

# **Ulster University**

## **Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk of Harm Policy and Procedure**

**Approved by SLT 25 April 2023**

**Next review date: April 2026**

## 1. Introduction to Safeguarding

- 1.1. Safeguarding at Ulster University means taking all reasonable steps to promote welfare and protect children and adults at risk of harm who are engaged with our community in any way, and to respond appropriately if harm does occur. Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone at the University.
- 1.2. Ulster University places this policy within the context of the University's four values as set out below:
  - Collaboration – People and relationships are central to everything we do
  - Enhancing Potential – We strive to be the best that we can be
  - Inclusion – We promote a place to work and study where everyone is accepted
  - Integrity – We are open, honest and transparent with each other
- 1.3. Those who work with children and adults at risk of harm, in whatever capacity, have a responsibility to promote their welfare and protect their rights and safety. All organisations and agencies working with children and adults at risk must have procedures in place for safeguarding and ensure these are adhered to. Enhanced Access NI Disclosures will be required for any members of the University working in regulated activity with vulnerable groups. See Section 6.8 of this policy for further information and definitions.

When there are concerns about the welfare of a child or adult at risk of harm, early intervention and appropriate support can prevent problems escalating to a point where harm occurs and can also improve the long-term outcomes.

- 1.4. A **child** is anyone under the age of 18.
- 1.5. An '**adult at risk of harm**' "is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their personal characteristics and/or life circumstances.

Personal characteristics may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.

Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions (Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership [NIASP] Adult Safeguarding Operating Procedures pg. 11)

- 1.6 The legislation and guidance relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk in Northern Ireland include the following:
  - [The Children \(NI\) Order 1995](#)
  - [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups \(NI\) Order 2007](#)
  - [Access NI's Code of Practice \(October 2020\)](#)
  - [Department of Health: Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI \(March 2016 & August 2017\)](#)
  - [Adult Safeguarding: Prevention to Protection in Partnership Policy \(DHSSPS 2015\)](#)
  - [NIASP Adult Protection Operating Procedures, Adults at risk of harm and Adults in need of protection \(2016\)](#)
  - [The Sexual Offences \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2008](#)
  - [The Family Homes and Domestic Violence \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1998](#)

- [The Mental Health \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1986](#)
- [Mental Capacity Act \(NI\) 2016](#)
- [The Human Trafficking & Exploitation \(Criminal Justice and Support for Victims\) Act \(NI\) 2015](#)
- [The Police and Criminal Evidence \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1989](#)
- [The Protection from Stalking Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#)

## **2. Purpose of this Policy**

- 2.1 Ulster University is both legally obliged and committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of those who are under 18 years of age, or who are adults at risk, within its community. These obligations extend to all who participate in our activities, services or facilities, whether they are staff, students or visitors.
- 2.2 Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone within the University community, for example: staff, students, volunteers, members of the extended workforce such as student workers, freelancers, contractors and external organisations working for, or on behalf, of the University. Therefore, everyone should be vigilant and alert to possible incidents and report these in accordance with the procedures laid out in Appendix 1.

## **3. Aim of this Policy**

- 3.1 Ulster University is committed to providing and maintaining a University community which protects children and adults at risk from harm. Effective safeguarding activity will:
- promote the welfare for the child or the adult at risk of harm;
  - prevent harm occurring through early identification of risk and appropriate, timely intervention;
  - and protect children and adults at risk of harm

## **4. Objectives of this Policy**

- 4.1 To provide a Safeguarding Code of Conduct for staff and students;
- 4.2 To ensure University staff and volunteers are appropriately selected, vetted, and trained in the University's Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk of Harm Policy and Procedure;
- 4.3 To ensure safeguarding is considered in the design and delivery of University activities;
- 4.4 To ensure that staff, students and everyone working/acting on behalf of the University are aware of the risks and signs of potential abuse or harm;
- 4.5 To ensure appropriate action, in line with agreed procedures, is taken in the event of any safeguarding issue or concern;
- 4.6 To provide guidance for staff, students and volunteers when dealing with children and adults at risk;
- 4.7 To provide a procedure with guidance on how concerns can be raised about a safeguarding issue;

4.8 To ensure that procedures are in place to create a safe and welcoming environment, in line with the University's values.

## 5. Scope of this Policy

5.1 This policy document outlines the systems and procedures in place within Ulster University to safeguard children and adults at risk of harm who attend or visit all Ulster University campus sites, as well as students on placement and apprenticeship, and other locations attended by Ulster students as part of their studies.

5.2 Ulster University students on work placement in another organisation should be aware that any safeguarding concerns regarding children or adults at risk of harm in their care, can be governed by the placement organisation's Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.

5.3 A student or member of staff may disclose that they were the subject of historical abuse by someone external to the University. Some allegations of historical abuse may raise concerns that others may be at risk. If the individual has provided sufficient information to identify the alleged perpetrator, Ulster University may have an obligation to share this information with the relevant authorities.

5.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- [Bullying and Harassment \(Dignity at Work and Study\) Policy](#)
- [Employee Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- [Equal Opportunities Policy](#)
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#)
- [GDPR Policy](#)
- [Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement](#)
- [Policy for the Governance of Research Involving Human Participants](#)
- [Policy on Recruiting & Selecting Employees](#)
- [Procedures for the Recruitment of Ex-offenders](#)
- [Professional Integrity in the Conduct of Research Code of Practice](#)
- Staff Disciplinary Procedures
  - [Academic and Academic Related Staff](#)
  - [Other Staff](#)
- [Student Discipline Procedure](#)
- [Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- [Whistleblowing Policy](#)

Breach of any policies, codes or procedures with which a member of staff or student is required to comply may be gross misconduct and will be addressed through the relevant Staff or Student Disciplinary Procedures.

All policies and procedures can be found at:  
<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/about/governance/policies>

5.5 This policy applies to:

- Adults at risk of harm
- University students under the age of 18
- Those attending open days as potential student applicants under the age of 18
- Children brought on site by parents
- Those attending summer schools

- Those using sports facilities
- Work experience placements
- Temporary employees
- Those staying temporarily in University managed accommodation over the holiday period (e.g., but not limited to, as part of school party)
- Those attending interviews for admission to the University
- Those contributing to teaching
- Participants of academic research
- Visitors for any other reason
- Students who are parents of children under the age of 18.

## **6. General Principles**

### **6.1 Confidentiality**

In implementing this Policy, the University will be mindful of the sensitive and confidential nature of safeguarding concerns and its obligations under all Data Protection legislation (including General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018 and the Data Protection Act 2018 as well as the Special Educational Needs Disability Order NI (SENDO 2005).

Whilst it is important that a partnership approach is adopted to ensure the safety and welfare of children and adults at risk of harm, it is of equal importance that all concerned are confident that the information they provide will only be disclosed where it is in the best interests of the child or adult at risk of harm, and when necessary to comply with legal requirements. Ulster's policy and procedures have been carefully constructed to ensure such confidentiality while protecting the interests of the child or adult at risk of harm.

Ulster University has Designated Safeguarding Officers (see Appendix 2 for full contact list) who have been specially trained in the area of safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm and are committed to the principle of confidentiality.

### **6.2 Consent and Capacity**

The Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016 is a law that protects vulnerable people over the age of 16 around decision-making. Every adult, whatever their disability, has the right to make their own decisions wherever possible. People should always support a person to make their own decisions if they can.

### **6.3 Partnership Working**

The diversity of Ulster University and settings means there can be variation in practice when it comes to safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm. We will endeavour to work in partnership with a range of stakeholders to promote safeguarding and ensure consistent practice as far as possible.

Effective communication is essential in promoting safeguarding, both to those we wish to protect, to everyone involved in working with children and adults at risk of harm and to all those with whom we work in partnership.

Effective safeguarding requires co-operation and partnership between management, staff and volunteers, and All those who attend or visit the University.

#### 6.4 Information Sharing

Ulster University will ensure that relevant information about potential safeguarding concerns in respect of children and adults at risk of harm is shared appropriately with the partner agencies where necessary. This enables the level of risk to be assessed appropriately and allows for suitable responses to be agreed, thus increasing the likelihood of successful outcomes.

This should include, wherever possible, seeking clear, explicit, and informed consent from the individual(s) concerned for information about them to be shared with specified other individuals or agencies, except in circumstances, when it is placing a child or adult at risk at greater harm if a criminal offence is suspected/has occurred.

There should be a local agreement or protocol in place setting out the principles and processes for sharing information between organisations, to ensure maximum rights and protection for children and adults at risk of harm (see Appendix 3 for template agreement).

#### 6.5 Equality

The University's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion underpins this policy, in particular:

- We respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and will treat everyone equally regardless of age, ability, gender, race, ethnicity, religious belief, sexuality, or social/economic status.
- We are committed to creating an environment free from threat of intimidation, harassment and abuse.
- We promote equality of opportunity and oppose discriminatory behaviour.
- We will deal with any incidence of discriminatory behaviour seriously according to our disciplinary procedures.

#### 6.6 Safe Recruitment

Safe recruitment and selection procedures help to ensure a safe workplace by ensuring only individuals who are suitable are appointed. Whether the role is paid or not, it is important that the individual has the right skills, knowledge, and attitude for the role. Some individuals may not be suitable to work with children due to gaps in these areas or due to previous concerns about conduct.

Staff involved with recruiting people will operate under the guidance of Ulster University's Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure. Relevant Management staff will ensure that all workers are appointed, trained, and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment. All new staff will be trained to use key operating procedures directly affecting their role and department.

Any members of the University working in a regulated position with vulnerable groups will require Enhanced Access NI disclosure with a barred list check. See the Department of Health's guidance for definitions of regulated activity in relation to [children](#) and [adults](#) at risk.

Ulster University will utilise Access NI and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to provide a disclosure service for staff/students (depending on course)

volunteers/regular contractors whose roles fall under the definition of ‘regulated activity.’ It is against the law to knowingly permit a barred individual to work in a regulated position.

When employing any person under the age of eighteen (full/part-time/casual) or providing work experience opportunities for any person under the age of eighteen, Ulster University acknowledges the amended requirements of the Sexual Offences Bill 2001. All staff/volunteers are advised that it is illegal for an adult to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18 if the adult works with the young person in a supervisory capacity, even if the relationship is consensual. This is considered an “abuse of trust” and is therefore a criminal offence. If this were to occur, Ulster University discipline procedures will be applied, in consultation with the relevant external agencies.

#### 6.7 Data Protection

Ulster University will comply with laws regulating the processing of personal data, particularly the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. For further details of our commitment in this area please consult our GDPR Policy.

Considerations relating to safeguarding are as applicable to processing data for social media as they are to any other form of interaction between those who are in a position of trust, and those within their care, or who are deemed vulnerable. Thought should be given to the duty of care when publishing photographs, comments and personal data on the web, including on all social media sites.

### **7. Record Keeping and Information Management**

- 7.1 Ulster University creates, receives, and holds information in a range of formats. All information must be managed appropriately in relation to its content, purpose and ongoing value.
- 7.2 Good record keeping and management of information is crucial in dealing with safeguarding issues, and are central to effective partnership working, interdisciplinary working and clear decision making. Decisions and action taken should be supported by evidence and rationale so that intentions are clear.
- 7.3 Any basic data gathered e.g., through registration forms will be kept securely within folders or filing systems.
- 7.4 Any personal or confidential data gathered must be kept within some secure environment and only authorised personnel should be allowed to access it.