



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

CHILD PROTECTION & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

VERSION CONTROL

Version No:	Reason for Update	Date of Update	Updated By
1	To update current Policy	February 2016	Child Protection and Safeguarding Working Group
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1. Introduction and Context

Whilst Stranmillis University College (the College) owes a duty of care to all its students, it also has a particular responsibility to safeguard vulnerable groups including the welfare of children (any individual under the age of eighteen) and vulnerable adults that staff and students may have contact with in the course of their work or studies. This responsibility applies whether the individual is a student of the College or is otherwise under the care or supervision of College staff. A separate policy for vulnerable adults is available.

This policy therefore provides advice to all staff and students on their responsibilities in relation to child protection and safeguarding children and young people, including the action to be taken to enable cases of suspected or actual maltreatment to be properly considered and pursued. It includes guidance on the role of the College Child Protection and Safeguarding Committee and Team; procedures that staff should follow when a student discloses a concern; and procedures that students and staff should follow if faced with a child protection concern during placement/school based work. Its contents do not constitute, or purport to be, an authoritative interpretation of the law: that is exclusively a matter for the courts.

The central thrust of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 is that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration, and it is this essential principle which underpins this policy.

2. Aim of the Policy

The aim of this Policy is to promote good practice in child protection and safeguarding children and young people within the College and to set out a procedural framework to ensure that:

- the College protects children and young people under its care or supervision;
- College staff and students are equipped to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection and safeguarding issues;
- College senior management are equipped to make appropriate decisions in the event of specific child protection or safeguarding concerns arising;
- the College takes proactive steps in recruitment and in other areas to minimize risk with regard to child protection and safeguarding children and young people.

3. Legal Context

The central legal framework in respect of the welfare of children is set out in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012) provided for the establishment of the new Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), a merger of the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) and the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) which has become operational since December 2012. The DBS has responsibility for maintaining the list of individuals barred from engaging in regulated activity with vulnerable groups making decisions as to whether a person should be included in one or both of the children/adults barred lists. The DBS also takes decisions as to whether to remove an individual from a barred list. Any members of the College working in a regulated position with children will require an enhanced AccessNI disclosure with a barred list check. It is against the law to knowingly permit a barred individual to work in a regulated position.

The College will refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child and who has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left. The DBS will consider whether the person is unsuitable to work with vulnerable groups and make a decision as to whether the person should be barred from working in regulated activity with children, or adults, or both.

Detailed guidance on the definition of regulated activity with children and vulnerable adults is available on the website of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (NI) at: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/svg>.

4. Definitions of Maltreatment

Both the terms 'abuse' and 'harm' are used regularly in the context of child protection and safeguarding, and the categories of abuse/harm outlined below fall under the internationally recognised umbrella term 'maltreatment'. The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003 defines harm as ill-treatment or impairment of a child's mental or physical health or development. The following categories of maltreatment in particular would warrant a report:

- i) **Physical abuse** – is the deliberate physical injury to a child or the willful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. For children with disabilities it may include confinement to a room or cot, or incorrectly given drugs to control behaviour.
- ii) **Emotional abuse** - is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying

to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corrupting of children.

- iii) **Sexual abuse** – involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- iv) **Neglect** – is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve failure to provide adequate foods, shelter and protection from physical harm or danger, and failing to ensure adequate medical care in case of injury and a lack of stimulation and supervision.
- v) **Domestic Violence** – is the experience of threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone, irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation, by a current or former intimate partner or family member.
- vi) **Bullying** – is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for the victim to defend him or herself.

Please note that the definitions list above is not exhaustive. Concerns that a child has been harmed (or is at risk of being harmed) in any way must be reported immediately to a designated person in a setting and/or any member of the College Child Protection and Safeguarding Team even where the child is aged 16 years or older, and irrespective of whether the child has been said to have given consent.

5. Designated University College Staff

All policy and practice relating to child protection and safeguarding children and young people will be co-ordinated by a College appointed Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator. This person will be responsible to the Vice-Principal and also act as:

- Chair of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Committee (Appendix 1);
- Team Leader of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Team; and

- Co-ordinator of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Education programme provided to registered students.

In relation to this policy, the College Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator's primary role is to ensure that College procedures are followed, and particularly to inform Gateway, the PSNI and/or Education Authority Designated Officers for Child Protection in Educational Groups (DOCPEGs) about the relevant concerns raised by any student or member of staff about individual children. Investigations of cases will be left to Gateway Teams or other appropriate agencies. The role of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator within the College is:

- (a) to produce, maintain and develop relevant Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies and Procedures for staff and students within the College;
- (b) to ensure that all teaching staff, whether full-time, part-time or temporary, are aware of the College Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures;
- (c) to co-ordinate action by staff when a report is made about suspected or actual child maltreatment in a school/educational setting or on campus, and to report to the PSNI or to the appropriate Gateway Team or DOCPEG where necessary;
- (d) to co-ordinate the regular and compulsory learning and teaching of child protection and safeguarding issues during initial teacher education (ITE) and during the preparation of students to work in the childcare, health, physical activity and sports sectors;
- (e) to facilitate staff development in terms of child protection and safeguarding issues for students; and
- (f) to be available to provide guidance and information relating to child protection and safeguarding issues to all students and teaching staff.

The designation of a member of staff for this purpose should not, however, be seen as diminishing the role of **all** members of staff in being alert to the signs of maltreatment of a child or young person, in recognising their responsibilities in reporting a concern that a registered student has made during placement/school based work and understanding the procedures to be followed.

6. Reporting Procedures

6.1 Reporting of a disclosure

When maltreatment is disclosed by a child or young person to a member of College staff or student, he or she **must**:

- (i) Inform the child or young person that the information cannot be kept completely confidential as it will have to be passed on to a designated person and/or to the appropriate agency

- (ii) Listen carefully to what is being said and offer reassurance
- (iii) Report the concern immediately to:
 - a) the designated person in the school/setting if during placement OR
 - b) the responsible adult in charge of the group if on campus
 - c) record the concern as soon as possible
- (iv) Inform the College Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator that a report has been made so that necessary supports may be offered to the student if required
- (v) The Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator will, where appropriate and necessary, keep a confidential record of details provided (see Appendix 2)
- (vi) The student or member of staff will not take any further action or discuss the matter further with anyone else unless advised otherwise.

Where a student makes a disclosure of maltreatment that occurred during his or her childhood, that disclosure must also be reported to a member of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Team, as the (alleged) abuser may still pose a risk to children and so that the Team member may signpost the student to appropriate supports.

Student placement providers will be furnished at the outset with a partnership agreement which outlines the University College's responsibility to report any incidents of inappropriate practice or child protection issues.

When a student or member of staff is concerned that the above procedures have not been followed appropriately or adequately, they should report their concern immediately to the College Senior Management or report their concern directly to the relevant Gateway Team, Education Authority DOCPEG or to the PSNI.

6.2 Reporting of a Concern

Where maltreatment is not necessarily disclosed but a member of staff or student is otherwise concerned that a child is being maltreated, he or she **must:**

- (i) report the concern to the designated teacher/person (in school or placement), the responsible adult if during an on-campus activity or a member of the College Child Protection and Safeguarding Team without delay.
- (ii) when a report is made to a member of the College Child Protection

and Safeguarding Team in the first instance, that Team member will seek guidance from the Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the Deputy Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator OR the Vice-Principal before a decision is made.

- (iii) if agreement cannot be reached, report the concern immediately to the Vice-Principal. However, where there is doubt, a referral may be made by any student or member of staff (see Appendix 3).
- (iv) not take any further action or discuss the matter further with anyone else unless advised otherwise.

Public Interest Disclosure Order

Any student or member of staff who follows the procedures in this policy in making a report of suspected or actual child maltreatment by any person (whether or not connected with the educational or other setting), is acting within the course of his/her position or employment within the College, and in such circumstances, where he/she has acted in good faith, will receive the full support of the College and will not be legally or financially liable should any consequential action be brought against him/her. This assurance is given added strength under the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

Under this Order, employees will be protected from suffering detrimental treatment by their employers for disclosing information (in good faith, and in the reasonable belief that it is substantially true) about the conduct of private or public bodies or individual employers ('protected disclosure'). Specifically, protected disclosure includes any disclosure of information which, in the belief of the employee making the disclosure, tends to show that a criminal offence has been, is being or is likely to be committed, or that the health or safety of an individual has been, is being or is likely to be, endangered; or that information about such matters has been, is being or is likely to be, deliberately concealed.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 1998 deals with the right of individuals to obtain copies of personal data, held on computer and manually-held data (i.e. paper records), of which they themselves are the subject. Section 28 of the Act, however, sets out some exemptions to the general subject access right. In particular, it specifies that subject access need not be given in any case where to do so would be to prejudice the prevention and detection of crime, or the prosecution or apprehension of offenders. Moreover, under the Education (Pupil Records) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998, any information held (manually) in school on a child, whether or not directly related to possible child abuse, need not be disclosed where, in the opinion of the Designated Teacher, disclosure may cause serious physical or emotional harm to the child or any other person.

See Appendix 4 for a Procedural Flowchart.

7. Investigations

Formal investigations into child abuse allegations or concerns are conducted by Social Services or the PSNI. The College will investigate internally in a sensitive, timely and thorough manner any disclosures, reports of abuse or matters arising from recruitment and employment checks. Contemporaneous notes of conversations must be taken where possible, and must always be kept secure. It is important that staff do not discuss disclosures or reports of abuse with others unless specifically authorised by the Senior Management Team, by this Policy or by the College's procedures. All students and staff will act in accordance with this Policy and the College's procedures. Deliberate failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

If an allegation against a member of staff or student has been made, in consultation with the College Vice-Principal and, where appropriate, the relevant Programme Chair, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator will seek advice as to what steps will be taken with the member of staff or student concerned during the investigation procedure. If the allegation is made against the Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator, responsibility for this will remain with the Vice-Principal.

8. Health and Safety

Senior management has a responsibility to ensure that College premises are safe for staff, students and visitors. All staff share a responsibility to take reasonable care of the safety of those around them, and will be familiar with the College's Health and Safety policy. Failure to follow health and safety procedure may affect the College's legal liability and any insurance claim by the College in the event of personal injury caused to or by children.

It must always be borne in mind that children will tend to be less careful than adults, and that when staff or students work with children there will be additional matters to be taken into consideration (such as if children are in large groups). Staff bringing their own children onto premises must remain responsible for their children at all times, and must bear in mind that parts of the premises may pose hazards. Staff and students are advised not to bring young children onto College premises unless absolutely necessary.

Where any accident occurs, a detailed record of the incident must be logged or recorded as soon as possible after the event. All accidents must be reported to the College's Health and Safety Officer, who will liaise with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator accordingly.

9. Risk Assessment and Insurance

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator will:

- (i) work with the College Health and Safety Team/Officer and other relevant departments e.g. Widening Participation, to ensure relevant risk assessments have been conducted for College premises where children may be present, and for specific situations e.g. field trips or summer schools, where College staff or students may be directing or supervising children on or off-site; and
- (ii) be informed by the College Senior Management Team of the appropriate insurance against personal injury caused to or by children when on College premises.

When planning activities with children that may fall outside the University College's normal day-to-day activities, staff must check with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator whether that activity is covered by the University College's insurance policy and appropriate risk assessment procedures.

10. Children and Research

Occasionally, children may attend College premises and/or be supervised by College Staff for research purposes. Parental consent for children under sixteen years of age must be obtained before any research activity is conducted with them. Children of sixteen years or more can give their own consent. Any research activity will respect the child's right to confidentiality, and comply with the College Code of Ethics in Research. Researchers must undergo relevant criminal records checks in line with other statutory child protection lists where the researcher(s) may be working alone with children or the research activity is deemed to be 'regulated activity'.

11. Photographs and Images

There is evidence that people have used events attended by children to take inappropriate images of them in vulnerable positions. Staff and students must be vigilant in such circumstances and should immediately report any concerns to any member of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Team. There will be occasions where photographs, film or video is required for legitimate purposes such as for teaching, research or Widening Participation on-campus events. In all such circumstances the children and their parents/carers or adult in charge e.g. teacher, must be made aware of this and asked to provide their consent in line with the setting/schools policy. All such media must be stored securely and used appropriately.

12. Policy and Procedures Implementation and Review

The College will ensure that this policy and related procedures are implemented, disseminated and kept under review. The Governing Body and its Education Committee will review this policy and related procedures, in addition to examining the work of the College Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator and his/her Deputy and Team, every two years or sooner in the event of significant changes in child protection and safeguarding legislation. The procedural flowchart and related arrangements shall be revised where necessary to facilitate the effective implementation of this Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and to reflect changes in child protection and safeguarding law when they occur. The Governing Body must satisfy itself that this policy and the procedures are fit for purpose and that the Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator, Committee and Team duties are being discharged satisfactorily.

Appendix 1 – Child Protection and Safeguarding Committee

Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator (Chair)

Vice-Principal (Secretary)

Deputy Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-ordinator

Head of Student Support

Head of School Partnerships

Academic Area/Programme Representatives

Appendix 2 – Reporting a concern or disclosure

Record completed by:		
Position:		Date:
Child's name:		
Child's address:		
Child's date of birth:		
Parent's/Carer's Name(s) and address:		
Date/time of incident:	Date:	Time:
Observations – detail exactly what was said, heard and/or seen and where. Do not lead the child. Record actual details only. Continue on separate sheet if necessary		
Action taken so far:		
External agencies contacted		
Police	Advice received:	
Branch:		
Name:		
Contact no:		
Gateway	Advice received:	
Branch:		
Name:		
Contact no:		
Education Authority	Advice received:	
Branch		
Name:		
Contact no:		
Other information:		

Signature _____

Appendix 3 – Procedural Flowchart

Date _____

