

# University of Ulster Employee Guide to the procedures for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

*Why does the University of Ulster have a Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults?*

Anyone under the age of eighteen is deemed a 'child' by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007.

The University:

- has a number of students under 18 years of age
- facilitates various educational and social activities involving children in the community
- has children present on its premises from time to time on open days and other occasions
- may have the children of student parents living on campus in our residences.

The University's Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults and this procedural guide aim to set out best practice in protecting children from harm, whether mental, physical or sexual abuse - including bullying and neglect. Where relevant these procedures will also apply to vulnerable adults as defined by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007.

*University's Designated Child Protection Officer*

The University's Designated Child Protection Officer is Mr Eamon Mullan, University Secretary. Mr Mullan can be contacted by telephone on 028 7012 4533 or by email at [e.mullan@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:e.mullan@ulster.ac.uk).

*Who does the Policy apply to? Where can I find a copy of the Policy?*

The policy applies to **all** University staff, students and volunteers.

The policy can be found on the University website at: [http://www.ulster.ac.uk/secretary/policyimplementation/policies/child\\_protection\\_policy.pdf](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/secretary/policyimplementation/policies/child_protection_policy.pdf)

*How might I become aware of a concern, disclosure or allegation that a child is being harmed (or potentially exposed to harm)?*

**'Concern'** relates to the possibility a child may be suffering harm. Indicators include:

- sudden, unexplained or worrying changes in behaviour
- physical signs or symptoms of harm
- worrying remarks made by a child
- inappropriate communications with a child
- a situation where a child is exposed to potential harm

**'Disclosure'** occurs when a child tells a staff member/volunteer that they have been or are being harmed or abused in some way.

**'Allegations'** about a staff member/volunteer or other individual occur when anyone reports specific unacceptable behaviour where a child has been harmed or abused in some way.

Who should I contact if I have a concern that a child may have been abused - or if someone makes a disclosure or reports an allegation to me?

Fill out the Reporting Pro-Forma (Appendix 1), then immediately contact the Child Protection Co-ordinator based nearest the reported incident:

Campus	Child Protection Co-ordinator (Provosts)
Belfast/Jordanstown	Professor Alastair Adair 028 9036 7330
Coleraine/Magee	Professor Deirdre Heenan - 028 7137 5352

What happens if someone raises a concern or makes a disclosure or allegation to me and asks me not to report it?

The safety and welfare of the child is the most important consideration. You **must** report any concern, disclosure or allegation that a child has been harmed or may be exposed to harm as soon as possible to a responsible officer i.e. a Campus Child Protection Co-ordinator or the Designated Child Protection Officer.

What should I do in the event of an emergency?

**In the event of an immediate risk to health and safety, telephone the Emergency Services by dialling 999.** Physical accidents should be reported in the campus accident register.

What happens once the responsible officer is alerted?

The responsible officer will liaise with the statutory agencies and the police as appropriate. These agencies will conduct any appropriate investigation.

Once you report the incident, **do not disclose the event to anyone else** until advised otherwise by the responsible officer or the police. The responsible officer will support you through the reporting process and advise you on any further steps to take if necessary.

When do staff, students or volunteers require child protection/criminal record checks?

**Recruiting staff who will or may have unsupervised access to children/vulnerable adults:** The person responsible for filling in the Human Resources (HR) Recruitment Requisition **must inform** Human Resources that the appointee will or may have unsupervised access by completing the relevant section on the requisition form. Human Resources will notify candidates that clearance against child protection/criminal records will be required and make sure that all the necessary checks are completed.

**What happens if a current staff member's duties change bringing them into unsupervised contact with children/ vulnerable adults?** This might happen e.g. if a researcher takes on a new project involving children or vulnerable adults. In these circumstances confirmed clearance may be formally required by funders or partner organisations before the project starts. In these circumstances the Head of Department/School **must inform** HR who will make sure that all the necessary checks are completed.

**Other circumstances:** When it is anticipated that **any undergraduate or postgraduate student or volunteer** may have unsupervised contact with children as part of their role:

- The individual should be informed **before** undertaking any such duties that clearance against child protection/criminal records will be required

- The faculty or departmental AccessNI (ANI) countersignatory for child protection checks should be contacted and informed why the checks are required. The countersignatory will then make available the appropriate forms. The current list of countersignatories is available upon request to the University's Designated Child Protection Officer.
- The applicant should complete the form and return it to the countersignatory, who will submit it to ANI.
- Relevant information provided by ANI will be considered and if it suggests that the employee/student is unsuitable to work with children the applicant must not be selected/admitted and statutory agencies notified where appropriate.

Due to the occupational requirements of some courses (such as optometry or nursing) many students will be expected to undergo criminal record/child protection checks as a matter of course prior to admission. Details can be found in course prospectuses.

**Existing employee:** If a line manager knows that an existing employee has, or a group of existing employees have, duties which involve working with children, he/she should contact the Designated Child Protection Officer outlining the nature of the relevant duties in respect of dealings with persons under 18 years of age.

**Still not sure what to do?** Contact the University's Child Protection Co-ordinator by telephone on 028 7012 4533 or by email at [e.mullan@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:e.mullan@ulster.ac.uk).

*How should information received from child protection/criminal record checks be handled?*

Records received from ANI must be treated in the strictest confidence and held securely by HR or the nominated officer until a personnel or student admission decision has been taken.

Records must then be destroyed, but a note should be kept on the personnel or student file confirming the:

- nature of the check that was carried out;
- the date that the check was conducted; and
- the resulting personnel or student admission decision.
- the date the record was destroyed

*What other child protection issues should be considered?*

Child protection considerations should not end at criminal record checks.

Line management should examine the **Child Protection Risk and Issue Checklist** (appended to the Policy) and examine whether their current operational practices require modification in order to mitigate any risks – both in terms of risk of harm to children and risk of placing staff, students or volunteers in situations where they could be subject to false accusations.

*How should staff, students and volunteers act when dealing with children?*

The following **code of behaviour** should be followed by all students, employees and volunteers:

- *Avoid being alone with a child where this is practicable*
- *Listen to what children have to say*
- *Hitting, punching or fighting is unacceptable behaviour, as is any form of harm to a child*

- *Bullying of children, whether physical, verbal or emotional is unacceptable*
- *Do not use language of a sexual or inappropriate nature in front of children*
- *Staff and volunteers are advised not to make physical contact with a child except where this is unavoidable due to the nature of the authorised activity, in which case the child must consent to this*
- *If a child has special needs consider how these can be accommodated (see SENDO and related guidance from the Equality Unit)*
- ***Staff, students or volunteers who breach this code or the Child Protection Policy will be subjected to disciplinary procedures and sanctions***

*When do we need to obtain assurances from contractors?*

Where a contractor or partner organisation provides services to the University, they will be responsible for conducting any necessary child protection/criminal record checks on their employees. If these organisations' employees deal with children in the course of providing their services to the University, written assurances should be sought that they will both conduct all necessary checks and comply with the University's Child Protection Policy.

Similarly, such expectations on the contractor or partnering organisation should be reflected if possible in any relevant contract or tender documentation. Further advice may be sought from Governance Services.

Researchers conducting research with children must adhere to the child protection and research ethics policy and procedures. Parents must provide consent in respect of children below the age of sixteen years.

*When do I need to obtain a child's consent in relation to University research?*

Children between the ages of 16-17 are normally judged legally competent to provide their own consent to research or medical treatment. The University Research Ethics Committee must approve any research where parental assent is not being sought for the inclusion of a person below the age of 18.

*What steps should be taken in relation to University premises – and off-campus activities?*

Staff and students who take children onto premises should ensure they are supervised at all times. Bear in mind children will tend to be less careful than adults.

If you are helping to organise an activity involving children **on University premises**:

- Ensure children (and the persons supervising them) are aware of the relevant first aid, fire evacuation and other health and safety procedures.
- Check that any hazardous areas of the University near the planned activities are off-limits to children
- Ask the school to confirm its plans for supervising their students in advance of a school group's arrival on University premises

In advance of any **off-campus** activities involving children (as participants or observers), establish:

- whether any particular hazards to health and safety exist on the site in question
- the health and safety arrangements for the site, such as fire evacuation procedures and location of first aid facilities
- existing arrangements for accommodation, supervision, equipment, transportation

and insurance, and whether these will be sufficient for the type of activity planned (e.g. will there be an adequate supervision ratio?)

*What other steps should be taken to protect children in University premises?*

As part of their regular health and safety reviews, staff responsible for health and safety in any particular area of the University should ensure:

- interior or exterior University locations that may pose a hazard to children are sufficiently secured and appropriately sign-posted
- effective security measures are in place in areas where hazardous materials and equipment are stored

The University's insurance officer should be notified of any persons regardless of age undertaking **work experience** on University premises (telephone 028 7012 3069 or email [m.harvey@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:m.harvey@ulster.ac.uk))

*What should I do if I observe young or adolescent children in University Premises unsupervised?*

If you find a young or adolescent child on University premises alone and unsupervised, remembering the **code of behaviour** above, try to find out from the child his name, why he is here, who he is with and any other appropriate information. If you can, escort him back to his group or parent – you may want to ask another person to accompany you.

If you cannot reasonably establish this information and/or suspect the child is not present as part of an authorised activity, then escort the child to the nearest security station – you may want to ask another person to accompany you. You should cooperate fully with security personnel which may require you to remain at the security station until the situation has been resolved.

*Who do I contact if I have any queries?*

Contact the University's Designated Child Protection Officer, Mr Eamon Mullan, University Secretary, by telephone on 028 7012 4533 or by email at [e.mullan@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:e.mullan@ulster.ac.uk).

*Out of hours*

Emergency number outside office hours, telephone 08 700 400 700

**APPENDIX 1**

**Reporting Pro-Forma  
Reporting of an Allegation / Concern / Disclosure**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

<p>Name of Employee / Volunteer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- reporting concern; or</li><li>- receiving disclosure/allegation</li></ul>	
<p>Any known details of child reported to be exposed to harm, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• name</li><li>• age</li><li>• address</li></ul>	
<p>Any known details of reported harm, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• nature of the reported harm (e.g. emotional, mental, physical, sexual harm, bullying, neglect)</li><li>• where a specific allegation or disclosure has been made, date(s) and location(s) of occurrence(s)</li><li>• where someone has a concern about abuse occurring, details of any indications that suggest the child may be exposed to harm</li><li>• person(s) suspected of harming child (or exposing the child to harm)</li></ul>	

<p>Details of how you became aware of the allegation, disclosure or concern including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the time/date you were made aware</li> <li>• the name and contact details of any person who made a report to you</li> </ul>	
<p>Any other relevant details?</p>	

***Fill out this form as fully as possible, then telephone the Campus Child Protection Co-ordinator immediately who will support you through the reporting process and advise you what to do next.***

***Ensure the Campus Child Protection Co-ordinator receives the completed form as soon as possible. Do not make a copy of the completed form and do not pass this information to any other person.***

<p>Date and Time you contacted the Campus Child Protection Co-ordinator</p>	
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**Signed by employee/student/volunteer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Received by Child Protection Co-Ordinator:** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 2

### Designated Child Protection Officer

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact Details</b>
Designated Child Protection Officer	Mr Eamon Mullan	028 7012 4533 <a href="mailto:e.mullan@ulster.ac.uk">e.mullan@ulster.ac.uk</a>

### Campus Child Protection Coordinators

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact Details</b>
Belfast/Jordanstown	Prof Alastair Adair (Provost)	028 9036 6533 <a href="mailto:as.adair@ulster.ac.uk">as.adair@ulster.ac.uk</a>
Coleraine/Magee	Prof Deirdre Heenan (Provost)	028 7137 5268 <a href="mailto:da.heenan@ulster.ac.uk">da.heenan@ulster.ac.uk</a>

*N.B. Allegations against one of the officers listed above should be reported to another individual holding the position of Designated Child Protection Officer  
- or directly to a statutory agency such as the PSNI.*