Annex 6.

Online Safeguarding Guidance

1. **Introduction**

We recognise our responsibility to develop awareness and promote safeguarding responsibilities and are committed to practice which reflects this.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the University's Safeguarding Policy and Procedure and has been developed to assist University staff and students to safely use online platforms.

This guidance on the use of online platforms applies to staff, students, contractors, collaborators and volunteers interacting with anyone aged under 18, or any adult at risk, whether they are a current student, prospective student, or otherwise participating in University-led activity. Relevant activities would include tutorials, webinars, virtual tours, outreach activity, research and innovation projects, recruitment and admissions, or student support (including Professional Services and Academic/Learning Support).

2. **Safeguarding and Online Abuse**

Children and adults-at-risk may be subject to abuse via social media, text messages, emails, or during online chats and other interactive online activity. Abuse can take many forms, but includes cyberbullying, emotional abuse, grooming, sexting, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. The NSPCC provides further detailed advice on online abuse in relation to children.

3. **Assessing and managing risk**

A safeguarding risk assessment should be undertaken for any new online activity involving children or adults-at-risk, which is not covered by an existing risk assessment.

A Safeguarding Risk Assessment should take into account things such as:

- Whether the platform being used has a "moderator" with oversight of the online activity or has built-in capability to identifying inappropriate language or images.
- If the platform used is not moderated or otherwise monitored, will a responsible adult (teacher, parent or carer) also be online.

  Note. When possible, ALWAYS avoid one-to-one online interaction with anyone you believe may be aged under 18 if no other trusted adult is also involved in the call, if this situation occurs by accident, for instance because a participant has lost connection, you are advised to terminate the meeting and reschedule it.

- Whether the platform being used is approved by the University. Check with IT Services before accepting an invitation to use an unknown online platform hosted by another organisation.

In addition:

- Ensure that all participants understand who is taking part and who will be able to see or hear them.

- Ensure that all those involved, and any trusted adult also present, are aware of what platform is being used and its constraints and limitations with respect to safeguarding and moderation of content.
- Ensure that the background environment which may be visible to all participants is appropriate, blurred, or replaced with an appropriate picture/image.
- Ensure that appropriate precautions are taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality. If working from home do all that is reasonable possible to ensure that family members cannot view participants or overhear the conversation.
- Ensure that all pop-ups or notifications of income emails etc. are disabled during any activity where your screen is or may be visible to participants.
- Ensure that no contact details are exchanged during the activity.
- Ensure that staff and students who engage in University-related online activity that may involve children or adults at risk, receive safeguarding training.
- Ensure that staff have read and understood the policy, procedure and guidance on the University's safeguarding webpages.

4. Online Platform

All online activities which involve participants that are, or maybe under 18 or adults at risk must be hosted on a platform that has been approved for that use by IT Services.

Any such platform **must** have the following features:

- The ability to restrict access so that only the intended participants may take part.
- Access to sensitive personal information, including contact information (email, mobile phone, social media) are only available to the meeting organiser / host and can be kept confidential.
- The ability for the host to remove anyone who is behaving in an inappropriate manner.

Careful consideration must be given to the suitability of a platform for its intended used.

5. Guidance for online events and meetings

In addition to the general guidance provided above on risk assessments, training and online platforms, also consider the points below when engaging online with participants who are aged under 18 or who are adults at risk:

- Where possible / practical always record sessions, but always make it clear to the participants that the session is being recorded.
- Always get parental approval if involving anyone under 16.
- Avoid "live sessions" when at all possible for anyone under 16, (i.e. use recorded content with no live interaction).
- Do not let participants share screens.
- Do not let participants directly contact any other participant i.e. all chat goes though the host so that it can be moderated.
- Always have a second member of staff on the session to monitor and moderate the chat boxes

- Use platforms that allow you to disable the participants' cameras and microphones when this is desirable, for instance if a participant becomes disruptive.
- Use waiting rooms to monitor and control who joins the meeting.
- Set out "community rules" so that participants are aware of the expected behaviour in the online session.
- Ensure the host is aware of the University's Safeguarding Policy and Process and is aware how to escalate concerns.
- Ensure the content is appropriate for the participants' age group.
- Ensure participants are aware of how to raise concerns if they should see or hear anything upsetting or inappropriate in the course of the online event.

Any concerns regarding safeguarding should be reported to safeguarding.keele@keele.ac.uk.