SafeZone
by criticalarc

One of Scotland's top universities for graduate employability, Edinburgh Napier University offers work placements with many of its courses – ranging from health and social care to engineering and the built environment – making it important for the university to prioritise safety for students and staff. SafeZone allows the university's security department to provide a wide range of enhanced 24/7 safeguarding services wherever students are working, on-site or off.

SafeZone helps Edinburgh Napier to provide more proactive, enhanced mental health support

With three campuses around Edinburgh and a large cohort of students working and living away from home for the first time, including many on placement in workplace settings, Edinburgh Napier University places a high priority on student mental health and wellbeing.

A team of 25 counsellors, therapists, and mental health advisers is available to support students with issues that commonly affect young people, including financial anxiety, work worries, and feelings of isolation. The university actively encourages students to attend counselling sessions rather than waiting and until difficulties become more serious, and SafeZone ensures that the counsellors themselves feel safe and are supported, especially when they are working alone.

SafeZone enables any student or member of staff to access advice or support, or to request immediate assistance, at the touch of a button using the SafeZone app, or a dedicated wearable duress device. For the counsellors, for example, this is a more dependable and easy-to-use technology than the old hard-wired system it replaced. For the university it provides better value and requires no maintenance – it also

"With SafeZone we have taken a major step forward at Edinburgh Napier University. Our security team has become more efficient, delivering better services and collaborating more effectively with key stakeholders to meet our duty of care towards our community. It's a great technology."

RUSSELL WARDALE
Security Manager,
Edinburgh Napier University

includes multiple other functions and is unique in the way it adds to the security team's capabilities.

In the security control room Edinburgh Napier's monitoring team now has complete visibility over the precise current locations of all checked-in users calling for assistance, with information about their identity and any pre-registered vulnerabilities. Security controllers can also see the locations of all available officers. This improves team coordination and allows the fastest and most appropriate response to any call for assistance.

A wider transformation of security services

SafeZone has proved to be a cornerstone technology that has enabled a wider transformation of services at Edinburgh Napier, with more effective collaboration between the security department and multiple stakeholders including information services, student support services, property & facilities, and marketing & communications.

For the individual schools, SafeZone is allowing operational flexibility aligning with their own risk assessments. For example, the computing and engineering school has mandated the use of SafeZone for anyone working out of hours, so that if they fall ill or become unresponsive rapid assistance can be provided. At the nursing school, students working late hospital shifts are protected as they travel to and from work.

For the first time SafeZone has also given the university the ability to send out mass communications and alerts to its whole community in the event of an emergency. In addition, it allows direct communications to be targeted to specific sub-groups, which can be defined by precise location, role, status etc. This means that the security team can keep in touch with users, whichever campus or university facility they are in and users can request assistance, 24/7, from any location.

Going a step further, Edinburgh Napier is also a founding member of the SafeZone Alliance Scotland, which is a collaboration between leading Scottish universities ensuring rapid support for users when they are visiting any participating institution.

Benefits and outcomes: wide ranging improvements and assured adaptability

SafeZone is allowing Edinburgh Napier to continuously adapt and offer the best the safety and wellbeing support services to students. SafeZone not only streamlines the security team's operations and enhances officers' ability to respond, it raises preparedness for any major incident that might arise and offers the assurance of future adaptability. For these reasons, Edinburgh Napier was awarded the 2023 Pride of Napier award for its implementation of SafeZone which required substantial effort and collaboration.

System benefits include:

- Providing the highest level of currently available protection for students working late or alone. Boosting student experiences and satisfaction, supporting better recruitment and retention.
- Extending protection to students visiting other institutions, through the SafeZone Alliance.
- Optimising existing resources by boosting security team capabilities, improving officer deployment, and streamlining coordination.
- Adding value to the security function, enabling new levels of engagement and collaboration with key internal and external stakeholders.