



POLICY TITLE

**SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE GROUPS POLICY
11 -2010/11**

Academic Year (if applicable):

Target Audience:

ALL STAFF

Summary of Contents:

This policy and associated procedures will help staff deal with any suspicions, allegations or instances of abuse that may arise.

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By: CMT 1 September 2008 and
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By: Governing Body 17 September
2008 and 12/4/11

Review date:

November 2011

Related Documents:

DEL – FGS Scoping Document
Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults
SOP – Educational Visits
SOP – Safeguarding Vulnerable
Groups
SOP – Managing Sex Offenders in
College

Superseded Documents (if
applicable): Protection of Children
and Vulnerable Adults Policy 23-2008

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SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE GROUPS POLICY

November 2010

Our Commitment

SERC is committed to practices that protect children and vulnerable adults from harm and creating a safe learning environment that promotes well-being and security for all learners. Staff in this organisation recognise and accept our responsibilities to protect and develop awareness of the issues that may cause harm to young people or to vulnerable adults and promote the concept of the 'safe learner'.

1.0 Introduction

The College recognises the rights of vulnerable groups (vulnerable adults and children) to be protected from harm and abuse when under its care. As the Children Northern Ireland (NI) Order 1995 defines a 'child' as a person under the age of 18 years the College has a responsibility to assist social services on child protection issues. A 'vulnerable adult' is a person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, unable to take care of him/herself against significant harm or exploitation. This policy and associated procedures will help staff deal with any suspicions, allegations or instances of abuse that may arise.

The policy and procedure follows the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order (SVG) 2007 and DE's Policy on Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection, which deals with all aspects of Child Protection and takes account of the requirements outlined in "Co-operating to Safeguard Children" (DHSSPS, May 2003). The central thrust of the Children Order and the statements listed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration.

It should also be noted that the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, Parliament introduced a new criminal offence of abuse of trust in certain defined areas, which include full-time education. In summary, the Bill's provisions mean that, subject to a limited number of defined defences, it is a criminal offence for a person in a position of trust in a College to engage in any sexual activity with any person aged under 18 (irrespective of the age of consent, which is age 17 in Northern Ireland) even if the basis of their relationship is consensual.

The term staff refers to all members of the College and extends to include all volunteers and contracted personnel. The relationships which lecturers and other staff have with students/trainees and parents are often based on trust and confidentiality. Such relationships are acknowledged by the College as underpinning the secure, caring environment for growth and learning which it seeks to provide for students/trainees attending its programmes.

All staff must recognise that, in order to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect and exploitation, a proper balance must be struck between protecting children and vulnerable adults and respecting the rights and needs of parents, families, carers and members of staff.

2.0 Aims

The College will endeavour to safeguard children and vulnerable adults by:

- adopting safeguarding vulnerable groups guidelines through a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers;
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, students, parents, carers, staff and volunteers;
- involving parents, children and vulnerable adults, appropriately;
- following carefully the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

We are also committed to reviewing our policy and good practice at regular intervals.

3.0 Managing Sex Offenders in the College

The College has in place a Protocol which provides a framework through which informed decisions can be made regarding sex offenders participation on courses. This Protocol, which includes the involvement of the Probation Service and PSNI enables the College to make informed decisions that can be justified and are non discriminatory yet offer appropriate protection to children and vulnerable adults attending the College. Details of the Protocol are provided in the Standard Operating Procedure Managing Sex Offenders in the College (SOP).

4.0 The College Designated Student Safeguarding Officers

South Eastern Regional College has designated a minimum of 17 persons who are responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

The role and responsibilities of the designated persons named are to:

- Establish contact with the Social Services Gateway Team with responsibility for child and vulnerable adult protection in the relevant Health and Social Care Trust area
- Provide information and advice on child and vulnerable adult protection within SERC
- Ensure that SERC's Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Policy and SOP are followed and particularly to inform Social Services of relevant concerns about individual children and vulnerable adults
- Ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing, under confidential cover using the UNOCINI form
- Liaise with Social Services and other agencies, as appropriate to seek advice or clarification in advance of possible formal referral
- Keep relevant people within SERC, particularly the Campus Director and /or Campus Manager, informed about any action taken and any further action required.
- Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of the action taken by the College, the liaison with other agencies and the outcome

- Advise SERC of child and vulnerable adult protection training needs.
- Inform the PSNI where it is clear that a crime has been committed

5.0 Protecting Learner's Personal Data

The College reserves the right to store personal details of each individual student. However it is important to note that all records are confidential and guidance as laid down in the data protection legislation and the Colleges Data Protection Policy are strictly adhered to.

- 5.1 When images of students are taken and/ or stored either on paper or in electronic format (this includes video/digital capture for any purpose including residential and coursework) parental/guardian permission must be sought. Permission should be gained in writing as verbal will not satisfy the requirements of this policy document. If for any reason only verbal permission can be achieved written permission must be gained from the Principal.
- 5.2 The course tutor and /or staff member may be asked at any point to produce a copy of parental permission documents. It is important that all permission forms are stored in a secure place and kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
- 5.3 Storage of student images on the College's network by students and/or staff also requires **specific** parental permission, i.e., beyond permission for using or storing general information. The fact that images will be **stored** must also be clearly stated when seeking permission along with the length of time it will be stored.
- 5.4 It is understood that students and staff are made aware of the Colleges computer usage policy and all reasonable steps are taken by the College to ensure security of data and images especially when belonging to children and vulnerable adults.
- 5.5 Where images of children or vulnerable adults are used on the College website or any other promotional material, the names of those in the image will not be included.

The Principal shall ensure that the application of this Policy is monitored, that confidential records are maintained, and that regular reports are made to the Governing Body.

Structure of Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Officers (SVGO) within SERC



