



GUIDANCE

Responding to allegations of abuse and neglect (children and vulnerable adults)

Contact Officer

Director of HR – Safeguarding Officer/Lead and advice and guidance for staff
Provost – Safeguarding Officer/Lead and advice and guidance for students

Purpose

This guidance is designed to support and advise staff and students on how to respond to allegations of abuse or neglect in relation to children or vulnerable adults as defined in the University's Policy for Safeguarding ("the Safeguarding Policy").

Allegations relating to Domestic Abuse are to be handled separately – details are contained within the Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence and Stalking Policy.

This guidance must be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy and any concerns relating to abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult at the University should be reported in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy.

Guidance

1. All University members (ie. staff and students) must be alert to the possibility that the children and vulnerable adults they are working with may have been, or may be, at risk of neglect or being abused. All complaints or allegations of abuse or neglect must be taken seriously and dealt with in accordance with the following guidance and the Safeguarding Policy.
2. Reference should also be usefully made of the Department for Education's [Guidance on Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 \(updated in June 2025\)](#).
3. If a University member has a suspicion that a child or vulnerable adult at the University is being abused or neglected (see definitions in Appendix 1) they should follow the reporting procedure as set out in the Safeguarding Policy. This should be done immediately without awaiting confirmation of concerns.
4. If a University member receives from a child or vulnerable adult an allegation that they or another child or vulnerable adult is being, has been, or is at risk of abuse or neglect they should:
 - a. Listen carefully and stay calm.
 - b. Ensure that they do not interview the child or vulnerable adult. However, if necessary, they may seek to clarify, using open questions and without putting words into their mouth, in order to be sure that they understand what the child or vulnerable adult is telling them



5. Reassure the child or vulnerable adult that by telling them, they have done the right thing.
6. Inform the child or vulnerable adult that they must pass the information on, but that only those that need to know about it will be told.
7. Inform the child or vulnerable adult to whom they will report the matter.
8. Make a detailed note of the date, time, place, what was said to have happened and the questions asked etc. A proforma is provided to assist with this record (see Appendix 2).
9. A report should then be made in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy.
10. On receipt of a report of an allegation of abuse in relation to a child or vulnerable adult (which may be contemporary or historical) by a University member in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy, the University Safeguarding Lead for Staff or Students will discuss the detail with the person reporting. The University may refer concerns that children on University premises might be at risk of significant harm to Worcestershire Children First and/or the Police. Concerns that vulnerable adults might be at risk may be referred to [Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board](#). In any such cases, referrals to external bodies should only be made by the Safeguarding Lead or nominee. In exceptional circumstances, such as when the matter is of extremely high urgency due to significant risk of harm, the Safeguarding Lead can immediately refer to the matter to Children and Young People's Services/the Safeguarding Adults Board and/or the Police.
11. Where an allegation of abuse is received by the University concerning a University member, the University Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy) will normally consult with the Chair of the University Safeguarding Committee and other Senior Staff who will, if appropriate, decide on any referrals that need to be made. At this point appropriate staff or student disciplinary procedures may be initiated.

The following appendices are attached:

Appendix 1: Definitions of Abuse and Neglect

Appendix 2: Proforma for managing allegations of abuse or neglect

Related Policies / Procedures

University Policy for Safeguarding

Date Originally Approved	<i>March 2013</i>
Date of Last Review	<i>May 2025</i>
Date for Next Review	<i>April 2028</i>
Approval Authority	<i>University Safeguarding Committee</i>



Appendix 1

DEFINITIONS

Abuse

A form of maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child or vulnerable adult by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse. Children and vulnerable adults may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children and vulnerable adults may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or vulnerable adult. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child or vulnerable adult.

Child Neglect

Child neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food and clothing, shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child or vulnerable adult is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does

not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the person's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying) causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult, though it may occur alone.

Child criminal exploitation

Child criminal exploitation is where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

County lines

County line is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.



Appendix 2

**SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES
Record of Concerns**

Name of Subject:

Address:

Telephone No:

Parent/Guardian/Carer details:

Name(s):

Telephone No(s):

What is said to have happened or what was seen?

When and where did it occur?

Who else, if anyone, was involved and how?



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What was said by those involved?

Were there any obvious signs e.g., bruising, bleeding, changed behaviour?

Was the child/vulnerable adult able to say what happened, if so, how did they describe it?



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You should now following the procedure in the Safeguarding Policy and send this form to the University Safeguarding Lead for Students (currently the Head of School of Education) or the University Safeguarding Lead for Staff (currently the Director of HR) by emailing it to safeguarding@worc.ac.uk

Signed

Date

Action taken by University Safeguarding Lead

Signed by the University Safeguarding Lead:

Date: