

# University Policy for Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk

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## 1. Policy purpose

1.1 The University regularly invites children and young people, and potentially “Adults at Risk” to access its facilities and services for a wide variety of purposes. Examples include outreach activities, school visits, residential, hosting of work-experience placements and Open Days. There are also a small number of undergraduates who start studies at the beginning of an academic year who are under 18 and specific areas of the University (such as research groups and the Nursery, etc.) who have a very specific relationship with children and young people and possibly Adults at Risk. This policy also extends to students who may work with children and Adults at Risk for specific reasons such as a research project or volunteering. Many of these activities, involving University members of staff working with children and Adults at Risk, are away from parent/guardian and/or teacher supervision.

1.2 This policy is separate to that of individual departmental policies, such as the Nursery or the School of Education, but is intended to be an overarching set of procedures so that all staff across the University, who might be working with children and Adults at Risk as a regular part of their normal duties, know how to respond if a child/young person or Adult at Risk discloses abuse and/or shows signs of such. Even if you do not work with children and Adults at Risk; all staff members have a responsibility towards their safeguarding.

1.3 This policy also considers some of the additional safeguarding measures that the University will put in place to support Adults at Risk. The University defines an Adult at Risk, in line with the Care Act 2014, as a person aged 18 years or older, who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

1.4 The University draws a specific distinction between an Adult at Risk and an adult who may be vulnerable at any given point during their studies at the University. Students who are deemed to be vulnerable at any given point have a range of [support services](#) and structures available to them and are not considered under this policy, unless they subsequently become classified as an Adult at Risk.

1.5 An individual may become classified as an Adult at Risk at any point during their studies and a classification is not necessarily permanent for the duration of study.

1.6 Appendix 6 details a process for the decision making process involved in classifying an individual as an Adult at Risk.

## 2. Principles

2.1 Oxford Brookes University recognises its responsibility for the safeguarding of children and Adults at Risk . It is recognised also that Oxford Brookes University has a general duty of care to provide a safe environment for all those working and studying at the University as well as those who visit the campus.

2.2 Other than specific areas of the University that are expressly identified (e.g. the Nursery) it is not intended that any staff have responsibility for providing care or support for children and Adults at Risk .

2.3 Training and designating specific persons to fill bespoke roles surrounding child safeguarding will enable this policy. Wider awareness raising for all relevant staff will also be provided.

2.4 For the purpose of this policy, the terms 'child', 'young person' or 'young people' is to refer to a person or persons under the age of 18 (The Children Act, 1989).

2.5 The term 'staff' used in this policy refers to staff, students and volunteers within the University.

## 3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all staff and includes any activity involving children and Adults at Risk.

3.2 The University recognises that staff members who work regularly with children and Adults at Risk are best placed to notice changes in behaviour and/or physical injuries. Oxford Brookes staff will therefore:

- know how to report any unusual/inappropriate behaviour to a Designated Safeguarding Officer and
- ensure that children and Adults at Risk know they can approach any of the adults in our establishment if they are worried about something and that they will receive a consistent, supportive response.

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Effective safeguarding practice starts with having in place effective procedures. Lines of responsibility should be clear, with leadership from the senior management level. Representatives from across the university should be involved in implementation and in contributing to a culture in which safeguarding is discussed openly. Staff with particular responsibilities will need appropriate training and all staff need to be aware of the university's policies and procedures<sup>[1]</sup>. For definitions of specific safeguarding roles and responsibilities see Appendix 1: Definitions of Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities

## 5. Safeguarding measures

5.1 The University aims to ensure the safeguarding of children and Adults at Risk attending University premises or activities, as far as is reasonably practicable, by ensuring that the following general measures are implemented:

- **Existing risk assessments** would normally be undertaken for activities involving children and Adults at Risk. Any other significant hazards, not already covered in the existing risk assessments that may arise from having children and Adults at Risk on University premises must also be risk assessed. It will be the responsibility of the Faculty/ Directorate to seek guidance from the University Safety Officer on this matter. Where no current risk assessment exists it is advisable for one to be conducted.
- **Safe recruitment practices** are utilised to prevent unsuitable people working with children and Adults at Risk . This includes the use of Disclosure and Barring Service <sup>[1]</sup> (DBS) checks where necessary. For further information, see relevant [DBS policies](#).
- **[Designated Safeguarding Officers \(DSOs\)](#)** within the University will be in place and trained in safeguarding children issues. They will also be aware of options to signpost to appropriate services within the University if they have specific concerns about Adults at Risk.
- **All staff**, regardless of role, will be made aware of, and be familiar with, the University's safeguarding policy and procedure.
- **Volunteering/community-based activities** are also included where they necessitate a DBS check.

## 6. Confidentiality

The University will ensure that any information relating to safeguarding will be recorded and stored securely. All safeguarding matters should be recognised as confidential but the law permits the disclosure of confidential information necessary to safeguard a child.

## 7. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Chief People Officer /the Senior Designated Safeguarding Officer (SDSO) or their designate.

# Appendix 1 – Definitions of Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities

**Senior Designated Safeguarding Officer (SDSO)** will:

- overall responsibility for the University's safeguarding practice;
- create and maintain a network of Designated Safeguarding Officers;
- ensure relevant policies/procedures are in place;
- refer cases of suspected abuse or allegations to social services and/or police child protection unit where appropriate;
- ensure accurate written records of referrals/concerns are stored securely and shared appropriately (where concerns have not required referral to social services or police a record should still be retained) and
- ensure all members of staff and students are aware of their responsibilities under the safeguarding policy and procedures via all staff awareness raising communications.

**Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs)** will:

- have operational responsibility for the University's safeguarding practice;
- undergo safeguarding training and undertake refresher training as appropriate;
- refer any child protection concerns, where appropriate, to social services and/or police child protection unit in the absence of the SDSO
- provide information and advice within the University on safeguarding issues.

## Appendix 2 - Management Guidance and Procedures

### **a) Recognition of abuse:**

It is recognised that some members of the University will have only slight contact with children and Adults at Risk at work and consequently may not be in a position to recognise abuse. (See Procedure Appendix 1 for definitions of abuse).

The recognition of abuse is not always easy and the University acknowledges that members of staff may not be experienced in this area and will not easily know whether or not abuse is taking place. Indeed, it is not the place of University members to make such a judgement, but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns in order to safeguard the welfare of the child.

### **b) Dealing with a disclosure**

The following procedure should be adhered to if any person has concerns about the safety of a child or Adult at Risk or if a disclosure is made, particularly if a child or another adult says something or acts in such a way that abuse is suspected.

Remember that those who abuse children and Adults at Risk can be of any age (even other children and Adults at Risk), gender, ethnic background or class and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate action taking place.

Therefore the following advice and guidance is given:

- React calmly
- Reassure the adult or child it is OK for them to talk to you
- **Do not** promise confidentiality, but explain that it may be necessary to consult/share information with another colleague to (for example) protect them from further harm.
- Keep questions to a minimum. If necessary, ask open and/or non-leading questions, e.g. is there anything else you want to say? 'Can you tell me more about that?'

- On an Incident Report Form, make a full record of what has been said/observed/heard (within 24 hours of disclosure). Use the child's language where possible. Include the date, time and place the disclosure was made.
- Refer the incident to your Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) as soon as possible and do not tell **any** other adults or children and Adults at Risk about it. Ensure that the relevant DSO receives your Incident Report Form. (Any information regarding child protection issues will be stored in a secure place and there will be limited access to this by the DSO).

**Please note:**

All staff have a responsibility for action in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect. See *Procedure Appendix 4* for definitions of abuse. University staff are encouraged to discuss any concerns with a DSO in the University.

Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality. Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone else on campus other than the SDSO or DSOs. If the SDSO/DSO is absent then individuals should not delay and contact Oxford's Children's Social Care Team. For contact details see:

*<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/keeping-children-and-young-people-safe/report-child-abuse>*

Under no circumstances should members of the University carry out their own investigation into suspicions or allegations of abuse, neither should they question children and Adults at Risk closely, as to do so may distort any investigation that may be carried out subsequently by the Police or Social Services.

Regardless of how the initial assessment develops, the DSO responding to the issue/allegations will follow up with all relevant parties/stakeholders to ensure it was concluded

**c) Reporting**

Refer any incident or suspicion to a DSO or SDSO through the 'Incident Report form' see *Appendix 4 section d*

## **Appendix 3 - Dealing with allegations against members of staff or volunteers**

All members of the University (including those members with obligations to particular codes of conduct/professional ethics that may be thought to constrain their actions) are required to report or act on any disclosures or allegations of abuse that involve a member of the University and that have taken place on campus or on University business. This must be in line with both the Children Act (2004) and current Health and Safety legislation (so that the risks either of further abuse and of litigation against the University, can be eliminated or removed).

The University recognises the importance of having a procedure in place for dealing with allegations against staff and volunteers who work with children and Adults at Risk. This procedure must aim to strike a balance between the need to protect children and Adults at Risk from abuse and the need to protect staff and volunteers from false or unfounded allegations.

If a member of staff has concerns about a child's safety or a child confides in a member of staff, in relation to another member of staff's actions, they should:

- report this immediately to a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO). The DSO will obtain any notes of the allegation from the member of staff.  
Procedure to follow allegation:
- The DSO will report this allegation to the Chief People Officer, who may designate one of the managers within Human Resources to act on his/her behalf. The DSO should also report, and provide a copy of the Incident Report Form, to the SDSO, who will be required to inform the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at Oxfordshire County Council
- The People Directorate representative will contact the member of staff against whom the allegations have been made. Throughout, the University will aim to balance the welfare of the accused member of staff and the interests of the investigation, taking account of the need to minimise the stress to anyone who may be wrongly or mistakenly accused. The initial assessment will normally be undertaken within 48 hours, dependent upon the timing of receipt within any given working week, and may require further information to be obtained from the member of staff who reported the concern/allegation.
- The individual will be made aware of the nature of the allegations that have been made against him/her and notified that an initial assessment of the allegation will be undertaken by the People Directorate representative in conjunction with the SDSO.
- Whilst allegations are being investigated the member of staff whom allegations have been made against will be removed from all further activities that involve contact with children and Adults at Risk . This may also necessitate formal (paid) suspension from work if felt appropriate. Suspension would not imply guilt and may be prudent to protect the member of staff and the reputation of the University. Such decisions would be made on a case by case basis. Separate provision for Nursery staff applies.
- The University acknowledges such allegations are likely to be extremely stressful for the individual concerned and are likely to have a significant impact on him/her even if the allegations are not substantiated. The individual will therefore be offered support from the University.  
The University acknowledges that such allegations are highly sensitive and will ensure that confidentiality is maintained throughout the assessment and investigation process.  
If the initial assessment reveals a need for further investigations then there may be up to three strands in the consideration of an allegation:
  - a police investigation of a possible criminal offence;
  - enquiries and assessment by children and Adults at Risk 's social care about whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services; and
  - consideration by the University of a potential disciplinary action in respect of the individual.
 The University may also be requested to provide information and help agree how the social services team and/or the Police will undertake their enquiries.

## **Appendix 4 - Guide for staff / volunteers working with Children and Adults at Risk**

### a) Minimising risk

All members of the University should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour when working with children and Adults at Risk . The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

#### *Staff should:*

- treat all children and Adults at Risk equally and with dignity regardless of age, sex, religion, race etc;
- always put the welfare of the child and Adult at Risk first;

- wear clothing that promotes a positive and professional image, is appropriate to their role and the activities they are undertaking, is not offensive, revealing or sexually provocative and is absent of any political or otherwise contentious slogans;
  - keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given and
  - refer all concerns of a child's welfare and safety to a Designated Safeguarding Officer.
- Staff should avoid:*
- working alone with a child. If a child requests a private interview, ask a teacher/adult to be present or ensure there is visual access and/or an open door;
  - physical contact, especially if there is risk of it being misinterpreted by the child. There may be some occasions where physical contact is necessary, such as if a child is distressed or a member of staff needs to administer first aid. Staff are asked to use their discretion in these circumstances. If this occurs, it is advised two members of staff are present and
  - going into a child's room unless absolutely necessary. If activities involve overnight stays, appropriate sleeping arrangements must be considered.
- Should never:*
- give out personal details. This includes your home address and personal telephone/mobile phone number;
  - interact with, or accept friend requests on their personal accounts from, children and Adults at Risk or young people you are working with on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter;
  - share a room overnight with a child, or go into a child's room unless absolutely necessary. (If it is necessary, two members of staff should enter.);
  - invite or allow children and Adults at Risk to stay with you at your home unsupervised;
  - allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching;
  - allow or engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games with children and Adults at Risk ;
  - allow or use inappropriate language;
  - make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun;
  - deliberately reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
  - allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon and
  - do things of a personal nature for children and Adults at Risk that they can do for themselves.

### **Further help and advice**

The University recognises that children and Adults at Risk who have been abused, or witness violence, may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They can feel helplessness, humiliation and a sense of blame. Brookes may provide the only stability in the lives of some children and Adults at Risk and we will endeavour to support them by:

- liaising with other agencies that support children and Adults at Risk , (e.g. Social Care and Health) where appropriate;
  - providing opportunities for children and Adults at Risk to discuss and explore issues around safety and ensuring children and Adults at Risk know who to talk to in Oxford Brookes if they need help and
  - promoting a positive ethos within Oxford Brookes, giving children and Adults at Risk the sense of being safe, supported and valued.
- It is recognised that staff may need support after receiving a disclosure from a child and appropriate counselling will be offered by the University.

### **b) Definitions of Abuse**

The definitions below are brief and reproduced from the government guidance '*What To Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused*'<sup>[1]</sup>

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment – a person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children and Adults at Risk and young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

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

**ii) Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development It may involve conveying to children and Adults at Risk that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person, age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children and Adults at Risk , causing children and Adults at Risk frequently to feel frightened, or the exploitation or corruption of children and Adults at Risk . Children and Adults at Risk who witness domestic violence, even if it is not directed at them, can also be affected in this category. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

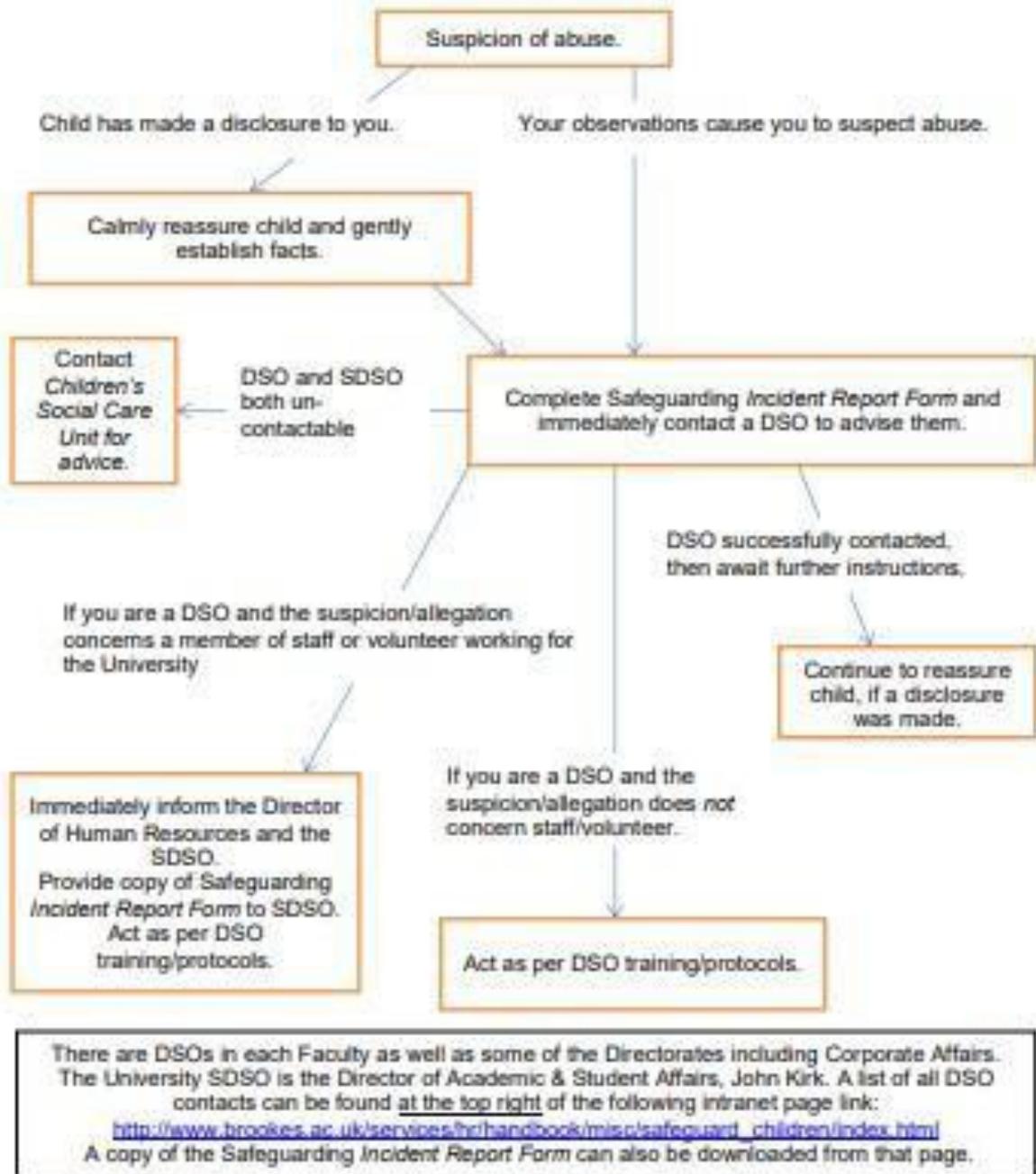
**iii) Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include involving children and Adults at Risk in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or encouraging children and Adults at Risk to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Sexual abuse can also include trafficking for sexual exploitation through physical coercion and/or deception.

**iv) 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, clothing and 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.

**v) Bullying** is the persistent, intentional harming of another person within an unequal power relationship. Bullying can be verbal, written or physical. Cyber-bullying is included within this and could be actions that use information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm another or others.

**c) How to respond to an incident regarding Children (Appendix 6 covers Adults at Risk)**

How to respond to an incident and who to contact



If the SDSO or any DSO are unavailable please call the **Children's Social Care Unit (Oxford)**:

- in office hours, the Access to Information and Services Team on **0845 050 7666** or
- out of office hours, the Emergency Duty Team on **0800 833 408**.

**d) Incident form**

Please use the following [Incident form](#) (which can be used to report incidents involving children and / or Adults at Risk) to report any incidents to the University's safeguarding lead

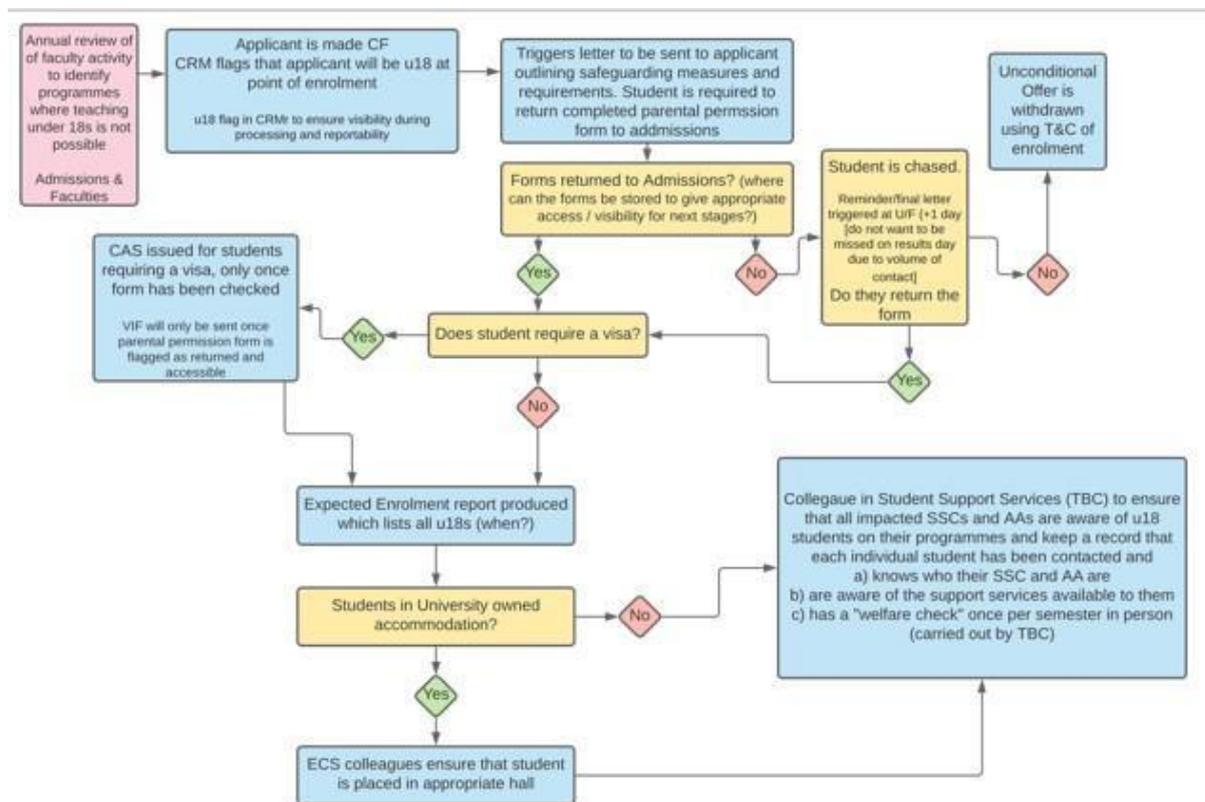
### e) Training

Details on training, which is provided by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Board can be [found here](#). Online e-learning options can be [accessed here](#).

## Appendix 5 – Under 18 Admissions Process

Details on applying to the University can be found [here](#)

For students who will be under 18 at the point of enrolment, the University follows a particular process to ensure that appropriate support will be in place at the point at which a student joins the University, including any specific measures that need to be taken in terms of accommodation. The diagram below details the various processes:



# Appendix 6 – Identifying someone who is an Adult at Risk and responding to issues of concern

The Care Act 2014 defines an adult at risk as 'any person who is aged 18 years or over who may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm of exploitation'

The University considers there to be three potential categories of contact with Adults at Risk that need to be considered under this policy.

- 1) Supporting Staff members who may be or become Adults at Risk
- 2) Supporting Students who may be or become Adults at Risk
- 3) Our safeguarding responsibility for members of the public attending the University for organised activities, who may be Adults at Risk

Each category is considered separately below

## **Supporting Staff members who may be or become Adults at Risk**

The needs of University staff will normally be considered at the point of appointment or through the course of regular interaction with line managers and / or team leaders as part of the general responsibilities of managers.

Where there are any concerns about a staff member's wellbeing, or ability to perform their role, or if they may be an "Adult at Risk", the University has appropriate mechanisms for responding and supporting staff, including [Occupational Health](#)

## **Supporting Students who may be or become Adults at Risk**

The needs of students will usually be considered, if disclosed, prior to a student joining, as part of the admissions process. Applicants / Students are able to liaise with a range of services including the [Inclusive Support Service](#) who will be able to assess the support needs required and advise accordingly.

For students who may become "Adults at Risk" during their time as a student with the University, there are a range of services and processes designed to support all students, through which concerns can be raised either as an initial safeguarding concern (in a similar way to that highlighted in Appendix 4 section C) or through established processes available to all students as detailed via the links below

[The Fitness to Study Policy](#)  
[Responding to Complex Student Situations Policy](#)

Concerns may also be raised through other policies and services, where interactions with students lead to concerns about their wellbeing, and any staff member can raise a concern at any point by contacting [case-conference@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:case-conference@brookes.ac.uk)

## **Our safeguarding responsibility for members of the public attending the University for organised activities, who may be Adults at Risk**

In terms of supporting Adults at Risk from within the wider public, who may be interacting with the University, then the University adopts the same processes, in the main, as for supporting Children, as highlighted throughout the accompanying policy. Our interactions with "Adults at Risk", who are not our students or staff, is extremely infrequent given the nature of the University's provision and therefore, at this point in time, the infrastructure,

policy and flowchart in place for safeguarding children is deemed to be the appropriate guidance to be followed.

The University's current Designated Safety Officers (not including the University Safeguarding Lead) have not received specific external training to cover "Adults at Risk" as a separate additional training package, beyond the training outlined in Appendix 4 section e. DSOs are aware that any concerns raised with them about possible Adults at Risk should be raised with the University's Safeguarding Lead for further consideration and advice on reporting and recording. By July 2022 all DSOs will have undertaken the specific "Safeguarding Adults training offered by the Oxford Safeguarding Adults Board.

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