

Approved by:	Board of Trustees
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Responsible for implementation:	Deputy Chief Executive
Responsible for interpretation:	Board of trustees

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy applies to all staff, sabbatical officers (referred to as staff in this policy and procedure) and volunteers, and others representing City St George's Students' Union (the Union) who have contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults. The Union values and encourages the involvement of volunteers with children, young people and vulnerable adults in its activities and is committed to protecting their health, safety and general welfare.
- 1.2 This policy will be considered at least every three years by the Board of Trustees. Responsibility for its day-to-day enactment will lie with the Deputy Chief Executive.

For Reporting and Dealing with Incidents – Please see section 11 and 12.

2.0 Policy Statement

- 2.1 Central to our strategy is the importance of being student-led and having a positive impact for our members. We provide a range of services such as student activities, advice, events, representation and volunteering. This policy applies to all staff and volunteers, and others representing the Union, who have contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 2.1.2 For the purpose of this policy, the term child or children means any person who has not yet reached 16 years of age. A young person is any person who has passed 16 years of age but not yet reached 18 years of age. A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 or over who has a condition such as a learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs or a reduction in physical or mental capacity.

3.0 Guiding Principles

- 3.1 When dealing with children, young people and vulnerable adults, the Union aims to:
 - (a) promote their general welfare;
 - (b) recognise their rights as individuals and treat them with dignity and respect;
 - (c) consistently apply fair and objective methods of selecting staff and volunteers;
 - (d) plan activities involving children, young people and vulnerable adults with care to minimise risks to their health and safety;

- (e) raise awareness of the dangers to which children, young people and vulnerable adults may be susceptible; and
- (f) develop appropriate procedures for responding to accidents, incidents and alleged or suspected harm.

4.0 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

- 4.1 Union staff and volunteers who will have substantial, unsupervised access to children, young people or vulnerable adults will be subject to a DBS check of the appropriate level.
- 4.2 The DBS check searches an individual's details against criminal records and other sources, including the Police National Computer. All individuals will be made aware that any appointment, whether paid or voluntary, will be subject to satisfactory checks. Information gathered through this process will be treated in the strictest confidence and in accordance with the DBS Code of Practice.
- 4.3 The Union, the University and its partners will make volunteer recruitment decisions on a case by case basis and in line with relevant policies and procedures. When the project is external, the charity or organisation will be responsible for providing the application and covering the cost.
- 4.4 These applications can take from between 10 days and 4 weeks to reach their end point. When working with the Union or the University, Human Resources (HR) will provide the application and the department that is organising the project, will provide the payment.

5.0 Risk Assessments and General Considerations

- 5.1 Health and safety requirements will be carefully considered when planning and carrying out activities involving children, young people and vulnerable adults. The Union's Health and Safety Policy applies to volunteers as well as employees.
- 5.2 All staff and volunteers will complete thorough risk assessments prior to undertaking events/activities with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- 5.3 This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following:
 - (a) The Union Health and Safety Policy; and
 - (b) The Union Data Protection Policy.

6.0 Designated People

- 6.1 The Union will nominate designated people who are trained in safeguarding and making referrals. They will serve as first points of contact for any guidance and advice necessary.

- 6.2 The designated people have the following responsibilities regarding the coordination of safeguarding:
- (a) Receiving concerns and disclosures made to staff or volunteers;
 - (b) Making referrals to Social Services and/or the Police and supporting them in their procedures;
 - (c) Not to investigate allegations themselves;
 - (d) Liaising with other departments in the University, agencies and professionals as necessary;
 - (e) Supporting staff and volunteers and keeping them updated with appropriate information on a 'need to know' basis;
 - (f) Ensuring records are completed and filed confidently; and
 - (g) Providing access for volunteers to attend appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding training.
- 6.3 The Deputy Chief Executive is the designated Lead Safeguarding Officer and will determine who are the nominated Deputy Lead Safeguarding Officers.

7.0 Planning and Supervision

- 7.1 Whenever a staff member or volunteer works with children, young people or vulnerable adults (whether or not carers remain ultimately responsible), the Union guidelines on appropriate planning and supervision will be in effect to reduce the risk of harm. They read as follows:
- (a) Careful planning will be undertaken to ensure that maximum protection is provided at all times when children, young people or vulnerable adults are involved in activities.
 - (b) Supervision and support will be provided by staff during Union-organised activities, ensuring the appropriate ratio of employees to participants. The number, age range, and special needs of participants will be considered when determining the appropriate level of supervision.
 - (c) Wherever possible both female and male employees/volunteers will be present (except in the case that their presence poses a specific risk either to participants or to staff members due to the particular conditions of individuals subject to this safeguarding policy).

8.0 Code of Conduct

- 8.1 Some actions, no matter how well-intentioned, may be misinterpreted and leave all parties vulnerable. The following is a quick reference guide to appropriate behaviour when working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 8.2 **Union staff and volunteers will:**
- (a) act as role models and conduct themselves in an exemplary fashion at all times;

- (b) be alert to any risk of potential harm or dangerous and inappropriate behaviours by young people;
- (c) organise sleeping accommodation and facilities with appropriate attention to the varying needs of males, females, and those of other gender identifications who may or may not require specific safeguards and protections during residential activities;
- (d) ensure that adequate training has been completed when supervising sports or games;
- (e) respect individuals' rights to privacy;
- (f) provide access for children and young people to discuss any concerns they may have; and
- (g) speak to the appropriate person if they have concerns about an individual's safety.

8.3 Union staff and volunteers will not:

- (a) be alone for substantial periods of time with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Where one-to-one work is necessary other staff members will be informed where this work will take place, with whom and for how long;
- (b) engage in abusive behaviour of any kind (eg ridiculing and bullying) or permit it to be perpetrated by any participant under their supervision;
- (c) show favouritism to, or become too closely associated with any individual(s) under their supervision. Staff and volunteers will also be aware of and have strategies prepared for managing inappropriate attention-seeking behaviours;
- (d) allow or engage in suggestive remarks, gestures, or touching of a kind which could be misinterpreted as of a sexual, threatening, violent, or otherwise inappropriate nature;
- (e) act upon unverified assumptions or unreliable conclusions pertaining to any individual; and
- (f) hesitate to share concerns on any of these matters with the appropriate person.

9.0 Raising Awareness of the Dangers of Abuse

9.1 Abuse is generally described under five headings and is usually referred to in the context of children:

- (a) neglect;
- (b) emotional abuse;
- (c) physical abuse;
- (d) sexual abuse; and
- (e) bullying.

10.0 Informing

10.1 By issuing this policy, the Union is keen to ensure that all relevant employees and volunteers:

- (a) know the types of harm to which children, young people and vulnerable adults are susceptible;
- (b) are alert to behaviour which may be suggestive of abuse of any sort;
- (c) are able to talk to someone if they become aware of anything, which causes them to feel uncomfortable; and
- (d) know how to deal with alleged or suspected harm.

11.0 Responding to Accidents/Incidents

- 11.1 In the event of harm coming to an individual by accident or otherwise, first aid will be administered by a qualified first-aider as appropriate and the situation managed to ensure the welfare of the individual and the safety of others. The Emergency Services will be contacted where appropriate.
- 11.2 An Accident/Incident Report Form will be completed with the University's Health and Safety Department. The circumstances of the accident will be investigated to establish the cause and to identify what remedial action will be taken to minimise the possibility of recurrence. A comparison with the risk assessment for the activity will also be made to establish whether the correct controls/actions have been in place/followed when the incident occurred.
- 11.3 Fatal accidents, major injuries and dangerous occurrences should be brought to the attention of the appropriate Union staff member by telephone without delay, after alerting the appropriate authorities.
- 11.4 Where an accident/incident involving young people has been narrowly avoided employees and volunteers will detail its nature and pass the information on to the appropriate Union staff member. Incidents of this nature will also be reported to the University's Health and Safety Department.
- 11.5 If a child, young person or vulnerable adult wants to talk about abuse, it is essential that the employee or volunteer:
 - (a) listens carefully to what the person says, keeping calm and looking at them directly;
 - (b) lets them know that to help them someone else must be told;
 - (c) reassures them that they are not to blame;
 - (d) is aware that they may have been threatened;
 - (e) does not push them for information;
 - (f) reassures them that they are right to talk about it and what they say is accepted; and
 - (g) informs them of what will happen next and undertakes to let them know the outcome.

12.0 Dealing with alleged or suspected abuse

- 12.1 If a young person or other person who may be vulnerable has talked about abuse, or other reasons present themselves for suspecting abuse, the Union employee or volunteer will:
 - (a) Notify the appropriate Union staff member; and

- (b) Make, as accurately as possible, a written record of what the individual in question has said or the presenting reasons for suspecting abuse.
- 12.2 Where the appropriate Union staff member is unavailable and the individual is considered to be in imminent danger, employees or volunteers will contact the relevant authorities themselves. The appropriate Union staff member will be informed as soon as practicably possible.
- 12.3 Where it is suspected that an employee or volunteer may be involved in abuse, employees and volunteers will inform the appropriate Union staff member as soon as possible. The employee/volunteer will be immediately removed from access to children, young people and vulnerable adults, but be assured that no presumptions have been made and that the allegation will be fully investigated by the relevant authorities.
- 12.3.1 If gross misconduct is reasonably suspected, the Union will use the relevant procedures including the Staff Complaints and Disciplinary procedure to investigate the allegations and determine the most appropriate course of action.
- 12.4 Dealing with incidents of abuse is difficult for any individual; employees and volunteers will not:
- (a) act alone;
 - (b) investigate independently; or
 - (c) make any assumptions of guilt or innocence.
- 12.5 Full and accurate notes will be written as soon as possible, recording the date and time of the alleged incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was alleged and action taken. Records will be as accurate as possible as they may be invaluable to the investigation and used as evidence in court. The appropriate Union staff member will keep a copy.
- 12.6 Any employee or volunteer who is involved in a disclosure of any kind may wish to speak to a professional to reassure themselves that they have done the right thing. The NSPCC operate a 24-hour help line for anyone concerned about a child or young person. It is primarily for use by adults and can be used anonymously: 0800 800 600.

13.0 Confidentiality and Sensitivity

- 13.1 When dealing with personal and emotive details of this nature, confidentiality will be maintained at all times since the allegations or suspicions may prove to be unfounded.
- 13.2 Notes and records will be kept in a secure place and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.
- 13.3 No assumptions of guilt will be made unless and until guilt can be established in the appropriate legal proceedings, beyond the remit of the Union.

13.4 A nominated Union staff member will maintain impartial contact during this process.

14.0 Operational Accountability

14.1 The Union will account for all potential and actual safeguarding concerns through a safeguarding register.

14.2 The safeguarding register will function in a way analogous to the Union's risk register, as an active record of safeguarding concerns. The register will contain an ongoing record of all safeguarding concerns and will be managed as follows:

- (a) Any potential or actual safeguarding risks arising from a Union activity will be updated in the safeguarding register *before* any agreement will be made for the activity to be carried out.
- (b) Any measures implemented to reduce the safeguarding risks will be agreed and updated in the safeguarding register with the responsible staff member and date of agreement detailed *before* any agreement will be made for activity to be carried out.
- (c) At the termination of any Union activity presenting safeguarding risks, the safeguarding register will be updated to indicate the safeguarding risks are closed. The responsible staff member and date of closure will be indicated.
- (d) In the case that an actual safeguarding concern arises during a Union activity, procedures as in sections 11.0 and 12.0 will be followed. The safeguarding register will be updated as soon as practicably possible with a record of events, relevant causative factors, actions taken, end results, present and responsible staff members, times and dates of events where known, and ongoing decision-making and consequences. Such updates will continue until the case may be considered closed.
- (e) The safeguarding register will be archived at the end of every academic year and a new register will resume the following year.

14.3 If an activity presents a safeguarding risk, the managing staff member responsible for the activity will also be responsible for updating the safeguarding register.

14.4 The staff member responsible for agreeing the undertaking of activities will hold ultimate responsibility for ensuring the safeguarding register is up-to-date and timely in accounting for and adequately evidencing the Union's actions in respect of safeguarding.