**Safeguarding Policy – DSU Members**

**Document Control:**

**Title:** Safeguarding Policy

**Applicable to:** Members

**Policy Owner**: HOMS

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1. **Introduction** 
   1. De Montfort Students’ Union (DSU) supports the principle that ‘safeguarding is everybody’s business’ and is committed to supporting staff to ‘do the right thing’ when they have a concern.
   2. This policy reflects the fact that DSU has many members who may have care and support needs, who may be vulnerable to abuse and harm
   3. This policy reflects the fact that DSU provides some services to under 18’s.
   4. This policy reflects the fact that DSU should be a safe environment which promotes well-being and protects adults and children who may be at risk of harm or abuse.
   5. All staff should be aware of our safeguarding responsibilities for adults and children who come to the Campus Centre or are linked with DSU in any way.
   6. All staff can play a part in safeguarding by recognising risks to adults and children and by knowing what action to take.
   7. All staff are expected to undertake the DMU eLearning course – Safeguarding Essentials (for further information please contact the Operations Manager).
   8. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of DSU has leadership responsibility to oversee the union’s safeguarding arrangements and should be the first point of contact for anyone who has any concerns in relation to safeguarding. In this regard, the CEO will be known as the Responsible Officer for Safeguarding (ROS).
2. **The Legal Context**
   1. Higher Education Institutions and Students’ Unions are not specifically named in either the Children Act or the Care Act as having a duty to safeguard and protect children or adults unlike schools and Further Education colleges.
   2. We do however have a general duty of care under common law to take such steps as are reasonable to ensure that children, young people and adults who may be at risk are safe and that reasonably foreseen harm does not occur as a result of careless acts or omission on the part of DSU.
3. **Definition of Safeguarding**
   1. Safeguarding relates to protecting children and adults who may be vulnerable from all forms of abuse and exploitation.
   2. There is no exhaustive list of what may constitute abuse or exploitation but it includes physical, emotional, sexual, financial, neglect, online abuse, domestic abuse, human trafficking and discriminatory abuse.
   3. Safeguarding also relates to broader preventative responsibilities that are wide-ranging concerning the welfare and well-being of children and enabling people to reach their full potential as well as to stay safe and healthy.
4. **Safeguarding Children**
   1. Safeguarding duties in respect of children apply to anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child is living independently, or is at university, does not change their entitlement to protection.
   2. There is an obligation to act on safeguarding concern relating to children whether or not this is the child’s preferred course of action.
   3. On occasion, information will be received relating to children from an adult who does not want action to be taken. In safeguarding children, the child’s needs are paramount and those needs should always be put first.
5. **Safeguarding Adults**
   1. Safeguarding duties apply to adults who are, or may be, in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability. Who is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.
   2. Adults must be assumed to have capacity to make their own decisions and be given all practicable help before anyone treats them as not being able to make their own decisions, even in situation where there actions may seem unwise.
   3. Where an adult is found to lack capacity to make a decision then any action taken, or any decision made for, or on their behalf, must be made in their best interests.
6. **Situations/Warning signs which may trigger safeguarding concerns**
   1. Witnessing something which constitutes harm or neglect.
   2. Abuse or neglect has been disclosed to you. This may be historical but is still cause for concern and must be dealt with.
   3. There is a suspicion that abuse or neglect is occurring, in this case vigilance is needed.
   4. There is no exhaustive list which may indicate abuse and further information about warning signs are dealt with in the eLearning course.
   5. Signs can include unusual behaviour, lack of self-esteem, unprecedented violent outbursts, weight loss, constant fatigue, inability to socialise, extreme changes in appearance/clothing, bruises, fear of parents/carers/others, financial difficulties and inappropriate sexualised behaviour.
7. **Emergency Situations**
   1. If there are reasonable grounds for believing that an individual is at immediate risk then consideration should be given to contacting the emergency services by phoning 999. This is a matter of judgement according to the circumstances of the situation.
   2. The ROS should be informed of the situation as soon as is practicable after such urgent action is taken.
8. **Non-Emergency Situations**
   1. When you first become aware of a concern your role as a member of staff is to listen and to record any information that is disclosed to you. At this stage you should do nothing further before consulting with the ROS. The ROS will help decide what action to take.
   2. Ensure you are discreet and respect the person’s privacy.
   3. Try and ascertain whether the person is in touch with any support agencies, or DMU colleagues, already.
9. **Making a Record**
   1. You should make a record of any information you have been given and any action that has been taken.
   2. You should bear in mind that this record could become disclosable evidence in the event of a prosecution or other proceedings.
   3. You should ensure that accurate details of any witnesses are recorded – for example, did anyone else hear what the person said, see any physical injuries or notice the behaviour?
   4. Record only what people said and did, not what you think was meant. You must distinguish between fact and opinion.
   5. This record should be kept safe and given to the ROS as soon as possible, the ROS will arrange for the document to be securely stored.
   6. Decisions about whether or not to refer a case to the authorities should be clearly documented, this record should include who was consulted, risks, mitigation, advice given and support already in place.
10. **What Happens Next**
    * 1. If the matter is referred to Social Services or the Police they may wish to discuss the concerns with you, or there may be no further contact.
      2. If the ROS is able to give you any feedback on what has happened they will, however it is not always possible to share information about everything that has happened.
      3. After further investigations, Social Services and the Police will need to work with other organisations and individuals in the best interests of the child/adult being protected.
      4. In safeguarding, for both children and adults, any criminal investigation by the Police takes precedence over all other forms of enquiry.
11. **Confidentiality and Data Protection**
    1. Members of staff should never offer complete confidentiality. Be open and honest about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be, shared and seek their agreement unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
    2. It should always be made clear that information which suggests the possibility of an individual being a serious risk to themselves or others, which may give rise to concerns about the welfare of a child or adult, or relates to criminal activity, may need to be passed on.
    3. GDPR is not a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about a living person is shared appropriately.
    4. You can share information without consent if, in your judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest.
    5. Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the person and others who may be affected by the actions that have been disclosed.
    6. Information should only be shared with those people who need to know it; for example, the ROS, Social Services and, if appropriate, key safeguarding staff at De Montfort University.
12. **Other Considerations**
    1. Securing evidence (if you have any), to support any action by the Police is vital. This includes any records as well as physical evidence.
    2. Understand the importance of respect for the person’s views as their engagement is vital to positive intervention and support.
    3. It can be very difficult to decide whether a particular act or act of omission is abuse; do seek advice from the ROS if you have any doubts.
    4. Remain open-minded and treat all disclosures seriously.
    5. If the allegation concerns a member of DSU staff immediately speak to the ROS. This can be an extremely difficult issue to deal with and colleagues must not try to handle the matter alone.
    6. Staff should not share their personal contact details with students unless there is a strong operational reason for doing so, to do so could place staff in a vulnerable position. Likewise, engaging in personal social media activities with students should be avoided.
    7. If any disclosures are made to you regarding domestic abuse or forced marriage please seek further guidance from the ROS or the DMU Mandala Project. The utmost discretion must be used when sharing information about a possible forced marriage situation.
    8. Coming in to contact with children or adults in need of safeguarding and/or who have experienced abuse, raising a safeguarding concern, and dealing with information about abuse and harm can all have a personal impact. Help and advice is available to you through line managers and [PAM Assist.](https://demontfortuniversity.sharepoint.com/sites/DMUHome/staff_news/Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FDMUHome%2Fstaff%5Fnews%2FDocuments%2FEAP%20%28PAM%20Assist%29%2FPAM%20Assist%20Poster%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FDMUHome%2Fstaff%5Fnews%2FDocuments%2FEAP%20%28PAM%20Assist%29)