UoC Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report

Annual Report 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024

(including Office for Students (OFS) Prevent monitoring return reporting responses for 2023-24)

Please note, where references are made to "students" this includes all learners including Higher Level Apprentices, home, international, full and part time, on and off campus.

The Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report is intended to provide assurance to the Board and colleagues across the University, to underpin the OfS monitoring requirements and those of other external bodies (eg OFSTED/ESFA), and to show the range of safeguarding and Prevent-related activity during the 2023 -24 academic year.

Contents

1. Introduction

The University must ensure it can demonstrate it is addressing the following duties and responsibilities:

- Statutory Safeguarding and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups
- Its "*Duty to ensure that* individuals within the University community are safeguarded from *becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism''* – The Prevent Duty; and
- Discharge of its Duty of Care to students and staff who are vulnerable by way of their mental health or disability.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and is embedded across the University with roles and responsibilities outlined in the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures document. The University takes a risk-based approach to safeguarding including Prevent, which is embedded within safeguarding at the University.

An Independent Review of Prevent was commissioned in 2019 and William Shawcross was appointed as the Independent Reviewer in 2021, and the review was published in February 2023. The review considered the UK's strategy for protecting people vulnerable to being drawn in to terrorism and made 34 recommendations. Updated Prevent guidance was effective from 31 December 2023. There are no new legal requirements or additional responsibilities for the higher education sector.

Key changes arising from the review include:

- The first objective of Prevent has been changed to "tackle the ideological causes of terrorism".
- The Prevent Duty has been refocused to a requirement on providers to have "*due regard to the need to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism*" previous phrasing was "*due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism*"
- HEPs should determine who the appropriate members of staff are and how frequently training should occur, being proportionate to the risk of terrorism and extremism in their local area. They should also consider what type of training is needed for staff in different roles.
- The risk and threat landscape has been updated in line with the counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) 2023.
- The National Referral Form is being rolled out nationally with the aim for all Prevent partners to adopt this approach as previously there had been varying practice across police forces.
- The Office for Students (OfS) will consider the updated Prevent duty guidance when it next reviews the monitoring framework.

2. Terrorism threat level 2023-24

This was informed by information from the Gov.uk website and counter terrorism information and national threat levels. The terrorism threat level in the UK remained "*Substantial*," meaning that" a*n attack is likely*". The UK's primary domestic threat comes from Islamist terrorism, with the remainder predominantly driven by extreme right-wing terrorism. The terrorism threat level in Northern Ireland from Northern Ireland related terrorism was changed from "severe" meaning "an attack is highly likely" to "substantial meaning "an attack is likely".

In October 2023 the Online Safety Act became law. This adopts a zero-tolerance approach to protecting children from online harm, and places legal responsibility on tech companies to remove illegal content. It is possible this will alter the way extremists use the online space.

3. Leadership and Governance

"Effective leadership" is a key theme of OfS compliance in relation to the Prevent Duty. Specifically,

 "People in leadership positions are expected to:

- *Establish or use existing mechanisms for understanding the risk of radicalization*
- *Ensure staff understand the risk and build capabilities to deal with it*
- *Communicate and promote the importance of the duty and ensure staff implement the duty effectively"*

In relation to OFSTED the OFSTED inspection handbook sets out:

"Inspectors will seek evidence of the impact of those responsible for governance. They will determine whether they provide confident, strategic leadership and create strong accountability for and oversight and assurance of the educational performance, to ensure continuous and sustainable improvement.

Inspectors will also consider whether those responsible for governance:

- *know the provider and understand its strengths and weaknesses*
- *support and strengthen the provider's leadership and contribute to shaping its strategic direction*
- *ensure that the provider meets its statutory responsibilities*
- *provide challenge and hold senior leaders and managers to account for improving the quality of learning and the effectiveness of performance management systems.*

Inspectors will satisfy themselves that those responsible for governance understand their responsibilities and are ensuring that these are carried out appropriately within the provider. They are not expected to review a list of duties with inspectors.

Inspectors will look for a culture of safeguarding. This means providers should have effective arrangements to:

- *always act in the best interests of learners to protect them online and offline, including when they are receiving remote education*
- *identify learners who may need early help, and who are at risk of harm or have been harmed. This can include, but is not limited to, neglect, abuse (including by their peers), grooming or exploitation, sexual abuse and online harm.*
- *secure the help learners need and, if required, refer concerns in a timely way to those who have the expertise to help*
- *ensure safe recruitment and manage ongoing compliance and allegations about adults who may be a risk to children and vulnerable adults*
- *ensure that all staff maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned.*

4. Leadership and governance at the University of Cumbria

The University's named Safeguarding/Prevent Lead on the Board of Directors is the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Safeguarding Steering Group was reconfigured during 2022-23 to reflect changing business needs and changed roles and structures. Revised terms of reference were agreed in July 2023 and the group met four times during 2023/24 academic year. At the first meeting of the steering group in October 2024 there will be a discussion about the implementation of the 'safeguarding champions' role in the updated policy.

The Strategic Lead with responsibility for Safeguarding and Prevent is the DVC. The Lead Operational Safeguarding/Prevent Officer (LOSO) is the Head of Student Support. This role leads on casework including working with referrals from and into external networks.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Team supports the duty system in relation to safeguarding. The Director of Student Services acts alongside the LOSO and is regularly briefed on student cases. The LOSO also conducts an audit with those with safeguarding responsibilities in advance of the production of this annual report to ensure compliance.

The Head of Apprenticeships is the nominated OFSTED contact for Higher Level Apprentices (HLAS). He has developed a range of interventions to ensure those delivering HLAS are aware of what they need to do to show how they address safeguarding/Prevent and the wider safeguarding context for OFSTED in their programmes.

The Head of Practice Learning & Partnership has oversight of safeguarding related casework in the Institute of Health. These cases frequently have an element of fitness to practise or the need to manage reputational risk inherent in them.

The Education Partnerships and Mentor Development lead works closely with the ITE programme leads and the Lead Operational Safeguarding and Prevent Officer to oversee safeguarding related cases in the Institute of Education, Arts and Society. Like the Institute of Health there is frequently an element of fitness to practice to consider. During the first term of 2023/24 the LOSO and the Head of Admissions met with the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the Centre for Teacher Education at Warwick university to review safeguarding processes. Following that meeting relevant UoC processes were reviewed and aligned where appropriate. The safeguarding leads agreed it would be useful to have scheduled catch ups going forward and these are in place.

5. External reporting and scrutiny

The University submitted the Annual Accountability and Data return to the OfS for 2022-23 by the December 1, 2023, deadline, and in March 2024 the OfS confirmed that they did not have any further queries about our submission after their review of the information received in the return.   The OfS made one change in the data return request for 2022-23 in that the requirement for providers to report the 'number of staff receiving broader welfare or safeguarding training, awareness raising training or briefing' was removed.

During 2023/24 there were no serious issues/cases that met the OfS Prevent reporting criteria.

The OfS have confirmed that no changes have been made to the data requirements for the 23/24 return.

The submission date to the OfS for the 2023-24 return is 2 December 2024.

The University's Higher Level Apprentice Provision was inspected by OFSTED in May 2024 and arrangements for safeguarding were judged as effective.

6. Internal reporting on Safeguarding and Prevent and monitoring of welfare provision

- Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) received the Ofs data return and accountability statement in November 2023. The Safeguarding Risk Assessment and Action Plan and the Prevent Risk Assessment and Action Plan were also presented to ARC at that time.
- The University Board of Directors received updated Safeguarding and Prevent Risk Assessments and Action Plans, and the draft of the OfS submission and accountability statement in November 2023.
- The Safeguarding Policy (Incorporating the Prevent Duty and Modern Slavery) was reviewed and updated for 24/25 and was approved by ARC in June 2024. Key changes included:

  - The Policy was redrafted using the new Policy framework template.
  - Within the Purpose/Context section of the policy categories have been added to provide clarity across the Statutory, Regulatory and Non-Statutory aspects of safeguarding.
  - Definitions related to key words or phrases associated with safeguarding and prevent have been added at section 8.
  - General and specific roles and responsibilities have been summarised at section 5, with fuller details of roles and responsibilities provided in Appendix 1.   Each institute and service should nominate a colleague to represent their respective institute or service on the Safeguarding Steering Group. The Safeguarding Steering Group members will act as Safeguarding champions within their service or Institute and this approach replaces the previous "role" of Safeguarding Officers.
  - The Safeguarding and Prevent Risk Assessments and Action plans were reviewed and updated for 24/25 and approved by Business Assurance Board in May 2024. As part of the update, they have been moved into the University's risk register template. Given the University's approach of embedding Prevent within the context of Safeguarding, and the overlap between the risks within the two previous documents, in moving the assessments into the risk register template we have taken the opportunity to merge the documents into one. As this is the first time consideration of the likelihood and impact of the identified risks has been included in the assessment/register, further work will be undertaken via the Safeguarding steering group to consider the risk scoring.

- The LOSO contacted key leads with specific Safeguarding/Prevent responsibilities (as per the Safeguarding policy document) during summer 2024 to seek assurance of ongoing compliance and to inform this report.

- Updates on student and staff welfare and wellbeing from People and Culture and Disability and Mental Health and Wellbeing provision were provided to the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing (EDIW) committee during 2023-24.
- The University continued to support all learners on or off campus during 2023/24
- The Head of Student Support is a member of both the Apprenticeship Steering Group and the Apprenticeship Operational Groups and provides regular updates in relation to Safeguarding/Prevent and ongoing issues or risk impacting learner wellbeing.

7. Related policies, risk assessments and procedures include:

The University has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that incorporate Safeguarding and Prevent including, but not limited to:

Safeguarding web pages and Safeguarding Policy and Procedure www.cumbria.ac.uk/safeguarding
Safeguarding and Prevent Risk Register
Safeguarding audit annually of all responsible leads to inform Safeguarding/Prevent annual report due to go to ARC in November 2024
Freedom of Speech and External Speakers protocols
IT policies on acceptable usage for staff and student and guidance for students on the student hub re cybersecurity
Safer recruitment of staff protocols (People and Culture) and students (Admissions)
Staff and Student Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy
Under 18 protocols including risk assessments for accommodation, and programme-based activity including enhanced admissions' requirements for under 18 international students
Risk assessments are in place for Hello Future residentials on campus
Student and staff complaints and disciplinary process clearly reference safeguarding and prevent
Conference documentation clearly references Safeguarding/Prevent
Contractors' protocols are in place and include reference to safeguarding and Prevent

8. Effective reporting mechanisms for staff or students to raise concerns

Our online Student Enquiry Point (STEP) provides a centralised reporting route for internal learners, staff and external agencies/stakeholders. The STEP enables learners to seek support for themselves or refer concerns about another learner. Tutors, professional service staff, or external agencies can also report concerns about learners via the STEP.

STEP is supported by a helpdesk delivered by library staff as the first point of contact and Student Engagement Coordinators who can follow up with input from specialist teams as required. A pilot "First Stop Shop" offering co-located student facing services was introduced at Ambleside campus during 2022-23. The concept was further rolled out in Lancaster from September 2023 and operates from the library. The STEP desk at Fusehill Street will be introduced during 2024/25.

A small team deals with the Safeguarding related referrals via STEP which includes the LOSO and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Team.

The system has inbuilt identification of levels of risk/prioritisation in relation to Safeguarding/Mental Health and Disability cases.

In response to UUK Guidance on Changing the Culture, and in anticipation of changes to OfS regulation requirements, in relation to hate crime, harassment, bullying and sexual misconduct in Universities, from September 1 2023, individuals have been able to report student related issues involving those themes, directly via a "You Report, We Support" tile on the student hub. The duty worker in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Team responds to any cases that come through, ensuring the student receives an initial support call which details their support and reporting options.

Students report to, or are identified by:

Internally	Externally including referrals from other agencies
Learners themselves	Employers
Tutors	Placement facilitators/link tutors
Professional services staff	Police - general officers or specialist Public Protection Units
Accommodation staff	Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs)
Other learners	Hospitals
UoC Student Union	Mental Health Community Teams/Crisis Teams
	Private landlords or private accommodation providers
	Members of the public/parents
	Placement providers

External referrals still tend to come directly to the LOSO but can come in via any colleague and are then passed to the LOSO via STEP.

The Student Enquiry point continues to be highlighted to staff via training sessions and is included in staff inductions, including the new half day academic induction introduced during the summer of 2024. The Head of Student Support has also delivered training to the staff team at Denton Holme Student Village, the University's nominated accommodation partner in Carlisle. Student inductions also focus on ensuring students know where and how to report concerns or seek information and advice. All programme leaders have received a set of slides that they can incorporate into their programme induction to further reinforce the key messages. Information is also included in the mandatory induction that all residential students must complete. Refresher communications are sent regularly, and events are held across the year for students to meet staff and be reminded of reporting routes.

Concerns about staff may take routes in as above, but also issues are generally advised to Line Managers in the first instance. Trade Union reps may also flag concerns.

9. Safer recruitment
Safer recruitment of staff is led by the People and Culture Service.

Safer recruitment of students is led by Admissions in conjunction with the relevant academic department and Professional Body requirements including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and Occupational Health checks as required.

The requirements of a staff member's role, or the programme of study a student will be undertaking, are assessed against the Vetting and Barring Service framework and we are mindful that there need to be grounds for asking someone to undertake the DBS process.
Where a student or staff member is removed from study/work, the LOSO or the Director of People and Culture, checks to see if the requirements for reporting to the Vetting and Barring service have been met. If that is the case, a referral is made. An acknowledgement only is received back from the Vetting and Barring Service. No referrals were made during 2023-24.

10. IT (Information Technology) acceptable use policies, filtering and incident management and online safety

Staff across the University are required to complete a compulsory tailored online (and on demand) Cyber Security training session along with an Information Security and Being Safe Online course once every 2 years. These will continue for 2024-25 with existing courses to be reviewed for both content/relevancy and likely integration (combined).

All staff and students are supported in their cyber threat awareness through simulated phishing campaigns. A short (2 minute) training module is provided to all those whose response to the phishing exercise suggests a need for enhanced awareness of cyber security.   Campaigns are dynamically updated and refreshed to ensure relevancy and accuracy to current cyber threats.

Students and staff have been provided guidance on cybersecurity and best practices which can be accessed on the student hub/staff hub, in induction sessions (including for Higher Level Apprentices) and also on the public website. In addition, the Learning Advisers in Library Services have provided input on digital skills and online behavior. The Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement (CAPE) created guides for tutors and students/Higher Level Apprentices to improve understanding of the challenges and issues associated with extensive use of online learning.

IT Service Leads receive regular information via JISC, NCSC CiSP portal and wider network channels on the risks and wider context of delivering education online and respond accordingly in relation to their policies and procedures. The university also benefits from a cloud hosted and partner supported 365 x 24 x 7 managed detection and response service.   The university is audited annually on its cyber security 'posture', processes and procedures, with reports sent to a number of executive committees. The university also undertakes an annual Cyber Incident Response exercise, testing its response, mitigation and recovery plan against differing cyber-attack scenarios. The university is also Cyber Essentials accredited for its Apprenticeship Business Unit with university-wider certification being scheduled for December 2024.

The IT incident management process refers to Safeguarding and Prevent and ties in with both the acceptable use policy and the internet content filtering policy.

IT Services have the ability to provide details of the themes that are blocked by web filtering on request and are included in a defined Web Content Filtering policy.

11. Freedom of Speech, External Speakers and Events

The University's approach to the management of events involving external speakers is outlined within the External Speakers Protocols and Procedures which are incorporated within the University's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice, this underpins aspects of the Prevent Duty.

The Government's Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act became law in May 2023. Consequently, the University reviewed and updated the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and External Speakers Protocols during 2023-24. This review was led by the University Secretary and the Director of Student Services. The updated Code of Practice was approved by Audit and Risk Committee in June 2024, subject to review by the University's solicitors.

The University of Cumbria's Student Union (UCSU) have their own protocols in place governing external speakers. The 2023-24 SU approvals data has been requested from the SU but has not yet been shared with the University.

A) Total number of events or speakers approved through the external speakers' process	UoC: 11 (32 speakers) SU:
B) Total number of events or speakers approved subject to any mitigations or conditions	UOC - 0 SU- 0
C) Number of events or speakers approved subject to any mitigations of conditions due to Prevent-related risks	UOC -0 SU-0
d) Number of events or speakers rejected by the University	UOC- 0 SU- 0

Chaplaincy colleagues working with the LOSO continue to oversee the risk assessment of the multi-faith spaces across the campuses. A small number of honorary chaplains provide support.   The recent alumni open day has led to some alumnus contacting the Chaplain, asking how they might be able to help in the chapel and chaplaincy. The Director of Student Services and LOSO are working with People and Culture and the chaplaincy team to review and adapt the current volunteer's agreement so that this offer can be taken forward.

12. Key actions and initiatives in relation to Safeguarding and Prevent during 2023-24

- As part of an approach of continuous improvement regarding our Safeguarding and Prevent practices the following actions have been implemented:
  o The ongoing development of the Student Enquiry Point which enables staff, students or externals to refer at any time and mitigates reliance on the availability of the Lead Operational Safeguarding Officer
  o The introduction of You Report, We Support as a mechanism for students to report and receive advice and guidance about sexual misconduct, bullying, harassment or discrimination.
  o The Head of Practice Learning and Partnerships Engagement in the Institute of Health who, along with two colleagues continues to gain expertise in management of IoH Safeguarding casework including liaison with externals agencies.
  o Work by Head of PLPE, Head of Student Services and Academic Registry to review and develop all processes and procedures with regards to Fitness to Practice from both a health and conduct perspective
  o Regular casework oversight meetings between Head of Student Support and Student Procedures
  o Incident reporting using STEP/Advocate embedded across the university. This means a reduced risk of incident responses being delayed due to only one person receiving them.
  o The LOSO conducted an annual review of the BAE Safeguarding Scorecard with the BAE Safeguarding Lead.
  o In response to the UUK's Suicide Safer Universities: Sharing Information with Trusted Contacts Guidance the Trusted Contact policy was approved during 23/24 for implementation from September 2024. As part of the registration/re-registration process all students are asked to provide details of a Trusted Contact. Students are asked to provide this information so that it is

available in the unlikely event that a situation arises where the University considers the student's health, wellbeing or safety to be at significant risk

- o "Good Course" App piloted to provide a module covering "consent" to address UUK and predicted OfS requirements. The training was sent to new students and continuing students living in halls in early October 2023. 48.3% of students who were sent the link opened the message and 35% of those who opened the link completed the course.
- o Preparations for the developments at Barrow and PCSM have continued. Contracts/agreements have been considering any Safeguarding and Prevent elements.
- o The IOH Policy - Raising and Escalating Concerns in relation to Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, Children and Young People was implemented. Work is being undertaken by the Head of PLPE to develop roadmaps to support IOH staff and practice partners with escalation of student wellbeing concerns, particularly out of hours

13. During 2023-24 the following work strands have commenced with a view to completion and progression though university committees etc. during 2024-25

- Review of the implementation of the Trusted Contacts policy and the recording of this information by learners when they register. Registration data for September 2024 confirms that completion of this has been relatively low. This suggests a need to review the communication to learners about the importance of capturing this information
- Continue preparations for the developments at Barrow, PCSM and the International College
- Development of an action plan to ensure the university's compliance with the ne OFS condition of registration (E6) on harassment and sexual misconduct
- Development of an action plan to ensure the university is meeting the recommendations set out in the Equality & Human Rights Commission advice note from the legal case of University of Bristol vs Abrahart
- Introduction of 'Students of Concern' Review meetings providing a confidential forum for support services and academic teams to work more closely together to provide holistic support for student of concern.
- Continue to work with Student Procedures to review policies associated with conduct and fitness to study/practice
- Review of staff and student online training package and any key messages for comms to frontline staff following the recommendation made in the Shawcross Independent Review of Prevent and the updated Prevent Guidance

14. Wider wellbeing support and compliance with the Equality Act to ensure student's physical, psychological and spiritual wellbeing are recognized and addressed

The University recognizes that some students (and staff) are vulnerable to isolation, domestic violence, lack of mental health support and other influences that might affect their overall wellbeing. The University provides a wide range of wellbeing support including Sports facilities which are publicized via the website and Student Hub.

- As a multi-campus university with a range of learners, staff have always been able to offer online support and refer students remotely for support. The teams continue to offer face to face,

telephone and online appointments, but our experience is that many learners prefer to continue with online appointments via Teams for convenience. Many learners are studying at education centres local to them or by distance learning and work shifts, so some early morning and early evening appointments are being offered which are being well received. During Welcome Week and the first week of teaching in September 2024 the service offered an online Student Services Information session/drop in. This was offered at different times during the week but sadly there was no take up of this. The team will explore how this might be offered differently for welcome 2025.

- A range of welfare, pastoral and Chaplaincy support services are available to students. These are part of a student support framework which includes: Chaplaincy (for those of faith and those of none), Talking Therapy, Mental Health Case workers, Residence Life, Money Advisors, Careers, support for disabled students, international students, care leavers, L3, estranged students, adult carers and Sports Centre provision.

- Following the review of Disability Services by Halpin's consultancy in March 2023, the majority of the recommendations made were implemented during 2023-24. These included a full review of processes and associated communications, resulting in a more streamlined process and support plans being produced and shared with students and staff in a timelier manner. The remaining recommendations will be taken forward during 2024-25 when the new Disability Services Manager is in post.

- The Directorate of Student Services continues to promote its "Live Well, Learn Well" approach, supported by a wellbeing blog which focuses on different themes throughout the year. Other support staff such as those in Reception and the Libraries, the Barn at Ambleside and at London, have continued to provide a physical presence. These teams along with others such as the Academic skills team, Registry, student finance and catering continue to play a key role in identifying students of concern and seeking the relevant support for them or signposting to relevant specialist provision and self-help via STEP. During 2024-25 'active listening' and 'managing risk' training will be provided for all staff in Student Services to help staff feel confident and supported when it comes to managing student mental health and making them aware of the support services available to students. The Head of Student Support will explore with the PVC for Learning and Teaching whether this training should also be offered as part of the personal tutor toolkit.

- The Accommodation Officer Welfare role, newly restructured for 2023, is now embedded at all campuses. The team are working together across campuses and with other support teams in Student Services to support students whilst in residence in terms of welfare, community experience, and respectful relationships. Examples of this include events in October to tie in with national campaigns around Homesickness and World Mental Health Day. Across the campuses the team will be offering drops in at each accommodation as wellbeing walks and activities, providing an opportunity for students to come together and make new friends.

- Personal tutors and other academic staff also form a key part of the student support framework.

- Regular events are held throughout the year to encourage students to access support and services, e.g. induction activity, events during Welcome Week, introductions to Student Services within classes/class shout outs, campus roaming, and pop-up information events. All activities are designed to raise awareness of, and access to, support available, and for students to share their experiences and issues with support staff.

- The International Support team continues to provide in-year support for all international students and coordinated international induction for September 2024. Attendance at regular Engagement

Meetings with Academic Registry colleagues ensures that students at risk of failure are identified early on and can be contacted for support or signposting to specific support. The Student Engagement Co-Ordinator also works closely with the Mental Health and Wellbeing team to provide support for students with low level wellbeing concerns.

- Full details of support can be found at: https://my.cumbria.ac.uk/Student-Life/Support/
- The Students' Union and Chaplaincy provide vital impartial support. Multi-faith spaces continue to be available to students. As part of welcome activities in September 2024 the Chaplaincy hosted two events in Carlisle – a visit to Carlisle Cathedral and a guided walk to the Roman Wall.   Both events were well attended and will become annual events going forward.
- The Money Advice Team experienced continued demand for financial support through the Student Support Fund (SSF) in 2023/24. The primary purpose of the discretionary SSF is to relieve financial hardship which may affect a student's participation in higher education, especially preventing them from leaving their course due to financial reasons. In 2023/2024, the university allocated budget for the SSF was £145,000 for grant awards. £14,250 was ring fenced for contribution towards the cost of diagnostic assessment reports for students with Specific Learning Difficulties. The number of awards from the SSF decreased by approximately 23% in 2023/24 compared with 2022/23. However, in 2022/23, the fund was boosted by an additional £65,570 from the Office for Students additional hardship funds. The SSF did not receive any additional funding during the 2023/24 academic year, which is reflected in decline in awards made.
- Planning data confirms that the number of disabled students officially declaring to the University and in the Student Records System SITS, was 15.56% (18.94% the year before). The use of Advocate, and using similar wording on student facing disability questionnaires has enabled the University to improve the accuracy of information held on Student Records System. Some students choose not to declare their disability during the admissions process and declare once they are engaging with their programme. This means that the information is not automatically recorded on SITS. During 23/24 work has been undertaken to reconcile data on Advocate (which includes those who declared post registration) with SITS data to ensure SITS is updated with any post registration declarations. This work has improved the accuracy of the HESA return and is part of business as usual processes to regular reconcile the data between the two systems. There remains a wide variation in disabled students' percentages across student types/ cohorts. For example, 21.41 % of students on Higher Level Apprenticeships have disabilities compared to 14.5% on other course types (under / post grad /CPD courses).
- All of the support teams work together in a multi-professional/agency model and when a vulnerable student is identified they are quickly supported by the right service or services including external agencies where appropriate.
- The University has continued its use of "*Togetherall*" which gives access to 24/7 peer support for mental health for staff and students and has a range of self-help resources. During 2023/24 the Mental Health and Wellbeing team worked collaboratively with the Togetherall provider to increase promotion of the platform. During 2024/25 there will be targeted promotion of Togetherall on Blackboard.

- Tutors have the ability to actively monitor student engagement through our VLEs and the Student Engagement Dashboard to implement early intervention and referral to specialist services where required. Where academic issues come up in discussions with Student Services staff, they are highlighted back to tutors for relevant follow-up.

- 'Students of Concern' review meetings are now held when Student Services become aware of mental health concerns about a student that may impact on their academic study (and potentially accommodation). These meetings facilitate a holistic approach to student support where both support and academic teams can agree how best to support the student concerned.
- The Centre of Academic Practice Enhancement (CAPE) and Information Services continue to support academic and professional services colleagues to understand the impact of technology on learners including supporting accessibility for disabled learners.
- A range of support for staff wellbeing and for staff impacted by disclosures made to them by students or fellow staff, is available. This includes an Employee Assistance Programme, Able Futures and access to counsellors and a range of information via the Staff Hub. An extensive range of wellbeing resources are available to staff via StaffHub. Mental Health First Aiders and Wellbeing Champions are available to provide expert support. Employee wellbeing is encompassed by the work under the Health & Wellbeing action plan and newly developed stress action plan which aims to support employees in all aspects of their mental health and wellbeing

15. External partnership working

15.1 Prevent-Related

The new Northwest Regional Prevent Coordinator started in November 2023 and there have been regular meetings in person and online between the new role holder and the LOSO and/or Director of Student Services. Now that the DFE role has broadened to include schools there is less capacity for the role to deliver training but there is good signposting to other sources of support and training. There continues to be regular liaison also with the London DFE Coordinator. The LOSO continues to attend the North Prevent Delivery Group, and Cumbria Prevent Board meetings, held online. These meetings include representatives from the Police Counter Terrorism units and Police Prevent Leads and information on the local terrorism risks are fed back into the Prevent risk assessment. The LOSO meets termly with equivalent colleagues at UCLAN, Edge Hill and Lancaster University and with the DFE Regional Coordinator.

The Prevent Risk Assessment acknowledges the need for development of regular staff and student communications and a need for a main area on the website to bring together Prevent related material. The development of this commenced over the summer of 2024 with the launch of a dedicated staff resource page on the Student Services SharePoint site, providing staff with guidance on various matters of student support and this work will continue during 2024/25.

15.2 Safeguarding -Related

The LOSO and the Mental Health team, work closely with a range of external agencies including the Police, Social Services, Local Victim Services Advisers, Local Authority Designated Officers (Childrens' and Adult Workforce), and Local EIP Teams and Crisis Teams, making referrals to and receiving referrals from them as appropriate to each case. During 2023/24 the LOSO has strengthened the links with the Police, particularly the local neighborhood policing teams. This has resulted in the launch of a pilot of regular community police desks at the Carlisle campuses. Further expansion of this across other campuses will be explored during 24/25. The LOSO is working closely with both Cumbria and Lancashire Constabulary leads for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). During the summer of 2024 the Lancashire Universities and Lancashire County Council Safeguarding Forum was launched to provide a

dedicated forum for higher education discussion as previously it had been included and secondary and further education forums.   The LOSO has recently joined the Cumberland Council Safety Partnership.

16. Academic Partnerships

Academic Partnerships with external organizations are managed by the Academic Quality Development, Collaborative Provision team., who introduce Prevent and Safeguarding from the initial stages of partnership discussions so each partner's responsibilities in this regard are clear. The Partnership Agreement template was updated during 23/24 and now links to the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the respective obligations relating to this. Higher Level Apprentice subcontracted provision agreements reference compliance with Prevent and Safeguarding as do Employer Agreements for apprenticeships.

17. Safeguarding and Prevent -Related Training: Staff

Online Safeguarding and Prevent Training is mandatory for all staff on induction and subsequently every two years or annually depending on their role. There are two basic online modules: one for Safeguarding and one for Prevent.   The Head of Student Support attends relevant Safeguarding and Prevent training (Much of the safeguarding training continues to be geared towards the statutory sector or secondary education so is not always relevant.)

Safeguarding, Prevent and wider wellbeing training: for the period 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024

Data set	
Number of staff identified as key in relation to the Prevent Duty	1037
Number of key staff receiving induction Prevent training as part of corporate induction session	45
Number of key staff receiving mandatory Prevent training (includes both new staff completing the module for the first time and those completing refresher training)	412
Number of staff receiving broader welfare or safeguarding training	
• Safeguarding Training	420
• Workplace Wellbeing	5
• Cyber Security	149
• Information Security and Online Safety	376
• Bystander Awareness	18

The Director of Student Services and the LOSO provided a Safeguarding and Prevent briefing to Board members in January 2024 which included the outcomes of the Shawcross Independent Review of Prevent.

Total Completion Rates

The below figures refer to the % of current salaried employees who have completed the mandatory online training modules during their employment with the university – whether in 2023-24, in previous years, or in the current year so far.

Prevent: 95.6%
Safeguarding: 96.1%
Cyber Security: 86.1%
Information Security and Online Safety: 92%

Commentary

The number of staff identified as key to Prevent delivery is the total number of staff in the institution. Prevent is embedded within Safeguarding at the University. The Training is delivered in many forms and as such there will be some double counting in the data. Training for the LOSO is supplemented by focused input at the Northern Prevent Groups.   Whilst the LOSO has significant safeguarding experience and attends regular training, during 2024/25 the LOSO will undertake a level 3 Designated Safeguarding Lead as this was highlighted as good practice during the recent Ofsted visit.

Employees are also able to sign up for external Mental Health First Aider Training and fifteen members of staff have completed it this year. Ten members of staff have completed external Suicide Alertness Training.
The Mental Health & Wellbeing Manager and Head of Student Support have put together a mini site on SharePoint which is a guide for staff for supporting students, which includes a guide for supporting students with their mental health. They will also be rolling out some 'Active Listening' and 'Managing Risk' training to staff throughout the year to ensure staff feel confident and supported when it comes to managing student mental health and making them aware of the support services available to students.

18. Safeguarding and Prevent Training – Students

Student training in Prevent and Safeguarding is included at programme level as appropriate and tailored to the setting and professional body requirements. All new students are introduced to what is available in terms of student support via My. Cumbria induction pages for undergraduate, postgraduate and Higher-Level Apprenticeships.

Higher Level Apprentices receive an introduction to Student Support including reporting mechanisms, and information on Safeguarding and Prevent as part of their induction. Safeguarding issues can also be captured via the Tri-Partite review forms completed every 10-12 weeks and which involve the University, employer, and apprentice. Higher Level Apprentices also complete a suite of online training modules covering Safeguarding, Prevent and EDI.   In the Institute of Education, Arts and Society ITE students undertake modules that include preparation for their safeguarding responsibilities when going into schools on placement.

19. Student Engagement

The student voice is heard via the liaison between the Director of Student Services and LOSO with the Students' Union and their Welfare Officer, who is also a member of the Safeguarding Steering Group. The Students' Union works closely with the University to ensure any safeguarding or Prevent-related concerns are escalated into the University's protocols as appropriate.

20. Safeguarding and Prevent Casework 2023-24 Overview, trends and key points to note

The Student Enquiry Point (STEP) is the single point of recording of safeguarding cases. All safeguarding cases entered into STEP are initially picked up by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Team who cover the duty rota. Appendix 1 details the breakdown of the data reports from the Advocate System. There were 197 safeguarding cases in the academic year 2023/24 and the 197 cases comprise 170 individuals. One individual may have more than one case as we are seeking to establish patterns of concern e.g. repeat cases of self-harm, bullying and harassment. This is also important in relation to students on professional programmes to be able to inform e.g. occupational health referrals and fitness to practice/study processes.

The Institute of Health accounts for 53% of the 197 cases which is proportionate to the size of the institute.   Cases from the Institute of Science and Environment more than doubled during 2023/24 and the 24 cases comprised 19 individuals, with 4 individuals having multiple safeguarding cases.   Following the introduction of You Report We Support it was identified in year that there had been a disproportionately high number of cases of harassment and/or sexual misconduct at the Ambleside campus. Consequently the DVC convened a working group to review the data, identify any specific factors underpinning the data, confirm responsibilities in respect of student procedures cases involving Safeguarding issues, and consider appropriate actions and interventions. Actions being taken forward include the ongoing implementation of the White Ribbon campaign activity, provision of enhanced information regarding issues of consent provided through the Residential Welcome talk, the implementation of the Good Course "Healthy Relationships" training app, continued promotion of You Report We Support, and the development of a peer led bystander intervention scheme.   .

Referrals to the Mental Health and Wellbeing team for talking therapy increased slightly to 505 in 2023-24 from 503. Not all Safeguarding/Prevent cases require mental health support.

Anxiety, stress, low mood, and depression remain the most common reasons why students seek support from the Talking Therapy Service with 37% of referrals relating to low mood/depression and 47% of referrals relating to anxiety/stress. Academic stress, bereavement, relationship issues and sleep issues were also relatively common reasons for referral. Referrals relating to risk, such as suicidality, self-harm and sexual misconduct remained relatively consistent with the previous year, with there being no notable percentage increase or decrease.

Although Safeguarding cases constitute only 2.3% of the number of cases on STEP, the risk levels in terms of student experience, retention, risk to self and others etc. are often significant and the cases involve rapid, intense immediate, and often extensive ongoing interventions from both the specialist roles and academic and other professional service colleagues and external agencies.

The cases are increasingly challenging in terms of behaviours and complexity of presentation not just for the individual themselves, but in relation to the potential impact on their study and the ability to undertake activities such as field trips, placements etc.

The University had 3 under 18s admitted to its programmes in 2023-24 and risk assessments were undertaken to ensure appropriate measures were in place until the students turned 18. None of the students were living in university accommodation.

The protocol whereby a student who is a serious cause for concern is phoned, texted and given a deadline to respond to the LOSO (or Director of Student Services or Programme Lead) has proved effective again in a small number of cases.

Safeguarding data and statistics are available on request. Please see www.cumbria.ac.uk/safeguarding for contact information.

Prevent –related casework is reported via the Annual Prevent monitoring return to the OfS

21. Risk Management

The University continues to take a risk-based approach to its activities including in relation to Safeguarding (including Prevent) and in its handling of student casework.

The self-referral mechanism for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Service contains inbuilt clinical scoring tools which ensure that those who are most at risk are prioritized for proactive intervention and follow up.

Disability Services have a triage mechanism to identify the most complex and high-risk students to prioritize the distribution of disability support plans. The service continues to face challenges in terms of demand at peak times of the year v staffing resource, and this has impacted on the student experience and staff wellbeing. Following an external review of the service in 2023 there has been a full review of processes and associated communications, resulting in a more streamlined process and support plans being produced and shared with students and staff in a timelier manner. The Head of Student Support meets regularly with the team to review the caseload and provide support to team members. Recruitment is underway for the Disability Services Manager, and it is hoped the new role holder will be in place by January 2025.

Presented by Gail Howes, (Lead Operational Safeguarding and Prevent Officer) Directorate of Student Services

October 2024