

Safeguarding Guidance Note D: Handling Safeguarding Disclosures



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

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 and/or the emergency services on 999.
- You are unable to detain an U18 or adult at risk, but you should try to provide a safe place 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 the relevant Designated Safeguarding Lead**.

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.
- Allow the person to talk without interruption and avoid asking any leading questions.
- Do not interrupt the person when they are recalling significant events.
- Treat the person's comments seriously and reassure them that they were right to tell you.
- Ask open questions (e.g., "could you say a little more about what you experienced?") or repeat what the person has said to check that you have understood them properly.

- 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.
- Do not say whether you believe that what the person is alleging is true - your role is to gather together 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, tell them you may still need to share.
 - For adults at risk, say that you will discuss the matter with a DSL but that their consent may be required before information is shared with Social Services or the Police.
- Reassure the person that the information they have shared with you will be handed 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.
- 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.

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?
- Where possible, quote the actual words used, 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.
- 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?

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

If you need advice about the correct routing of Safeguarding and/or Prevent concerns, please contact a Local Safeguarding Lead (LINK), who will assist you.

Report your concern, within 24 hours, by taking the following steps:

- If the concern relates to suspected radicalisation to extremism or terrorism, email

prevent@bathspa.ac.uk

- In all other cases, contact a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
<mailto:safeguarding@bathspa.ac.uk>
 - Complete the [Safeguarding Report Form](#) with details of your concern
- mention the matter to your line manager and say that you are escalating the matter to a Designated Safeguarding Lead and decide with them whether there may be any other actions you need to take in the meantime.

Follow the advice or instructions of the DSL and your line manager and update the DSL with any instructions from your manager.

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 DSL.**

Next steps

The DSL 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.

The DSL 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).

Staff can also access the Employee Assistance programme, TELUS Health (accessed via the staff intranet). Students can access Student Wellbeing Services and the 24/7 Student Wellbeing

Helpline ([Student Wellbeing Services – Bath Spa University](#)).