Safeguarding & Wellbeing Policy
Union Theological College

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Aims

This safeguarding policy is designed to protect children, young people, and adults at risk of harm involved in Union Theological College (UTC) activities, ensuring their safety and well-being.

This policy is essential for ensuring the safety and well-being of all individuals involved in UTC activities, reflecting a commitment to our Christian responsibilities in safeguarding practices.

This policy aims to both prevent any harm and to protect those in need

Union Theological College has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of abuse

IN AN EMERGENCY

If a student of UTC, member of faculty or staff, or member of the public is in immediate danger or at risk of harm to themselves or others contact emergency services on 999.

You should inform the relevant Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible

Key Responsibilities

Duty of Care

UTC has a duty of care to safeguard all individuals, particularly children and any adult at risk of harm, during any college-related activities. This responsibility extends to all staff, students, and volunteers.

Promoting the wellbeing of all

UTC understands its responsibilities as part of the wider student community to promote the general wellbeing of all engaged in its activities.
We will engage with one another respectfully, we will not tolerate sexual misconduct, violence or abuse, taking all reasonable steps to keep our campus and community safe.

Training and Awareness

Staff and volunteers are required to undergo relevant safeguarding training to understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting individuals from harm.

Reporting Procedures

This policy outlines clear reporting and escalation routes for staff and students to follow if they become aware of any safeguarding concerns. This includes the need to report issues to appropriate external agencies when necessary. UTC believes in an open and transparent approach.

Rights & responsibilities

Students, staff and visitors to the UTC have the right to learn and work in a positive environment that is free from harm and all forms of prejudice, harassment, discrimination and bullying.
We all equally have a responsibility to ensure that we do not engage in or collude with any behaviours of the same nature. We all have a responsibility to safeguard one another.

"UTC" and "we" means all engaged in the mission and educational endeavors of UTC. That is; students, research associates, faculty, staff, recognised teachers and volunteers

Scope of the Policy

The safeguarding policy applies to all UTC activities, including teaching, research, sports, outreach programs, and any other interactions with children and vulnerable adults. It recognizes that safeguarding is a shared responsibility across the campus community.

We aim for our policy to go beyond the basic principles of safeguarding with a view to good practice established in safeguarding for all, especially focused on the higher educational sector.

We understand that robust safeguarding practices in UTC are an integral part of our Mission and when we do it well, we are proclaiming the excellencies of our Lord Jesus.

Compliance with Legislation

The legislation and guidance underpinning this policy for both children and adults at risk in Northern Ireland include but are not limited to the following:

- The Children (NI) Order 1995
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007
- Access NI's Code of Practice (October 2020)
- Department of Health: Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI (March 2016 & August 2017)
- Adult Safeguarding: Prevention to Protection in Partnership Policy (DHSSPS 2015)
- NIASP Adult Protection Operating Procedures, Adults at risk of harm and Adults in need of protection (2016)
- The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008
- The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998
- The Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986
- Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016
- The Human Trafficking & Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (NI) 2015
- The Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989
- The Protection from Stalking Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

Safeguarding General

We have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children and adults at risk of harm can live, learn and develop.

We understand that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk of harm is everyone's responsibility and we all have a role to play in protecting them in so far as we are reasonably able to do so within the context of this environment and our specific activities.

- Responsibilities of the UTC Safeguarding Team (On site Designated Safeguarding Lead/s)

  - To promote safeguarding and wellbeing understanding and strategies
  - To ensure the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures are understood and adopted by all
  - To ensure that they are accessible to all, and all know how to contact them with any safeguarding concerns
  - To screen all potential safeguarding issues and know when and how to make external referrals
  - To ensure follow-up with all safeguarding issues
  - To ensure safe and confidential record keeping for all safeguarding issues
  - To work closely with the Chaplaincy Team in pastoral care issues to ensure safeguarding concerns are being identified
  - To provide an annual audit of safeguarding and present to the management committee
  - To develop links with external professionals and agencies who can give expert advice and support to students and staff if required
  - To keep up to date with their own safeguarding training and understanding

- Responsibilities of the Management Committee

  - To ensure UTC has an up to date and relevant suite of safeguarding and associated policies and procedures and review these at least once every three years
  - To draft and review all Codes of Conduct / Charters at least once every three years
  - To ensure that recruitment and appointment policies and procedures are in line with regional legislation
  - To supervise and support the Designated Safeguarding Lead/s
  - To advise on wider policy and procedures, breaches and disciplinary issues that may have connections with safeguarding
  - To review the annual auditing of safeguarding and establish any associated strategies to strengthen safeguarding practices
  - To ensure they have kept their own safeguarding training up to date

- Responsibilities of Academic and Professional Service Departments (faculty and staff)

  - To attend required training and adhere to policy requirements

  To ensure they understand their responsibilities to each other and to faculty and staff in regards to safeguarding

- Responsibilities of Students in the UTC Community

  - To ensure they understand and comply with their responsibilities to each other and to faculty and staff in regards to safeguarding
  - To behave in a manner that is in keeping with the ethos and values of the institution and in line with the student charter

Responding a Safeguarding Concern

This safeguarding procedure is to be followed whenever a concern is raised or a disclosure made that a child, young person or adult at risk may be a victim of abuse or exploitation.

It should not be used if someone is in immediate danger, when the emergency services should be called.

See *Appendix 1* for more information on abuse and definitions of abuse.

Where any faculty or staff member of UTC, or its Management Committee, becomes aware of a possible safeguarding concern or receives a disclosure or an allegation they should:

- Reassure the individual for whom there are concerns. Ensure their immediate safety and wellbeing;
- Advise them what they are going to do next and whom they need to share the information with;
- Make a written report of all the relevant details: name, student number (if relevant), detail(s) of the person raising the concern, reasons for the cause for concern including any specific incidents, actions or observations (*See Reporting Form Appendix 2*);
- Contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay and send them the written report as soon as practicable. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be responsible for responding to the concern
- It is **not** the responsibility of any faculty or staff member of UTC to investigate or confirm instances of abuse or harm. This is the role of statutory services, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead will make the decision if statutory services should be consulted and/or advised in the first instance.
  If statutory services become involved UTC staff will take their lead from them;
- If the situation does not need escalated to statutory services, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should ensure they have recorded the decision making for this conclusion;
- In this circumstance, wherever possible and appropriate, meet with the person about whom the concerns have been raised, usually (unless in exceptional circumstances where this is impossible or inappropriate) with an appropriate professional member of staff or faculty;
- Take a written record of any such meeting;
- Reach a decision on what action is required appropriate to the person's safeguarding needs and the situation, including referral to external agencies where appropriate (for example signposting to counselling).

Depending on the circumstances of the case and whom is involved, the Designated Safeguarding Lead may also need to refer the matter under the relevant College Regulations and Policies

If the matter is the subject of a criminal investigation, UTC is entitled to pursue its own or complementary confidential enquiries and disciplinary action. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will consult with the relevant agencies in such cases.

Reporting a safeguarding concern

UTC is responsible for ensuring it maintains accurate records of safeguarding concerns, allegations and disclosures in accordance with the UTC Data Retention Policy.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for ensuring mechanisms for appropriate recording are in place and for onward (anonymised) reporting into the UTC's Management Committee.

All safeguarding concerns, allegations and disclosures will be treated in confidence.

To ensure the safety and welfare of all children, young people and adults at risk, information will be shared as soon as possible with organisations who will be involved in addressing the safeguarding concern (this may include other educational organisations, the local Trust or PSNI/Garda.)

Every effort will be made to gain the consent of the individual prior to sharing information but information may be shared without consent where there are reasonable grounds and concern of further risk of harm.

The child, young person or adult at risk should be advised that the information will be shared with those who will address the concern.

UTC's record will include who has been given the information and why.

Designated Safeguarding Officers

Name	Role	Contact
Prof Michael McClenahan	Principal	028 9020 5080
Rev Peter Gamble	Deputy Clerk	028 9041 7204
Mrs Jayne Bellingham	PCI Safeguarding Lead	02890417234 safeguarding@presbyterianireland.org

Gibson Chambers

UTC offers accommodation for students. This is for students aged 18+ only. A link to their student handbook can be found below.

All of the safeguarding procedures outlined in this policy apply to any safeguarding issues arising through Gibson Chambers and to Gibson Chambers residents and associated staff.

handbook-2025---26.pdf

Prevention & Wellbeing

(A Prevention and Wellbeing Policy, which will be guided by the following principles, is being developed)

Stalking

We believe that UTC plays a role in preventing the prevalence of stalking and associated behaviours and bringing stalking to an end.

We understand there is a need to promote education and prioritise the safety of our students, both within their premises and in their broader communities.

Extremism

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA) creates a statutory duty for specified public authorities (including universities) to "have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".
Prevent is one of four strands of the government's counter-terrorism strategy.

We understand our role and responsibilities to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism. Recognising radicalisation as a form of harm, UTC integrates Prevent obligations into its duty of care for all stakeholders.

We aim to balance these requirements with our commitment to embracing diversity and safeguarding academic freedom and freedom of speech.

Bullying & Harassment

Bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct are contrary to UTC ethos, values and mission and are never acceptable. No member of the UTC community is expected to tolerate such behaviour.

We aim to promote a positive environment in which people are treated fairly and with respect and are clear that bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct are unacceptable.

Suicide Prevention

Suicide-safer universities provides guidance for universities on preventing student suicide. We aim to embed these good practices in our student and staff community.

We agree that, "suicide prevention, intervention and postvention must focus on whole populations to build aware and compassionate communities. It should form part of broader action to tackle the situational determinants of mental distress, as well as an individual's capacity to stay well and confidence to ask for help when needed." *(Suicide Safer Universities)*

Whistleblowing

UTC is committed to promoting educational excellence with honesty, integrity and transparency.

We recognise that there will always remain a risk of things going wrong, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct.

A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur.

UTC will promote an environment where individuals feel safe in the knowledge that raising whistleblowing concerns will be supported and not result in any form of retaliation.

Glossary of definitions

Safeguarding refers to all activity that relates to the development and wellbeing of children, including raising awareness activity, promotion of safe practices, and preventative measures to ensure children never come to any harm. It is wider than the term child protection, which refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are

suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm *(Co-operating to Safeguard Children and young People in Northern Ireland Oct 2024)*

A Child; *the Children (NI) Order 1995* defines a 'child' as a person under the age of 18

An '**Adult in need of protection'** is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

a) personal characteristics AND/OR

b) life circumstances AND

c) who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests; AND

d) where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed. *Adult Safeguarding: Prevention to Protection in Partnership Policy (DHSSPS 2015)*

Staff References to "staff" includes employees, workers, agency workers, consultants, volunteers, honorary, visiting, and Emeritus professors.

Student References to "student" includes all students registered with UTC, including those based in partner organisations who are registered with the college to gain a professional qualification.

Visitor "Visitors" are considered to be any external individuals who are participating in UTC-led activities, this includes prospective students, visitors to the College premises, invited speakers, family and friends of students and any relevant PCI personnel.

Volunteer "Volunteers" are generally members of the UTC but may include other associated persons volunteering to lead or support UTC-led activities for which they are not paid including, initiatives, or supporting recruitment or widening participation and outreach events.

Statutory Authorities in Northern Ireland refers to Trust or Gateway Teams who are responsible for all child or adult protection matters, and/or the PSNI who are empowered under legislation to investigate possible criminal offences

Harm is defined in the *Children (NI) Order 1995* as ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development. The Order states that 'ill-treatment' includes sexual abuse, forms of ill-treatment which are physical and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical; 'health' means physical and / or mental health; and 'development' means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development

Significant Harm is defined in *Article 50(3) of the Children (NI) Order 1995* which states that "where the question of whether harm suffered by a child is significant turns on the child's health or development, his health or development shall be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child"

Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm or significant harm.
Harm can be caused by; Physical abuse / Sexual abuse / Emotional abuse / Neglect / Exploitation / Ill treatment of another, or abusive behaviour directed at another *(Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland Oct 2024)*

Prevention is the importance of preventing problems occurring or worsening through the introduction of timely supportive measures

APPENDIX 1

What constitutes adult abuse, where abuse can occur and who can abuse & Definitions of Abuse

Abuse is a 'single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to another individual or violates their human or civil rights'. *(Action on Elder Abuse: definition of abuse 1993 which can be accessed atwww.elderabuse.org.uk/Mainpages/Abuse/abuse.html This was later adopted by the World Health Organisationwww.who.int/ageing/projects/elder_abuse/en/)*

Abuse is the misuse of power and control that one person has over another. It can involve direct and indirect contact and can include online abuse.

Abuse is described in regional policies under the following terms:

P Physical
P Psychological
F Financial
I Institutional
N Negelct
E Exploitation
S Sexual

Additionally, there are three related (they have their own separate safeguarding procedures in place) definitions;

Domestic violence /abuse
Human trafficking / modern slavery
Hate crime

Abuse can happen anywhere, *for example*; in someone's own home, within day care, residential care, nursing care or other institutional settings, at work or in educational settings, in church property at church organisations, or in public.

Anyone can be an abuser. Faculty, staff and students should be aware that abusers come from all sections of society, all professions and all races and can be male or female, of any age.
As painful as it may be, we must remain open to the fact that people may be a part of the College community, in order to get easier access to abuse people.

Recognise

There are a number of ways in which you may become aware that an adult is at risk;

- They may tell you
- Someone else may tell you
- You may witness something that gives you cause for concern
- You may see signs of physical injury that have no credible explanation
- An individual's behaviour or demeanour may change or give you cause for concern
- The behaviour of another individual around an adult may be inappropriate

Respond

Confidentiality;
When anyone has a concern about an adult, that concern needs to be recorded and reported on a 'need to know' basis.

All staff, faculty and students should be clear that information relating to a concern, disclosure, allegation or suspicion should only be passed on to the relevant people whose task it is to decide what action to take.

Do;

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully
- Express concern and acknowledge what has been shared
- Reassure the individual
- Advise the individual what will happen next, of all actions you will take
- Explain the limits of confidentiality
- Ensure the immediate safety of the person
- If emergency assistance is required (medical/PSNI/Garda), call emergency services
- If there has been potentially a crime committed be aware medical forensic evidence may be required, act without delay

Do not;

- Panic
- Ignore; if you are at all unsure about what is occurring, report to those responsible for safeguarding in your church immediately
- Stop someone from disclosing
- Promise to keep secrets
- Press for more details or ask investigatory questions; allow for free recall
- Gossip or discuss with anyone who does not have a legitimate need to know. This includes for the purposes of prayer.
- Contact the alleged perpetrator
- Leave details with anyone on voicemail or email
- Delay

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is physical force or mistreatment of one person by another which might or might not cause physical injury. This type of abuse includes:

- hitting
- pushing
- rough handling
- exposure to heat or cold
- force feeding
- improper administration of medication
- denial of treatment
- misuse or illegal use of restraint
- not being allowed to go where you wish, when you wish

Signs of physical abuse are:

- fractures
- bruising
- burns
- pain
- marks

- not wanting to be touched

Psychological (or emotional abuse)

Psychological or emotional abuse is harmful behaviour that can cause mental distress. It can involve both verbal and non-verbal abuse which can scare, humiliate and isolate a person.

This may include:

- threats
- humiliation or ridicule
- provoking fear of violence
- shouting, yelling and swearing
- blaming
- controlling
- intimidation
- coercion

Signs of psychological abuse are:

- being withdrawn
- too eager to do everything they are asked
- showing compulsive behaviour
- not being able to do things they used to
- not being able to concentrate or focus

Financial abuse

Financial abuse happens if someone tries to steal, steals or defrauds you of your money, goods or property. This includes:

- exploitation
- embezzlement
- withholding pension or benefits
- exerting pressure around wills, property or inheritance

Signs of financial abuse are:

- having unusual difficulty with finances
- not having enough money
- being too protective of money and things they own
- not paying bills
- not having normal home comforts

Institutional abuse

Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult at risk by a regime or individuals. It takes place within settings and services that adults at risk live in or use, including any organisation, in or outside the Health and Social Care sector.

Institutional abuse may occur:

- when routines, systems and regimes result in poor standards of care
- when poor practice and behaviours are in place
- within strict regimes and rigid routines which violate the dignity and human rights of the adults and place them at risk of harm
- within a culture that denies, restricts or curtails privacy, dignity, choice and independence

Possible signs are:

- the person has no personal clothing or belongings
- there is no care plan for them
- they are admitted often to hospital
- professionals having treated them badly or unsatisfactorily or acting in a way that cause harm to the person

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a person deliberately withholds, or fails to provide, suitable and adequate care and support needed by another adult. It may be through a lack of knowledge or awareness, or through a decision not to act when they know the adult in their care needs help. It may impair the health or well-being of an adult.

Possible signs are:

- having pain or discomfort
- being very hungry, thirsty or untidy
- failing health

Exploitation

Exploitation is the deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person. It is taking advantage of another person or situation usually, but not always, for personal gain.

Exploitation comes in many forms, including:

- slavery
- being controlled by a person or a group
- forced labour
- domestic violence and abuse
- sexual violence and abuse
- human trafficking

Recognising signs of harm or abuse

- you might become aware that an adult is at risk of harm when:
- you see or hear something
- they tell you about abuse, exploitation or neglect happening to them
- a friend, family member or somebody tells you something that causes you concern
- you notice injuries or physical signs that cause you concern
- you notice the victim or abuser behaving in a way that alerts something may be wrong

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity or sexual behaviour that happens without consent or understanding.

Sexual violence and abuse can be physical contact or non-contact sexual activities, such as:

- indecent exposure
- stalking
- grooming
- forced to look at or be involved in producing sexually abusive material
- forced to watch sexual activities

Possible signs are:

- genital itching, soreness or having a sexually transmitted disease
- using bad language
- not wanting to be touched
- behaving in a sexually inappropriate way
- changes in appearance

APPENDIX 2

Safeguarding Incident Report Form

This form is to be used to record basic information in the light of an allegation, suspicion, or disclosure of a potential safeguarding concern. Completing this record should not stand in the way of contacting Police or other agencies in the event of an emergency or urgent safeguarding incident.

Name & contact details of the person completing this form (YOU):

Date and time of completing this form:

Your position or relationship to who safeguarding concern is about

Name/names of person/s the safeguarding concern or incident is about & any known contact details *(please include age of the person if known)*

Date and time of any incident/disclosure/noted concern

If a child, name and address of parent, carer or guardian of alleged victim, if known

What have you witnessed or been told? (if a disclosure please write down what your were told in the persons own words)

Action taken so far (please include dates and times actions were taken, and everyone this has been discussed with)

External agencies contacted, e.g. PSNI or Trust (if yes include the professionals name and contact number)

If reported to statutory bodies record here the details of the person you spoke to and the advice and instruction you have received

Signature and date

A copy of this form should be sent to the UTC Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible, but after any urgent or emergency calls that you feel need to be made