



Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Policy statement

York St John Students' Union (YSJSU) has a statutory, ethical and moral duty to ensure that the organisation functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults who are visiting the Students' Union. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Throughout this document, reference is made to 'children and young people'. This term is used to mean 'those under the age of 18'. This policy also refers to adults who are vulnerable to abuse. This term is used to mean a person aged 18 or over who has a condition of the following type: (a more detailed description is available in the Vulnerable Groups Act 2006)

- a) A substantial learning or physical disability,
- b) A physical or mental illness or mental disorder, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs; or,
- c) A significant reduction in physical or mental capacity.

YSJSU is committed to ensuring that it:

- a) Provides a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults to work and visit and those children, young people and vulnerable adults are safe and feel safe;
- b) Identifies children, young people and vulnerable adults who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, and;
- c) Takes appropriate action to see that such children, young people and vulnerable adults are kept safe, both at the Students' Union and at home.

In pursuit of these aims, YSJSU will ensure procedures and practice is in place with the aim of:

- a) Raising awareness of issues relating to the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and the promotion of a safe environment for them whilst they are at the Students' Union;
- b) Aiding the identification of children, young people and vulnerable adults at risk of significant harm, and providing procedures for reporting concerns and acting on these;
- c) Establishing procedures for reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and fellow students;
- d) The safe recruitment of staff and students.

When reviewing relevant policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding, the Chief Executive will consult with, and take account of relevant guidance and good practice, including liaison with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

YSJSU will refer concerns that a child, young person or vulnerable adult might be at risk of significant harm to Social Services/the appropriate agencies as agreed with the LSCB. Managers and all staff working with children will receive training adequate to familiarise them with

protection issues and responsibilities, and the YSJSU procedures and policies, with refresher training at least every two years.

The Chief Executive will have special responsibility for protection issues as the designated members of staff with lead responsibility for child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults. They will be assisted by other members of staff with responsibilities for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

Policy Scope and Definition

YSJSU recognises the following as definitions of abuse:

Physical Abuse – Physical abuse causes harm to a child, vulnerable adult or young person. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning or suffocating. It may be done deliberately or recklessly, or be the result of a deliberate failure to prevent injury occurring.

Neglect – Neglect is the persistent or severe failure to meet a child, vulnerable adult or young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It can result in serious impairment of the child or young person's health or development.

Sexual Abuse – Sexual abuse involves a child, vulnerable adult or young person being forced or coerced into participating in or watching sexual activity, looking at or being involved in the production of pornographic materials, or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. It is not necessary for a child, vulnerable adult or young person to be aware that the activity is sexual, and the apparent consent of the child, vulnerable adult or young person is irrelevant.

Emotional Abuse – Emotional abuse occurs where there is persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection. It causes severe and adverse effects on the child, vulnerable adult or young person's behaviour and emotional condition, resulting in low self-worth. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all forms of abuse.

Financial Abuse – Financial abuse occurs when money is unreasonably denied to someone who is financially dependent, money is stolen, misused or information is withheld about welfare benefits.

Designated Staff with Responsibility for Safeguarding

The designated senior member of staff with lead responsibility for child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults is the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive has the key duty to take lead responsibility for raising awareness within YSJSU of issues relating to the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and the promotion of a safe environment within YSJSU. The Chief Executive will ensure that designated staff have received training in child and vulnerable adult protection issues, and will receive refresher training at least every two years.

The Chief Executive (or the Student Voice Manager in the absence of the Chief Executive) are responsible for ensuring that the following take place:

- a) Oversight of the referral of cases of suspected abuse or allegations to the relevant investigating agencies as agreed with LSCB;
- b) Provision of advice and support to staff and students on issues relating to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- c) Maintaining a proper record of any child or vulnerable adult protection referral, complaint or concern (even where that concern does not lead to a formal referral);

- d) Ensuring that parents of children, vulnerable adults or young people within YSJSU are aware of the YSJSU protection policy;
- e) Liaison with the LSCB and other appropriate agencies;
- f) Liaison with organisations who send children, young people or vulnerable adults to YSJSU to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made;
- g) Liaison with employers and training organisations that receive children, young people or vulnerable adults from YSJSU on placements, to ensure that appropriate safeguards are put in place;
- h) Ensuring that staff receive basic training in safeguarding issues, and are aware of the YSJSU protection policies and procedures;
- i) Ensuring that appropriate safeguards are in place for the management of contractors on YSJSU premises;
- j) Ensuring that recruitment and selection policies for staff are regularly reviewed and adhered to.

Procedures for Dealing with the Disclosure of Abuse and Reporting Concerns

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult tells a member of staff about possible abuse:

- a) Listen carefully and stay calm;
- b) Do not interview the child, young person or vulnerable adult, but question normally and without pressure, in order to be sure that you understand what the person is telling you. It is important not to ask leading questions;
- c) Do not put words into the person's mouth;
- d) Reassure the person that by telling you, they have done the right thing and try to ensure immediate safety;
- e) Inform the person that you must pass the information on, but that only those that need to know about it will be told. Inform them of to whom you will report the matter and do not offer confidentiality;
- f) Note the main points carefully for your detailed record;
- g) Make a detailed note of the date, time, place, what the child, young person or vulnerable adult said, did and your questions etc.

Staff should not investigate concerns or allegations themselves, but should report them immediately to the Chief Executive or the Student Voice Manager.

Procedures for Reporting and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Students and Members of Staff

These procedures apply to all YSJSU staff members as well as to any volunteers working with YSJSU.

Allegations against members of staff

YSJSU recognises that an allegation of abuse made against a member of staff may be made for a variety of reasons, and that the facts of the allegation may or may not be true. It is imperative that those dealing with an allegation maintain an open mind, and investigations are thorough and not subject to delay. YSJSU recognises that the Children Act 1989 states that the welfare of the child, vulnerable adult or young person is the paramount concern. It is also recognised that hasty or ill-informed decisions in connection with a member of staff can irreparably damage an individual's reputation, confidence and career. Therefore, those dealing with such allegations within YSJSU will do so with sensitivity, and will act in a careful, measured way.

Receiving an Allegation

A member of staff who receives an allegation about another member of staff from a member of staff, a student or a child, young person or vulnerable adult should follow the guidelines below for dealing with disclosure.

The allegation should be reported immediately to the Chief Executive or the Student Voice Manager. The Chief Executive or the Student Voice Manager will obtain written details of the allegation from the person who received it, which are signed and dated. Where possible information about times, dates, locations and names of potential witnesses should also be recorded.

Initial Assessment

The Chief Executive or the Student Voice Manager will make an initial assessment of the allegation, consulting with colleagues and the Local Safeguarding Children Board ('LSCB') as appropriate. Where the allegation is considered to be either a potential criminal act or indicates that the child, young person or vulnerable adult has suffered, is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm; the matter should be reported immediately to the LSCB. This is a 24 hour responsibility.

It is important that the Chief Executive or the Student Voice Manager does not investigate the allegation. The initial assessment should be on the basis of the information received and is a decision about whether or not the allegation warrants further investigation.

Where the matter does not require reporting to the local LSCB, other potential outcomes are:

- a) The allegation can be addressed in accordance with the YSJSU Disciplinary Procedure;
- b) The allegation can be shown to be false because the facts alleged could not possibly be true and no further action is required.

Enquiries and Investigations

Protection enquiries by Social Services or the Police are not to be confused with internal, disciplinary enquiries by YSJSU. YSJSU may be able to use the outcome of an external agency's enquiries as part of its own procedures.

The statutory agencies, including the Police, have no power to direct YSJSU to act in a particular way; however, YSJSU should assist the agencies with their enquiries.

YSJSU will hold in abeyance its own internal enquiries while the formal police or Social Services investigations proceed. To do otherwise may prejudice the investigation. Any internal enquiries will conform to the existing staff disciplinary procedures.

If there is an investigation by an external agency, for example the Police, the Chief Executive or the Student Voice Manager should normally be involved in, and contribute to, the inter-agency strategy discussions. The Chief Executive or the Student Voice Manager will be responsible for ensuring that YSJSU provides every assistance to the investigation. They will ensure that appropriate confidentiality is maintained in connection with the enquiries, in the interests of the member of staff about whom the allegation is made. The Chief Executive or the Student Voice Manager should advise the member of staff that he/she should consult with a Trade Union representative, contact the Employee Assistance Scheme or seek any external advice they feel appropriate.

Subject to objections from the Police or other investigating agency, the Chief Executive or the Student Voice Manager should:

- Inform the person making the allegation that the investigation is taking place and what the likely process will involve,
- Ensure that the parents/carers of a child or young person making an allegation have been informed that the allegation has been made, and what the likely process will involve. In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to inform the recorded next of kin of a vulnerable adult making an allegation;
- Inform the member of staff against whom the allegation was made of the fact that the investigation is taking place and what the likely process will involve;
- Inform relevant, senior, colleagues of the allegation and the investigation.

The Chief Executive or the Student Voice Manager will keep a written record of the action taken in connection with the allegation and should consider, any action under the YSJSU Disciplinary Policy which should be taken - pending the outcome of the full investigation; to safeguard both those who have made the allegation, any others who may potentially be at risk; and the member/s of staff concerned.

Records

It is important that documents relating to an investigation are retained in a secure place, together with a written record of the outcome and, if disciplinary action is taken, details retained on the member of staff's personal and confidential file, in line with normal Data Protection procedures.

If a member of staff is dismissed or resigns before the disciplinary process is completed, he/she should be informed about the YSJSU's statutory duty to inform the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA)

Monitoring Effectiveness

Where an allegation has been made against a member of staff, the Chief Executive or the Student Voice Manager should, at the conclusion of the investigation and any disciplinary procedures, consider whether there are any matters arising from it that could lead to the improvement of YSJSU's procedures and/or policies and/or which should be drawn to the attention of the LSCB.