

## Wattle Insights: Safeguarding policy

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**Wattle insights** is committed to ensuring that it's employees, contractors, collaborators and research participants can work and thrive in a safe, respectful and supportive environment. We recognise our moral, professional and statutory responsibilities to safeguard and protect children, young people and adults who may be at risk of harm – whether from abuse, neglect, exploitation, crime, domestic abuse, mental health crisis, or being drawn into terrorism-related activity.

The policy applies to all those working with and for Wattle Insights.

### Our policy's purpose

This policy's purpose is to:

1. Promote the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk.
2. Provide clear guidance on recognising, responding to and reporting safeguarding concerns.
3. Set out the roles and responsibilities of staff, contractors and other partners.
4. Maintain effective and transparent safeguarding governance.

### Our commitments

Wattle Insights commits to:

1. Provide an environment where all community members are safe, valued, respected and supported.
2. Identify concerns early and respond quickly and proportionately.
3. Ensure accessible pathways for reporting harm and seeking help.
4. Engage in robust multi-agency partnerships to protect research participants and other stakeholders.

### Safeguarding Terms

Safeguarding concerns may include, but are not limited to:

- Sexual abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, and inappropriate relationships (including child-on-child)
- Physical and emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Domestic abuse or coercive control
- Exploitation, including sexual exploitation, financial exploitation, forced marriage, criminal exploitation, trafficking and modern slavery
- Grooming behaviour (online or in person)
- Bullying, harassment, discrimination or hate-based harm

- Cyberbullying or online harassment
- Victimisation or targeted hostility
- Exposure to extremist content or grooming under Prevent
- Unsafe activities, environments or living arrangements
- Mental health crisis, self-harm or suicidal ideation
- Sharing or creating harmful images, including upskirting, sexual extortion, or distribution of sexualised images
- Violence, threats or intimidation
- Crime, including knife crime, gang affiliation, or coercive groups
- Modern slavery, including forced labour or labour exploitation.

These behaviours—whether experienced directly, observed, or disclosed—require action in line with the University’s safeguarding procedures.

## Aims and objectives

Wattle Insights aims to maintain the highest possible standard of safeguarding practice. We will achieve this by:

1. Ensuring that all staff and sub-contractors understand safeguarding as part of their core responsibilities
2. Providing visible and accessible reporting pathways
3. Identifying concerns early
4. Ensuring that individuals feel safe, heard and respected
5. Ensuring clear lines of accountability and leadership
6. Providing a robust structure for reporting, managing and escalating concerns
7. Maintaining comprehensive, secure safeguarding records
8. Collaborating with local authorities, police, NHS and other agencies
9. Promoting equality, diversity, dignity and respect
10. Preventing bullying, harassment and discrimination.

## Principles

The following principles underpin Wattle Insights safeguarding activity:

1. Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility. All staff and subcontractors have a role in keeping others safe and raising concerns promptly.
2. Trauma Informed Practice. Wattle Insights staff and subcontractors will act in ways that promote dignity, respect and psychological safety, including:
  - a. Listening without judgement
  - b. Avoiding re-traumatisation
  - c. Ensuring transparency and fairness

3. Proportionality and professional judgement. Responses are evidence-based, proportionate to risk and guided by expert advice.
4. Safeguarding will consider intersecting vulnerabilities, including those linked to disability, mental health, care experience, socio-economic disadvantage, migration status, race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, domestic abuse or family breakdown.
5. Information will be shared securely, lawfully, in accordance with UK GDPR and only when necessary to protect someone from harm. We will never promise absolute confidentiality where safety is at risk.

## Responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will:

- Ensure the policy and associated procedures are implemented effectively
- Provide advice to staff, subcontractors and partners
- Maintain comprehensive and secure safeguarding records
- Attend and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding meetings
- Ensure timely referral to appropriate agencies.

The DSL is Abigail Powell who can be contacted at [info@wattleinsights.co.uk](mailto:info@wattleinsights.co.uk)

## Staff and sub-contractor responsibilities

All staff and subcontractors must:

- Understand that safeguarding applies to every role
- Be familiar with this Safeguarding Policy
- Know how to recognise signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation or radicalisation
- Know how to respond to a disclosure and avoid asking leading questions
- Report concerns promptly
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality, sharing information only when necessary to protect safety
- Never promise that ALL information will be kept secret
- Refer immediately to emergency services if someone is at imminent risk of harm
- Promote a culture in which sexual harassment, bullying, discrimination or abusive behaviour is not tolerated
- Treat every concern as valid and respond with empathy, respect and professionalism.

## Digital responsibilities

All staff and subcontractors must:

- Use digital platforms responsibly
- Avoid sharing abusive, intimidating, discriminatory or sexually harmful content
- Must not create, possess or share intimate images without lawful consent.
- Report concerns about online abuse, cyber bullying, radicalisation or exploitation
- Maintain privacy and respect in group chats and online forums.

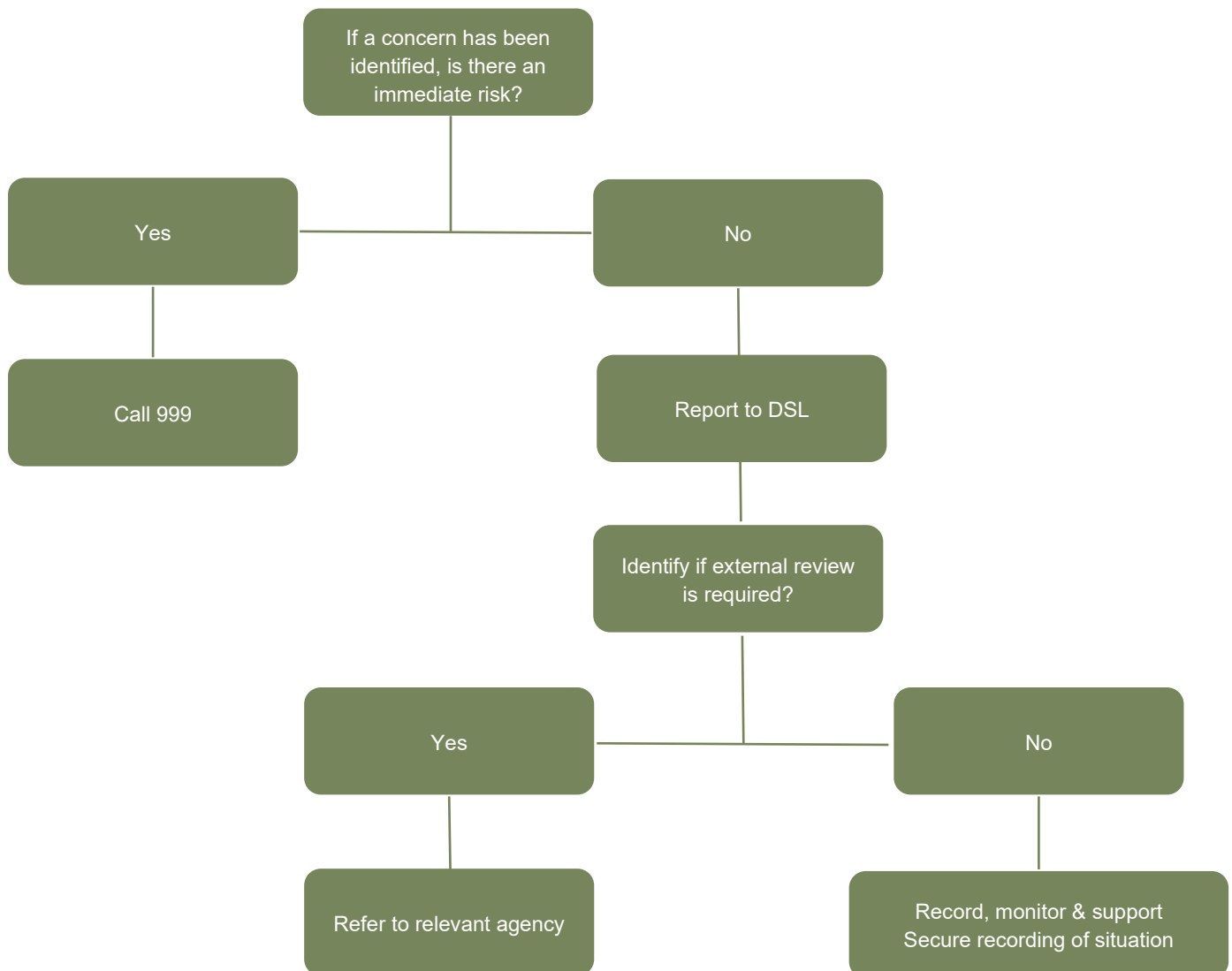
## Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

Where roles involve contact with children, young people or adults at risk, Wattle Insights staff and subcontractors require appropriate DBS checks.

All individuals for whom DBS checks are required must disclose:

- New criminal convictions
- Cautions, reprimands or final warnings
- Police investigations or arrests
- Restrictions place by regulatory or professional bodies
- Any external safeguarding review.

## Safeguarding Reporting Process



## Referrals, Reporting and Responding to Concerns

All staff and subcontractors must be alert to the possibility that a colleague, visitor or research participant may be at risk of harm. Safeguarding concerns must always be taken seriously and acted upon immediately.

### Reporting timeframe

Wherever possible concerns should be reported to DSL within 24 or immediately for an immediate risk. The DSL will review within one working day or sooner. Record completion will be completed on the same day wherever possible.

### Responding to a Disclosure or Concern

When someone discloses harm, staff or subcontractors should:

- Listen carefully and stay calm
- Allow them to talk in their own words
- Use open questions (e.g. tell me what happened)
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in speaking up
- Make no judgement about the situation or people involved
- Explain that you cannot promise confidentiality if someone is at risk
- Tell them what will happen next and that support will be offered.

They will not:

- Ask leading questions
- Attempt to investigate themselves
- Promise that nothing will happen or that the information will be kept secret.
- Express shock or disbelief
- Delay reporting because they are unsure.

Staff and subcontractors have a responsibility to listen, reassure and refer.

### Recording the Disclosure

As soon as possible following a disclosure, staff (or subcontractors) should:

Record:

- Date and time of the concern/disclosure
- Location of the incident or conversation
- Name and details of the person at risk
- Words used by person at risk
- Their observations (not interpretations)
- Any actions taken at the time
- Anyone else present
- Whether the individual is aware a referral is being made.

Staff should not store safeguarding notes on local drives, emails or personal devices.

## Immediate Risk Procedures

If someone is at imminent risk of harm, staff must:

1. Call 999 immediately

Then:

2. Submit a safeguarding referral within 24 hours.

If staff are unsure whether a situation is 'immediate risk', err on the side of caution and seek urgent advice from the DSL.

## Safeguarding vs Welfare Concerns

Not every concern is a safeguarding issue. Some may indicate distress, financial pressure, housing problems, bereavement or academic difficulty.

## Safeguarding Triage and Decision-Making

Once a referral is submitted:

1. The DSL will review the referral and may consult with the referrer.
2. Where thresholds are met, the team may escalate the referral to:
  - a. Children's Social Care
  - b. Adult Social Care
  - c. Local Authority Designated Officer
  - d. Police or emergency services
  - e. NHS crisis teams.

The DSL will record referrals, actions taken, decisions made, consultations, referrals to external bodies, outcomes and follow-up measures.

Records will remain confidential, access-controlled, compliant with UK GDPR, retained in line with statutory guidance.

## Research Settings

Where children, young people or adults at risk are participating in research or evaluation:

- Ethical protocols must be followed
- Researchers must undergo appropriate checks and training
- Parental/carer consent should be obtained for children aged below 16 and/or adults at risk
- Safeguarding risks must be addressed in research design
- Interviews with children must not occur unsupervised
- Researchers must report any safeguarding concerns immediately.

## Procedures for disclosures during interviews and other data collection

- Participant information sheets must explain the limits of confidentiality
- Participants should receive debrief information and signposting to relevant support
- Risks assessments must be undertaken before commencing fieldwork

- Safeguarding statements should be included within research ethics documentation.

## Allegations Against Staff

Where concerns involve a member of staff, contractor, associate or Director:

- The concern must be reported immediately.
- The individual should not investigate the allegation themselves.
- Advice should be sought from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where children are involved.
- Appropriate disciplinary or contractual action may follow.

## Monitoring and Review

**The DSL will:**

- Review safeguarding incidents and lessons learned annually
- Monitor referrals and outcomes
- Review this policy every two years or sooner following legislative changes or safeguarding incidents.