

# **NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE**

---

## **CHILD PROTECTION/YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY**

---

**August 2009**

# **NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE**

## **Child Protection/Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy**

Based on DENI Circular 99/10

Under this Policy a child is any child or young person under 18 years of age.

Legal basis for Child Protection/Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy:

- United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child
- Children (NI) Order 1995
- Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults 2004
- Sexual Offences (Amendments/Bill)

## **Child Protection/Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy**

### **POLICY FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

The North West Regional College acknowledges its responsibility to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment for all our customers/students. We recognise under the Northern Ireland Children Order our particular legal and moral duties and responsibilities to promote the wellbeing of children/young people below the age of 18 years. We also recognise that within the student body there are adults who, due to physical disability or learning difficulties/disabilities, are particularly vulnerable. Again we acknowledge our duty to provide adequate care and protection.

The following policy and guidance on good practice aims to enable staff to prevent situations of abuse or risk occurring and to respond to any concerns which may arise. Recording and reporting concerns appropriately will be an essential part of our policy to protect students from harm.

This policy sits alongside other College policies and procedures such as the Whistleblowing Policy.

### **NWRC PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

- NWRC aims to protect from harm and promote the general welfare, health and full development of our students.
- NWRC recognises that all students have rights as individuals. We aim to empower students to exercise these rights and obtain appropriate help and support through customer comments/complaints systems, the Personal Tutor and Pastoral systems and College Student Support services. In addition, all students are made aware of community and voluntary sector agencies which offer guidance and support services. Such guidance and support shall be delivered through the College's information services and student support services and Pastoral care system.
- NWRC ensures, through Staff Development and In-Service Training, that all staff are informed and appreciate their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding the wellbeing and the protection of students. Training for College staff is provided in relation to the following:
  - Awareness Training for the Protection of Children/Young People and Vulnerable Adults
  - Anti-Bullying Training
  - Drugs Awareness Training
  - Training regarding student learning and support needs and guidance on preparation for and management of work placements.
- Given the location of our main sites and communal areas the College should be considered under this policy a high risk area. This is because virtually any member of the public can enter communal areas in the College sites. The College will strive to

develop self-protection awareness skills among the student population. Should the College become aware of a student being subject to the Sex Offenders' Register, Child Protection/Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policies and Procedures must be invoked by the Designated Officer for Child Protection/Young People and Vulnerable Adults, Mrs A McGarrigle. The Designated Officer for Child Protection/Young People and Vulnerable Adults is integral to this process and must be informed in the first instance. As part of normal enrolment procedures students will be asked to declare whether or not they are subject to the Sex Offenders' Register.

- The College adopts, and applies consistently, a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting and selecting staff to ensure their suitability to work with young people and vulnerable adults.
- The College adopts, and applies consistently, a thorough system for vetting students engaged in Care and Child Care programmes of study or other programmes that involve students working with children/vulnerable adults to ensure their suitability to work with children or vulnerable adults during student placements.
- Care is taken to ensure the welfare of young people when on work experience. Staff are aware of possible danger to students/trainees when on work experience. Young people receive appropriate guidance (refer to Work Experience Placements).
- The College provides staff with advice and guidance for a Code of Conduct to minimise opportunities for students to experience harm or for allegations to be made in respect of inappropriate staff conduct (refer to Code of Conduct for College Employees).
- The College has developed effective procedures for responding to accidents, concerns or complaints and suspected incidents of abuse or disclosure of prior abuse. We recognise that certain forms of bullying and/or persistent harassment may constitute abuse and should be responded to consistently with our policy and guidance on "The Protection of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults".

The College is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This policy should be interpreted in a manner consistent with the aforementioned legislation.

The North West Regional College will consider producing this policy in alternative formats on request e.g. Braille, Large Print, Computer Disk, Audio Cassette etc and/or alternative language.

## **WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?**

### **Physical Abuse**

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, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

## **Emotional Abuse**

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 a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of another person. It may involve causing a child frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. 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 in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

## **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (faltering growth).

## **Bullying**

Bullying includes physical and emotional abuse, neither of which will be tolerated in this College (refer to Student Harassment Policy - if required this policy can be produced in Braille and large print).

## **Young Person whose Behaviour places them at Risk of Significant Harm**

A child whose own behaviours such as alcohol consumption or consumption of illegal drugs, whilst placing the child at risk of significant harm, may not necessarily constitute abuse as defined for the purposes of the Child Protection / Young and Vulnerable Adults Procedures. If the child has achieved sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind then the decision to initiate child protection action in such cases is a matter for professional judgement and each case should be considered individually. Professionals should though be alert to the possibility that a young person may be engaged in certain risky behaviours as a result of other adverse experiences in their lives which may be indicative of abuse.

## **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CONCERNS BASED ON SUSPICIONS OR DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE**

Mrs Ann McGarrigle is the designated officer for Child Protection/Young and Vulnerable Adults in NWRC. In her absence the following will assume responsibility for Child Protection/Young and Vulnerable Adult matters as the Designated Officer for Child Protection/Young and Vulnerable Adults within the College:

Helena McVeigh - City Factory

If a student makes a disclosure to any member of staff giving rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a student arising from an incident, observation or from information from a third party, the member of staff must act promptly.

He/she should not investigate – this is a matter for external investigative agencies – but should report these concerns immediately to the designated officer, discussing them fully and providing full notes.

The designated officer will discuss the matter with the Assistant Director/Director as a matter of urgency, planning a course of action and ensuring that a written record is made. Advice may be sought from the WELB Designated Officer for Child Protection and/or Social Services before a referral is made.

The Assistant Director/Director in consultation with the designated officer will decide whether the matter needs to be referred to social services and/or the police. If there are concerns that the student is at risk, a referral must be made. Agreement should be reached at a strategy discussion with social services as to who will inform the young person's parents and when. Similarly, if there are concerns that a criminal offence may have been committed, a referral must be made to Social Services under the Joint Protocol.

Where concerns about possible abuse results in a decision to make a referral to Social Services or police for investigation, the College's designated officer will advise WELB's Designated Officer for Child Protection accordingly.

# CHILD PROTECTION IN THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE

ALL child protection/young and vulnerable adults concerns should be referred to Mrs A McGarrigle, or, in her absence, the designated officer (see previous page).

Do NOT promise confidentiality to any student. Staff have a legal responsibility to pass on concerns about child protection. However, assure the student that information will only be passed on a need-to-know basis, and that it **MUST** be passed to the designated officer. As far as reasonably possible, information should be passed on immediately.

## Initial Concern

1. Member of staff feels concern due to
  - report by other student(s)
  - disclosure by student concerned

2. Member of staff feels concern due to
  - evidence of abuse/neglect as outlined in WELB booklet

## What to do

1. Note **What** was said/reported  
Any **factual** information  
**Who** said/reported it

Give **written** notes of this (signed and dated) to designated officer.

2. Remember, signs are usually found as part of a group of signs rather than singly.

Pass on a written (signed and dated) note of concerns and continue to **observe** the student.

**DO NOT APPROACH THE STUDENT**

**When notes for passing on are made, include as far as possible actual words used by students, rather than your own interpretation. Don't worry if these are not very grammatical or even acceptable in normal conversation - in fact these comments are more helpful than any 'second-hand' report.**

## **Monitoring**

This policy will be monitored by the Designated Officer for Child Protection/Young and Vulnerable Adults on a continuous basis. The effectiveness will be checked against each referral made under the policy. The Designated Officer will liaise with relevant bodies and designated teachers in link schools to monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy.

This will be discussed between Designated Officer and Director/Assistant Directors and where appropriate adjustments made.