergency services on 999. Additional support can be accessed via the [Safe Zone app](#).
- Every effort should be made to try to provide a safe place for the U18 or adult at risk until the Police or Local Authority are in attendance.
- Do not place yourself in danger - be aware of your own safety and take steps to minimise the risk of harm.
- Do not confront or contact the alleged perpetrator, or discuss with any bystanders involved in an incident (e.g. friends, housemates and/or relatives).
- Once the emergency situation is under control and the incident managed, any related safeguarding issues should be **reported to a University Designated Safeguarding Officer and the Head of Safeguarding**.

Safeguarding disclosures – how to respond?

During the conversation where you are made aware that an U18 or adult at risk is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect (regardless of whether you are communicating directly with the U18 /adult at risk or with another person), you should:

- Respond in a calm but concerned manner.
- Listen quietly, carefully and patiently.
- Allow the person to talk without interruption and avoid asking any leading questions.
- Do not interrupt the person when they are recalling significant events.
- It is not your role as the person receiving the disclosure to investigate but you can ask open questions to help clarify whether the U18 or adult is at risk of harm. Use the acronym **TED** (tell, explain, describe) (e.g., “tell me a little more about what happened?”, “can you explain/describe to me what happened”).
- Reflect back/repeat what the person has said to check that you have understood them properly.
- Treat the person’s comments seriously and reassure them that they were right to tell you.
- Avoid physical contact with the person unless it is absolutely necessary (e.g., to administer first aid, or offer mobility assistance) and do not remove clothing to view injuries. In the event there has been any physical contact, it is important you record and explain the context of what happened.
- Do not say whether you believe that what the person is alleging is true - your role is to gather basic information in order to enable you to report the matter.
- Where appropriate, signpost the person to relevant specialist support services (e.g., emergency contact details, counselling service, GP, etc), and reiterate these via email.
- Explain that you need to share the information and will consider what will happen next.
 - For U18s, consent is not required but they should be encouraged to agree to the sharing of the information – if they refuse, explain to them that you may still need to share.
 - For adults at risk, say that you will discuss the matter with a DSO and ask whether they consent to their information being shared with other agencies.
- **Don’t make promises you can’t keep and never agree to keep secrets.** An example of this would be telling someone who has made a disclosure of abuse that you promise to make sure it never happens again. Even with the best intentions, this is not something you can guarantee. Another example is where someone makes a disclosure to you but asks you to promise not to share this with anyone else.
- Reassure the person that the information they have shared with you will be handled sensitively and shared only with those who need to know. – **do not promise confidentiality.** Explain, if

necessary, that you can't promise confidentiality to anyone as there may be situations when matters need to be shared to ensure everyone is kept safe.

- If the disclosure is made when the alleged perpetrator is present, do NOT discuss the disclosure with them, including any follow-up actions you will take.

Things to remember:

- Avoid asking leading questions – these are questions that imply or contain it's own answer and can subtly prompt the person making the disclosure to answer in a particular way.
- Leading questions can lead a disclosure off track, prompting the respondent to answer in the way they think you want to hear or are comfortable with rather than what they want to share.
- Examples of a leading question might be where the answer would be a simple "yes or no" or where you seek to confirm something eg. "Your partner has hit you, haven't they?".

After the conversation, make a detailed note of the conversation. An accurate record of the disclosure is essential as this may be used later in criminal trials or legal proceedings.

- What was said, or what did you see, that suggests an U18 or adult at risk may be experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect?
- Wherever possible, quote the actual words used by the individual, rather than summarising or paraphrasing.
- Describe any physical injuries you observed or other items shown to you in connection with the disclosure (e.g., mobile phones in cases of cyber bullying)
- Make a careful note of any information about the alleged perpetrator and significant dates, times, names or places.
- Confirm where and when the disclosure was made, and who else was present.
- Add in any contact that arose – e.g. physical touch, close proximity etc and context of this.
- Clarify, where possible, the relationship the person has with the University – are they a student, a staff member, a visitor on campus or other third party?
- What are the contact details of the person/people who might be at risk?
- Sign and date your report

If after making notes you remember something that you did not record, it is acceptable to add an addendum to your notes but date and time when additions were made.

Do not share this note with anyone apart from those you are reporting the concern to in the next stage.

Procedure for reporting concerns and allegations of abuse and neglect

If you are concerned that a child (U18) or Adult at Risk connected with the University community is experiencing or is at risk of abuse, neglect or harm or concerned that someone connected with the University may be harming a child (U18) or Adult at Risk, you should:

- make a careful note about your concerns, so that you do not forget anything.
- report your concerns promptly and within 24 hours, using the [online reporting form](#) (advice can be sought from your line manager) .
- tell [the Designated Safeguarding Officer](#) for your department/ faculty.

The completed form will be automatically sent to the Safeguarding Team who will liaise with the [Designated Safeguarding Officer](#) to ensure all concerns and allegations are responded to in a sensitive and timely manner.

Detailed information on reporting and referral mechanisms and good practice guides for handling safeguarding disclosures and concerns of abuse and neglect can be found on the University [Safeguarding webpages](#).

Important: If you are on placement or on University partner premises, you should report the concern through the safeguarding arrangements of the relevant partner body. Raising a concern via the University's arrangements above may also be appropriate, particularly if you are not satisfied with the host organisation's response or are unsure of which reporting route to follow. **If you require clarification on any actions you might need to take in relation to a safeguarding concern, speak to a DSO.**

Next steps

The DSO will co-ordinate further actions connected with the disclosure and will make an initial judgement about whether an external referral to local safeguarding authorities or the Police is required, seeking advice from the Head of Safeguarding as required.

The DSO may need to talk to you further. They may also need to talk to the person who made the disclosure and may ask you to arrange this conversation with or be present while it takes place. In certain cases, you may be asked to attend other internal meetings about the disclosure or, at a later stage, participate in meetings with the statutory safeguarding authorities.

Alternatively, it is possible that you are told the details of the disclosure does not fall within the scope of the Safeguarding Policy. In these cases, you will normally be advised about other ways in which you and your team can support the individual(s) involved.

Confidentiality

All safeguarding concerns and allegations should be handled in confidence. However, since those involved may be invited to participate in statutory safeguarding processes led by safeguarding authorities, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Further support

The University recognises that receiving a disclosure may be distressing for those involved and can offer a range of support. The first step is talking with your line manager or relevant HR Business Partner (staff members), or personal tutor or academic supervisor (students).

Glossary

A glossary and FAQ are available on our [Safeguarding Webpages](#) for further information and clarity.