

Safeguarding Protocol for International Projects, Research and Partnerships

1. Introduction

King's has a zero tolerance approach to any attitudes or behaviours that put children, vulnerable adults or the communities we work with at risk.

This international protocol provides additional information and procedures to the King's Safeguarding Policy to ensure that King's is able to maintain an appropriate and safe environment in the international contexts in which we work.

Safeguarding Definition

The King's College London Safeguarding definition as referred to in the [Safeguarding Policy](#) is to taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm, particularly sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment from occurring; to protect people, especially adults at risk and children, from that harm; and to respond appropriately when harm does occur.

The King's safeguarding international protocols protect:

Child/Children

A person/people under the age of 18.

Adults at Risk

An adult at risk is any person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

Affected populations

Anyone who can be exploited through an imbalance of power. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Students
- Anyone who directly receives goods or services from our programmes
- Anyone who potentially may receive some development assistance through our programmes.
- Research participants, and anyone involved in research projects.
- Patients at health facilities

Safeguarding applies consistently and without exception across our programmes, partners, students, volunteers and staff. It requires proactively identifying, preventing and guarding against all risks of harm, exploitation and abuse and having mature, accountable and transparent systems for response, reporting and learning when risks materialise. Those systems must be survivor-centred and also protect those accused while the outcome of an investigation is being determined.

The university recognises that in the context of international projects, research and partnerships, safeguarding extends to community members, research participants and anyone in contact with King's as a result of the projects, research and partnerships. Safeguarding in an international context refers to any abuses of power including sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or harassment,

plus any broader forms of violence, exploitation and abuse such as bullying, psychological abuse and physical violence.

Safeguarding incidents are acts of serious misconduct and are grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal and referral to relevant authorities for criminal prosecution.

Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

Sexual exploitation means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of power or trust for sexual purposes. Sexual abuse can be actual or threatened, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

In some countries prostitution is legal, but no matter what law the country adheres to, any exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, whether on or off duty, by King's College London staff, volunteers or affiliates is prohibited.

Bullying and Harassment

Harassment is unwanted behaviour that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person.

Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or an abuse of power in ways intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

2. Scope of the International Protocols

This protocol aims to protect children, vulnerable adults and affected populations from:

- Staff, volunteers or affiliates contracted by King's (international and national).
- Anyone engaged with work or visits related to King's, including but not limited to consultants, volunteers, contractors, and programme visitors.
- Downstream partners or organisations or companies with whom we are working with who are also expected to adhere to international safeguarding standards.

Our international projects and programmes exist online and in person, and this protocol applies equally to both.

This protocol does not cover:

- Safeguarding concerns occurring in the UK not relating to international projects and programmes – these are dealt with directly under the core sections of the King's Safeguarding Policy.
- Safeguarding concerns in the wider community not perpetrated by persons associated with King's.

Those impacted by an abuse of power that is not perpetrated by a person associated with King's are still encouraged to report any incident to the relevant Designated Safeguarding Officer who will assist them in accessing appropriate support services.

King's has additional policies which cover areas not covered by the Safeguarding Policy including sexual harassment in the workplace and whistleblowing. Please refer to the policies below for incidents not covered under the safeguarding policy:

[Information Disclosure \(Whistleblowing\) Policy](#)
[Dignity at Kings - Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)

It is recommended that Survivor Support guidelines, containing detailed service mapping, should be created for all King's international activities working with vulnerable groups and/ or in LMICs.

3. Prevention

A key focus of the international safeguarding protocol is ensuring safe recruitment practises that help to avoid hiring any persons that may propose a safeguarding risk. To this end the following processes now form an essential part of the recruitment process for all staff, volunteers and affiliates who may have contact with vulnerable populations through their work at King's.

DBS Checks

All team members that have direct contact with children, at risk adults or affected populations, and that have been resident in the UK, must take a DBS (criminal background) check as part of their onboarding process. The requirement for a DBS check also applies to any existing team members who will be travelling internationally on behalf of King's and may have direct contact with children, at risk adults or affected populations. Line Managers are responsible for ensuring existing staff undertake a DBS as required.

Enhanced DBS checks are required for all staff, volunteers or affiliates who will be dealing with children, including all clinical staff.

For team members that have not been resident in the UK, alternative criminal background checks will be requested where available.

References

An explicit safeguarding question is included in all reference requests for new volunteers and employees. Two reference letters from previous employers and/or academic supervisors are required before employment, or a volunteer position, can begin.

For team members resident in a country where criminal background checks are not available, a third reference will be requested.

Training

During the onboarding process all staff, volunteers and affiliates must undertake safeguarding training. The following courses accessible on OpenLearn are recommended for online safeguarding training in international contexts ([OLCreate: Safeguarding in the International Aid Sector](#) | [OLCreate \(open.edu\)](#)):

- **Introduction to Safeguarding in the International Aid Sector**
- **Implementing Safeguarding in the International Aid Sector**

And

Each international project at King's is required to have a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO). All Designated or Lead Safeguarding Officers may additionally take:

- **Leadership in Safeguarding in the International Aid Sector**

Additional training resources:

- [Summary of Safeguarding Essentials \(kayaconnect.org\)](https://kayaconnect.org)
- [Introduction to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(interaction.org\)](https://interaction.org)

4. Raising a concern

Survivors of exploitation or abuse often do not report incidents through established reporting mechanisms so it is essential for all staff and volunteers to be sensitive to incidents of bullying, harassment, sexual exploitation or abuse.

Reports may be received through:

- Formal written reports through internal Complaints policy
- Informally via text, social media etc.
- Via community-based complaints mechanisms
- Disclosures made directly to staff members
- Concerns or reports about others raised to staff members
- Rumours or gossip

Reports are most frequently made in person to junior staff members and volunteers as they are considered more approachable.

All staff, volunteers and affiliates are obligated to report any potential incident, abuse or concern that they witness, are made aware of, or suspect within 24 hours.

Reports of abuse or exploitation from within the community that are not perpetrated by anyone connected to King's are beyond the scope of this protocol. However, it is encouraged for these to still be reported to the relevant Designated Safeguarding Officer as the DSO may be able to signpost to appropriate authorities or organisations that can assist.

5. Survivor Centred Approach

The King's Safeguarding International Protocol seeks to empower the survivor by exploring the options available without imposing ideas or opinions on the most appropriate course of action. In some cases action may be taken to safeguard a child or adult at risk.

In some countries reporting safeguarding incidents to police or other authorities may cause serious repercussions for the survivor, including imprisonment and risk to life.

Reporting safeguarding incidents may pose administrative, financial, logistical and emotional challenges to survivors. King's will endeavour to support survivors by helping them access services which can include:

- Medical support
- Mental health services
- Transportation to appointments
- Compassionate leave
- Accompaniment to police meetings
- Translation services
- Childcare support during appointments occurring as a consequence of a safeguarding incident
- Signposting to other services as required

Survivor Support guidelines, containing detailed service mapping, should be created for all King's international activities working with vulnerable groups and/ or in LMICs.

6. Reporting Process

Concerns regarding King's Global Health Partnerships can be reported to:

kggpsafeguarding@kcl.ac.uk

Concerns regarding International (other): Global Business Development, Professional Education overseas, Global Mobility and collaborative provision can be reported to the Lead Safeguarding Officer (International - Study Abroad; Collaborative Provision).

Concerns for a student currently enrolled at King's should be submitted via the Student of Concern (SOC) Procedure or directly to the Lead Safeguarding Officer (LSO), who will submit a SOC referral for recording and monitoring.

Project DSOs are responsible for completing a safeguarding incident report detailing the safeguarding concern and escalating this to the Lead Safeguarding Officer. The LSO will share this information with the Safeguarding International Group who will evaluate the information and open an investigation if it is considered that a safeguarding incident has occurred.

If there are any concerns that the DSO or LSO is implicated in the incident or may not act objectively then it is advised to contact alternative DSOs or LSOs from the approved list.

Process for King's Global Health Partnerships:

Once an investigation is opened a Safeguarding Investigations Manager will be appointed. The role of the Safeguarding Investigations Manager is to arrange for an external investigator to be contracted to ensure impartiality during investigations. The Safeguarding Investigations Manager will then support the external investigators to conduct their investigations, including arranging interviews for them, supervising timelines, travel and payments and reviewing findings of the investigation.

Process for International (other):

If the incident involves a student currently enrolled at King's, domestic reporting procedures for King's students should be followed. The LSO (International - Study Abroad; Collaborative Provision) may support the caseworker in any necessary country advice/ liaison with an overseas institution.

All other referrals are reviewed within 24hrs of submission by the Safeguarding International Group. Safeguarding cases may be referred to an external caseworker for investigation. Cases may be referred to a relevant local body in-country.

Otherwise, the case will be referred to the Safeguarding International Group who will:

- Gather all available relevant information about the concern
- Consider referral to other agencies that also have a duty of care and with whom liaison is required to manage risks (e.g. partner institutions, other relevant bodies identified in the local survivor support guidelines).
- Make (if required) a referral to a relevant local government body, ensuring that any local legal obligations are fulfilled.
- Seek advice from the Chief Safeguarding Officer if required

The findings from the investigation will be submitted to the LSO, DSO and case management group to make a decision on the outcomes of the investigation, including disciplinary procedures and referral to relevant authorities where appropriate. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process.

Those involved in the safeguarding incident will be informed of the outcome of the investigation but will not be kept up to date during the course of the investigation. King's aims to make a decision within one month of a report being made, although depending on the circumstances this timeframe may increase.

In order to ensure due diligence and facilitate organisational learning and development an annual report on safeguarding concerns, mitigations, and outcomes will be submitted to the Safeguarding Steering Group. However confidentiality will still be maintained at all times with any identifying details of persons involved in incidents or investigations withheld from the report.

7. Reporting to Donors and Regulatory Bodies

Many institutional donors and private funders have additional safeguarding reporting requirements.

It is the responsibility of the Lead Safeguarding Officer for international partnerships to ensure that safeguarding reporting requirements are met for all grants and contracts awarded to King's in the event of a safeguarding incident.

Further guidance on reporting to the FCDO can be found [here](#).

Further guidance on reporting to the Charity Commission can be found [here](#).

Further guidance on reporting to UKRI can be found [here](#).

Further guidance on reporting to NIHR can be found [here](#).