

# SAFEGUARDING FOR HOMESTAY HOSTS

## Introduction

Welcome to the Safeguarding Guide for Homestay Hosts. This resource is designed to support new and experienced hosts by enhancing your understanding of safeguarding responsibilities, recognising signs of harm or abuse, and providing clear guidance on how to address any concerns about students in your care.

Safeguarding is about protecting children (under 18) and vulnerable adults from abuse (physical, emotional, and sexual), neglect, and other forms of harm, while promoting their safety and well-being. It encompasses all aspects of care, including food and nutrition, medical needs, supervision, e-safety, and preventing radicalisation. It applies to all students in your home, including those over 18, and is an integral part of hosting.

As a homestay host, you have a legal **Duty of Care** to look after students in your care “as a caring and responsible parent” would. This means protecting them from harm and acting in their best interests. Your Duty of Care is not optional; it is a legal obligation under UK law for all adults working with under 18s.

Hosting international students is a privilege, and your role is vital in creating a safe and supportive environment where they can thrive. PLUS would like to thank you for your commitment to ensuring their safety and well-being.

## Host Responsibilities

As a homestay host, you are expected to:

- Provide a safe, welcoming environment for students.
- Ensure minors and vulnerable adults feel supported and secure.
- Refrain from any actions or behaviours that may harm or distress students.
- Report any concerns or suspicions of abuse, neglect, or danger to PLUS promptly: Emergency telephone: 020 7042 9436 Extension 2004 (available 24/7), email: [safeguarding@plus-ed.com](mailto:safeguarding@plus-ed.com)

You must maintain professional boundaries and reflect on your own behaviour to ensure your interactions remain appropriate and respectful.

## Identifying Risks

Students may face various risks, including:

- **Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination:** This includes racism, homophobic bullying, or verbal abuse.
- **Safety on Activities:** Ensure students are supervised and risks are mitigated during educational visits or activities.
- **Online Safety:** Students may be exposed to cyberbullying, grooming, or harmful content online.

Cultural or language barriers can lead to feelings of isolation or misunderstanding, which may increase a student’s vulnerability. Hosts should actively work to create an inclusive environment.

## Signs to Watch For

It's essential to recognise signs of potential harm or abuse. Be aware of:

- **Behavioural Changes:** Unexplained withdrawal, aggression, or excessive anxiety.
- **Physical Indicators:** Unexplained injuries or complaints of pain.
- **Emotional Changes:** Sudden drops in self-esteem, or inappropriate reactions to affection.
- **Performance Issues:** Declining school performance or lack of engagement.

While some of these behaviours may be normal aspects of development, significant or sudden changes should prompt closer attention and, if necessary, action. You should never try to take any action yourself; please contact the Safeguarding team at PLUS who will advise you on what action to take, if any. We will contact authorities, conduct a thorough investigation, and keep you informed of any developments.

## Concerns About Adults

If you have concerns about the behaviour of another adult in your household, or elsewhere, towards a student, you must report this immediately to PLUS. This ensures swift investigation and resolution while protecting all parties involved.

## Communication with Children & Young People

If a student discloses abuse or shares a concern, it's crucial to respond appropriately. Here's what you should do:

1. **Stay Calm and Listen:** Allow the student to speak without interruption. Avoid expressing shock or disbelief.
2. **Keep Body Language Open and Neutral:** This is especially important as students might have lower levels of English, and can be a way of establishing trust.
3. **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Use neutral questions such as "Can you tell me more about that?" Avoid leading or suggestive questions.
4. **Reassure Them:** Let the student know they did the right thing by coming to you.
5. **Explain Confidentiality Limits:** Make it clear that you cannot promise confidentiality and must share what they tell you with those who can help, but will not share it with anyone else.
6. **Record Details:** Note key points, including dates, times, locations, and exact phrases used.
7. **Report Promptly:** Contact PLUS as soon as you can (the Safeguarding phonenumber is open 24/7) to ensure timely action.

## Do's and Don'ts

### Do:

- Stay calm and listen carefully.
- Show support and empathy.
- Reassure the student that they are safe.
- Document the disclosure accurately and factually.
- Report concerns to PLUS immediately.

### Don't:

- Interrupt or dismiss what the child is saying.
- Ask leading questions or pressure the student for more information.
- Promise confidentiality or guarantee outcomes.
- Pass judgment on the situation or alleged perpetrator.
- Dismiss concerns as unimportant or assume someone else will act.

## Identifying Risks Online

The internet is an essential tool for students to stay connected and learn, but it also comes with potential risks. While it is not possible to monitor everything students do online, as a host, you can help create a safer digital environment:

- **Monitoring Behaviour:** Be alert to signs like students hiding screens, appearing distressed after internet use, or being reluctant to discuss online activities.
- **Encouraging Responsibility:** Remind students not to share personal information online and to report instances of cyberbullying or inappropriate messages (either to you or someone at PLUS).
- **Firewalls:** It is strongly advised to have a firewall set up for your home Internet access, to protect you and students from any harmful or inappropriate content.

## Training

All hosts **must** complete the following training:

1. **Online Safeguarding Training:** The British Council-approved course equips hosts to identify and manage safeguarding risks. PLUS will provide you with the training link. Hosts must renew their safeguarding training every two to three years.
2. **PREVENT Training:** As part of the UK government's Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, PREVENT training helps hosts identify and respond to signs of radicalisation. PLUS will provide you with the online PREVENT training link.

Both certifications are mandatory for all homestay hosts to ensure the safety and well-being of students.

## What is PREVENT?

The PREVENT programme is part of the UK government's counter-terrorism strategy aimed at preventing individuals from being drawn into extremism or terrorism. It focuses on safeguarding vulnerable individuals and promoting fundamental British values, including:

- **Democracy**
- **The Rule of Law**
- **Individual Liberty**
- **Mutual Respect and Tolerance**

By completing PREVENT training, you will learn to identify early warning signs of radicalisation, such as sudden changes in behaviour, expressing extremist views, or isolating themselves from friends, and know how to respond appropriately. This is not about restricting students' beliefs, but ensuring their safety and compliance with the law.

## Contact Information

For any safeguarding concerns, reach out to PLUS's designated contacts. Save the emergency number for urgent situations and use the non-emergency line for general advice.

- **Emergency Safeguarding:** 020 7042 9436 Extension 2004 (24/7)
- **Non-emergency Safeguarding Queries:** 020 7730 2223 (Office hours)
- **Email:** [safeguarding@plus-ed.com](mailto:safeguarding@plus-ed.com)
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead:** James Bell

## Safeguarding Incident Form

Make notes while speaking to the student, and use their own words as much as possible in the report. Do not try to 'tidy up' or interpret what they say.

Date and time of disclosure	
Student's full name	
Name of person noting the disclosure	
Name(s) of others present (if applicable)	
Date and location of the incident	
Details of the incident	
Name(s) and address(es) of witness(es) (if applicable)	

The information provided on this form must remain confidential and only be shared with the designated safeguarding contacts. You can either make a copy of the form or write the information directly into an email to [safeguarding@plus-ed.com](mailto:safeguarding@plus-ed.com). Call the Safeguarding Emergency phone any time of the day or night if you have any concerns about a student whatsoever. Nothing is too minor an issue to report.