**Safeguarding: Activity Specific Guidance Note 4**

**Researchers in Contact With Children, and Adults at Risk.**

**1. Researcher’s Responsibilities**

1.1 The researcher who is in contact with children and adults at risk (for definitions see appendix 1 of the Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy) is expected to be familiar with the safeguarding procedures of the University and/ or host organisation (school, youth club/group etc.) and he/she should seek training, if required (see main policy).

1.2 The researcher should report any issues of concern with regards to the physical and emotional welfare of the children and/or adults at risk with whom he/she works to the Principal Investigator (PI).

1.3 In the case of immediate danger to the child or an adult at risk, the researcher should contact the police or social services directly.

1.4 The researchermust recognise his/her individual responsibility to his/her own safety and that of others with whom he/she works and take appropriate action to minimise risk.

1.5 The researcher will not be:

* responsible for assessing the accuracy of any allegation,
* held personally responsible for the physical and/or emotional welfare of any child or adult at risk with whom he/she is conducting research, beyond meeting the practical and ethical requirements of the research and acting within the bounds of this policy.

**Actions for the researcher with a child or adult at risk protection concern**

1.6The researcher should

* Show the child/young person/adult at risk that you have heard what they are saying;
* Do not make the child/adult at risk repeat their account;
* Explain what actions you must take in a way that is appropriate to the age and understanding of the child/adult at risk;
* Explain the limits of confidentiality to anyone under the age of 18 years, as you have a responsibility to disclose information to those who need to know. Reporting concerns is not a betrayal of trust;
* Explain to an adult at risk that you require their consent to pass on the matter to an agency such as social services or the police.

1.7 There are some exceptions to this rule where consent is not required, these are:

* where there is a duty to act (e.g. a crime may have taken place); or
* when it is in the public interest to act e.g. another person or people, child or adult, are put at risk; or
* when it is suspected that the individual may be under the undue influence of someone else.

1.8 The researcher should then:

* Make a record of what you have been told, using the exact words if possible, as soon as possible and no later than 24 hours after the event;
* Report any concerns to the PI or team member with responsibility for safeguarding children or adult at risk within the research team or, if appropriate, to the member of staff of the host organisation with designated responsibility for safeguarding children/young person/adult at risk (see below);
* Do not confront the alleged abuser;
* If you require advice or support, contact the local duty team or NSPCC helpline (see *Supporting Compliance and Practice Guidance Note 1; Reporting Concerns* for reporting procedures). The need to seek advice however, should not delay any emergency action needed to protect a child. If you are unable to contact social services or your PI/line manager for advice, you should report your concerns to the police;
* All concerns reported to social services are taken seriously. It is better to have discussed it with an expert who has experience and responsibility to make an assessment;
* Make a note of the date, time, place and individuals who were present at the discussion.

2. **Specific Circumstances**

2.1 **Child/adult at risk discloses a safeguarding concern in a setting (e.g. school)**

If you have any reason for concern you must inform the project PI and the lead individual for adults/child protection/safeguarding within the setting (frequently the manager/ head teacher etc.). It is the responsibility of this lead individual to contact social services.

2.2 **Child/adult at risk discloses a safeguarding concern outside of a formal setting (within the home, community context etc.)**

If you have any reason for concern, these should be raised with the Principal Investigator/ person responsible for safeguarding children and adults at risk within the project, who should pass on these concerns to the local authority Social Services Duty Team (see *Supporting Compliance and Practice Guidance Note 1; Reporting Concerns*).

2.3 **Child/adult at risk raises a concern during a focus group/group discussion**

A child or adult at risk may choose to disclose concerns during a focus group or group discussion. In such circumstances, the limits of confidentiality should be restated to all members of the group. The researcher should make provision to speak with the child/adult at risk away from the group as soon as possible. If the child/vulnerable adult becomes distressed, it is best to terminate the group session and seek support from other staff. Follow-up will be as in 2.2) above.

2.4 **The child/young person/adult a risk is at immediate risk of harm**

In the event that the researcher suspects that the child /adult at risk is in immediate danger, the situation should be treated as an emergency. In such circumstances the researcher:

* should contact the Police (999) and inform the PI.
* should not, under any circumstances, confront or contact the accused, or talk to friends and/or family of the abused.

3. **Responsibilities of Principal Investigator**

3.1 **General Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator**

* The PI is responsible for ensuring that the researcher working with children, or adults at risk is familiar with appropriate safeguarding procedures and is equipped with appropriate knowledge and skills.
* The PI is responsible for ensuring that the researcher working directly with children, or adults at risk has an up-to-date DBS check where required.
* The PI should follow University procedures for communicating safeguarding issues to the appropriate authorities, whilst keeping the best interests of the child/ or adult at risk and the researcher as the primary focus.

3.2 **Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator in the event of a concern regarding the need to safeguard or protect a child/young person/adult at risk**

* The PI should contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer appointed to the activity whenever the alleged perpetrator or victim is a member of the University community or the abuse is alleged to have happened on University property. Allegations may also need to be raised with the relevant University Designated Officer (see appendix 1).
* A written referral to social services should be made as soon as a problem, suspicion or concern becomes apparent, and certainly within 24 hours.
* During office hours, referrals may be made by telephone to the local social services office. Outside of office hours, a referral should be made to the Emergency duty team.
* Social services should acknowledge the written referral within one working day of receiving it. Social services should be contacted again if a response has not been received within 3 working days (*Supporting Compliance and Practice Guidance Note 1; Reporting Concerns*).
* Any discussion about a child/or adult at risk’s welfare should be recorded in writing by the PI, including a note of the date and time, and details of the individuals participated in the discussion. These records will be the responsibility of the PI and should be kept in a confidential and secure manner.
* At the end of any discussion there should be clear agreement about what actions will be taken and by whom, with details disseminated to the relevant parties.
* If the decision by social services is that no further action is taken, this should be recorded in writing, including the reasons for that decision.
* It is important that any reasonable concerns are referred to social services, even if you think it may be unimportant or that the cultural context is not fully understood. The information provided could be crucial in a broader context.
* There is no restriction stated in the Data Protection Act or other legislation that prevents reasonable concerns being shared for the purpose of protecting children and adults at risk. Therefore, the facilitation of information-sharing during the enquiry is to be encouraged.

Wherever possible, consent should be obtained from an adult with capacity, but the public interest in safeguarding children and adults at risk always overrides the public interest in maintaining confidentiality or obtaining consent.

3.3Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that a Designated Safeguarding Officer (and deputy where required) is appointed to ensure all research work with children, young people and adults at risk is undertaken in compliance with these procedures and for ensuring that all staff and students undertaking research with children, young people, adults at risk receive appropriate child protection and safeguarding training and DBS checks, via their PIs/Centre Directors.

4. **Review of procedure**

The University’s Designated Officer shall ensure that this guidance note is compliant and consistent with the University’s Safeguarding Policy which shall be reviewed annually. Furthermore these procedures may be subject to review in response to any legal or other developments in this area.