Guidelines on dealing with suspicions or allegations of abuse in relation to safeguarding vulnerable groups

1. Definitions of Abuse
Abuse under the policy on safeguarding vulnerable groups includes:

- **physical abuse**, including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, or inappropriate sanctions;
- **sexual abuse**, including encouraging relevant individuals to look at pornography, harassing them by making sexual suggestions or comments, or sexual acts where the individual has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting;
- **psychological abuse**, including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks;
- **neglect and acts of omission**, including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating; and
- **financial or material abuse**, including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits;
- **discriminatory abuse**, including racist, sexist, that based on a person’s disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

2. Detecting abuse
There are a number of ways in which suspicions of abuse may be raised or actual abuse brought to your attention:

- A child/young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation may confide in you that they are being abused
- A colleague may report to you that a child/young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation has confided in them that they are being abused or that they have a suspicion that a child/young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation is being abused

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1 Adapted from the Department of Health 'No Secrets' publication. See http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4008486
• A child/young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation may display signs of physical abuse
• The behaviour of, or a change in the behaviour of a child/young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation, may suggest that they are being abused
• A colleague may confide in you that they have abused a child/young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation
• The behaviour of, or a change in the behaviour of a colleague, may suggest that they are abusing a child/young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation

3. Dealing with a suspicion or awareness of abuse

If you have a suspicion or are aware that a child/young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation is being abused you must act quickly but appropriately and professionally.

To assist in the reporting procedure please ensure that you:

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<tr>
<th><strong>DO</strong></th>
<th><strong>DO NOT</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Be accessible and receptive.</td>
<td>• Jump to conclusions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Listen carefully.</td>
<td>• Directly question the child or adult in a vulnerable situation or suggest words for him/her to use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Take it seriously.</td>
<td>• Try to get the child/young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation to disclose all the details.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reassure the child/ young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation that they are right to tell.</td>
<td>• Speculate or accuse anybody.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Negotiate getting help.</td>
<td>• Make promises you cannot keep.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Find help quickly.</td>
<td>• Give your opinion; just state the facts as reported to you.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Make careful records of what was said using the child's/young person’s/ adult in a vulnerable situation’s own words as soon as is practicable following the disclosure. Date, time and sign the record. This record would be used in any subsequent legal proceedings.</td>
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If you suspect abuse has taken place or abuse has been brought to your attention you are obliged to take action but you must also ensure at all times that the welfare of the child/young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation is paramount and the interests of the person against whom the allegation has been made are protected.

Where practicable you should obtain the following information:

• Contact details for the child/young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation
• Details of the allegation or suspicion including where known the name of the alleged abuser and the circumstances, which brought the alleged abuse to your attention

This information should be recorded on the attached form (see Annex A).

4. Reporting suspicions or allegations of abuse

You should immediately report any suspicion or allegation of abuse to either the Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions or the Director of Student Services and Employability (where the person alleged to have been abused is a student) or the Resourcing Manager (where the person alleged to have been abused is a member of staff)\(^2\). If you wish to report an allegation or suspicion of abuse out of hours please contact the University of Bristol Security Services.

Do not attempt to assess yourself whether or not the allegations are true and do not attempt to deal with any suspicion or report of abuse yourself.

The Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions or the Director of Student Services and Employability or the Resourcing Manager may\(^3\):

- Provide appropriate support for the child/young person/adult in a vulnerable situation
- Report the suspicion or allegation to the relevant agencies who may include the Police and/or Social Services and/or Disclosure and Barring Service ("DBS")
- Make a written record of the contact at any of these agencies to which the case is reported
- Provide appropriate support for the person against whom the allegation has been made
- Confirm to the person who originally reported the allegation that action has been taken

5. Person against whom the allegations have been made

The Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions or the Director of Student Services and Employability or the Resourcing Manager may consider whether it is appropriate to take action against the individual under either Ordinance

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\(^2\) The exception to this procedure would be any activity, such as mentoring or outreach work in schools, where any suspicions or allegations involving individuals that are not directly in the care of the University should be reported in accordance with any safeguarding policy or procedure that is established in the environment where this activity takes place. However, in such circumstances where the suspicions or allegations are made against an individual who is engaged in activity on behalf of the University, then the Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions or the Director of Student Services and Employability (where the individual is a student) or the Resourcing Manager (where the individual is a member of staff) should be informed.

\(^3\) This responsibility may be devolved as appropriate.
where the suspicions or allegations are made against a member of staff, or the Student Disciplinary Regulations where the suspicions or allegations are made against a student. The individual will be notified in writing if any such action is to be taken.

The University has a duty to take all allegations or suspicions of abuse seriously and to take the appropriate action, including referral to the DBS. In light of this anyone against whom an allegation has been made may be suspended from their employment or studies whilst appropriate investigations are undertaken. If the DBS subsequently bars a person against whom an allegation has been made (or at all), the University will not be permitted to engage the individual in regulated activity.

However, the University will extend its full support to the individual by ensuring that the line of communication remains open even where access to the University and its facilities is limited or prohibited.

6. Follow up Procedures
The Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions or the Director of Student Services and Employability or the Resourcing Manager will confirm to you the action that has been taken. If you feel that insufficient action has been taken and you still have concerns for the safety and welfare of the child/young person/ adult in a vulnerable situation you should report your suspicions or allegations again explaining why you feel the action taken to date is insufficient.

7. Data Protection
Under the Data Protection Act 1998, individuals have a right of access to personal data that relates to them. This right of access may include a right to request access to records (in whole or in part) relating to suspicions or allegations of abuse involving the person making the request. Further information on data protection can be accessed at:
http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/dataprotection

If any staff member receives a request from a person for access to personal data (held either about that person or another individual) in relation to suspicions or allegations of abuse, the request should be forwarded to the Information Rights Officer. Further advice on data protection can be obtained from the Information Rights Officer, University Secretary’s Office or via email to data-protection@bristol.ac.uk
ANNEX A

RECORD OF ALLEGATION OR SUSPICION OF ABUSE

Date & Time of Initial Report ........................................at ..........................

To: Responsible Person (Name): ......................................................................

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Complainant</th>
<th>Name and contact details of Child/ Young Person/ Adult in a vulnerable situation</th>
<th>Place of alleged abuse</th>
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Name(s) of people present ..............................................................................

Details of Allegation or Suspicion
Please give as much information about the allegation or suspicion, including if you suspect abuse what alerted your attention to the situation. Please include all names of the people involved.

Name person reporting incident (capitals): ......................................................

Signed: .......................................................... Date: ......................................

Dept: .......................................................... Ext No: ......................................

Email address: ..................................................................................................

Please return to the Director of Student Services and Employability or the Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions or the Resourcing Manager