

# Safeguarding Guidance Note C: Maintaining appropriate boundaries with U18s and Adults at Risk



This Guidance Note 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. Adhering to these practical guidelines will help to maintain appropriate boundaries.

This Guide should be read in accordance with the University's Safeguarding Policy.

## **When working with U18s and Adults at Risk, do:**

- Treat all students with respect and dignity at all times, reflecting their age, background, culture and any special needs.
- Seek support from your line manager or Local Safeguarding Lead if you are unsure about how best to interact with U18s or Adults at Risk that you are dealing with.
- Familiarise yourself with the "signs of abuse or neglect" that could suggest a safeguarding concern is required (see separate list on [Safeguarding](#)).
- Challenge inappropriate actions and language from others and encourage others to be open about an attitude or behaviour they don't like.
- Plan interactions, as far as your role allows, that take place in the company of others to ensure that an allegation of improper behaviour does not arise.
- Ensure that, when conducting a 1-1 meeting, the room has a glass door where other employees can see you or (preferred option) you meet in a room shared by other employees. If this is not possible, make sure a colleague knows the location and ask them to call in at a specific point.
- Be consistent in applying the boundaries of your role when supporting/advising students and explain these to students, where required.
- Refer onto specialist services for support (e.g., exploring a student's mental health needs in depth, medical support, academic support, etc.).
- Be aware that others might misconstrue your speech and behaviour, however well-intended, and do your best to ensure that your intentions and boundaries are clear.
- Consider the balance needed between respecting people's right to privacy and taking any allegations or concerns of abuse seriously.

## **When working with U18s and Adults at Risk, do not:**

- Delay when responding to any concerns or allegations made by a child or Adult at Risk or reporting these to a Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Share your personal details (personal mobile number, personal email address, home address) to any student or parent.
- Share overly personal information (e.g. about your background, your history, your mental

health, your family) with students, as this can easily blur the boundaries of your role and send a message to the student that you are their friend rather than a member of staff.

- Communicate with students using any personal social media accounts, sites or apps.
- Use your car (or a University vehicle) to transport a lone student – except in rare emergency situations, where permission has been granted by a supervisor or line manager.
- Physically touch or comfort a student (and, if they initiate physical contact for whatever reason, break away from this as soon as you are able and make a file note).
- Be overly familiar or take part in inappropriate behaviour or contact, whether physical, verbal or sexual (for example, play fights, insults, obscene gestures).
- Make threats or suggestive or offensive remarks, or lewd or sexually explicit comments.
- Form a relationship (including a platonic relationship) which constitutes an abuse of trust\*.
- Act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive.
- Trivialise abuse or allow bullying or abusive activities (e.g., by downplaying an ‘initiation ceremony’).
- Take photographs or videos without appropriate consent.

#### \*Personal relationships with U18s

Any adult in a “position of trust” who engages in any sexual activity with a person under 18 is committing a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

The University considers that any staff member (including volunteers) who comes into contact with U18s in the course of their employment is considered to be in a position of trust, whether or not they meet the strict legal definition. Any alleged sexual activity between anyone in a position of trust and an U18 connected with the University will therefore be treated as a serious disciplinary matter and referred to the Police.