Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

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Document History

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Document Location

This document is only valid on the day it was printed.

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## Revision History

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<td><strong>Page 6 – General Principles</strong></td>
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<td>• Bullet point 3, changed from reviewed annually to every 3 years.</td>
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<td>• Bullet point 10, removed childcare/crèche staff which no longer exist in the college</td>
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<td>• Removal of line “Therefore it is the responsibility of all staff to:” Not necessary.</td>
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<td>• Bullet point 2, change wording to include “abuse” for clarity and “Child, young person, vulnerable adult” for consistency.</td>
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<td>• Bullet Point 4, wording change to include safeguarding referral.</td>
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<td>• Bullet point 2 – remove the time frame annually</td>
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<td>• Remove the comment “In all cases the main restrictions on disclosure of information are” it is not necessary.</td>
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1. **Purpose**

Belfast Metropolitan College wants to ensure that all students of the College experience an inclusive, enjoyable and safe environment, in which they feel respected and valued. We all share an objective to keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe. All Children and Young People have a fundamental right to be safeguarded from harm.

The purpose of this Policy and related procedures is to:
- promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm
- prevent harm occurring through early identification of risk and appropriate timely intervention
- identify staff responsibilities in dealing with reports or suspicions of abuse
- provide clear and robust guidance on how to handle these concerns
- encourage good practice in all aspects of promotion and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults

2. **Context**

The College will carry out its responsibilities under all relevant legislation, regulations and professional guidelines which include the following:
- Children Northern Ireland Order 1995
- Children’s Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young people in Northern Ireland (HSSPS – March 2016)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

3. **Scope**

This Policy and related procedures deals with the safeguarding and protection of children and vulnerable adults from abuse, as defined below.

- **Child**
  A person under the age of 18, as defined in the Children Northern Ireland Order 1995

- **Vulnerable Adult**
  A Vulnerable Adult is a person aged 18 or over, who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is, or may be unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation (DoH No Secrets 2002)

- **Abuse** (see Appendix 1 for more detail)
  - Neglect or acts of omission
  - Physical abuse
  - Sexual abuse
  - Psychological/Emotional abuse
  - Financial or material abuse (Exploitation)
  - Discriminatory abuse
  - Institutional abuse

4. **General Principles**

This policy and related procedures are based on the following principles:
The College seeks to provide and promote a safe learning environment for all users.

The College recognises that anyone can be the subject of abuse and that all allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and treated in accordance with the College’s procedures.

This Policy and related procedures will be reviewed every three years to ensure they reflect current legislation and best practice.

The College will use best practice in its safe recruitment of staff by undertaking the appropriate checks.

The College reserves the right to refuse to employ any person who has a conviction for the abuse of a child, young person or a vulnerable adult. All College staff will be subject to background checks.

The College must follow criminal disclosure risk assessment procedures, before enrolling any person who has a conviction for the abuse of a child, young person or a vulnerable adult.

The College will collaborate with regional policies and procedures in full partnership with other local agencies and the Health and Social Care Trust Gateway Team.

Our staff will listen, record and report all concerns, disclosures and allegations of abuse in accordance with current procedures in a empathic, prompt and secure manner.

The College will NOT investigate instances of abuse as this is the role of other statutory agencies e.g. social services, PSNI and NSPCC.

The College will inform all college users (including student and trainees) and parents/guardians/carers of under 18’s about the college’s policy and procedures and that this may mean we refer cases to investigative agencies in the interest of the child, young person or vulnerable adult.

The College is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with, or come in contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults and to provide appropriate supervision.

The policy will be implemented in the following ways:

- All staff are required to follow the staff code of behaviour for Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding.
- All staff must refer all concerns, allegations or suspicions to a Designated Safeguarding member of staff promptly using the appropriate recording methods.
- Designated Safeguarding members of staff will report these concerns, allegations or suspicions to the Designated Safeguarding Manager.
- The Designated Safeguarding Manager will undertake to contact external agencies when and where appropriate.

5. Responsibilities

All staff

It is the responsibility of ALL staff working in the College to record and report abuse and incidents of concern. This responsibility extends to all staff, not just those specifically working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

- Anyone with an immediate concern about the safety or welfare of a child or young person should contact the police via a 999 call.
- Anyone with a concern about the abuse of a child, young person, or vulnerable adult in circumstances other than an emergency should fill in the safeguarding record form and forward it on immediately to their designated safeguarding officer.
- Adopt child protection and vulnerable adult guidelines including the code of behaviour for staff.
- Act upon any safeguarding disclosure in accordance with the College procedures.
- Promote safe practice and challenge poor and unsafe behaviour.
- Ensure all health and safety procedures are adhered to.

Designated Safeguarding Governor (DSG)

The Designated Governor is responsible for liaising with the Director and Designated Safeguarding Manager over these matters including:
Ensuring that the College has procedures and policies which are consistent with the requirements for safeguarding students

Ensuring that the Governing Body reviews this policy

Ensuring that each year the Governing Body is informed, by way of a report, of how the College and its staff have complied with the policy.

The Designated Governor is responsible for overseeing the liaison, on behalf of the college, between Social Services and the PSNI in connection with any allegations against the Director or the Designated Safeguarding Managers. This will not involve undertaking any form of investigation, but will ensure good communication between the parties and provide information to assist enquiries.

**Designated Safeguarding Manager (DSM)**

All colleges are required to have a designated member of staff, who is assigned to act upon child, young people and vulnerable protection concerns. As Belfast Metropolitan College is a large organisation we have two Designated Safeguarding Manager to oversee and co-ordinate all strategic and operational college protection matters. To support this role we also have a number of Designated Safeguarding Officers across college sites to deal with the day to day operations of child, young people and vulnerable adult protection. The Designated Safeguarding Managers are the college’s Head of Learner Success and Head of Student Support.

The Designated Safeguarding Manager’s role is to:

- Liaise with college management regarding safeguarding policy, procedures and any reported incidents of concern.
- Liaise with the local Gateway Team regarding safeguarding procedures and any reported incidents of concern.
- Liaise with and understand the roles and responsibilities of all the appropriate investigating agencies.
- Liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Governor on all protection matters relevant to College governance.
- Review this policy and related procedures annually.
- Oversee and monitor the security of record keeping.
- Develop and monitor a Safeguarding Action Plan.
- Ensure that safeguarding measures are implemented at all college events that may involve children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Manage and support all Designated Safeguarding Officers

**Designated Safeguarding Panel/ Criminal Disclosures Panel**

We have a designated safeguarding panel comprising of four managers at the college:

- Head of Student Support
- Head of Learner Success
- Offender Learning and Skills Manager
- Centre Manager for Learner Services

The role of the Designated Safeguarding Panel is to determine in conjunction with external professionals (PSNI, NIAcro, PBNI) any risk associated with applications from students with backgrounds of unspent criminal activity, or for certain courses background of both spent and unspent criminal activity. The panel then determine whether or not the associated risk can be safely managed, i.e. whether or not the applicant is approved for the admissions and enrolment process.

**Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)**

We have designated Safeguarding Officers with responsibilities for all our college sites. They should be contacted for information, advice and reporting of concerns, disclosures or allegations of abuse.
The role of the Designated Safeguarding Officer is to:

- Receive information from any staff, volunteers, children, parents or carers who have safeguarding concerns and record it.
- Advise staff on protection policy, procedures and record keeping.
- Assess the information promptly and carefully, clarifying and obtaining more information about the matter as appropriate.
- Record statements and information relating to any safeguarding issues.
- Store all information and recording in a secure manner and in accordance with Data Protection Act 1998.
- Advise the Designated Safeguarding Manager of identified cases.
- To report concerns to PSNI/Social Services in the absence/unavailability of the DSM (or if the allegation is against the DSM) or in the instance of an immediate threat to a person(s) safety or welfare.

**Human Resources**

The role of the Human Resources Department is to:

- Ensure the safe recruitment and induction of all staff including all appropriate Access NI checks.
- Oversee staff disciplinary investigations if any concerns, disclosures or allegations of abuse by a staff member are made.
- Plan, deliver and monitor in partnership with other college departments the appropriate level of training required by all staff.
- Regularly review and update its own policies to reflect child, young people and vulnerable adult protection needs.

**6. Confidentiality**

Confidentiality and trust should be maintained as far as possible, but staff must act on the basis that the safety and welfare of the child/vulnerable adult is the overriding concern. The degree of confidentiality will be governed by the need to protect the individual and therefore complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. In general the following guidelines should be used:

- The individual should be informed at the earliest possible stage of the disclosure that the information may be passed on and where possible their permission to disclose sought.
- All conversation regarding a safeguarding concern should always be held in a person sensitive environment. Staff must not discuss the case with anyone other than those involved in the case.
- If staff have any concerns about the progress of the case or have any other concerns these must be discussed with the DSM or the DSO dealing with the case.

The College complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, which allows for disclosure of personal data where this is necessary to protect their vital interests. Other statutory provisions may also be relevant, but in general, legislation does not prevent sharing of information if:

- those likely to be affected consent; or
- the public interest in safeguarding the person’s welfare overrides the need to keep the information confidential; or
- it is considered the person is a danger to themselves or others; or
- disclosure is required under court or other legal obligation

Whatever happens, we should always be open and honest with the individual.
7. Appendices

- Appendix 1 - What is Abuse?
- Appendix 2 - Staff Code of Behaviour
- Appendix 3 - Reporting Procedure Flow Chart
Appendix 1

What is Abuse?

Defining abuse is complex and rests on many factors. The term “abuse” can be widely interpreted. However, “abuse” is defined in the Department of Health No Secrets guidance as the “violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons.” Abuse may happen as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance. Here are some examples of abuse.

- **Physical abuse**
  This includes hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medical/chemical restraint or inappropriate sanctions.

- **Sexual abuse**
  This includes rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the child/vulnerable adult has not, or could not, consent and/or was pressured into consenting.

- **Psychological/emotional abuse**
  This includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, forced marriage, isolation or withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

- **Financial or material abuse**
  This includes theft, fraud, exploitation; pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions; or the misuses or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

- **Neglect and acts of omission**
  This includes ignoring medical or physical care needs; failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services; the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

- **Institutional abuse**
  This is repeated instances of poor care of individuals or groups of individuals. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of structures, policies, processes and practices within an organisation. While this in no way condones the abusive practice on the part of individuals, it recognises the powerful influence that organisational culture has on individual behaviour.

The above should not be considered an exclusive or even exhaustive list of the types of abuse which can be experienced by children/vulnerable adults.
Appendix 2

Staff Code of Behaviour/ Safeguarding Specific

The duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the students in their charge rests with all members of staff, academic and support. Implicit in it is the assumption that the conduct of all staff towards students must be above reproach.

You can reduce likely situations for abuse of children and vulnerable adults and help protect yourself from false accusations by making sure that you are aware that, as a general rule, it doesn’t make sense to...

- spend excessive amounts of time alone with children or vulnerable adults away from others;
- take children or vulnerable adults alone in a car on journeys, however short;
- take children or vulnerable adults to your home.

When it is unavoidable that these things do happen, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of the Line Manager and the young person’s parent /person with parental responsibility where appropriate.

Staff should never:

- engage in rough physical games including horseplay - apart from structured sports activities [and only with children and/or vulnerable adults over age 16years].
- engage in sexually provocative games;
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form;
- allow young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- make sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person even in fun;
- let allegations in respect of a young person go unchallenged or unrecorded;
- do things of a personal nature for young people that the young person can do themselves.

It may sometimes be necessary for staff to do things of a personal nature for young people or vulnerable adults, particularly if they have disabilities. These tasks should be clearly described and should only be carried out with the full understanding and written consent of the parent / person with parental responsibility. In an emergency situation which requires this type of help, parents / those with parental responsibility should be fully informed, as soon as reasonably possible that it was necessary to provide such assistance. In such situations, it is important that all staff are sensitive to the individual and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion. Whenever possible a second member of staff should be informed in advance of, or as soon as practically possible thereafter, of the need to perform an assisting task of a personal nature. A record should be maintained to this effect.

Staff should be particularly careful when supervising students in a residential setting, or in approved out-of-hours activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual.

Academic staff should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice. If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching method, the academic should consult with their line manager before using it.

In all circumstances, employees' professional judgement will be exercised and for most this code of conduct will only serve to confirm what they have always done. However, inappropriate actions in relation to any of the above may lead to staff disciplinary procedures being implemented.
Appendix 3

Reporting Procedure

Staff/Student concerns (Recorded by staff)

Report to DSO

DSM

Is this a serious concern?

Yes

Possibly

Seek advice from Social Services – Gateway Team

No

Identify training or practice issues

Yes

Report and record

Social Services/PSNI

No

Report back to staff/volunteer and/or appropriate personnel

Further process