

## **Child Protection Policy**

<b>Name of regulation :</b>	<b>Child Protection Policy</b>
<b>Purpose of regulation :</b>	<b>To inform University staff of their responsibilities when working with children</b>
<b>Approval for this regulation given by :</b>	<b>Executive</b>
<b>Responsibility for its update :</b>	<b>Dean of Students and Academic Registrar</b>
<b>Regulation applies to :</b>	<b>University staff who work with children</b>
<b>Date of Approval :</b>	<b>27 June 2007</b>
<b>Proposed Date of Review :</b>	<b>May 2008</b>

## **Introduction**

- A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).
- For the purpose of this policy document
  - The term 'child' will be used to describe all children and young people under the age of 18 years old participating in University led activities.
  - The term 'staff' will be used to describe those employed on a contract of employment at Staffordshire University including those on working on a voluntary/unpaid basis.
- Staff should implement this policy using the following guidelines when conducting work that involves children. This will protect the safety and well-being of children engaging with the University and that of our own staff.
- For all activity and events involving children at Staffordshire University, at least one member of staff should lead on child protection, raising awareness of this policy and its guidelines among other staff and where appropriate the children, accompanying school/care staff and parents.

- Where staff are likely to engage with a child on a one-to-one basis, it is imperative that he/she is appropriately child protection trained.
- The “Lead member of staff” referred to in this Policy is the Dean of Students and Academic Registrar, or, in her absence, the University Secretary.
- The University’s Counselling Service works to a separate professional code of practice which aligns with this policy.

### **Children’s Rights**

All children have needs and rights:

- The need for physical care and attention
- The need for intellectual stimulation
- The need for emotional love and security
- The need for social contact and relationships
- The right to have their needs met and safeguarded
- The right to be protected from neglect, abuse and exploitation
- The right to be protected from discrimination
- The right to be treated as an individual

### **Staffordshire University Child Protection Policy**

In our provision for children Staffordshire University will ensure that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- All staff have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate child protection lead member of staff.

### **Policy statement**

Staffordshire University staff have a professional duty to take such steps that, in the circumstances of an educational institution, are reasonable to see that the child is safe from harm while involved in University activities. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. Staffordshire University will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in its activities through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines it has adopted.

### ***Policy aims***

The aim of the Staffordshire University Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst visiting/ in the care of the University
- Allow all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

## ***Policy implementation***

The Staffordshire University Child Protection Policy will be implemented by adhering to the policy guidelines contained within this document. All staff who work with children must comply with this Policy in conjunction with the University's Code of Conduct, failing which disciplinary action may be taken under the University's Disciplinary Procedure.

The guidelines cover three main areas:

- Staff recruitment, support and training
- Staff conduct
- Child protection procedures

### **Staff recruitment, support and training**

For staff working with children at Staffordshire University safe recruitment will be ensured by checking their suitability to work with children (those recruited to work with children may be existing staff):

- At initial recruitment to Staffordshire University an application form is completed. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past.
- Pre-activity training (responsibility of department organising/conducting activity) including,
  - The activity requirements and responsibilities clarified.
  - Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified.
  - Staff sign up to the University's Code of Conduct for staff and the Child Protection Policy.
- Staff are selected on their suitability for the activity requirements and responsibilities and their ability to demonstrate that they can work safely with children (as determined by the application form and pre-activity training).

Where staff will take significant responsibility for safeguarding children during University activities (where parents and/or children's school teachers are not present and therefore taking the significant responsibility) they will also be required to complete a Criminal Record Bureau Check (CRB check).

All appropriate staff will receive a copy of the Staffordshire University Child Protection Policy from their Dean of Faculty/School or Director of Service. A copy will also be available on the University's website.

Awareness of child protection issues will continue to be addressed through on-going training.

## **Staff Conduct**

### **Good practice guidelines**

All staff should demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from allegations of misconduct. Staff should maintain their standards of behaviour therefore acting as a role model.

The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice means:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets). Never allow yourself to be left alone with a participant. There may be rare occasions when a confidential interview or a one-to-one meeting is necessary and in such circumstances, the interview should be conducted in a room with an open door or visual access. Where this is not possible, the member of staff should ensure that there is another adult nearby. Never make gratuitous physical contact with a participant. [There may be occasions where a distressed participant needs comfort which may include physical comforting and staff should use their discretion to ensure that it is appropriate and not unnecessary or unjustified contact. ]Be cautious about physical contact in games. Where physical contact is inescapable (e.g. to demonstrate equipment or a particular exercise/move) staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should take place and of the possibility for misinterpretation of such contact.
- Treat all children equally, and with respect and dignity. Staffordshire University will take positive action to eliminate discrimination against any person or group of people. Staff should ensure that children are protected from discrimination on any grounds, including ability and challenge discriminating comments and behaviour. Activities should be designed to include all children and to promote positive attitudes towards differences.
- Be clear about what the objectives of the activity are before it begins and always put the welfare of each child first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Never contradict an instruction given by a tutor/ project manager or other member of staff
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with children (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them during residential activities).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Ensuring that if children of mixed genders are to be supervised, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- Ensuring that at residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms (unless it is essential because a child is ill and in these circumstances, adopt the procedures set out above in relation to private interviews). Staff should never invite children into their rooms.
- Conducting yourself in a manner that sets a good example to the participants. Be an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of/whilst responsible for children.

- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Never using physical force against a participant, unless it constitutes reasonable restraint to protect him/her or another person or to protect property. If it is necessary to restrain a participant because they are an immediate danger to themselves or others or to property then the minimum amount of force should be used for the shortest amount of time. Remain calm and get the attention and support of other staff. The incident should be recorded in writing, with a witness statement (where possible), immediately afterwards.
- Never using physical punishment
- Securing parental consent in writing (example form is attached) if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment where the participant is under 16. First aid given should be recorded in writing and reported to the lead member of staff who will inform the parent or carer.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent (example form is attached) if staff are required to transport young people in their cars.
- Always refer any problems to the child protection lead member of staff.
- Question any unknown adult who enters the University's premises and/or who attempts to engage with the children.

Practices never to be sanctioned:

- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Sharing a room with a child
- Engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Children's inappropriate use of language and/or behaviour. This should always be challenged.<sup>1</sup>
- Sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves (e.g. apply sunscreen).<sup>2</sup>
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home or arrange meetings off-campus.

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<sup>1</sup> Challenging Behaviour: 'Bad' behaviour is often a response to a situation, or a way to seek attention. If children are occupied there will be less of a need to seek attention and less of a chance for boredom to set in.

The following guidelines can be used to deal with challenging behaviour constructively:

- Be aware of what unacceptable behaviour is. Ask your lead member of staff if you are unsure. Children attending certain activities will have been issued with a code of conduct.
- Explain to children why certain behaviour is unacceptable. This makes children feel responsible for their behaviour and they are less likely to repeat it.
- Make sure it is the behaviour which is punished and not the person. Always avoid labelling someone as 'bad'.
- If appropriate ignore the bad behaviour for a while – a child may only be attention seeking.

<sup>2</sup> It may sometimes be necessary for staff to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

## **Use of photographic/filming equipment**

Written consent to take and use images of children should be obtained prior to the taking of photographs and/or video footage. Parents should be made aware of when, where and how the images may be used in order to give their informed consent. This includes comprehensive information regarding use of images e.g. in print, multi-media, broadcast; for what purpose e.g. promotion, publicity, evaluation, audit, review; and where possible an indication of who the audience will be e.g. the general public, the participating children and their families, other organisations and institutes.

## **Child Protection Procedures**

Staffordshire University will follow the procedures set out by the Area Child Protection Committee (Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire) to:

- Ensure we have a lead member of staff for child protection who has received appropriate training and support for this role.
- Ensure every member of staff knows the name of the lead staff member responsible for child protection and their role.
- Ensure all staff understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and responsibility for referring any concerns to the lead staff member. However, staff should remember that they are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred.
- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the University and staff for child protection by setting out its obligations on the University website and supporting documentation available from the University.
- Develop effective links with relevant agencies and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters including attendance at case conferences.
- Keep written records of concerns about children, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately. Ensure all records are kept securely in locked locations.
- Develop and then follow procedures where an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer.
- Adopt a procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse.

## **What is abuse?**

**Child Abuse** *A term to describe a range of ways in which people, usually adults, harm children. Often the adult is a person who is known and trusted by the child.*

*Child abuse is neglect, physical injury, sexual abuse or emotional abuse inflicted or knowingly not prevented, which causes significant harm or death.*

NSPCC (1999)

## **Awareness of actual or likely occurrence of abuse**

There are a number of ways in which abuse becomes apparent:

- A child discloses abuse.
- Someone else discloses that a child has told him/her or that he/she strongly believes a child has been or is being abused.
- A child may show signs of physical injury for which there appears to be no satisfactory explanation.
- A child's behaviour may indicate that it is likely that he/she is being abused.
- A member of staff's behaviour or in the way in which he/she relates to a child causes concern.

## **Issues of Disclosure**

Becoming aware of abuse can cause a multitude of emotional reactions, which are personal to each individual. Whatever the reaction and however the abuse has become apparent, actual or suspected, it must be responded to in the correct manner according to the procedure outlined here. Even if the truth of the disclosure is uncertain – an appropriate response has to be made. A response in accordance with the procedure outlined here will be supported by the lead member of staff and ultimately Staffordshire University.

## What to do upon suspicion or disclosure

There are some basic principles in reacting to suspicions, allegations, and/or disclosures.

<b>What to do</b>	<b>What not to do</b>
Stay calm	Don't panic. Don't over-react. It is extremely unlikely that the participant is in immediate danger.
Listen, hear and believe	Don't probe for more information. Questioning the participant may affect how the participant's disclosure is received at a later date.
Give time to the person to say what they want	Don't make assumptions, don't paraphrase and don't offer alternative explanations
Reassure & explain that they have done the right thing in telling. Explain that only those professionals who need to know will be informed	Don't promise confidentiality to keep secrets or that everything will be OK (it might not)
Act immediately in accordance with the procedure in this policy	Don't try to deal with it yourself
Record in writing as near as verbatim as possible what was said as soon as possible	Don't make negative comments about the alleged abuser
Report to the lead member of staff	Don't 'gossip' with colleagues about what has been said to you
Record your report	Don't make a child repeat a story unnecessarily

It is the duty of anyone who works with children to report disclosure of abuse. It is not for staff to decide whether or not a suspicion or allegation is true. All suspicions or allegations must be taken seriously and dealt with according to this procedure.

## **Responsibility**

Staff made aware of suspicions, allegations or actual abuse, **are responsible to take the appropriate action according to this procedure** .

- The primary responsibility of the person who first suspects or who is told of abuse is to report it and to ensure that their concern is taken seriously whilst adhering to the dos and don'ts above.
- The incident should be reported immediately to the lead member of staff who is then responsible for dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse.

Staff should never **try to deal with a suspicion, allegation or actual incident of abuse by him/herself**.

## **Reporting suspected, alleged, or actual incidents of abuse**

It may sometimes be difficult to accept that something that has been disclosed in confidence by a child or anyone else should be passed on to a colleague. But the welfare of a child must be paramount and you therefore have a duty to report suspicions, allegations or actual incidents to the designated member of staff.

Information should also be reported if you yourself have concerns that a child may be suffering harm or at risk of abuse, even if you are unsure about your suspicions.

Once this initial report has been made, the lead member of staff will consult with the relevant statutory agencies.

- Stoke-on-Trent Social Services Emergency Duty Team
- Staffordshire Social Services Emergency Duty Team
- Child Protection Unit
- NSPCC Child Protection Helpline 0800 800 500

The following information may be required:

- Staff name, address, telephone number, position/role within the University.
- As many details about the child as possible, e.g. name, date of birth, address, home telephone number, school.
- What the reasons are for telephoning, e.g. the suspicions, allegations, what has been said, giving details of times and dates and the child's emotional state, or what the child has said in response to the suspicions/concerns. Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- What's been done so far.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

The relevant statutory agency will then give instructions as to what to do next and take the responsibility for further action.

## **Statutory Child Protection Procedures**

What happens next is entirely up to the relevant statutory agency, usually Social Services.

Enough information passed onto the agency may lead to the suspicion, allegation or actual incident, being dealt with quickly with few complications, or it may lead to thorough checks with several other organisations and possibly a child protection conference.

A child protection conference involves as many people as possible, (including the parents/carers and sometimes the child as well), who discuss the issues that have been raised in the suspicions, allegations, or actual abuse that has been reported and investigated. Decisions about what will happen next are made at the conference.

Quite often, the person who has made the initial report may not be contacted again unless further information is required and it is not usual practice for the relevant statutory agency to feedback developments. However, if you feel that not enough action has been taken, and the child is still at risk, concerns should be reported again or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline contacted for advice.

## **Recording suspected or actual incidents**

No matter what happens to a suspicion, allegation or actual incident of abuse, (that is whether or not it is processed through a statutory agency or not), all details must be recorded.

Important information to record includes:

- The date and time of disclosure, suspicion, allegation or actual abuse incident.
- Details given to you about the above, e.g. date & time of when things occurred.
- An indication of the parties involved.
- Details of what action you and the University have taken.
- Details of reporting on, e.g. who to (statutory agency) and when.

If for any reason it is decided not to consult with a relevant statutory agency, a full explanation of why must be documented.

Recording should be factual, that is no reference made to your own subjective opinions.

Records should be kept completely confidential and secure (always locked away) and only shared with those who need to know about the suspicion, allegation or actual incident of abuse.

**Staffordshire University's commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of gender-neutral language, jargon-free plain English, recognition of the needs of disabled people, promotion of the positive duty in relation to race and disability and avoidance of stereotypes. This document is available in alternative formats on request. If you think we can improve the fairness of this policy, please contact the individual who has responsibility for its update.**