

Please ensure all staff have read the Safeguarding Guide before the Work Experience placement begins.

What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the process of protecting people from harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and avoidable risks.

As a work experience host, you have an important role in helping to provide a **safe, supportive and positive workplace environment** for the young person.

Safeguarding is not just about responding when something goes wrong. It also means **preventing risks, creating safe work practices, recognising concerns early, and knowing what to do if you are worried about a young person's safety or wellbeing.**

You are **not expected to be a safeguarding expert or to investigate concerns yourself.** Your role is to provide a safe environment, recognise when something may not be right, and **report concerns promptly to the appropriate person.**

This Safeguarding Guide contains all of the information you need to ensure a safe environment for Work Experience students. The Guide includes details about our Safeguarding Procedure, as well as information about:

- 1. Key Contacts at The Switch**
- 2. Creating a Safe Environment**
- 3. Safeguarding Scenarios**
- 4. Code of Conduct**
- 5. Dealing with Disclosures**

If you see, hear or become aware of something that makes you concerned about a young person's safety or wellbeing, don't ignore it - follow our safeguarding guide and report it.

Please ensure all staff have read the Safeguarding Guide before the Work Experience placement begins.

The Switch staff are on hand to support you throughout the Work Experience placement. We are your first port of call for any concerns, and we can guide you through the best course of action.

If you have raised a safeguarding concern and would like to discuss it further, you can contact Megan, our Designated Safeguarding Officer and CEO, for more support.

You will receive all of the contact details you need, including School contact numbers and email addresses, in advance of the placement starting.

Key contacts at The Switch:

Leanne Greaves

Work Experience Manager

T: 020 3882 6626

E: leanne.greaves@theswitch.org

Megan Hunter

Designated Safeguarding Officer

T: 0207 655 0355

E: megan.hunter@theswitch.org

If there is an urgent safeguarding concern
and you cannot get through to The Switch:

MAST (Multi Agency Support Team)

T: 020 7364 5006 option 3.

Please see below key points for ensuring a safe working environment during Work Experience.

- **Be alert to safeguarding concerns:** Be aware of signs that a young person may be at risk of harm, including changes in behaviour, signs of distress, or anything they tell you that causes concern.
- **Work in appropriate spaces:** If you are supervising a young person, work in a communal area whenever possible. If not, please leave your office door open and ensure you are in view of another member of staff.
- **Maintain appropriate boundaries:** Do not accompany a young person to use the toilet.
- **Use safe travel arrangements:** Where travel with a young person is required, use public transport wherever possible. Do not transport a young person alone in a private vehicle or other private space.
- **Maintain professional communication:** Do not share any personal social media accounts or personal contact information which is not appropriate for the workplace. Do not accept students' invitations on personal social media accounts (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp). If a student attempts to contact you on personal social media, inform The Switch. An exception may be made for students aged 16+ to connect with you on LinkedIn to support professional networking; however, LinkedIn must not be used for private communication.
- **Maintain appropriate physical boundaries:** Do not initiate physical contact with a young person, other than a handshake when greeting or saying farewell.
- **Report concerns promptly:** Ensure that all concerns are promptly reported to The Switch or the relevant school. Simply sending an email is not sufficient - you must receive confirmation that your concern has been received and acknowledged by the relevant person.

See below for the steps to follow when responding to safeguarding scenarios that may arise during a work experience placement.

Unexpected Lateness or Absences

If a student is absent and did not inform you previously, you must notify The Switch within the first hour of the placement workday.



The Switch will contact the School, who will contact the student's parents or guardians immediately. This is to ensure the safety of our students. The Switch will let you know any updates.

Medical Emergencies

Contact the relevant emergency services and the School immediately. You will receive the School's contact details via email before they start.



You should then contact The Switch to make them aware of the situation. The Switch will follow up with the School.

You should always contact the School before contacting The Switch in a medical emergency, so parents or guardians of the student can be informed.

Welfare/Safeguarding Concerns

You must phone The Switch straight away. You will receive these contact details via email on the Friday before they start.



The Switch may ask you to send an email detailing the concern. The Switch will then contact the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The Switch will confirm that your concern has been reported and that the School is following it up.



If it is urgent and you do not get a reply from The Switch by the end of the working day, you should contact MAST (Multi Agency Support Team) for advice on 020 7364 5006, option 3.

Expected Absences

If a student is absent and informs you, you must notify The Switch as soon as you receive this information.



The Switch will contact the School, who will contact the student's parents or guardians immediately. This is to ensure the safety of our students.

- Follow this code of conduct, even if you happen to encounter a young person when not on site or involved with a project.
- Be an excellent role model – keep conversation and actions appropriate to the situation. Keep your focus on the task and learning objectives.
- Keep an open mind, taking care not to hold presuppositions or stereotypes.
- Treat everyone with respect and sensitivity. Never promote your religious or political ideas or beliefs.
- Put the wellbeing of young people first.
- Don't share contact details or social media. (If a young person shares contact details or social media, treat it as a Safeguarding concern).
- Never take photos, videos or screenshots of young people without written photo consent. Please ask The Switch if in doubt.
- Never give gifts or money to an individual young person. Lunch and travel may be considered; please contact The Switch for more information.
- Ensure any sickness or lateness from the work experience student is reported to The Switch within the first hour of their working day.
- Report any and all concerns to The Switch immediately.
- Do not travel alone with a young person, unless it is via public transport and has been communicated to The Switch.
- Call out any abusive, discriminatory or demeaning attitudes, language or behaviour from staff, volunteers and young people.
- Never initiate physical contact with a young person.
- Do not make sexually suggestive comments or use such language.
- Do not vape, smoke or drink alcohol in the presence of a young person, virtually or in person.
- Never invite a young person to individual homes or other venues other than those agreed with The Switch.
- Never promise to keep anything confidential or 'secret'.
- Ensure that all concerns are promptly reported to The Switch or the relevant school. Simply sending an email is not sufficient – you must receive confirmation that your report has been received and acknowledged by the relevant person.
- Always adhere to [The Switch safeguarding policy](#) and know what to do if a young person makes a disclosure.

Dealing with a disclosure

Volunteers have a duty of care to be vigilant and respond appropriately to concerns about the well-being of a young person.

This does not mean that it is your responsibility to decide if a situation is poor practice, bullying, abuse, etc., but it is your responsibility to report your concerns.

If you have a concern, you should:

- Take seriously any allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse that a young person makes.
- Observe, listen and remain calm. Allow them to talk freely without interruptions or questions.
- Don't ask for more information or make judgements or negative comments. Don't push or lead the conversation.
- Never try to interpret any of the information yourself. Remember it is not your job to prove or disprove what the young person tells you.
- Tell them what you are going to do next. Explain that the information they have shared will need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep anything confidential.
- Report any concerns that you have, no matter how small they might be.
- Report your concern on the day you first feel concerned.
- Ensure that all concerns are promptly reported to The Switch or the relevant school. Simply sending an email is not sufficient – you must receive confirmation that your report has been received and acknowledged by the relevant person.

Follow your programme's procedure for reporting concerns. If in doubt, phone The Switch's Designated Safeguarding Officer:
Megan Hunter - 020 7655 0300

