

GSA Policy

Safeguarding Policy

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Policy Tracking

Implementation date:	
Manager responsible for implementation:	CEO
Trustee responsible for interpretation:	Chair of Trustees

Linked Policies / Legislation / Guidance

- Charity Commission, Policy Paper, Strategy for dealing with safeguarding issues in charities (2017)
- Charity Commission, Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees (2018)
- Instruct UK, Safeguarding and Protecting Young People or Vulnerable Adults (2019).
- NCVO, Safeguarding for volunteer involving organisations.
- Section 29 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- UK Government Prevent & Contest Strategies (2011)

- University of York Prevent Policy
- University of York Safeguarding Policy
- GSA Safeguarding Policy 2023
- GSA Employee Handbook
- GSA Health and Safety Policy

1. Introduction

The Charity Commission's strategy for dealing with safeguarding issues in charities makes clear that "protecting people and safeguarding should be a governance priority for all charities" and not just those working with children or groups traditionally considered at risk.¹

The University of York Graduate Students' Association (GSA) shares the University's commitment to provide a safe and secure environment for all staff, students and visitors who access its services and facilities. Further GSA is committed, so far as is reasonably practicable, to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk that participate in any of GSA's activities on its property and at any other location.

GSA recognises that anyone working with children, young people and adults at risk has a moral and legal duty to ensure their safety and protection.

This policy sets out how this will be achieved. It is a reference for all staff and students involved in activities with children, young people and adults at risk. In adopting this policy, GSA is taking reasonable steps to:

- Provide a friendly, secure and comfortable environment for the benefit and enjoyment of all students and visitors taking into consideration the needs of all concerned;
- Keep them safe from harm while in the company of its staff, elected officers or representatives and volunteers;
- Support and protect the interests of staff, elected officers or representatives and volunteers who have contact with, or access to, children, young people and adults at risk.

2. Scope

This policy is designed to underpin the University of York Graduate Students' Association's commitment to safeguarding children, young people, and adults at risk. This policy provides all those working or volunteering for the GSA (career staff, student-staff, student volunteers and trustees) with guidance on their responsibilities regarding safeguarding. It also outlines the various procedures staff and volunteers should adhere

¹ Charity Commission, *Strategy for dealing with Safeguarding issues in charities*, December 2017

to if they suspect a child, young person or adult at risk is experiencing, or has the potential to experience, some form of harm.

The policy is also designed to aid students who are members of one of the GSA's Volunteering Projects, and outlines the process that volunteers should follow if they have safeguarding concerns when frequenting the premises of a volunteering project or undertaking any aspect of volunteering.

All staff, volunteers and trustees are expected to comply with this policy.

3. Definitions

Child: Anyone who is under 18 (or under 16 if in employment). (*Criminal Justice and Court Services Act, 2000*).

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): GSA's CEO responsible for coordinating the organisation's safeguarding practice and main point of contact for individuals wishing to report safeguarding concerns.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS): The DBS is the non-departmental public body responsible for providing records information to enable better informed and safer recruitment decisions by identifying candidates that may be unsuitable for certain work, particularly that involving children or vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding: refers to the protection of vulnerable adults and children from harm or neglect.

Staff: All individuals who are paid by the GSA in some form of employment. This includes, but is not limited to, full-time staff, part-time staff, student members of staff, and Sabbatical Officers.

Young Person: Anyone between the ages of 16 and 18. (*Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service*).

Vulnerable Adult (Adult at Risk): Anyone over the age of 18 who i) has need for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs); ii) is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and iii) as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it. (*Care Act, 2014*).

Volunteers: Students who are participating in one of the GSA's 'student opportunities'. This includes, but is not limited to: societies, sport teams, RAG projects, volunteering projects, and representation networks.

4. Types and indicators of abuse

The University of York Graduate Students' Association recognises that there are different forms of abuse. What follows are definitions of different types of abuse, and to ensure clarity, examples of what some types of abuse may involve, as well as common indicators of abuse².

Physical Abuse

Any non-accidental act or behaviour towards a person causing injury, trauma, or other physical suffering or bodily harm.

Common indicators: Injuries in unusual positions; injuries inconsistent with age, ability or lifestyle of the person; apparent finger marks, slap marks, bite marks, burns and/or fractures on the body.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse may involve physical, sexual, psychological or financial abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse can involve forcing or enticing a child, young person or adult at risk to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the individual is aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

May involve: Physical contact including assault by penetration (rape or oral sex); non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. Can also include non-contact activities such as involving children or adults at risk in looking at, or in the production of sexual images; watching sexual activities; grooming a

² Content in this section is taken and/or adapted from: *Safeguarding and Protecting Young People or Vulnerable Adults, an Instruct UK Publication (2019)*.

child or adult at risk in preparation for abuse; encouraging a child to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Common indicators: Detailed sexual knowledge inappropriate to the age of the child; sexually explicit language and behaviour; increased frequency of visits to the toilet and bed-wetting; fear of medical examinations and being alone.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a person such as to cause severe adverse effects on the person's mental health, emotional development, and self-esteem. This may involve making the person feel worthless, unloved, and/or inadequate.

Financial or Material Abuse

May involve: Theft; fraud; exploitation; pressure in connection with wills; property and inheritance; financial transactions; misuse of misappropriation of property; possessions or benefits.

Common indicators: Unexplained sudden inability to pay bills or maintain lifestyle; unusual or inappropriate bank account activity; withholding money; recent change of deeds or title of property etc.

Modern Slavery

Modern Slavery encompasses slavery, human trafficking, and forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhuman treatment.

Common indicators: Poor dishevelled appearance, poor command of English or awareness of local environment, unwillingness to provide basic information about self.

Neglect or Acts of Omission

This may involve 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 or heating.

Common indicators: Failure to thrive; constant hunger and/or tiredness, malnutrition, steals food; poor hygiene; frequent accidental injuries and illnesses.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a procedure where the female genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed, but where there is no medical reason for this to be done. This procedure is illegal in the UK and is a form of child abuse.

Forced Marriage

Forced marriage takes place when the bride, groom or both do not want to get married but are forced to do so by others. Forced marriage is linked to 'honour based violence' where crimes and incidents take place because of a perceived need to protect or defend the honour of the family or community.

5. Named person(s) for safeguarding

As part of its commitment to ensuring the safety of all children, young people and adults at risk, the University of York Graduate Students' Association operates a designated safeguarding lead system for the purposes of safeguarding with a member of staff whose portfolio include taking an organisational lead on the GSA's safeguarding responsibilities. This will be the CEO

Due to the sensitive nature of the Designated Lead role an enhanced DBS check will be undertaken.

The roles and responsibilities of the designated safeguarding lead is:

- To ensure that the Safeguarding Policy is implemented and that all staff and students receive the appropriate information, advice and training in relation to the policy.
- To be a central point of contact in GSA for safeguarding vulnerable individuals, acting on, recording and referring concerns appropriately.
- To keep up to date on changes to policies, procedures and legislation, informing staff as appropriate.

It is **not** the responsibility of the safeguarding lead to undertake any assessment of risk themselves; this is the role of Children's or Adult's Social Care Services.

The Designated Lead role will be covered by the HR and Finance Manager in the instances of staff absence.

To report an issue please email: ceo@yorkgsa.org

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Name: Jonny Exon

Job Title: CEO

Email: ceo@yorkgsa.org

6. Roles and responsibilities

The University of York Graduate Students' Association Responsibilities

The University of York Graduate Students' Association will:

- Ensure all staff and volunteers have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy;
- Design and undertake all its activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with GSA. This includes the way in which information about individuals engaging with the organisation, for whatever purpose, is gathered, stored and communicated;
- Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and associated individuals;
- Ensure staff and volunteers receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the organisation;
- Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process;
- Ensure appropriate welfare support is available for all staff and volunteers who may have to respond to safeguarding concerns and/or allegations.

Staff Responsibilities

Staff are expected to:

- Adhere to all of the GSA's policies and codes of conduct to ensure that the highest level of professionalism and conduct is maintained at all times;

- Report any concerns about a child, young person or vulnerable adult promptly, and by following the procedures outlined in this policy;
- Respond to any allegations of abuse against a child, young person, or vulnerable adult in a calm manner, promptly, and by following the procedures outlined in this policy;
- Partake in any training provided by the GSA on safeguarding to ensure that their knowledge is appropriate for their role and responsibilities within the organisation;
- Ensure they are familiar with this policy, and to raise any questions or concerns they may have with their line-manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Volunteer Responsibilities

Volunteers participating in GSA opportunities are expected to:

- Adhere to all of the GSA's policies and codes of conduct relating to student members to ensure that the safety of themselves and others remains paramount;
- Report any concerns about a child, young person, or vulnerable adult promptly, and by following the procedures outlined in this policy;
- Respond to any allegations of abuse against a child, young person, or adult at risk in a calm manner, promptly, and by following the procedures outlined in this policy;
- Ensure they are familiar with this policy, and to raise any questions or concerns they may have with the staff-lead for their student group type;
- Engage with and complete the appropriate training module on safeguarding as outlined in their (re)ratification process;
- Seek support from the GSA's Advice and Support Team, or a member of staff in the Events and Communications Team, or another service provider, if they require support following the reporting of a concern or responding to a disclosure/allegation.

Working with under 18s (including minors)

- GSA representatives are expected to take reasonable steps to determine whether the people they are working with are aged under 18.
- GSA representatives should take steps to avoid direct unsupervised contact with anyone aged under 18 as part of their GSA duties. Any meeting/activity with someone under 18 should take place in the presence of another GSA representative or other responsible adult acceptable to the person aged under 18, such as a parent, guardian or teacher;
- Where it is not possible for genuine practical reasons (to do with the specific circumstances of the situation) to meet a person aged under 18 in the presence of another responsible adult, any meeting should be in an open environment. The

arrangement should be made in advance and the time, date, location and reason for the meeting should be communicated to another GSA employee and recorded.

- Meetings on GSA business with under 18s should take place on campus and should never take place in private residences.

Student GSA representatives, both staff and volunteers, also **should not**:

- Be left alone for substantial periods of time with children, young people, or adults at risk. Where one-to-one work is necessary the representative should inform another staff member where they are going, with whom, and for how long;
- Permit abusive behaviour by others or engage in it themselves;
- Show favouritism to, or become too closely associated with an individual;
- Allow or engage in suggestive remarks, gestures, or touching or a kind which could be misunderstood;
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts;
- Communicate in inappropriate ways including using social networking sites or giving under 18s or vulnerable adults personal addresses, telephone numbers, personal social networking details or home addresses. Best practice is for GSA and educational establishment email addresses and contact details to be used for all communications. Generally GSA representatives should follow the principle that any contact outside of the volunteering setting is not appropriate. Any use of social networking sites should be in line with GSA's policy on the use of social media;
- Allow boundaries to be unsafe in informal settings;
- Take any action that would lead a reasonable person to question their motives or behave in a way that could be regarded as bringing GSA into disrepute or opening GSA up to legal liability;
- Hesitate to share concerns on any of these matters with the appropriate person.

7. Duties to young people in education on the estate

In some instances, GSA may be required to work with young people who are employed by the Students' GSA or the University as an apprentice. Any organisation responsible for educating someone under the age of 18 has statutory responsibilities under current legislation to safeguard them against harm. GSA will therefore:

- Ensure that all relevant employees, representatives and/or student volunteers are aware of current government legislation regarding safeguarding those in apprenticeships;
- Ensure that any staff working with apprentices have had an appropriate DBS check and that the organisation is confident they can operate in a position of trust;
- Adhere to and demonstrate a commitment to the Prevent Duty (section 9);
- Demonstrate a commitment to British Values;
- Adhere to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

8. Extremism and radicalisation

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism. Extremism is vocal or active opposition to inclusive values, such as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

Teaching an individual extremist views and radicalisation is a form of child abuse as classified by the NSPCC.

If you have a concern about an individual regarding extremism or radicalisation please proceed with the following procedure:

1. If the individual is **not** at risk of immediate harm, please inform GSA's designated lead as soon as possible. They will then decide on the most appropriate course of action, which may include making a referral to the local authority's children's services or the police.
2. If the child or young person in question is at risk of immediate harm:
 - a. Please contact the emergency services on 999.
 - b. Alternatively, if the risk is on the University of York campus, University Security can be contacted on. A member of staff will then liaise with the emergency services as appropriate.

In either of these instances, please inform GSA's CEO and Prevent Lead as soon as possible.

9. Online safeguarding

The University of York Graduate Students' Association is also committed to ensure that children, young people and adults at risk are safe and protected when engaging with our services in an online environment. It will seek to achieve this by:

- Ensuring that staff, representatives and students have access to an online activity risk assessment template that includes a section on appropriate safeguarding precautions to take;
- Ensure staff have access to appropriate training materials online safeguarding commensurate with the level of responsibility and nature of their role;
- Ensure student groups have access to appropriate training regarding online safeguarding commensurate with the type of activity they are undertaking;
- Ensure that staff, students and other relevant parties are familiar with GSA's digital policies.

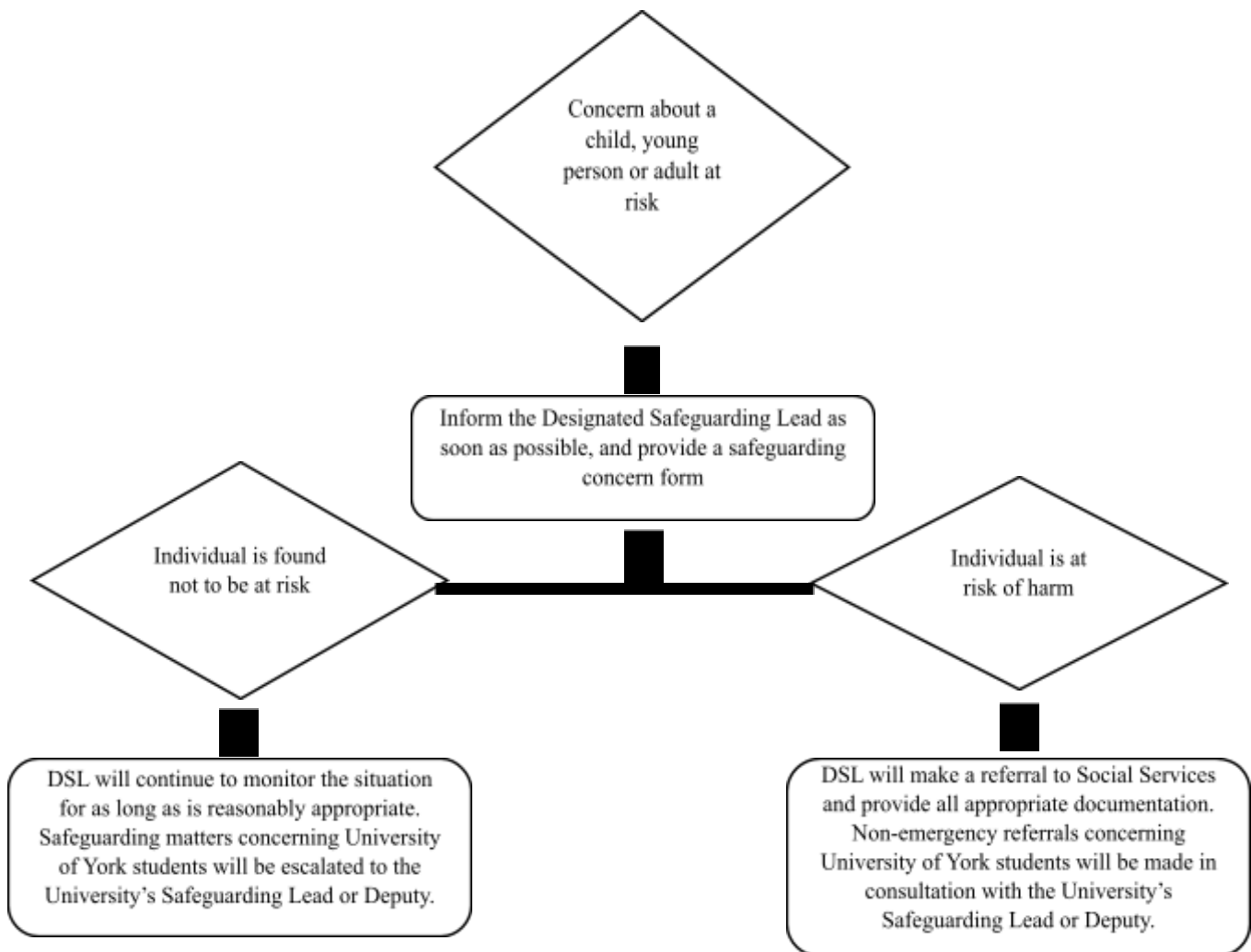
10. What to do if you are concerned about a child, young person, or adult at risk

If an individual is concerned about a child, young person, or adult at risk, then they are expected to report their concerns following the process outlined below.

A concern about the welfare of an individual may occur due to:

- A disclosure from a child, young person, or adult at risk;
- Self-disclosure of an adult;
- An anonymous disclosure;
- Content included in a letter, phone call, or email;
- The appearance of a child, young person or adult at risk;
- Inappropriate or out-of-the-ordinary behaviour of a child, young person, or adult at risk;
- An observation made of an abusive incident;
- A report of bullying;
- Witnessing domestic abuse where children are in the home;
- Being informed of a concern by a work colleague;
- Material evidence found or provided;
- Whistleblowing by staff about a member of staff.

If you are concerned about the welfare of an individual:



If at any point in this process the individual is at risk of immediate harm, staff should call 999 and involve the emergency services.

11. Responding to a disclosure and/or allegation of abuse

There may be instances where an individual will disclose one or more of the following scenarios:

- That they have, or currently are, being subjected to abuse;
- That they believe someone else is being abused;
- That they believe someone is abusing another individual

If a GSA representative is the recipient of a disclosure, they should:

1. Remain calm and listen carefully, reassuring the person that they have done the right thing speaking to you.
2. Separate the individual making the allegation from the individual being accused, if appropriate. Under no circumstances should the staff member confront the alleged abuser.
3. The individual making the disclosure/allegation should be offered the opportunity to speak somewhere private, and without judgement, if required. Questions should only be asked for clarification.
4. Do not promise to keep any secrets.
5. The staff member receiving the disclosure/allegation should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately. The DSL will then seek advice and guidance from Social Services and determine what the most appropriate course of action to take is.
6. The staff member who received the disclosure/allegation should complete a safeguarding concern form in as much detail as possible. The form should be completed as soon as possible to ensure the maximum amount of detail can be achieved. When completing the safeguarding report form, the staff member should:
 - a. Include the name of the individual making the disclosure/allegation;
 - b. Describe, in as much detail as possible, what the individual told them. If they can quote the individual at times, they should;
 - c. Record whether there is any physical signs of injury;
 - d. Record what steps the staff member took;
 - e. Sign and date the report form.
7. All appropriate staff members will cooperate fully with any investigation that takes place.
8. If the disclosure/allegation implicates another staff member as an abuser, they will be immediately removed from having contact with children, young people, and adults at risk.

9. If the disclosure/allegation implicates another student at the University of York, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will involve the University by following the institution's Safeguarding Policy.
10. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

12. DBS checks

Some of our projects may require volunteers to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The University of York Graduate Students' Association provides (enhanced) DBS Checks to both staff and volunteers, when deemed appropriate.

A staff member will be provided with an Enhanced DBS Check if:

- They disclose a criminal conviction when applying to work for the organisation;
- Their role requires them to work in regular³ close proximity with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults.

Staff checks will be updated at three year intervals.

A volunteer will be provided with a DBS Check of an appropriate level where:

- They are volunteering in a school, hospital, care home or any other institution where they will work with children, young people and vulnerable adults, **and** such activities would be defined as **regulated activity** as defined by the [Department for Education \(children\)](#) and [Department for Health \(adults\)](#);
- The partner organisation requires an (enhanced) DBS check for individuals to volunteer with them.

Exceptional circumstances may also result in an (enhanced) DBS check being provided for staff and volunteers. Decisions about this will be made on a case-by-case basis:

- For staff, the HR Manager, the employee's line manager and, if applicable, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will make the decision
- For volunteers, the Community Manager, Fundraising and Volunteering Coordinator and, if applicable, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will make the decision.

³ Regular activity is defined as working with a child, young person or adult at risk, in regulated activity, at least once a week or at least 4 times in 30 days.

DBS requirements will be reviewed to coincide with the policy review.

The fact that someone has a conviction or a caution would not necessarily prevent them from taking up or continuing in employment or volunteer roles with GSA, however serious consideration by the CEO, in conjunction with the HR and Finance Manager and Trustee Board as appropriate would be given to the information that has been received before a decision is made.

13. Recording and storing information

All safeguarding concerns will be recorded and stored confidentially, and in-line with the University of York Student GSA's data protection policy and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). This extends to low level concerns that do not meet reporting thresholds.

Information on incidents and disclosures will be retained securely in a manner that's accessible only to designated lead and those in charge of activities.

For reference:

[GSA Privacy Notice](#)

[GSA Data Protection and Confidentiality Guidelines](#)

[ICO Guidance on GDPR](#)

[Disclosure and Barring Service Privacy Policy](#)

14. Photography and video consent

The University of York Graduate Students' Association celebrates the important work that student volunteers do in their communities. As such, there may be times when photos and/or videos are taken of voluntary activity. However, the GSA recognises individuals' rights to privacy, and the potential child protection issues that may arise from visual imagery. Therefore, the GSA will:

- Obtain the express permission of individuals that they are happy for their images to be taken when the image in question can personally identify the individual;
- If the individual is under-18, parental or carer consent will be obtained;

- Publicise, at large events, when photography is being taken, and the procedures for individuals to inform staff if they do not wish for their image to be captured.

When obtaining the express permission of an individual who can be identified in an image the GSA has taken, the GSA will inform them:

- About the context of the image;
- Purpose of the image;
- How the image will be used;
- And where the image will be used.

For more information on the use of photography and videography, visit the NSPCC website:

[NSPCC: Photography and Sharing Images Guidance](#)

15. Health and Safety

Project leaders are expected to work with GSA to ensure that risk assessments are undertaken for each project and retained by project leaders. All volunteers should be made aware of risks relating to individual projects. When working with partner organisations on site, volunteers must ensure that they are aware of any protocols in the event of an emergency and safe use of any facilities or equipment.

Risk assessments will be reviewed annually by staff during the project ratification cycle.

Where partner organisations are involved in volunteering activity relating to children and vulnerable adults, a MoU will be put in place setting out the responsibilities of each party and respective policies and procedures that volunteers need to adhere to.

When working on site with partner organisations if any student volunteer is concerned about safeguarding they should communicate these concerns to the appropriate designated contact within the on-site project, as appropriate.

16. Training

All staff and volunteers will receive a copy of GSA's safeguarding policy as part of their induction, or at the point an update to the policy is made

All staff and volunteers will complete the safeguarding training that has been deemed appropriate for their role and remit with the organisation. Three tiers of safeguarding have been identified:

- Tier 1: A basic overview of what safeguarding is and organisational responsibilities (e.g. general staff and trustees) at the point of induction.
- Tier 2: An introduction to safeguarding (e.g. network co-ordinators, trip volunteers, Advice and Support team staff).
- Tier 3: Comprehensive Safeguarding Training e.g. Level 3 Award in Principles of Safeguarding and Protecting Children, Young People or Vulnerable Adults (for the appropriate staff)⁴

Completion of training will be monitored by the staff team to ensure compliance with the policy.

It is the responsibility of the Digital Communications and Events Manager, Student Voice and Campaigns Manager and HR Manager (each dealing with their respective staff and student areas) to ensure that staff and students are aware of their duties in relation to safeguarding.

17. Review of the policy

This policy will be reviewed on a two-year basis, and will be subject to approval by the Board of Trustees.

⁴ Note that at the time of writing we do not feel that any current or planned GSA Activity would come under Tier 3.