

# Keeping everyone safe in our building

## The purpose of this policy

This policy aims to protect the safety of:

- Visitors to and attendees of meetings held in our building
- People regularly working within our building
- Confidential Information in our building

The Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) agenda requires academic and clinical staff to engage with representatives of diverse communities, including people who have mental health difficulties or personality disorder, may be detained in conditions of security, or have a history of dangerous or antisocial behaviour.

## Core beliefs

Mental health issues can affect anyone at any time, and so this policy suggests how we should respond, not just to PPI Volunteers, but also to staff and other visitors who are experiencing difficulties. We will seek to challenge any suggestion of 'us and them' thinking, preferring an approach that acknowledges our own vulnerabilities as well as our shared responsibilities towards one another.

Moreover, whilst we recognise that people with mental health issues or other difficulties may from time to time behave in challenging or antisocial ways, our experience is that the overwhelming majority of people who engage in PPI activities are honest, respectful and generous. The guidance below is to plan for those rare situations where this is not the case, and should be followed in a discreet manner that underlines the positive qualities of all PPI Volunteers, including those who challenge.

## Our approach aims to create:

1. **A flexible and tolerant culture.** Everyone who uses our building needs to be willing to make reasonable adjustments in response to the difficulties that some people may have from time to time. The expectation is that staff will comply with the normal rules but will adopt a flexible and tolerant approach towards people who may find it difficult to behave with the usual courtesies and respect for others. Where behaviour has to be challenged, the goal will be to resolve the matter as informally as possible in order to encourage continuing engagement whilst maintaining community safety and upholding the law.
2. **Duty of care.** If problematic behaviour is identified, staff have a duty of care to try and signpost the person to some suitable help and so encourage positive change, rather than

simply dismiss the individual. In addition, anyone who has been a victim of threatening, aggressive or dishonest behaviour can expect support from colleagues and managers in coming to terms with their experience. The person who knows the individual best is probably the right person to engage in any 'uncomfortable' conversations, and issues should be reported to a senior staff member who can identify patterns and take appropriate action.

3. **Clear standards of conduct** are explained to people who use the building, perhaps through a Code of Conduct document. For some individuals, 'explaining' will mean coaching over time rather than a single conversation or merely issuing a document to them. Sanctions are in place to exclude PPI Volunteers if they cause a serious or persistent risk to the safety of persons, property or information. These sanctions will be used proportionately and with the involvement of a senior staff member who is not directly involved in the situation giving rise to the issue. If necessary, a senior named manager will escort the person from the building and/or contact the University security department or Police. A process is also in place to facilitate the reporting, investigating and action in response to complaints from PPI Volunteers regarding any misconduct directed towards them. Parallel grievance and disciplinary procedures are available for staff.
4. **Meeting rooms** are available and guests to the building do not normally need to pass computer screens where they may have sight of confidential information or desks where confidential papers may be read. Anyone who welcomes an occasional visitor to the building has a responsibility for that person and must ensure that they do not have access to confidential information, whether by reading screens or papers or by overhearing confidential conversations. The staff host is also responsible for ensuring that the person has left the building after the meeting is over. Conference events where large numbers of visitors are welcomed to the building require special arrangements. In general, the hospitality area is close to the main entrance, minimising the penetration of guests into the remainder of the building.
5. **Attentive hosts.** Similarly, staff who host visitors need to be vigilant to ensure that property and equipment belonging to the building or other people is properly looked after and doors and windows are effectively secured after use. Personal property is generally safe within office areas, although everyone must take responsibility for their belongings at all times, and email circulation is used to alert staff of any particular threats or changes to the usual arrangements, including visits from building maintenance staff.
6. **Appropriate precautions.** Where it is appropriate for staff to be alone with a PPI Volunteer, they should consider whether to brief another staff member to remain in the room or within earshot so that they can offer support if necessary.