Global Health Research Unit on Diabetes and Cardiovascular Diseases in South Asia

Safeguarding Approach

Date	*Version nr*	*Detail of changes*
28/10/2020	**V1**	

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Global Health Research Unit on Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease in South Asians' Safeguarding Approach

Key messages:

- Abuse is a deliberate act of ill-treatment that can harm or is likely to harm a person's safety, wellbeing and development;

- The Unit's safeguarding guidelines encompasses all children under the age of 18 and the communities with whom the Unit works and/or impacted by our research work;

- The Unit's objective is to create strong and effective pathways to prevent and minimise the risk of harm to the children and communities the Unit comes into contact with or has impact upon directly or indirectly;

- It is everyone's responsibility to report any suspected or actual abuse arising within the community towards child or vulnerable adults;

- All Unit's staff is bound by a code of conduct and any kind of abuse towards children and communities will not be tolerated. This obligation on staff, volunteers and associates to keep children and communities safe extends to their conduct outside the work environment as well as inside;

- Third parties such as actors, stakeholders and local organisations may also have potentially damaging impact on children and communities. In order to prevent and minimise the risk of harm to the children and vulnerable adults, Collaborating Parties and other third parties involved in research activities with the Unit should be subject to appropriate due diligence and be compliant with the Unit's safeguarding guidelines and principles;

- The Unit's Safeguarding Committee is supported by a Lead Safeguarding Officer and Local Safeguarding Officer, who together are responsible for implementing a strong, safe and effective safeguarding programme.

Purpose

The Global Health Research on Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease in South Asians' Safeguarding policy is based on guidance from Imperial College London, UKCDR and NIHR, and has been created as part of the Unit's effort to ensure compliance and safeguarding in research work conducted as part of this Unit's programme. In addition, the guideline considers Imperial College London's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (1) and Child protection and Safeguarding Code of Practice (2).

The guidance applies to all Collaborating Parties and individuals involved in this Unit in all capacities, including Principal Investigators, researchers, managers, coordinators, administrative staff, technicians, students, community health workers and equivalent quadres, community representatives involved in the work of the Unit and unpaid staff working on behalf of the Unit in any capacity and any setting.

The purpose of the guidance is to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of the children and communities with whom the Unit works. The aim is that all employees and others covered by this Unit understand the context within which the safeguarding policies and procedures apply and to provide guidance to all parties above mentioned on how they should behave and respond if they suspect that a child or vulnerable adult may be experiencing, or be at risk from abuse or harm.

Young members, young people on work experience and any children or young adults involved in the work of the Unit should be made aware of Unit's safeguarding policies and procedures. Those with specific communication needs because of language or disability should have access to information in appropriate forms to ensure their understanding. The policies relate to all children up to 18 years of age and includes children with whom the Unit might have direct or indirect contact with, for example children known to adults with whom the Unit works directly. The safeguarding policies also relate to vulnerable adults who need to be safeguarded from harm.

General Principles

Safeguarding relates to the action taken to promote the welfare of children under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults and to protect them from harm (3). In research specifically, safeguarding is defined as sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of research participants, communities and research staff and any broader forms of violence, exploitation and abuse (4,5). The nature of our work means that large part of the population with whom we get in contact is vulnerable. Therefore, the Unit's safeguarding encompasses all children under the age of 18 and the communities with whom the Unit works and/or are impacted by our research work. In the Unit's guidance, we consider safeguarding as applying to all people involved in and connected to research, and suggest that 'doing no harm' requires gaining information about what the potential harms may be, which may not always be

immediately apparent. All Unit's Collaborating Parties and individuals should have a basic awareness of safeguarding issues. This includes:

- Being alert to the possibility of abuse and neglect;
- Having enough knowledge to recognise an abusive or potentially abusive event or set of circumstances;
- Knowing who in the organisation to raise concerns with;
- Being competent to take the appropriate immediate or emergency action.

What constitutes abuse?

Abuse is a deliberate act of ill-treatment that can harm or is likely to harm a person's safety, wellbeing and development. Abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional. Abuse may not, however, fall easily into these categories and while staff/collaborators are expected to have enough knowledge, they are not expected to be experts in the field. Neglect also constitutes abuse but can be defined as failing to provide or secure a child or vulnerable adult with the basic needs required for physical safety and wellbeing.

Safeguarding statement

All the Unit's documentations and proposals for collaboration should have the Unit's Safeguarding policies where and as appropriate. Project information leaflets for children and vulnerable, parent/carers and local agencies should all have a statement on safeguarding with contact details as appropriate.

Reducing the risk of harm by staff, volunteers and associates

The Unit's code of conduct, recruitment procedures, training and internal communications state that any kind of abuse towards children and communities will not be tolerated. We ensure it is clear that this obligation on staff, volunteers and associates to keep children and communities safe extends to their conduct outside the work environment as well as inside, as part of their social responsibility. In addition, it is clearly stated that it is the responsibility of staff to promote good practice and minimise and manage potential risks.

Reporting abuse of children and vulnerable adults in their community

We acknowledge our responsibility to report any suspected or actual abuse arising within the community towards child or vulnerable adults. The Unit partners are expected to have clear reporting pathways to the formal authorities or, or other relevant organisations that are able to deal with cases appropriately. Advice and guidance on how to build these pathways should be sought locally to ensure that the actions outlined are locally relevant, achievable and ensure safety to these children, vulnerable adults, their families and communities.

Building a safe programme

Recognising that research can present specific situations in which abuses of power may occur and the need for a tailored framework and approach, The Unit's partners are expected to have in place pathways to prevent and minimise the risk of harm to the children and communities the Unit comes into contact with or has impact upon directly or indirectly. We acknowledge that many actors and stakeholders brought into our research activities will be for the first time introduced to the research environment and, consequently, unaware of research and partnerships in an international context and safeguarding policies and considerations. Additionally, local organisations that are designed to improve overall economic, legal or governance of the situation of a community or country may also have potentially damaging effects on children and communities if they have not carried out a rigorous social and environmental impact assessment that includes assessing the impact on the safety of these groups. The Unit takes into account the environment, context and impact (intended or unintended) on the children and communities. We are, therefore, committed to conducting country specific assessments and tailored approach that includes risk assessment of all potential collaborators or third parties, adapting our communication and programme so they understand our commitment to safeguarding and show commitment to respect and implement measures that ensures safety of the children, vulnerable adults and communities they are engaged with. Our safeguarding guidelines further recognise the importance of involving and creating partnerships with the communities as part of our effort to build trust with and within communities, improve communication, a better research understanding and collaboration and effective safeguarding processes.

Research integrity, working overseas and due diligence

Imperial College London's relationship review states the need for all relationships with third parties entered with Imperial College London to be subject to prior and continuing assessment to ensure that they support the College's mission and strategic aims and overall objectives (6). The Unit makes it clear in the safeguarding guidelines, that in order to prevent and minimise the risk of harm to the children and vulnerable adults, Collaborating Parties and other third parties involved in research activities with the Unit will be subject to appropriate due diligence and be compliant with the Unit's safeguarding guidelines and principles.

Responsibilities of all line managers

The Unit's line managers are responsible for ensuring staff comply with the expectations set out within the Unit's policy. Specific responsibilities of managers include:

- Being the first point of contact for reports of concerns;
- Ensuring that all employees and volunteers in regulated roles are subject to DBS checks where applicable;
- Reporting all concerns to the Lead Safeguarding Officer;
- Providing advice and support to employees reporting disclosures or concerns;
- Working with the Lead Safeguarding Officer.

Responsibilities of the Lead Safeguarding officer

The Lead Safeguarding Officer is responsible to ensuring staff, collaborators and individuals with lead responsibilities in the Unit are communicated the policies, understand the policies and are respect the policies. Specific responsibilities of Lead Safeguarding Officer include:

- Providing support and advice to managers and all staff on safeguarding matters related to children and vulnerable adults;
- Ensuring that all members of staff receive training on child protection and safeguarding as part of their induction, and on an ongoing basis where required;
- Managing referrals/cases reported and working with Senior Management to ensure resolutions;
- Maintaining an overview of safeguarding issues and monitoring the implementation of this policy, in conjunction with the Unit Director.

Responsibilities of the Local Safeguarding Officers

Each Unit partner is expected to have a Local Safeguarding Officer, who will work closely with the Lead Safeguarding Officer to implement Safeguarding. Specific responsibilities of Local Safeguarding Officers:

- Providing support and advice to local managers and staff on safeguarding matters related to children and vulnerable adults;
- Coordination trainings on child protection and safeguarding as part of their induction, and on an ongoing basis where required;
- Carrying out referrals to the relevant local authority social care team where abuse of a child or vulnerable adult is reported or suspected;
- Referring the matter to the local authority where a member of staff is suspected of abuse.

Safe escalation routes

The Unit partners are expected to established safe and confidential routes for escalation of concerns, alongside regular trainings, to all staff to ensure an effective report system of suspicions of abuse of children and communities is in place.

The Unit Safeguarding Committee, comprising the Lead Safeguarding Officer, and Local Safeguarding Officers are responsible for monitoring and improvement of the reporting systems and pathways.

Where the individual of concern is a member of staff, the Unit Director and the Lead and Local Safeguarding Officers should take any relevant action, such as suspension or commencing disciplinary proceedings, if necessary.

In cases of situations of information that may have been provided in confidence, the duty of confidentiality must be weighed against the duty of care, in case of potential or actual harm of an individual. At all stages, only those people who need to be made aware of an incident or concern, should be informed on a 'need to know' basis.

The Safeguarding Committee

The Safeguarding Committee consists of representatives from across all collaborating partners who have responsibility for activities involving under 18s and communities.

The Committee meets annually to:

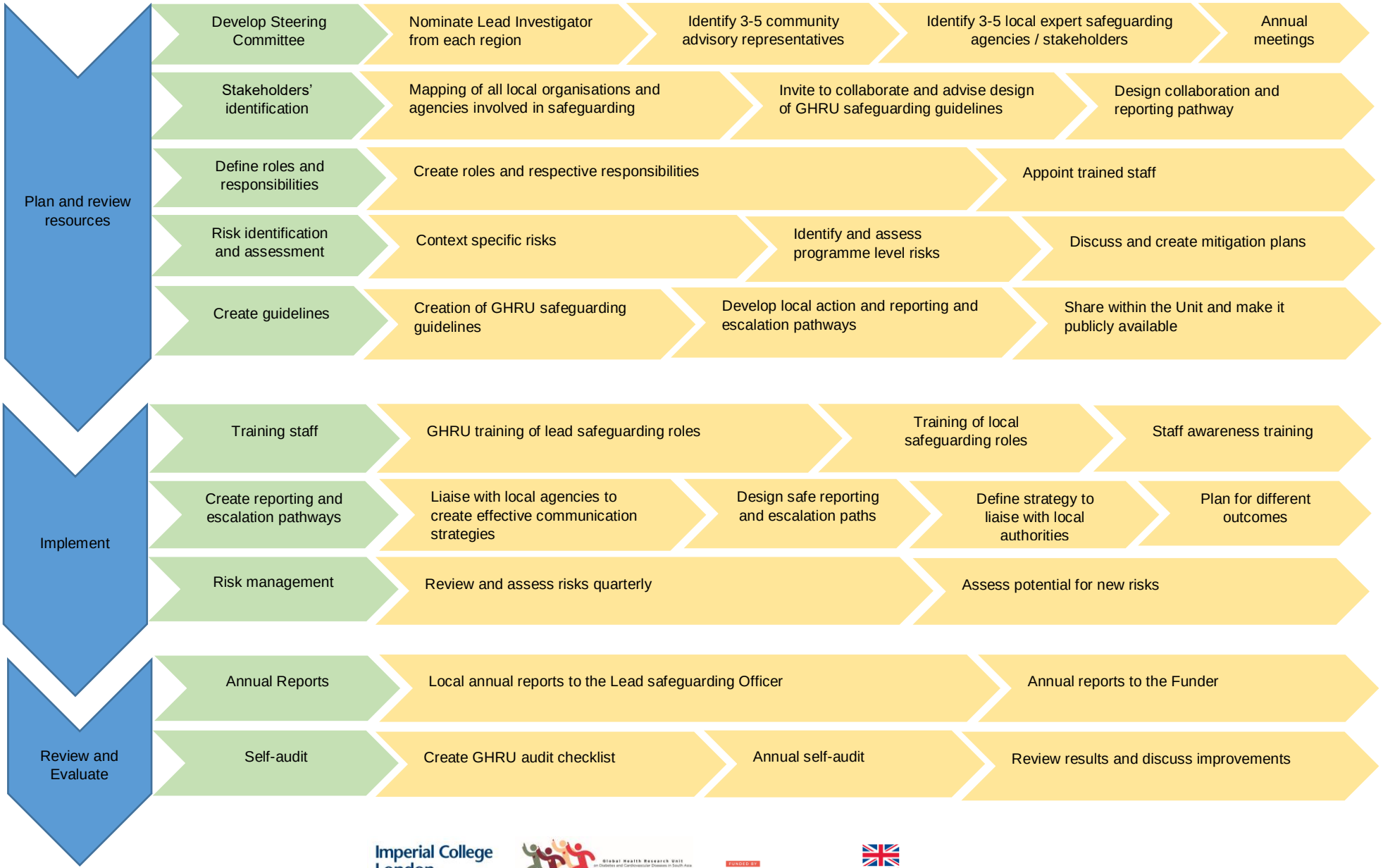
1. Agree protocols and procedures that reflect a best practice approach to safeguarding
2. Risk assess programme changes and development in different regions
3. Ensure clear accountability and training for those with responsibility for safeguarding

The Chair of the Committee is the Unit Director who will be supported by an appointed Lead Safeguarding Officer. The Lead Safeguarding Officer will be responsible for management of the Unit's approach to safeguarding.

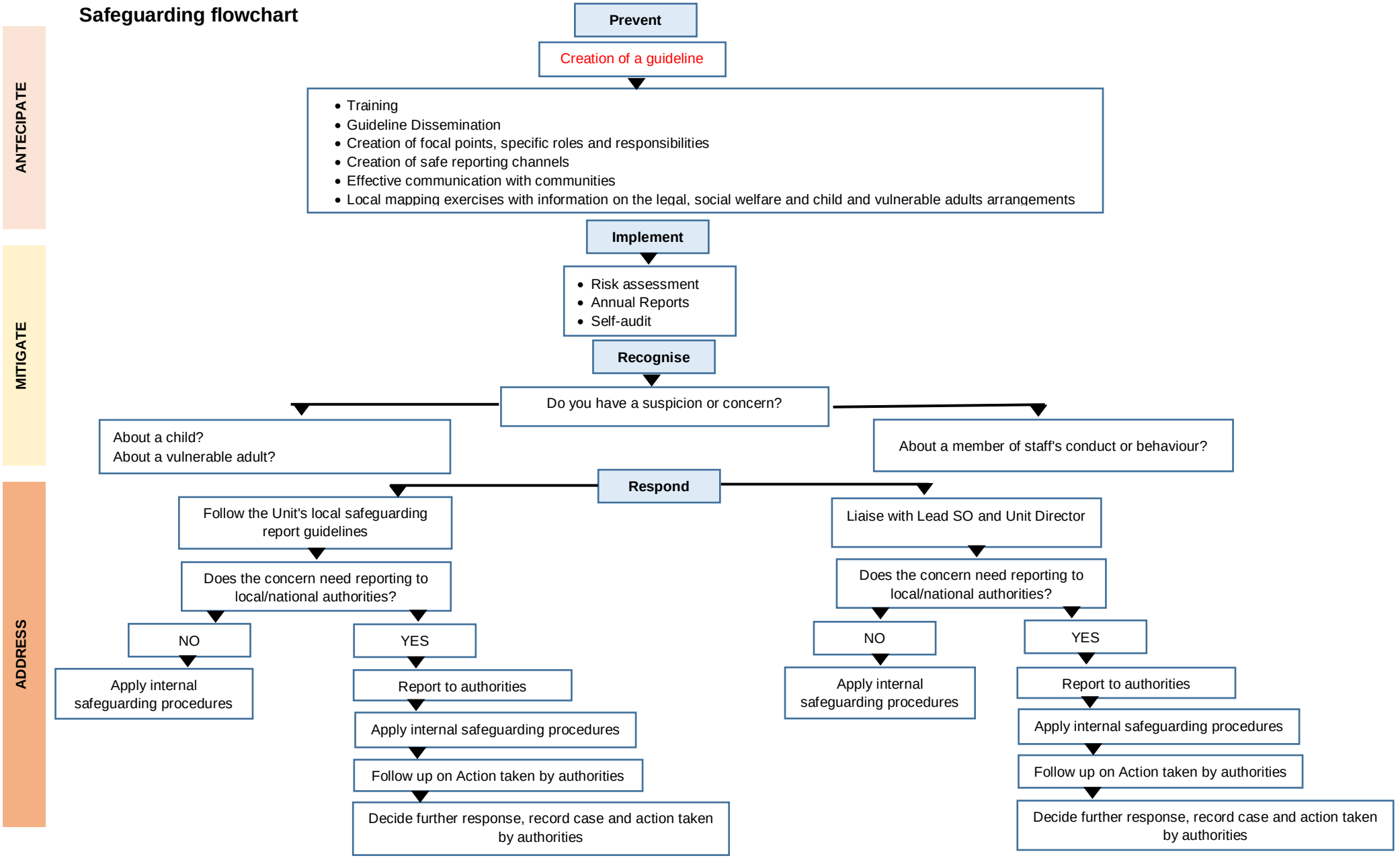
Accountability and Reporting

The Unit's operation of the safeguarding policy and codes of practice will be publicly available through the Unit's website, and will be reported annually to the Funder, together with the minutes of the annual Safeguarding Committee's meeting.

Safeguarding Implementation Pathway



Safeguarding flowchart



Online Resources

Imperial College London's safeguarding online training

UKCDR webinar: Preventing harm in research

References

(1) Griffith R. Child Protection, Vulnerable Adults and Safeguarding. British Journal of Neuroscience Nursing 2017 Feb;13(1):46-47.

(2) Brammer A. Child Protection and Safeguarding - Code of Practice. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; 2014.

(3) Imperial College London. Safeguarding. Available at: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/compliance-and-immigration/safeguarding/.

(4) National Institute for Health Research. NIHR Safeguarding Guidance. Available at: https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/nihr-safeguarding-guidance/25744.

(5) UKCDR. Safeguarding. Available at: https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/safeguarding/.

(6) Imperial College London. RELATIONSHIP REVIEW POLICY. 2017.