Student-led Projects – what to consider around safeguarding

The OU Students Association along with the OU recognises that it has a duty of care to children and young people under the age of 18, vulnerable and protected adults, and adults at risk.

This is in line with the OU’s Policy for ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable/protected adults at The Open University and in accordance with current legislation and guidance in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

This guide will introduce you to safeguarding and explain why it is relevant to your Student-led Project.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding refers to the action that is taken to protect from harm and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. For information, some definitions of vulnerable and protected adults are referred to in Appendix B of the OU’s Policy.

You must receive safeguarding training online or face-to-face if your project involves any members of a protected group and this training must take place before your project goes live.

Behaviour

As Project Leader, you and any volunteers working with you will be required to get a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check if your project includes working with any of the protected groups as defined by the OU’s Policy.

A Project Leader is in a position of trust and, as such, needs to exhibit exemplary behaviour and ensure the behaviour of your team of volunteers.

Although you or a member of your team may act in a well-intentioned way, it could be misinterpreted so be aware:

- that all people including fellow students, staff, team members, those impacted by your project and other members of the public should be treated with respect and with due regard to cultural differences.
- that you act as an appropriate role model and provide an example you wish others to follow.
- that you must challenge unacceptable behaviour by others. This includes not permitting abusive behaviours such as bullying and ridiculing others. This includes cyber bullying.
- that you ensure feedback given in activities is constructive rather than negative;
- that you are careful in your use of language/terminology/behaviour and do not make unnecessary comments or actions which could be interpreted as having a sexual connotation.
- that you take special care when discussing sensitive issues with children or young people. Please ask for training if you feel it necessary.
- that you report any concerns, suspicions or allegations regarding the welfare of a young person immediately to the appropriate person and to the Head of Volunteering, OU Students Association.
- That you or anyone involved in the student-led project may not take any images in any format that will be circulated or stored involving anyone under 18 or with protected status without first gaining explicit written informed consent of those
involved and their parents/guardians/carers. The consent must be sought of anyone appearing in any photographs taken during your project.

Never:

- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- allow the use of inappropriate language without challenging it.
- enter into a physical 'adult' relationship with a vulnerable person to whom you are in a position of trust, even if they give their consent. This would be a criminal offence if the relationship was with a child.
- give a vulnerable person or child your personal phone number, email or home address.
- do personal things for a child which they can do for themselves. If a child has a disability any tasks should only be performed with the full understanding and consent of the parents or carers and only if they are unavailable.
- Allow allegations by or about a vulnerable person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.

Please contact the Volunteer team if you have any concerns around safeguarding and if you have any further questions.