

Protocol 3 - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups

Dealing with concerns about vulnerable persons

1.1 All concerns and incidents relating to vulnerable persons must be reported to the Designated Reporting Officer (DRO) in accordance with Section 12 of the Safeguarding Policy.. Reports should be made as soon as is practically possible. It is vital that even minor concerns are reported to a central individual in order to ensure that as full as possible a picture is available.

1.2 Any member of staff or student may report a concern about the safeguarding of a vulnerable person. Members of staff should not assume that someone else has raised a concern simply because other members of staff may have more direct contact with a vulnerable person. A member of staff might raise an issue of concern if:

- i. they have witnessed an incident in which a vulnerable person is harmed or abused.
- ii. a vulnerable person has disclosed or hinted at abuse or harm.
- iii. they have concerns about a vulnerable person because of their behaviour or appearance.
- iv. they have concerns about a vulnerable person because of the behaviour of an adult or because of something an adult has said.
- v. they are concerned about the behaviour of another member of staff.

1.3 Members of staff or students may raise concerns about any vulnerable person. They do not have to be a student or participant in Aberystwyth University's programmes or activities. For example, an adult student might disclose information in relation to a child; or the behaviour of an adult student who has the care of a child might give rise to concern.

1.4 Information on how to deal with disclosures of harm or abuse from a child is given in the Code of Conduct.

1.5 If a complaint or concern relates to the Designated Reporting Officer, the report should be made to a DVO.

1.6 Where the member of staff believes that the risk to the vulnerable person is both immediate and serious, the member of staff should contact the police or social services immediately and then make a report to the Designated Reporting Officer as soon as possible.

1.7 The Designated Reporting Officer (DRO) will determine whether a referral to the police or social services is necessary. A written record should be kept of this decision.

1.8 The Designated Reporting Officer will report to the Lead Safeguarding Officer on all reports of concern and incidents, including whether or not they were referred. Reports to the Safeguarding Group will be anonymised.

Summary of reporting of incidents and issues of concern

1.10. Dealing with complaints or allegations against members of staff

1.10.1 The complaints procedure for students is laid out in the Student Handbook.

1.10.2 Any member of staff who receives a complaint against a member of staff from a person under 18 must inform the Designated Reporting Officer (DRO).

1.10.3 The Designated Reporting Officer will determine whether the complaint is:

i. relating to purely academic matters (e.g. the grading of assignments),

or

ii. relating to issues relevant to vulnerable person protection including inappropriate conduct; abuse; harassment; bullying.

If it is decided that the complaint is purely academic the Designated Reporting Officer will record this decision and take no further action themselves.

If the complaint relates to issues relevant to vulnerable person protection, the Designated Reporting Officer should be kept informed of the process and outcome of the complaint in all cases.

1.10.4 Allegations of serious misconduct will be dealt with through the University's staff disciplinary procedures.

1.10.5 Aberystwyth University should ensure that staff who are subject to complaints or allegations from vulnerable persons receive support during any complaints or disciplinary procedure. This may be in the form of union representatives, or an independent advocate.

1.10.6 If complaints or allegations are substantiated, the Safeguarding Group should:

- ensure that any legal obligations to report concerns are complied with;
- hold a review to see if policies and practice should be changed in the light of the substantiated complaint

1.10.7 If a complaint or allegation is not substantiated:

- the member of staff involved should be offered continuing support after the procedure is closed. This could include reviewing their practice to avoid further allegations or counselling.
- the Safeguarding Group should hold a review to see if policies and practice should be changed to prevent future unsubstantiated complaints.
- there should be discreet follow up through the Designated Reporting Officer to the appropriate agency in case this is an indicator of concerns that the individual may have either at home or in another context.

