

**Safeguarding Framework**

**Purpose**

The framework provides all members of the University’s community with guidance on their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. It describes the procedure that a member of staff should follow if they suspect a child, young person or vulnerable adult is experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, harm. It also sets out our approach to safeguarding the wider University community.

This document should be read in conjunction with the relevant policies that feed into and inform the safeguarding framework, including:

* Respect at Study and Work Policy
* Disclosure Scotland & Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Policy and Guidance
* Research and Innovation Code of Practice for the Protection of Children and Adults at Risk of Harm (Safeguarding)
* Ethics Policy
* The Prevent Duty
* Specialist operating area policies including Sport and the Faculty of Natural Sciences Kindergarten

**Context**

A significant minority of students enrolled at the University is under the age of 18.  The University’s staff and students may also engage with children, young people and vulnerable adults in the context of outreach, recruitment and voluntary activities, research, and through their professional roles in, for example, education or nursing.

All members of the University community are expected to adhere to the relevant codes of conduct in the course of their studies and/or professional activities, both on and off campus.

Additionally, all members of staff have the responsibility to report concerns of abuse and/or harm to the relevant channels.

Some members of staff are engaged for the majority of their time in caring for, supervising and advising children and/or vulnerable adults.  These staff are defined as undertaking work regulated under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 and are required to have PVG Scheme Membership. Students enrolled in certain courses of study are also required to obtain PVG Scheme membership.

**Scope**

The framework applies to all members of the University community who may come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults in the course of their duties or University-related activities. For these purposes, the University community is defined as employees, volunteers, agency staff, contractors and students.

It is based on the understanding that all University community are required to abide by the standards of behaviour set out in the Respect at Study and Work Policy.

The framework applies to all members of the University community on all campuses and in the course of all University duties on and off campus, including overseas.

University-related activities might include:

* Teaching
* Research
* Outreach, recruitment and other volunteering activities
* Supervising children, young people or vulnerable adults who are studying or on placement at the University
* Working with children, young people or vulnerable adults in the course of study or work placements organised by the University
* Participating in or running events taking place on University property
* Providing services such as those delivered by the University nursery

**Policy Statement**

The University is committed to providing a welcoming, inspiring and safe environment for all.  To meet its commitments to safeguarding, it will:

* Recruit staff and volunteers safely, taking up references and ensuring that those who carry out “regulated work” with children or “regulated work” with a protected adult as defined by the relevant act are members of the PVG Scheme.
* Ensure that students who are accepted onto relevant undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (i.e. Nursing and Education) obtain a satisfactory PVG Scheme membership.
* Provide clear and simple guidance for those who engage with children as volunteers or in support of the University’s outreach and recruitment activities.
* Ensure that staff and students understand their responsibilities and that they are aware of the procedure they should follow if they suspect a child, young person or vulnerable adult is experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, harm.
* Ensure that staff and students are trained appropriately and therefore able to discharge their safeguarding duties.
* Ensure that members of staff are aware of the required standards of conduct, as set out in the Respect at Study and Work Policy and when applicable refer matters to be considered under the Code of Student Discipline or staff Disciplinary Procedure.
* Work with relevant external authorities to prevent individuals from being drawn into potential extremism and terrorist activities.
* Develop and implement coherent, supportive and survivor-led polices regarding gender-based violence and sexual harassment.
* Ensure that the on-campus kindergarten is covered by a specialist, comprehensive safeguarding policy and procedure.
* Protect the welfare of adults who are unable to make decisions for themselves because of a mental disorder or an inability to communicate in accordance with provisions in the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000.
* Where necessary, report concerns to the relevant parties, involving parents/carers appropriately (see Appendix 2), with due regard to the relevant legislation, including:
	+ the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007), and
	+ the duty to prevent students from being drawn into terrorism described in Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015).

Where members of the University community are working, studying or participating in events within a partner setting (e.g. an external school), the partner’s Safeguarding (or equivalent) policy and reporting procedures should normally be followed.  However, if for any reason these prove to be ineffective, the University’s reporting procedure should be followed.

Members of the University community working overseas are required to follow the standard reporting procedures (see [Appendix 2](https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_624585_en.pdf)) if they suspect a child, young person or vulnerable adult is experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, harm.

**Introduction and Overview**

The protection of members of the University community from harm and abuse is a key priority for the University of Stirling. The University recognises its duty of care and is committed to providing a safe and protected environment for all its students and staff.

The University also recognises that within its diverse population there may be people who are vulnerable at any given time. This guidance document outlines the policy and support framework through which the commitment of the University in its obligation to protect children and vulnerable adults who are at risk of harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or discrimination is set out.

Vulnerable adults can be defined as persons over the age of 16 who have 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. It is reasonable for the University to assume that a student is a vulnerable adult when that student is unable to safeguard their personal welfare, property, or financial affairs or may be unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation and is in need of support or attention.

Under section 3 of the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, ‘Adults at risk’ are defined as adults over 16 years of age who:

* are unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests;
* are at risk of harm; and
* are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, that means an individual(s) are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected

All three elements of the definition must be met, and the presence of a particular condition does not automatically mean an adult is an ‘adult at risk’ or a ‘vulnerable adult’.

A person may have a disability, physical and/or mental health problem and be able to safeguard their well-being and interests. It is the whole of an adult’s particular circumstances which can combine to make them more vulnerable to harm than others.

It is recognised that members of the University community may come into contact with or have oversight of children and vulnerable adults, including: students either whilst studying or on placement; contact through the University’s range of student services or other University facilities (e.g. accommodation, catering or sports etc.); summer schools and other recruitment or widening participation activities; field trips; outreach activities; events taking place on University property.

The policies, procedures and support arrangements which protect and safeguard the University community and particularly children and vulnerable adults from harm and abuse are outlined below.

These policies, procedures and arrangements provide a framework which aims to:

* promote a culture of safeguarding, by ‘protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect’;
* aid protection through disclosure (criminal records) checks of staff, appropriate to the legal context that determines who can have disclosure and PVG (Protection of Vulnerable Groups) checks;
* identify designated persons with responsibility for children and vulnerable adult protection;
* promote a culture in which signs of possible harm, mistreatment, or neglect are recognised and appropriately acted upon;
* provide clarity of procedure for those involved, including reporting concerns, recording and communicating information, data protection, risk assessment and confidentiality;
* promote positive collaborative working within the University and with any external agencies involved e.g. Police Scotland, Local Authority or Health and Social Care where necessary; and
* ensure anyone involved in an abuse case is supported appropriately.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

All members of the University community have an essential role to play in ensuring that children and vulnerable adults are protected.

**All members of staff:** Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone.  All members of staff who come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults are in positions of trust and have a duty of care to act if there is a cause for concern.  All members of staff should therefore:

* Participate in appropriate safeguarding training as mandated by the University
* Understand what constitutes abuse and how it may be recognised
* Listen carefully to children, young people and vulnerable adults, who may be trying to voice concerns
* Take action in consultation with the University’s Safeguarding Officer(s) where there is cause for concern (noting that acting within the scope of this Framework over-rides the University’s usual obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation)
* Consult and take advice from the University’s designated lead for Prevent where they believe that an individual may be at risk of being drawn into terrorism
* At all times, treat others with dignity and respect, as required by the University’s Respect at Study and Work policy

It is not the responsibility of a member of staff to investigate, make judgements or provide a response on safeguarding matters, but to follow the Reporting Procedure (see Appendix 2) if they believe there is cause for concern.

**All students:** Safeguarding is also the responsibility of students on degrees where they will come into contact with children and vulnerable adults (i.e. Nursing and Education). All students are required to follow the Reporting Procedure if they believe there is cause for concern.

**The members of staff listed below are the University’s Safeguarding Officers.**  The role of these members of staff is to:

* Undertake appropriate safeguarding training as mandated by the University
* Offer an initial point of contact, should any student or member of staff have any concerns relating to safeguarding
* Enable staff and students to meet their responsibilities towards safeguarding as expressed within this framework
* Maintain an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding and oversee the provision of training to others as necessary
* Ensure the University meets its reporting requirement to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) under the ‘Notifiable Events Scheme’, by reporting any significant incidents.

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| --- | --- |
| Lead Officer, Safeguarding | Deputy Secretary and Executive Director of Student, Academic and Corporate Services |
| Lead Officer, Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme | Executive Director, HR&OD |
| Deputy Lead Safeguarding Officer (Students) | Director of Student Support Services  |
| Deputy Lead Safeguarding Officer (Prevent) | Deputy Head of Student Support Services  |
| Deputy Lead Safeguarding Officer (Research) | Head of Research Development & Performance |
| Deputy Lead Officer, Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme | Head of HR Business Partnering |

**SUPPORTING FRAMEWORK**

**Expectations of Conduct, Raising Concerns and Sanctions for Misconduct**

As part of our commitment to the student experience, the University aims to create a community that is based on support, transparency, and a culture of respect for equality and diversity. In line with this, we expect that as a student will conduct themselves in a way that is consistently appropriate within the University community, and in terms of the Student Charter.

The [Charter](https://www.stir.ac.uk/study/important-information-for-applicants/student-code/) is designed to ensure that students are well informed about their responsibilities as a student of the University of Stirling, and applies to all students, and across both physical and virtual environments. In enrolling at the University, students are required to agree to abide by the Charter.

The Students’ Union also has a range of policies in place that relate to student conduct, and specifically to discipline. These can be [accessed on the Students' Union website.](http://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/aboutus/governanceandplanning/)

Any conduct which does not align with the Student Charter will be taken seriously by the University and that action may be instigated as a result in line with [Ordinance 2 Code of Student Discipline](https://www.stir.ac.uk/media/stirling/services/policy-and-planning/university-calendar/2-ordinances-code-of-student-discipline.docx) and/or the University’s [Policy and Procedure on Fitness to Study](https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/student-academic-and-corporate-services/academic-registry/academic-policy-and-practice/quality-handbook/policy-and-procedure-on-fitness-to-study/).

The University recognises that it is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that acceptable levels of conduct, behaviour and performance are maintained at all times. Our procedure, [Ordinance 68 – University Staff](https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/student-academic-and-corporate-services/policy-and-planning/legal-compliance/publicationscheme/8-9-human-resources/), intended to address situations where the conduct or behaviour of an employee falls below acceptable standards.

The University is committed to developing and maintaining an environment in which all employees, students and visitors can experience university life free from any form of bullying, harassment or victimisation. The University is committed to dealing quickly and efficiently with any incidents that arise. All members of the University community are entitled to be treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

Any incidents of bullying, harassment or victimisation will be regarded extremely seriously and will result in formal action, including the issuing of disciplinary sanctions, being taken under the relevant employee or student procedures.

The informal and formal mechanisms and support which are available to employees and students if they perceive that they have been harassed, bullied or victimised are set out in the University’s [Respect at Work and Study Policy](https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/student-academic-and-corporate-services/policy-and-planning/legal-compliance/publicationscheme/8-9-human-resources/)

A student who wishes to make a formal complaint against another student or employee, should follow the University of Stirling Complaints Handling Procedure. This is available on the University website at [www.stir.ac.uk/complaints](http://www.stir.ac.uk/complaints)

An employee can take forward a complaint about bullying, harassment or victimisation from another employee through the [Grievance Procedure](https://www.stir.ac.uk/media/stirling/services/internal/hr/documents-moved/Grievance-Procedure.doc) (Ordinance 68, Part II, Schedule III) which will be used to deal with the complaint through the initial and appeal stages.

An employee can take forward a complaint about bullying, harassment or victimisation by a student by submitting a complaint in line with the Code of Student Discipline.

Allegations of bullying or harassment against an employee will be investigated fully. If the allegations are upheld, the employee will be subject to disciplinary action, as set out in the [Disciplinary Policy](https://www.stir.ac.uk/internal-staff/human-resources-and-organisation-development/policies-and-guidance/#panel13622-2) (Ordinance 68, Part II, Schedule II).

Complaints against external contractors, consultants and visitors from students will be dealt with under the University Complaints Handling Procedure

Concerns may also be raised informally and support and guidance sought through disclosure to University staff with a pastoral support role for example Personal Development Tutors, student support services or Report and Support.

**Student Support and Wellbeing**

Students have access to a range of University support services which includes:

* Mental health, wellbeing and counselling services
* Money support – money advice, discretionary and assistance funds
* Accessibility and Inclusion services - offering support for anyone with physical and mobility difficulties, sensory impairments, mental health conditions and learning difficulties such as dyslexia.
* Chaplaincy - open to students of all faiths and none. It celebrates the wealth of nationalities, cultures and beliefs represented here at the University of Stirling and is a place to find an understanding ear and a friendly face.
* Personal Development Tutors who have a pastoral role and to advise students of the relevant support services available to them. Further information about the role of personal development tutors [here](https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/student-academic-and-corporate-services/academic-registry/personal-tutor-scheme/). The [Personal Development Tutor Code of Practice](https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/student-academic-and-corporate-services/academic-registry/adviser-of-studies-scheme/code-of-practice/) sets out procedures for providing support and guidance to all taught students (undergraduate and postgraduate).
* Access to Sexual Violence and Misconduct Liason Officers. Further information can be found [here](https://www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing/student-support-services/sexual-violence/i-have-been-affected-by-sexual-or-gender-based-violence/talk-to-someone/university-sexual-violence-and-misconduct-liaison-officers/).
* Advocacy and support can also be accessed through the University of Stirling Students’ Union [here](https://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/representation/studentsupport/)

Further information about these support services can be found [here](https://www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing/student-support-services/).

Staff working within Student Wellbeing and Inclusion, in particular in the Counselling and Mental Wellbeing team are experienced in responding to safeguarding issues either raised directly by students themselves or as a result of concerns raised by other members of the University community. Using a risk-based approach students will be offered a range of support and if necessary referral out to other recognised professional sources of support. On occasion, in response to assessed risk issues, for example where concerns include issues relating to children and/or vulnerable adults, other external agencies will be contacted by the service on behalf of the University.

In addition the University has established [Report and Support](https://reportandsupport.stir.ac.uk/) – primarily a route to report an incident of gender based violence, sexual violence, harassment or abuse and find out how to access support.

**Training for staff**

There is a wide range of [training available](https://www.stir.ac.uk/internal-staff/supporting-our-students) in support of the University’s aims to provide a supportive and safe environment and to ensure that it delivers its duty of care to students.

A range of training is also offered to staff fulfilling key roles in relation to student safeguarding and related aspects of duty of care. This includes Prevent training, mental health first aid training; mental health awareness training for managers and staff; training in receiving a disclosure of sexual violence; and a wider range of mandatory Health and Safety training.

**Criminal Conviction Disclosure & Protection of Vulnerable Groups**

The University is committed to providing a safe and protected environment for its staff and students at all times. We comply fully with the relevant legislation and statutory guidance to ensure that, where relevant, applicants, students, employees and students are members of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme (the PVG Scheme) which has been introduced by the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007.

Staff who carry out ‘regulated work’ with children and/or ‘regulated work’ with a ‘protected adult’ under the 2007 Act are required to be members of the [PVG Scheme](https://www.stir.ac.uk/study/important-information-for-applicants/guidance-and-advice-on-criminal-convictions-and-protection-of-vulnerable-groups-scheme-membership-for-applicants/). This protocol also covers PVG scheme membership for research that may involve children/vulnerable adults; children on work experience; summer school working; activities in school and nurseries etc. These measures are contained within the University’s [Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy](https://www.stir.ac.uk/media/stirling/services/internal/hr/documents-moved/PVG.docx).

**Students on Placements and Studying Abroad**

The University will work with partners to ensure that processes are in place to secure the welfare of students on work placements or engaged in an international study opportunity. This will be documented in relevant agreements with partner institutions.

**Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing**

The University is committed to investing in the mental health and wellbeing of our community. We recognise the vital role our employees play in the success of the University. We take a proactive and supportive approach to keeping staff well.

Further information and resources and information about how the University supports staff, including support services, policies and health and safety in the work environment can be found [here](https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/human-resources-and-organisation-development/working-at-stirling/staff-mental-health-and-wellbeing/).

**Research Ethics and Integrity**

**The University of Stirling is committed to the highest possible ethical standards. We promote a culture of best practice and integrity in all our research through the core values of honesty, rigour, open communication, care, and respect. To safeguard the interests of researchers, participants and funding bodies, research within the University only proceeds after strict scrutiny by one of our three internal** [Research Ethics Panels](https://www.stir.ac.uk/research/research-ethics-and-integrity/)**.**

More can be read about the research values we hold to in [The Concordat to Support Research Integrity.](https://stir.sharepoint.com/%3Ab%3A/s/ResearchIntegrityandGovernance/EadpMhHrcxBLq6OgmuWDJyEBBXfePGj66wp26emrSFxxAw?e=9BsvCz)

In addition, the Research and Innovation Code of Practice for the Protection of Children and Adults at Risk of Harm (Safeguarding) sets out the commitment of the University to promote safe research and innovation environments and to protect children and adults at risk of harm where they may come into contact with the University community through research and innovation activities.

**Freedom to Speak Up - Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing Policy)**

The University is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. The [Raising Concerns](https://www.stir.ac.uk/media/stirling/services/policy-and-planning/documents/FreedomtoSpeakUp-Whistleblowing.pdf) policy is designed to encourage staff and other members of the University to speak up if they have any concerns at work as this will help the University to address any issues, improve the way we operate and the services we provide to students and other stakeholders. The guidance is designed to give reassurance to staff that they should not feel worried or concerned about speaking up or raising concerns.

**Protection of Health & Safety**

The University is committed to ensuring the health and safety of staff, students, visitors and contractors by taking all reasonable steps to provide and maintain a safe work and study environment. Essential information on the University's Safety Policy, Safety arrangements and Emergency Procedures are contained in the booklets and links [here](https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/estates-and-campus-services/safety-environment-and-continuity/safety/).

**Prevent Duty**

**UK universities have a statutory duty, along with all other public bodies in the UK, in terms of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, ‘to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’.**

Within universities, the term ‘Prevent’ refers to measures taken to safeguard members of the university community who might be at risk of being drawn into terrorism.

The University of Stirling has established a [University Prevent Strategic Group](https://www.stir.ac.uk/internal-staff/safe-campus/prevent/), which has responsibility to ensure the University addresses its statutory duty.

**Appendix 1 – Useful definitions**

**Disclosure Scotland**

This statutory body helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children.  It supports the implementation and management of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 (PVG).

**Children or young person**

This applies to a person who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.  In legislation and guidance ‘child’ typically refers to those under the age of 18 who are still in full-time education and ‘young person’ refers to those under the age of 18 who have left full-time education.

**Vulnerable Adult**

The University considers any person to be vulnerable if they need additional protection or input to enable them to achieve their full potential.  An individual’s vulnerability can vary depending on the activity being carried out and the people that are present.  Some of the groups the University deems to be vulnerable include, but are not limited to:

* Students with experience of care
* Young carers
* Students with disabilities, where they have specific support needs and as a result of those needs are unable to protect themselves against the risk of abuse or harm
* Students who are, or have been, subject to abuse
* Students who are estranged and studying without family support
* Students who are suffering from significant mental health issues
* Students with refugee status
* Students with recent criminal offences
* Researchers and research participants working or living in potentially hazardous locations including Official Development Assistance countries

**Safeguarding**

This is the term used to promote the welfare and protection from harm of children, young people and vulnerable adults.  This term is broader than ‘child protection’ which refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering significant harm.  Safeguarding, in addition to child protection, also encompasses protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children’s health and ensuring children grow up in a safe environment.

**Abuse**

This is a violation of human and civil rights by another person.  It may be planned or unplanned and consist of a single act or repeated acts.  Abuse can take many forms and includes but is not limited to:

* Physical abuse
* Sexual abuse
* Emotional abuse
* Neglect
* Discriminatory abuse
* Online abuse

**Appendix 2 – Reporting procedure and recommended behaviour when handling a safeguarding issue**

Any issues, suspicions and allegations involving harm to children or protected adults should be referred to the appropriate designated lead officer, who will assess the information and determine what action, if any, must be taken and that suitable steps are taken as a result of any investigations, which may include contacting the police and/or fulfilling the legal duty to refer information to the PVG Scheme, as required.

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult makes a disclosure to you, it is important to:

* Take everything that is said seriously
* Remain calm and listen carefully
* Reassure the person that they have done the right thing by disclosing
* Explain to the person what you will do next and who you will need to inform.

It is important NOT to:

* Ignore the disclosure
* Panic
* Question the individual further (but if necessary, you may seek to clarify what has been disclosed using open questions)
* Make any promises of confidentiality
* Assume anything or elaborate in your notes
* Investigate, make judgements or provide a response.

The steps that should be taken if, as a member of staff of the University, you have concerns that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, harm.

1. You should ensure the immediate safety of the person in question (e.g. is emergency accommodation needed?)
2. You should write down all the details relating to the concern. If applicable, this should include the date, time and place the conversation took place and what the child/vulnerable adult said in as much detail as possible\*
3. You should inform the child/vulnerable adult that you need to pass the information on but that only those that need to know about it will be told.
4. You should then report the above to the University’s Lead Safeguarding Officer as soon as you are able to.
5. Where appropriate\*\*, the Lead Safeguarding Officer will then:
* Make a referral to the local Social Care Services
* Contact the police
* Take steps to initiate the appropriate staff or student disciplinary procedure
* Consult with relevant colleagues

\* Notes taken at the time of concern should only be retained until the case has been referred to the Lead Safeguarding Officer; once this has been done, notes should be destroyed

\*\*The University will only refer on to external bodies or authorities, where it is deemed necessary by the Safeguarding Officer for reasons of safety or public interest, or where there is a legal obligation to do so.