BIRKBECK COLLEGE
University of London

Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Introduction

Birkbeck has longstanding policies in place recognising the need to ensure dignity at work and study, research integrity and recognition of equality and diversity. We have not had a separate safeguarding policy in place before, but having one has become an expectation in the HE sector. As well as measures for especially vulnerable groups including children and people with mental health challenges, we have a duty of care towards all of our students, staff and visitors. The Safeguarding policy sets out to meet those expectations by establishing a Safeguarding Panel with responsibility for considering and advising on a wide range safeguarding issues, considering each case referred to it individually and establishing what action to take.

There is also a need for compliance with the 2015 Counter Terrorism and Security Act, which made HE institutions responsible for preventing people from being drawn into terrorism (the Prevent duty). The guidance on Prevent issued by the Government for HE institutions includes an expectation for institutions to carry out a risk assessment assessing where and how students might be at risk of being drawn into terrorism, and an action plan setting out actions to mitigate the risks identified. Birkbeck’s risk assessment and action plan are available here.

The Government’s expectation, set out in the guidance, is for the risk assessment to extend to policies regarding the safety and welfare of students and staff. HE institutions are expected to ensure relevant staff can recognise vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism and understand what action to take.

In 2016 the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was appointed by the government to regulate and monitor compliance with the Prevent duty. HEFCE has asked HE institutions to ensure that they have policies and procedures in place which enable them to meet the Prevent duty. The Safeguarding Policy and Procedure includes provision to meet the specific challenge of addressing vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism. This approach is being taken by the majority of institutions in the sector.

Birkbeck is a diverse and complex community whose members come from different backgrounds, have different experiences and are at different stages in life. While there may be students who fit the standard expectation of being young, isolated, and possibly vulnerable to ideology, equally there are mature, professional local people and many students and staff who are dedicated to sincerely held beliefs about politics, society and freedom.

As a community, we value being able to operate inclusively, with diverse views and expressions and vigorous debate. We seek to work collaboratively with the Students’ Union and the Trade Unions in all areas of joint interest, and note the reservations that these organisations have expressed about Prevent. Birkbeck values its own radical beginnings as a
college specifically for working people and much of our academic culture is built on diverse concepts of radicalism. Nevertheless, we have due regard to the law, to our duty of care to the students, staff and visitors who make up the College community, and to the need to safeguard vulnerable individuals. We are taking practical steps to assure the College community that we are meeting the duty in a way that complements the College’s ethos and is of genuine benefit to individuals.

There has been extensive consultation on the policy, at School executives with Trade Union representatives and the College Ethics Committee, Strategic Planning Committee, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee, HR Strategy and Policy Committee, Equalities Committee, Academic Board Executive Committee and Academic Board. Academic Board’s discussion of the policy is on the record in its Report to Governors, presented as a separate agenda item.

As the Governing Body is responsible for ensuring the College complies with the law, it is asked to approve the attached Safeguarding Policy and Procedure, which responds to the requirements and issues described above and points raised during consultation.

The staff involved in operating the procedures will undertake comprehensive Unconscious Bias training. The policy and its operation will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment during its first year of implementation.
Principles

1. Since its foundation in 1823 Birkbeck’s mission has been to ensure ‘the universal benefits of the blessings of knowledge’ through providing study opportunities to those that desire them. This policy and procedure outlines how, in practical terms and in the context of the College’s legal responsibilities, Birkbeck will ensure that it sustains a safe environment in which staff and students can develop personally and academically.

2. This Policy applies to all staff, students and visitors to the College. With around 14,000 students and 2,000 members of staff, the College community is extremely diverse. The aim of having a comprehensive safeguarding framework is to support students and staff and at the same time maintain good campus relations. A safeguarding issue can be defined as actions or behaviour prompting concern about the well-being of staff, students or visitors. Appendix A illustrates how safeguarding issues can be referred for support.

3. All members of the College community have a responsibility for the well-being of staff, students and visitors. In certain areas of the College there may also be specific responsibilities for health and safety relating for technical or operational reasons. The Master delegates responsibility for the safeguarding of students and staff to the Academic Registrar and the Director of Human Resources respectively.

4. Staff, students and visitors also have the right to work and study unhindered by harassment or intimidation. This includes adherence to the College’s Principles of Dignity at Work and Study. Rights to freedom from harassment and intimidation are set out in the College’s Regulations, Policies and Procedures, which should be read in conjunction with this Policy.

5. The College aims to provide a safe and secure environment for all students, staff and visitors who access its facilities and services. This includes protecting the freedom and dignity of the individual to the extent that it does not interfere with the freedom and dignity of others or undermine community cohesion. It also includes the College’s responsibilities under legislation, for preventing members of the College being drawn into terrorism.

Vulnerable Groups

6. The College recognises its particular responsibility to safeguard the well-being of vulnerable groups including children and young people engaged in the breadth of the College’s activities by ensuring that there are appropriate arrangements in place to enable it to discharge its duty to provide a safe and secure environment.

7. The College recognises that it has a duty to help staff and students (through guidance, support and training), to promote safe working practices in order to minimise risk to vulnerable individuals and protect staff and the institution from the possibility of vexatious allegations. It is not intended that staff should be restricted from normal ways of working, but staff are advised to consider how an action may be perceived.
8. The College recognizes that staff, students and visitors have an ethical duty to report suspected abuse of any child, young person or vulnerable adult.

9. The College seeks to ensure that its policies and procedures comply with statutory duties and reflect guidance and good practice in safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, and that safeguarding arrangements are proportionate and practical.

10. The safeguarding framework for under 18-year-olds is outlined in the College Policy on Admission of Students Under the Age of 18. The Safeguarding Children Policy supports the safeguarding of children in the Birkbeck BabyLab and the Birkbeck Evening Nursery. Both of these facilities will maintain their own more detailed safeguarding policies.

11. We also understand that, where we have any concerns about an individual child or vulnerable adult's welfare, we will take appropriate action to address those concerns by working in partnership with other agencies such as Social Work Departments. Where a member of the College community is made aware - through their connection to the College - of any concerns that a child or vulnerable adult might be at risk they should discuss their concerns with the Head or Deputy Head of Student Services without undue delay.

12. Most of our students would not be considered to be either children or vulnerable adults; however the College has a consistent commitment to their safety and wellbeing. Whilst there will usually not be a statutory responsibility to refer such matters to Social Services, this policy and procedures should be followed with regards to identifying and reporting abuse and dealing with disclosure. This information should be passed to the Safeguarding Officer who will consider how the College and/or external agencies can support the individual to ensure their physical and emotional wellbeing, as well as their ability to be successful on their course.

Who to contact for advice on Safeguarding

13. The Head of Student Services and the Deputy Head of Student Services are the key College operational contacts for safeguarding issues. They can be approached for advice and guidance on a wide range of safeguarding issues. This includes concerns about the health or behaviour of a student whether at application or enrolment stage. Working with the Counselling, Mental Health and Disability and Dyslexia Services through regular Complex Case meetings, the Head and Deputy Head of Student Services can assist colleagues across the college to build a network of support around vulnerable students. If the Complex Case meeting feels that an issue has been raised that gives concern that there is a risk that a student may cause harm to others that cannot be dealt with internally, the case may then be referred to the Safeguarding Panel to agree the appropriate action to take.

14. No agency or individual should supply personal information about a student or applicant without checking with the appropriate operational contact, as there are
established processes for doing so. Student Services can provide guidance on how to manage concerns through established College policies and procedures. Staff, students and visitors are strongly encouraged to seek support on any topic that could impact the health and safety of a member of the College. Concerns about the behaviour of employees should normally be flagged through line management structures and/or the Director of Human Resources.

Table 1 - Operational Contacts for Safeguarding

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Web resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head and Deputy Head of Student</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Safeguarding@bbk.ac.uk">Safeguarding@bbk.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>020 7631 6316</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck">www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Registrar</td>
<td><a href="mailto:academicregistrar@bbk.ac.uk">academicregistrar@bbk.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>020 7380 3056</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry">www.bbk.ac.uk/registry</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Human Resources</td>
<td><a href="mailto:humanresources@bbk.ac.uk">humanresources@bbk.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>020 7631 6000</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bbk.ac.uk/hr">www.bbk.ac.uk/hr</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendant Desk in Malet Street</td>
<td></td>
<td>020 7631 6031</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ef/facilities/security-attendants">www.bbk.ac.uk/ef/facilities/security-attendants</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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A 24-hour reception service is provided at the main building on Malet Street and 08.00h-22.00h, Monday - Friday. Weekends dependent on booking in Gordon Square, Clore Management Centre, 25-28 Russell Square, 30 Russell Square.

An Attendant/Security presence acts as a first point of response to breaches of security and to minimize criminal activity.

Safeguarding Panel

15. Where a safeguarding issue is referred to one of the officers above, they will normally convene a Safeguarding Panel to assess the risk to staff, students or visitors in the College community. The Safeguarding Panel may seek advice and expertise from a number of internal services e.g. Schools/Departments/Mental Health/Counselling Services as well as external ones e.g. College Psychiatrist/Police/NHS. Following a College level risk assessment, an external referral may be made for additional support. It is anticipated that the Safeguarding Panel will consider the following topics as part of any risk assessment. The impact and likelihood of each will also be considered.

Outline risk assessment

- What is the issue under consideration?
- Who could be/is potentially affected?
- What is the likelihood of the safeguarding issue occurring or repeating?
- Is there an imminent risk to staff, students, and visitors?
- Can the College manage the safeguarding issue internally?
16. A Safeguarding Panel will normally comprise representatives from Student Services, the relevant academic School/Department and Registry Services. The composition of each Panel is likely to vary given the nature of the safeguarding issue being considered. The Panel will include one or more members of academic staff if the issue has academic dimensions. Colleagues from other services, including External Relations and Estates and Facilities will be consulted for advice as appropriate, if the issue is linked to College facilities or wider public or media interest.

17. All members of the Panel are expected to undertake regular safeguarding and unconscious bias training. The Panel will also ensure equality and diversity is promoted in the membership. This will normally be through regular training briefing and sourcing expert opinion on equality issues where required.

18. The Safeguarding Panel would use the College’s existing operating and policy framework to manage situations on a case by case basis.

Notes:

For further information on College Policies and Procedures, please go to http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules
Appendix A – How to recognize a safeguarding issue

Disclosure and how to make a safeguarding referral?

18. You can raise a safeguarding issue in person, by phone or by email. As soon as you become aware of an issue, you should make a record of what the issue is and the individuals involved.

- Listen to what the individual is saying without interruption and without asking leading questions.
- Respect the person’s right to privacy but not promise confidentiality.
- Reassure the e.g. student that he/she has done the right thing in telling.
- Explain to the individual that in order to keep him/her safe from harm the information that has been shared must be passed on.
- Report what was has been disclosed.
- Record, as soon as is practical what was said in the individual’s own words.
- It is likely to be extremely difficult for a student to disclose abuse and all staff have a role in supporting students through this process and ensuring we help them give as much information as possible.
- If you have reason to believe that a student is at immediate risk of harm, including self-harm or suicide, bring them to the attention of a member of Student Services as soon as possible.

19. Actions to take if an individual makes a disclosure

- React calmly so as not to make the student more anxious or discourage them from telling more.
- Listen carefully to what the student says without interruption.
- Use open questions to encourage further information, but do not probe.
- It is OK to have periods of silence
- Take what the student says seriously.
- Reassure the student that he/she was right to tell, and that he/she is not to blame.
- Reassure the student that there are many sources of help and that you will help and support them in seeking help.
- Explain to the student that you will need to discuss with the Safeguarding Officer naming them – and state that you can be with them when they meet. It is often most appropriate to take them to meet the Safeguarding Officer providing they are comfortable with this.
- Make a full record of what was said, using their own words (don’t assume or paraphrase).
- Note the time and location.
- Report the matter to the Safeguarding Officer without delay.

20. Actions to avoid during a disclosure

- Panic – it may be difficult for you, however it is likely far more difficult for the student. If you are distressed by the disclosure inform the Safeguarding Officer for advice and support.
• Allow your shock or distaste to show.
• Probe for more information than is offered.
• Speculate or make assumptions.
• Make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
• Approach the alleged abuser.
• Make promises that you will be unable to keep, e.g. to keep this secret.
• Discuss the matter with colleagues/friends.

21. Recording

22. Make a brief signed note (using the student or individual's words) of any allegations:

• the names of any people who are present during the disclosure
• the date and time of the conversation, and a brief outline of what may have happened, when, and to whom (remember other children or vulnerable adults may be involved and at risk too)
• a brief description of any injuries which are visible or alleged
• any nonverbal signs that you noticed
• the individual's preferred action

23. The content of this report will inform the decision to convene a Safeguarding Panel.