



Safeguarding, Care and Welfare SOP

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Responsible Owner:

Head of Learner Welfare

Summary of Contents

To protect learners and from harm and create a safe learning environment for all, these procedures give clear guidance on the required actions for staff to take to ensure all learners are safeguarded and their Care and Welfare needs are addressed.

Contents:**Part 1**

- Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk
- Using the Cause for Concern APP
- Engaging with External Providers
- Guidance for staff when working with Children and Adults at Risk
- Access NI procedures for students
- Applicants/Students with criminal convictions and/or cautions

Part 2

- Building Resilience and Wellbeing
- Wellness to study
- Supporting Transgender Students
- Care and Wellbeing Scenarios and actions

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- 070-10-2014 Students with Criminal Convictions/Cautions SOP
- 079-01-2014 Protection of Vulnerable Groups SOP
- 133-04-2014 Pastoral Care Issue raised in relation to Student/Trainee SOP
- 135-04-2014 Photographs and Videos involving Children and Vulnerable Adults SOP
- 190-07-2015 Safeguarding and Pastoral Care SOP

Date of Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations Screening (Section 75):**Date of Last Accessibility Screening:**

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1.0 Change History

Changes to this SOP are documented in Appendix 2.2 of this document. When reading electronic copies of this document.

2.0 Background

SERC's Safeguarding Care and Welfare Policy, which aligns to the FE Sectors Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy, states that SERC:

- is committed to ensuring that all students and trainees are protected from harm and abuse while they attend College / avail of the Colleges services.
- has particular legal responsibilities to ensure that children and adults at risk are protected from harm or abuse when under its care.
- will ensure that procedures are in place to protect all learners, their families and carers, staff and others who visit and work on the SERC campuses.

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides further details of how the College will deliver on these commitments and provide a safe and supportive environment for all students to achieve to their full potential.

These procedures are presented in two parts;

- Part 1 details SERCs Safeguarding procedures
- Part 2 details SERCs Care and Welfare arrangements

3.0 Part 1 Safeguarding Procedures

Part 1 of this SOP clarifies the:

- procedures that the College has put in place to ensure that all Safeguarding issues are identified and dealt with in an appropriate and timely fashion. In doing so SERC uses the term 'safeguarding' in its **widest possible** sense, so that it encompasses both activity which **prevents** harm from occurring in the first place and activity which **protects** both:
 - children, and
 - adults at riskboth where harm has occurred or is likely to occur without intervention.
- responsibilities of all staff and students in relation to Safeguarding, and details appropriate responses that are expected of SERC staff, volunteers, service providers, contractors and other users of College facilities to ensure that the safeguarding needs of all are met.

3.1 Legislative Context

SERC will comply with the requirements of:

- the protection of adults at risk as detailed in the Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership Policy:
[http://www.setrust.hscni.net/pdf/Adult_Safeguarding_Prevention_and_Protection_in_Partnership_Policy_\(2015\).pdf](http://www.setrust.hscni.net/pdf/Adult_Safeguarding_Prevention_and_Protection_in_Partnership_Policy_(2015).pdf)
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 ('The Children Order') as amended.
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 as amended by The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.
- The General Data Protection Regulations (2018).

3.2 Introduction

In its Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy South Eastern Regional College (SERC and hereafter referred to as the College) states how it aims to ensure that all students, staff and stakeholders of the College experience an inclusive, enjoyable and safe environment, in which they feel respected and valued. It highlights how everyone has a role in addressing the objective of keeping children, young people, adults at risk and adults in need of protection, safe from harm. The College Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy is built upon a foundation of 'zero tolerance' of harm to all children, young people, adults at risk of harm and adults in need of protection and is aligned to the Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership (NIASP) statement "Safeguarding is everyone's business".

These procedures have been prepared to ensure that clear guidance is provided so that all Safeguarding issues are identified and dealt with in an appropriate and timely fashion. In doing so SERC uses the term 'safeguarding' in its widest possible sense, so that it encompasses both activity which prevents harm from occurring in the first place, as well as activity which protects both children, and adults at risk from harm where harm has occurred or is likely to occur without intervention. This Procedure should be read in conjunction with the SERC Safeguarding Policy which provides further detail on the types and signs of abuse.

This document has been prepared to address both Child and Adult at Risk Safeguarding processes and as such some overlap of terminology should be noted.

3.3 Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities

The Designated Safeguarding Team is led by the Head of Learner Welfare who is the Senior Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer. They, with the assistance of the Lead Designated Safeguarding Officers oversee and co-ordinate operational safeguarding matters.

The role of **Senior Lead/Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer** for the purposes of Safeguarding at SERC also encompasses the role of **Adult Safeguarding Champion** as defined in the *Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership Policy*, 2015.

3.3.1 Role and responsibilities of the Senior Lead/Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer

It is the responsibility of the Senior Lead/Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer to instigate actions that will in the first instance ensure that all learners (Children or Adults at Risk) are safeguarded appropriately. This responsibility applies across all Campuses and SERC related activities.

The College Senior Lead/Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer will decide if it is in the best interests of the learner or Adult at Risk of Harm for the matter to be referred to Social Services, Gateway Team or the Adult Gateway Protection Service (Gateway Teams) and/or PSNI. Unless there are concerns that a parent/carer may be the possible abuser, the parent/carer will be informed.

The College Senior Lead/Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer may seek clarification or advice and consult with the Social Services Gateway Teams before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice from Gateway Teams. All contacts with Gateway Teams will be electronically recorded.

The Senior Lead/Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer will report safeguarding concerns as soon as possible after they are raised and within 24 hours (during a working week and by 10.00am on the first working day after a holiday period or weekend) to the Gateway Teams.

Additional responsibilities include:

1. Liaise with College CMT and Governing Body regarding Safeguarding Policy, Standard Operating Procedure, and any major reported incidents of concern.
2. Liaise with the local Gateway Teams, PSNI and/or any other relevant external agencies regarding safeguarding procedures and any reported Cause for Concern Referrals.

3. Liaise with and understand the roles and responsibilities of all the appropriate investigating agencies.
4. Deliver regular reports to the Governing Body Education Committee on reported Cause for Concern referrals.
5. Review the Safeguarding Care and Welfare Policy and related procedures annually.
6. Ensure that safeguarding measures are implemented at all college events that may involve children, young people or Adults at Risk.
7. Manage and support all Designated Safeguarding Officers.
8. Ensure that all records are dealt with in accordance with relevant Data Protection and Safeguarding Legislation.

3.3.2 Role and responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Officer

The role of the Designated Safeguarding Officer is to support and assist the Senior Lead/Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer in carrying out their duties.

Those acting in the role of **Designated Safeguarding Officer** as defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007, will assist, and support the Senior Lead/Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer in fulfilling the role of Adult Safeguarding Champion by ensuring the safeguarding arrangements for Adults at Risk from Harm are fully implemented.

As the Designated Safeguarding Officers are located at different Campuses, there are two key aspects to this role, namely:

- Acting as a point of contact for staff and advising and encouraging staff to raise concerns through the **Cause for Concern App** as necessary.
- Taking advice from the Senior Lead/ Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer and working with staff on Campus to advise and support a learner appropriately.

In addition, Designated Safeguarding Officers will:

- Meet, twice per academic year with the Senior Lead/Lead Designated Safeguarding Officers, or more frequently if required to identify issues and trends in the type and nature of the concerns arising with a view to informing Resilience and Wellbeing initiatives within the College.
- Deputise for the Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer as appropriate.

3.3.3 Role and responsibilities of staff

It is the role and responsibility of all staff working in SERC to report abuse and incidents of concern relating to safeguarding. Anyone with knowledge of or a suspicion that, a child, young person, adult at risk of harm or an adult in need of protection has been suffering abuse must refer their concern to a member of the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible.

Further details on how to report concerns through the **Cause for Concern App** can be found in section **3.5: Reporting concerns in relation to a SERC student or trainee**.

If any staff member feels unsure about what to do if they have concerns about a child, young person, an adult at risk of harm or an adult in need of protection or if they are unsure about being able to recognise the signs or symptoms of possible abuse, they should speak directly to a member of the Safeguarding Team.

Staff are expected to comply with the Staff Code of Conduct which is available from HR. Further advice can also be found in **Appendix 3: Code of Conduct in relation to potential safeguarding issues**.

3.3.4 Safeguarding Monitoring and Review Group

SERC has in place a Safeguarding Monitoring and Review Working Group to support, monitor and review the effectiveness of its operational arrangements. The purpose of the group is to:

1. ensure the effective and consistent implementation of the sector Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy at SERC
2. provide a forum to ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are coordinated across the college and that effective monitoring, review and reporting processes are in operation
3. provide a forum where situations of concern can be considered, actions agreed as appropriate and escalated as necessary.

The Safeguarding Monitoring and Review Working Group will comprise of the following Members:

- Deputy Principal Planning, Performance and Engagement
- Head of HR
- Head of Learner Welfare / Senior Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer.

The Deputy Principal Student Support will be responsible for updating CMT as necessary on the work of this group and will liaise with the Safeguarding Governors as necessary.

This group will meet once per term, but more frequently at the request of any member should a situation arise that is complex and requires co-ordinated action.

3.4 Key Safeguarding Contacts

Deputy Principal with responsibility for Student Safeguarding, Care and Welfare

Heather McKee

Senior Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer

Paul Walsh - Contact 07825 021832, raise a Cause for Concern or email pwalsh@serc.ac.uk

Lead Designated Safeguarding Officers

Roger Duncan - Contact 07825 021835, raise a Cause for Concern or email rduncan@serc.ac.uk

Barbara McNeill – Contact 07799 541054, raise a Cause for Concern or email bmcneill@serc.ac.uk

Designated Safeguarding Officers

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Gillian Auld | Samuel Lyttle | Sineadh McKenna |
| Karyn Eldon | Stefan Jones | Lynn Rainey |
| Caylan Ellesmere | Eleanor McDowell | Gerda Wilson |
| Mary Enright-Gillies | Gillian Martin | Tom Trainor |
| Alison Ferguson | Philip Martin | Don Walsh |
| Emma Finney | Lisa McCormick Baxter | Kieran McKenna |

Safeguarding Governors

Derek Wilson and Nuala Reid - contact via Governing Body secretary by email, cwilliamson@serc.ac.uk

3.5 Definitions

- A child is defined as any person under the age of 18.
- An '**Adult at Risk of Harm**' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:
 - personal characteristics **and/or** life circumstances

Personal characteristics may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain. Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors, and environmental living conditions.

- An '**Adult in need of protection**' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:
 - personal characteristics **and/or** life circumstances **and** who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights, or other interests **and** where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.

3.6 Reporting Concerns in Relation to a SERC Student or Trainee

3.6.1 Staff Responsibilities to SERC Students and Trainees

This procedure applies to all SERC students and trainees, whether they are studying in further education or higher education, whether they are part-time, full-time, or on a Business Services or other course, and whether they are an international or home student.

The procedure for Schools Partnership provision can be found in section 3.6 below and the procedures in relation to the Little SERC Creche are detail in section 3.11 below.

If, at any time, a learner makes a disclosure to a member of staff that gives rise to concerns about the occurrence of harm, or possible harm (defined as abuse, neglect or exploitation) or if a member of staff or volunteer has concerns about a learner, the member of staff/volunteer must act promptly by reporting their concern using **the Cause for Concern App (CfC)**.

If any member of staff/volunteer have concerns about a learner (especially if it relates to a possible situation of harm defined as abuse, neglect or exploitation) and feels unsure about what to do in relation to this, or they are unsure about being able to recognise the signs or symptoms of possible harm, they should refer this on to the Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer **via the Cause for Concern App**.

Further details on using the Cause for Concern App can be found in Appendix 2.

All Staff should note the following re confidentiality:

Information given to members of staff about possible abuse cannot be held 'in confidence'. In the interests of the learner or Adult at Risk of Harm, staff may need to share this information with other professionals. The informant should be advised accordingly but assured that only those who need to know will be told.

All Staff should note the following re sharing information about a student, and parent or guardian requests for information about a student:

The General Data Protection Regulations (2018) impose strict conditions on how personal data is used and shared, including restrictions on the circumstances in which such data can be shared with parents / guardians. Full details relating to the sharing of data can be found in the Data Protection Handbook. Staff should refer to this prior to releasing any data about a student / trainee.

3.7 Staff Responsibilities in Relation to School Partnership Provision

If a learner attending SERC through School Partnership Provision makes a disclosure to a member of staff that gives rise to concerns about the occurrence of harm, or possible harm (defined as abuse, neglect or exploitation) or if a member of staff or volunteer has concerns about a learner, the member of staff/volunteer should report the matter to the school's designated teacher **as soon as possible and within 24 hours (during a working week and by 10.00am on the first working day after a holiday period or weekend)**. The lecturer should also inform the SERC's Lead Designated Officer by completing a Cause for Concern Referral.

Where a lecturer from the College is attending a school as part of the Entitlement Framework, the lecturer should be aware of, and adhere to, the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, which take precedence in such circumstances, over those of SERC.

A lecturer who witnesses an incident of harm (concern) in a school should report the matter to the school's designated teacher **as soon as possible and within 24 hours (during a working week and by 10.00am on the first working day after a holiday period or weekend)**.

The lecturer should also inform the SERC's Lead Designated Officer by completing a Cause for Concern Referral. The Lead Designated Officer will within four weeks follow up with the school to determine what action has been taken, although a school is not obliged to provide updates to the College on reported incidents.

3.8 Staff Responsibilities to SERC Student or Trainee on Placement or Work Experience

Staff should apprise students and trainees of the standards and behaviours that students should expect while on placement or while participating in other College related activities and they should be advised as to who they should raise any concerns with. This is normally carried out by either their placement supervisor or their Deputy Head of School, or their representative. (Staff should note that during induction to a placement the student should be made aware of the organisations wider policies and procedures, which are to be followed, including all matters related to the reporting of a safeguarding issues).

If a safeguarding issue is identified in relation to a student on placement, or if a student reports that they have witnessed an incident staff should raise this through the **Cause for Concern App** and take advice from the Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer, who receives Cause for Concern Referrals. While the placement organisation is ultimately responsible for all safeguarding matters which occur on its premises, College staff must also report any concern that they become aware of through the **Cause for Concern App**. If appropriate a student / trainee will be removed from that placement with immediate effect until the issue is resolved.

The College Lead Designated Officer will within four weeks follow up with the placement to determine what action has been taken (although a placement provider is not obliged to provide updates to the College on reported incidents). The Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer may have to determine whether that placement provider can be used in the future.

3.9 International Trips

If, at any time, a learner on an international trip makes a disclosure to a member of staff that gives rise to concerns about the occurrence of harm, or possible harm (defined as abuse, neglect or exploitation) or if a member of staff or volunteer has concerns about a learner, the member of staff/volunteer must act promptly by reporting their concern using **the Cause for Concern App (CfC) or making direct contact by phone with the Senior Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer or a Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer** who will provide advice and guidance.

3.10 International Students residing with host families arranged by SERC

The International Project Manager will ensure all members of the homestay household who are 18+ years have completed an Enhanced Access NI check and will collate copies of the certificates. Each homestay household will complete the Homestay Risk Assessment Checklist and a Risk Assessment which includes child protection, and this will be reviewed by the Project Manager. Once the homestay family has been approved, the Project Manager will send a copy of the Homestay Handbook to the Homestay Partner which includes information on safeguarding and child protection.

The Project Manager will prepare and maintain a 24-hour emergency staff rota providing safeguarding and health & safety support.

Further information can be found in the Inbound Student Mobilities SOP.

Any safeguarding concerns raised by international students or their homestay families must be reporting using **the Cause for Concern App (CfC) or directly to the Senior Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer or a Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer.**

Where a potential safeguarding issue is raised regarding a Homestay family, the Senior Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer or a Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer will make a decision as to the immediate continuation of the Homestay arrangement (and other pertinent actions) and this decision will be reviewed as the situation is clarified.

Depending on the circumstances the Senior Lead Designated Officer will escalate the issue to the relevant external agencies in the normal way and will liaise with the Deputy Principal with responsibilities for Safeguarding and will be responsible for ensuring that the young person is appropriately supported.

3.11 Actions in Response to a Cause for Concern

On receipt of a Cause for Concern Referral the Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer will:

- Consider the information provided and request additional information if necessary.
- Assess the nature and level of the alleged harm, or risk to the student(s).
- Consider whether a referral to Gateway or Adult Gateway Protection Service of Social Services is required (taking advice as appropriate) and make the referral if necessary.
- Consider whether a referral to PSNI is appropriate, and if so, complete the referral.
- Engage with 'next of kin', or request the staff member to do so, if appropriate.
- Direct the staff member who has made the referral as to appropriate next steps / support arrangements that are appropriate to safeguard the learner. This response will be confirmed by email with a record being maintained on the CfC.
- Update and advise CMT / Safeguarding Governor as appropriate on significant cases.
- Review all Cause for Concern referrals to identify trends to ensure that student support services reflect on-going student needs and issues.

In responding to a Cause for Concern Referral the Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer will seek assistance from the Designated Safeguarding Officers to ensure that appropriate assistance and support is available for staff dealing with any given situation. The nature and level of this engagement by the Designated Safeguarding Officers will vary from case to case.

Further information regarding the anticipated response time for Cause for Concerns is provided in Appendix 2.

In the event that a disclosure is made concerning the activities of a member of staff towards a student or trainee, the matter must be immediately referred to the Head of HR or the Head of Learner Welfare who will convene a meeting of the Safeguarding Monitoring and Review Group to co-ordinate an appropriate response to the situation, which may include referral to the HR department.

3.12 Staff Responsibilities in Relation to Children at SERCs Newcastle Creche

SERC recognises that all children deserve to be treated with equality, respect, and dignity. Staff working with the children at SERC's Newcastle Creche are expected to always put the care, welfare, and safety needs of a child first. Staff should highlight any safeguarding concerns to the Creche Manager or Deputy Manager as soon as they are identified.

This section of the Safeguarding, Care and Welfare procedure provides guidance about the processes that are in place to safeguard children while they attend the SERC Creche at the Newcastle Campus. In addition, the list of other procedures that relate to the care of children at the Creche should be read in conjunction with this procedure; these can be found in Appendix 1.4.

3.12.1 SERC at the Newcastle Creche will, ensure that the following key arrangements are in place at all times:

- Access to the Creche will be limited, with only Creche staff having access to the Creche facility when children are present.
- All Creche staff will have been vetted during through the Access NI process and will be registered as appropriate with Social Services.
- The senior creche staff, i.e., the creche manager and the Deputy Creche manager are trained as Designated Safeguarding Officers.
- CCTV, with restricted viewing access will be recorded during the Creche opening hours.
- All staff have annual training in relation to the Safeguarding of Children.

3.12.2 Reporting a Disclosure, Suspicion or Allegation in Relation to a Child's Safety or Wellbeing at the Newcastle Creche

Should anyone observe, identify, or be told by a child or a third party of a suspicion or allegation of abuse they should report this immediately to the Creche Manager. The Creche manager will record the information provided by the member of staff, review the information provided and liaise with one of the SERC Lead Designated Safeguarding Officers as appropriate to identify the steps that need to be taken. The Creche Manager should also complete a Cause for Concern referral.

The relevant points of contact are as follows:

| Role | Name | Contact number |
|--|---------------|-----------------------|
| Creche Manager/Designated Officer | Ursula Maginn | 07816 115045 |
| Deputy Creche Manager/Designated Officer | Jenna Lynch | 07816 115045 |
| SERC Lead Designated Safeguarding Officers | Paul Walsh | 07825 021832 |

One or more of the following actions may be the outcome of such a report:

- The situation may be kept under review.
- A meeting may be requested with the parents of the child / children in question to seek clarification on the issues raised.
- Engagement with the Social Services Gateway Team for further advice and guidance.
- Referral to the Social Services Gateway Team or PSNI in a timely manner.

In liaising with the Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer, the Creche Manager will complete a Cause for Concern using the SERC Cause for Concern App.

A list of Child Safeguarding Contacts can be found in Appendix 1.3. Further information and guidance for Creche Staff and Families on child abuse can be found in Appendix 1.4. Further information on Child Sexual Exploitation can be found in Appendix 1.5 of this procedure.

3.12.3 Protocol for bruising on pre-mobile babies

In line with the Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland (SBNI) pre-mobile bruising protocol, any bruising which is observed or identified on a pre-mobile baby will be immediately reported to the Social Services Gateway team.

A pre-mobile baby is defined as a "baby who is not yet crawling, not actively rolling as a means of mobility (including those only able to flip from back to front), not bottom shuffling, not pulling to stand, not cruising nor walking independently.

3.13 Digital safety

The College is committed to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for all students and will implement appropriate safeguards to prevent online abuse by educating students and staff on digital safety practises and ensuring appropriate security measures are in place, including the use of web content filtering software and firewalls. For further information, please refer to the College's Acceptable Use Policy.

If a learner makes a disclosure to a member of staff that gives rise to concerns about the occurrence of on-line harm, or possible harm or if a member of staff or volunteer has concerns about a learner's digital safety, the member of staff/volunteer must act promptly by reporting their concern using **the Cause for Concern App (CfC)**.

3.14 Safeguarding Risk Assessment and Management Plans

The College has in place Risk Management procedures to deal with situations arising from significant behavioural issues or complex personal circumstances which may introduce a potential safeguarding risk to staff and/or other students. This procedure allows a senior manager to consider the nature of the issue alongside the responsibility that the College has to care for all students and staff.

As part of this process and if necessary, a Risk Assessment and Management Plan, including proposed recommendations, will be completed and forwarded to the College Management Team for consideration and approval. The Risk Assessment and Management Plan will outline:

- the nature of the issue
- the identified risks that could potentially impact on the maintenance of a safe College environment, specifically in relation to other students, staff, the College and the individual concerned
- consideration of options to manage the situation with a recommended course of action

Once a decision has been confirmed by the College Management Team, the Senior Lead/Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer will liaise with all relevant individuals to progress the matter.

Please note that Disclosure of Criminal Convictions are dealt with separately and in accordance with the procedures outlined in section 5 of this SOP.

4.0 Engaging External Providers to Provide Services / Events for Students

SERC relies on the services offered by many external providers to assist in addressing the needs and concerns of our students. Their specialist knowledge and expertise are vital to ensuring that students receive the most appropriate advice and support at all times.

The provision of services by external organisations is considered under the following categories:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Category 1 | Person or group of people who will attend SERC to share their knowledge with a class group, the tutor being present throughout the presentation. E.g., past pupils, guest lecturers, visit by local employers. |
| Category 2 | Person or group of people from an external agency who will host workshops / training sessions with groups of students, the lecturer may or may not be present. An example of such organisation might include Action Mental Health (Mindset programme), ASCERT. |
| Category 3 | Person or group of people who use facilities in SERC to provide a service to SERC students or who use SERC premises (rental or other usage) to provide services to other people e.g., Nexus, Cruse, PIPS. |

4.1 Process for Engaging the Services of External Providers

Staff are required to follow this process when identifying external individuals or organisations to meet and provide services to students. This process is as follows:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Category 1 | The member of staff organising such an event should advise their Deputy Head of School (DHoS) of their intention and subject to their approval then be available to ensure that the visitor is accompanied at all times by an appropriate member of staff while the visitor is working with SERC students. |
| Category 2 | <p>The provision of this type of workshop/seminar may be very valuable to SERC students, although in planning such events, the College needs to take into account:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The nature and appropriateness of the event being planned. (2) The external organisation's aims and objectives. (3) Clarity of the funding arrangements for the session(s). (4) Risk of conflicts of interest / duplication of provision with other College initiatives / organisations. (5) Access NI approvals / insurance arrangements as appropriate. |

In planning such events, staff need to contact their Campus Manager who will ensure that appropriate consideration will be given to their proposal and will advise the member of staff of their decision within 5 days of their request, after having discussed the proposal with the appropriate College Managers as necessary.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Category 3 | <p>The provision of such services will be organised at a College level by the appropriate Senior Manager and in agreement with CMT (as appropriate). The provision of such services while very valuable needs to be managed so as to ensure appropriate Safeguarding arrangements are in place for the protection of all students and staff.</p> <p>Any member of staff who is approached about such an arrangement should contact the Campus Manager who will liaise with CMT (as appropriate) to assess the proposal and in so doing will consider the following:</p> |
|-------------------|---|

- Purpose of the arrangement and how it meets SERC's strategic objectives.
- The nature of the request viz-a-viz other services already in place and the availability of resources to accommodate this request.
- The input of other SERC staff / Services e.g., Customer Service staff.
- Compliance with SERC Health & Safety policies.
- The provision of Access NI / insurance documentation.

4.2 Examples

Category 1

- A former student is prepared to come into the College to talk to a specific class about their experience.
- A local employer wants to talk to a class about job opportunities in their company.
- A representative from a charity, want to talk to a group of students about volunteering opportunities within their charity.
- A university representative hosting an information workshop.

Category 2

- Action Mental Health running seminars on Mindfulness at different campuses on different days.
- Ascort providing drugs and alcohol awareness sessions on one Campus on one day.
- A Bank running a “money matters” workshop to groups of students.
- PSNI providing an information session on “Knife Crime” to different classes on one day.
- Circus skills workshops with specific student groups.

Category 3

- Inspire - students providing counselling service on each Campus every week.
- Youth Health Advice Clinic.
- Cruse Bereavement providing counselling to invited members of the public and/or SERC students, on SERC premises, on the agreement that Cruse Bereavement provide support and advice on bereavement related issues to SERC staff and students as necessary.

4.3 Contractors working on SERC premises

Prior to the commencement of any contractors being present on site, the relevant Facilities Management staff should ensure the contractor staff comply with the relevant Access NI requirements and, in addition, the contractor is made aware of the importance of safeguarding all users of the college. Appendix 1.6 details the minimum information which should be shared with each contractor at the commencement of their work.

5.0 Disclosure of Criminal Convictions

5.1 Introduction

The College is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all students, trainees and staff as they attend, while at the same time ensuring that there is an equality of opportunity for all applicants including those with criminal convictions.

To enable it to meet these commitments, the College needs be informed of any relevant criminal conviction that an applicant may have so that it can identify any required actions that may be required. Applicants who have a criminal conviction are asked to download and complete the Disclosure of Criminal Convictions Pack and form. In completing this, applicants are only asked to provide information that is relevant given the nature of the offense, when it occurred and the type of course that you are applying to. If necessary, this information will be used to develop a suitable risk management plan.

Applicants are not required to disclose spent convictions, unless they are applying for courses in Childcare, Sports Studies, Health and Social Care (including Counselling and Social Work), Teaching or classroom assistants, Youth Work. For courses in these areas, they will be required to disclose all spent and unspent criminal convictions.

If a potential student discloses a criminal conviction(s), he or she will **not** automatically be excluded from the application process.

5.2 Scope

The disclosure of a criminal conviction means that the College will apply the Criminal Disclosure Procedure. This procedure allows a senior manager to consider the disclosure in the context of the occupational area that the applicant has applied to, the nature of the offence and the responsibility that the College has to care for all students and staff.

As part of this process and, if necessary, a risk assessment and management plan will be completed and agreed with the applicant as part of the application process.

5.3 Criminal Disclosure Process

The Criminal Disclosure Process is a separate and confidential procedure, which complies with the College's Data Protection policies. If an applicant declares that they have a prior criminal conviction when completing their on-line application, they will automatically be directed to the Criminal Disclosure Procedure and are required to complete the form in Appendix 8.

Stage 1

The applicant completes the Criminal Disclosure form, which should be returned to the named person at the College.

Stage 2

A senior College manager will review the information on the form and if necessary, the applicant will be invited to attend a meeting about the disclosure, the meeting being referred to as the Disclosure Meeting.

Stage 3

The purpose of the Disclosure Meeting is to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made if possible, to ensure the safety of all students (including the applicant) and staff.

At the Disclosure Meeting, the applicant will be given an opportunity to explain the nature and circumstances of their conviction(s), and they should provide enough information to enable a risk assessment and a management plan to be prepared, if necessary. This plan, if agreed by the applicant and the College will be implemented if the applicant becomes enrolled at the College.

The applicant is entitled to bring another person with them to the Disclosure Meeting, and if required, the applicant's Probation Officer, or PSNI Public Protection Unit Officer (PPU) may also attend.

Stage 4

The senior College manager who attends the Disclosure Meeting will complete the risk assessment and management plan, which will then be approved by the College Management team of the College, before the applicant is asked to confirm and sign the management plan.

Stage 5

Applicants will be advised about the outcome of this process separately and as quickly as possible after the Risk Assessment meeting. Where a current/previous conviction may preclude an applicant from doing a particular course, the College may offer alternative appropriate courses to the applicant.

If the College becomes aware of a trainee / student offence that has not been disclosed, it will review the risk and decide if the student must withdraw from the course (if enrolled) or the applicant be prevented from enrolling (if not enrolled) until the Criminal Conviction Disclosure Procedure can be applied.

5.4 Criminal Conviction Disclosure Form Overview

All applicants who have indicated on the application form (on-line application form) that they may need to disclose information regarding a criminal conviction are required to complete the Criminal Conviction Disclosure form (Appendix 1.7). This form will guide the applicant in relation the information that needs to be provided. Further information relating to relevant convictions is also contained within this pack.

Some jobs/roles are considered so sensitive or risky that all criminal offences must be declared regardless. A range of occupations (paid and unpaid) are excepted from legislation, and for these posts applicants must disclose information on both "spent" and "unspent convictions". SERC applies the same consideration when applicants are applying to courses, which relate to these job areas. These job areas are:

- Childcare
- Sports Studies
- Health and Social Care (including Counselling and Social Work)
- Teaching or classroom assistants
- Youth Work.

In these cases, it is emphasised to the prospective student that while they may be eligible to enrol on a course in one of these areas, the Criminal Conviction that they hold may impact on their ability to work in that area in the future. They will also be informed that, to take up a placement (if required by their course) they will have to complete an Access NI check and that a Criminal Conviction may impact on their opportunity to find a suitable placement (see Section 6 for further information).

All applicants should complete sections 1 and 3; while those applying for courses in the areas listed above should complete section 1, 2 and 3.

6.0 Access NI Procedure

6.1 Guidance for Students, Tutors and Counter Signatories

This section provides guidance on situation where students may need to complete an Access NI check, for example prior to commencing a placement. For guidance on the completion of Access NI checks for staff appointments, including emergency appointments, please refer to the Staff Appointments SOP.

6.2 Situations when Students are required to complete an Access NI

SERC requires that students and trainees to complete an 'Enhanced with Barred List' ACCESS NI application in each of the following situations:

1. Where a prospective SERC student is completing a course with an ACCESS NI requirement highlighted in the entry criteria e.g., Sports Massage.
2. When a SERC student is to complete a work placement* in one of the following areas:
 - Childcare
 - Sports Studies
 - Health and Social Care (including Counselling or Social Work)
 - Teaching or Classroom Assistants
 - Youth Work.
3. Where a student of SERC seeks to complete a work placement* at SERC, regardless of the area or role in which this placement will take place.
4. When a student at another school, College or University (i.e. not SERC) seeks to complete a work placement* at SERC, regardless of the area or role in which this work placement will take place.

In each case the College must assess the impact of any disclosure of criminal conviction on the student's participation in any college activity once that disclosure is made. In the vast majority of cases disclosures are openly made by a student when applying to a course and this is considered using the College's Disclosure of Criminal Conviction Procedure.

If a Criminal Conviction is only disclosed when an Access NI check is being completed, for example when a work placement is being organised, the College requires that the Disclosure of Criminal Convictions Procedure is then applied.

* SERC defines a **Work Placement** as paid or unpaid mandatory or non-compulsory, assessed work-based learning towards a final course qualification and career. This is separate and distinct from **Work Experience** which is defined as work shadowing of two weeks or less for a student to observe and assist (with guidance), a member of staff working in an organisation prior to pursuing a career.

6.3 Process for Completing an Access NI Application

Each student seeking to complete the work placement will be assigned a suitable Counter Signatory (Work Placement and Competition Manager to instruct) who will advise the student on how to complete the Access NI process.

This procedure requires that the student:

- a. completes the online ACCESS NI application form, with the appropriate pin number and instructions being provided by the SERC counter signatory that has been assigned to them or their class.
- b. pays the ACCESS NI fee at any SERC reception.
- c. provides the counter signatory (tutor or other designated member of staff) with three forms of ID to complete the ID Validation form, photocopies of which will be taken and kept for the academic year (note: a list of appropriate forms of ID is specified on the ACCESS NI Pin Notification and ID Validation form available on the staff "Work Placement" team site).

Please note

Online applications cannot be processed by the College counter signatories until the fee has been paid and ID Validation completed and returned to the counter signatory.

While processing shared personal data SERC will at all times be compliant with all applicable data protection laws (Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679 as amended, or such equivalent legislation as may be in effect from time to time).

Completion of this means that the student understands SERC can share "Access NI declaration information if there are no criminal convictions on the disclosure e.g., Access NI case numbers, date certificate was issued and cleared".

6.4 On receipt of an Access NI Certificate

Upon Completion of the Access (NI) checking process each student receives their own personal certificate detailing all disclosure information. Certificates are issued electronically unless information has been disclosed or a paper certificate has been requested.

It should be noted that when a student shares the link to their Digital Certificate the token will only be available for three days for the recipient to view, and then it will be blocked. If required, the student will be able to re-share after the three-day token expires.

An ACCESS NI certificate will identify if there is a “Disclosure” or “No Disclosure”. The counter signatory will be informed when the process is complete but will not be provided with details of the issues disclosed on the ACCESS NI system. A code will indicate if any issue has been identified.

6.5 No Disclosure Identified

If no disclosures have been identified the student should, as appropriate inform their:

- Course tutor.
- Placement provider (either external or internal to College);

and provide them with their Certificate number and/or a copy of their Certificate if required.

6.6 Disclosure Identified

Where the Access NI process identifies a disclosure issue the following process must be followed:

1. The counter signatory must contact the student to explain the situation and arrange to meet the student and clarify the nature of the issue that has been identified. The student is required to bring their Access NI Certificate to this meeting.
2. Prior to this meeting the Counter signatory will confirm whether a Disclosure of a Criminal Conviction has already been made by the student by contacting the Head of Learner Welfare
3. If the student has **not** previously completed a Disclosure of Criminal Conviction, the student must complete the 'Disclosures of Criminal Convictions' form (downloaded from the staff intranet) with assistance from the Counter Signatory as necessary.
4. The completed form is forwarded to the Head of Learner Welfare who will complete a risk assessment and management plan, for the approval of CMT as appropriate and based on the declaration. The outcome of this may mean that the student may not be able to continue with their course. If the placement role is within SERC, the approval or otherwise for the student to take up the placement will be considered in line with the completed Risk Assessment and Management Plan. The outcome of the Risk Assessment and Management Plan will be forwarded to the counter signatory who will inform the student.
5. If the placement role is with a company or other organisation that is outside of the College, the work placement tutor / counter signatory can advise and assist the student / trainee as follows:
 - a. Make the placement provider aware of the issue and seek their approval as to whether the placement can still be offered.
 - b. Direct the student to another placement in another organisation that is perhaps dealing with a different client group.
 - c. Advise the student that as a result of the issues identified they are unlikely to be able to complete the required work placement element of the programme.
6. If a disclosure is identified the College will ensure that the employer is made aware of it prior to a student is taking up a placement with that employer. The College will not share details of any issue with an employer, the student will be invited to do as necessary.
7. The following will be recorded on the Work Placement System by the counter signatory:
 - a. Status – Applied for, Cleared, Not cleared, Cleared by Company, Exempt for Position.

- b. Notes – e.g., sent to third party. No disclosure information to be recorded.
- c. Certificate No. – ACCESS NI referenced number.
- d. Date of Issue.

Appendix 1.1: Using the Cause for Concern App

If at any time any member of staff has a concern about any student or trainee then they can make a “Cause for Concern” referral using the **Safeguarding and Pastoral Support App**, which is available to all staff, on the Apps section on the SERC Intranet. See link - [My Referrals | CFC \(serc.ac.uk\)](https://serc.ac.uk/MyReferrals)

Such a referral may be as a result of a conversation or other communication from a student (e.g., a text, email, Facebook etc), shared information from another student, or based on attendance / behavioural concerns, or a request for help by a student. This list is not exhaustive.

The Cause for Concern App should be used where:

- A student / trainee is in crises.
- A student has requested help to cope with their issues.
- A member of staff has some concern about the student/ trainee even when evidence is limited.
- A member of staff suspects that there is a Safeguarding issue.
- Bullying has been reported or is suspected.

On completion of the Cause for Concern App the information contained is forwarded to:

- The Lead Designated Safeguarding Officers
- Principal and Chief Executive
- Deputy Principal Planning, Performance and Engagement

On receipt of a referral one of the Lead Designated Safeguarding Officers will review it, as soon as possible, usually within an hour. Depending on the nature and significance of the issue(s) being raised, an appropriate response will be made as follows:

Response to a Cause for Concern Referral

Significant Issue – one likely to affect the immediate safety of the student/trainee.

- Lead Designated Safeguarding Officers will contact the staff member by phone or in person to review the situation, to advise on the next steps and will work with that member of staff / Designated Safeguarding Officer to resolve the immediate situation.

Issue with medium to long term impact on a student:

- Lead Designated Safeguarding Officers will ask the member of staff to encourage the student to engage with the appropriate support services.
- Lead Designated Safeguarding Officers will engage with Social Services/others if necessary.

Issue of less immediate concern

- Lead Designated Safeguarding Officers will email the member of staff, identifying some appropriate support strategies / services and will request a further referral if the student's situation changes.

Should a member of staff be in doubt as to whether to complete a Cause for Concern for a student at any-time they are advised that they should do so. Ensuring that a student is protected far outweighs the any additional administrative tasks involved and the information being provided by the member of staff may be helpful when considered with other information that the Pastoral Care Managers may already have.

Appendix 1.2: Code of Conduct in Relation to potential Safeguarding Issues

This Code of Conduct is intended to assist staff and volunteers, in respect of safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk of Harm by drawing attention to the areas of risk and offering guidance on prudent conduct. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the learners in their charge must be above reproach and must uphold their best interests as a primary consideration.

All College employees, whether full/part-time and volunteers have been formally checked through AccessNI so they can be deemed fit to work with Children and Adults at Risk.

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff engage with Children and Adults at Risk, or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur, however, the following are of relevance:

Recording Information Disclosed by a Student or other person

If a complaint of abuse arises, it is important that the staff member takes the situation seriously and responds using the advice below:

DO:

- Listen to the student sensitively and carefully. Support the learner for telling you.
- Give reassurance, but tactfully explain you will have to tell someone else, but only those who need to know.
- Say, for example, "Tell me what happened".
- If possible, establish what happened, where it happened, when it happened and who did it.
- Immediately afterwards make notes especially actual words used. These notes should be passed to one of the named College Designated Safeguarding Officers.
- Immediately afterwards talk to a College Designated Safeguarding Officer who will document, record and report as necessary.

Do not:

- ask leading questions which can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the learner's mind.
- give a promise of confidentiality – it cannot be kept.
- make suggestions, for example, "Did they do X to you?".
- interrogate and do not dwell too much on the alleged perpetrator.
- write as the learner talks to you. Give your whole attention to the learner.
- discuss with others (except Designated Officers) - any information received from the learner should be held in strict confidence.

Mobile Phones / Social Media Groups (e.g., WhatsApp)

While Mobile phones and Social Media technologies are a very efficient way to keep in contact with students their use can leave staff exposed to potential safeguarding issues. For this reason, the College strongly recommends that staff do not share personal contact details with any student or trainee. Likewise, the establishment of groups through apps such as "WhatsApp" can mean that personal student contact details are shared across the group.

The College has group texting facilities which all staff are encouraged to use if it is necessary to communicate with groups of students/ trainees.

Private Meetings with Students

Staff should conduct such meetings in a room with visual access, or with the door open. Where this is not possible, staff should ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place.

Another learner or, preferably, another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

While it might be important to ensure privacy, it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.

Physical Contact with Students

As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their learners. Any physical contact that could be misinterpreted by the learners, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.

It is unrealistic to suggest that staff should touch learners only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this. Staff may also make physical contact where the individual is likely to harm themselves or likely to harm others.

Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.

Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.

Staff should follow College guidelines for behaviour in specialist areas such as changing rooms and the darkroom.

In situations where first aid is required, this should be carried out in the presence of other learners or another adult. However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.

Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to his/her line manager or to the relevant Duty Manager.

Residential Visits

Staff should be particularly careful when supervising learners in a residential setting, or on approved activities outside the College. The College guidelines on Educational Visits provides further information.

Photographs and Video Involving Children and Adults at Risk of Harm

An individual's name, video and photographic images can be considered as personal data and has been viewed legally as sensitive data and therefore must be managed in line with General Data Protection Regulations.

Further information on the SERC procedures for ensuring that photographs, video and audio recordings of students attending SERC are provided in **Section 7 of the Communications & Marketing SOP**. This SOP also includes student consent forms and guidance on the proper storage and use of such images for educational and promotional activities.

Choice and Use of Teaching Materials and approaches

Lecturers should avoid using teaching materials that might be misinterpreted by learners. When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature, a lecturer should be aware that their application, either by a learner or by the lecturer, might subsequently be criticised. If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the lecturer should consult with their Deputy Head of School before using it.

From time to time, however, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with Children/ Adults at Risk and their manner and approach to individual Children/ Adult at Risk, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, of Children/ Adult at Risk of Harm or of their parents/guardians.

Relationships and Attitudes

Staff should ensure that their relationships with learners are appropriate to the age, maturity and gender of the learners, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with Children and Adults at Risk of Harm.

Additionally, all staff and volunteers must never:

- Engage in rough physical games including horseplay – apart from structured sports activities.
- Engage in sexually provocative games.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child even in fun.
- Let allegations a child makes go unchallenged or unrecorded.
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

Personal Care and Assistance

In an emergency situation should staff be required to provide a level of intimate care, they should be sensitive to the individual needs of the learner and must report the circumstances to their line manager and the learner's parents or carers.

Sexual Relationships

It is a criminal offence for a member of staff or a person in a position of trust to engage in any sexual activity with a learner aged under 18 years (irrespective of the age of consent), even if the basis of the relationship is consensual. Similarly, staff should not engage in any sexual activity with an Adult at Risk of Harm.

While the SERC policy applies specifically to learners under 18 years of age, or Adult at Risk of Harm, the College does not endorse relationships between staff and students – staff engaging in such relationships may be subject to disciplinary action.

Appendix 1.3: Child Safeguarding Contacts

The Gateway Service can be directly contacted for help in the Lisburn, Dunmurry, Moira, Hillsborough, Ballynahinch Downpatrick, Newcastle, Bangor, Newtownards and Comber areas. Their contact details, along with other sources of help, are listed below.

| | |
|---|--|
| Organisation | |
| Gateway Service | <p><u>BY PHONE</u> During Office hours (9am-5pm, Mon- Fri), excluding public/bank holidays. Tel: 0300 100 0300 Out of Hours – Emergency Duty Service Tel: 028 9504 9999</p> <p><u>IN PERSON</u> North Down Gateway Team Family Resource Centre James Street Newtownards BT23 4EP</p> <p>Down Gateway Team Children's Services 81 Market Street Downpatrick BT30 6LZ</p> <p>Greater Lisburn Gateway Team Stewartstown Road Health Centre 212 Stewartstown Road Dunmurry Belfast BT17 0FB</p> <p>North Down Gateway Team Family Resource Centre James Street Newtownards BT23 4EP</p> <p>Greater Lisburn Gateway Team Stewartstown Road Health Centre 212 Stewartstown Road Dunmurry Belfast BT17 0FB</p> |
| Link Social Worker | 02844 513807 |
| PSNI | Emergency 999 Non-emergency 101 |
| Government helpline for extremism concerns | 020 7340 7264 |
| NSPCC Whistleblowing hotline | 0800 028 0285 |
| NSPCC Childline | 0800 1111 |

Appendix 1.4: Information and Guidance for Creche Staff and Families on child abuse

Child Abuse is the term used to describe ways in which children are intentionally or inadvertently harmed or placed at risk of harm, usually by adults, and often by people that they trust.

Categories of Abuse include:

- **Physical Injury:**

This is defined as any injury inflicted or knowingly not prevented by any person having custody or care of a child. Physical abuse is often defined by injuries that cannot be explained by the normal play activities of a child and is defined as hitting or hurting a child on purpose.

- **Neglect:**

This is defined as the wilful failure to meet the basic needs of a child, for example, not clothing, feeding or caring for a child adequately and leaving them without adequate supervision.

- **Emotional Abuse:**

This is defined as any abuse or torment which would have an effect on the mental health and wellbeing of a child. Most commonly emotional abuse is categorised as shouting at a child, making a child feel worthless, exposing a child to inappropriate and never punishment and inconsistency of behaviour towards a child.

- **Sexual Abuse:**

This is defined as the exploitation of children in order to meet the demands of adults or other children. Sexual abuse may include involvement of children in masturbation, involvement of children in pornographic activity, including taking pornographic photographs and involving children in watching or viewing pornographic materials, involvement of children in sexual activity, including rape, sodomy, oral sex and sexual intercourse with a child, even with their consent.

- **Bullying:**

Bullying is defined as any form of abuse on a child which is inflicted upon them by their peers, this abuse can be subtle, including, teasing, being ignored or left out, being pushed or pulled about, or having money or possessions taken.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) has been recognised by the Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland (SBNI) as a particular and complex issue. It can be defined as:

“Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.” (SBNI 2014, adopted from CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI).

Further and more detailed information on Child Sexual Exploitation can be found in Appendix 1.5 of this procedure.

Recognition of Child Abuse

Staff at the Creche are expected to highlight any causes for concern to the Creche Manager or Deputy Manager as soon as they identify a concern as outlined in section 3.12 of this procedure.

The following list although not exhaustive, may be indicative of some of the signs and symptoms of child abuse. However, it should be noted that some children may display some of these signs in times of stress; it does not necessarily mean that they are being abused.

Indicators of Abuse may be:

- Injuries to the child that are not consistent with the normal play activities of a child, either in position or type.

- Inconsistent or unreasonable explanation of an injury by a child, parent or carer.
- Inconsistent or inappropriate behaviour such as sexually explicit remarks or actions, mood swings, uncharacteristically quiet/aggressive or severe tantrums.
- Becoming isolated socially.
- Overeating, loss of appetite, weight loss, weight gain.
- Inappropriately dressed or ill-kept and/or dirty.
- Self-inflicting injury.
- Open distrust of, or discomfort with, parent or carer.
- Delayed social development, poor language and speech.
- Excessively nervous behaviour, such as rocking or hair twisting.
- Low self-esteem can be an indicator of abuse, though often typical of sexual abuse.
- Recurring abdominal pain.
- Reluctance to go home.
- Flinching when approached or touched.
- Recurring headaches.

All staff working with the children at SERCs Newcastle Creche are expected to:

- Play their part in helping to develop an ethos where all people matter and are treated with equality, and respect and dignity.
- Always put the care, welfare, and safety needs of a child first.
- Respect a child's right to be involved in making choices and decisions which directly affect them.
- Listen attentively to any ideas and views a child wants to share.
- Respect a child's culture (for example, their faith and beliefs).
- Respect a child's right to privacy and personal space.
- Respond sensitively to children who seem anxious about participating in certain activities.
- Speak to a member of staff immediately if you suspect that a child is experiencing bullying or harassment.
- Be aware of the vulnerability of some groups of children to being isolated and hurt.
- Ensure that when working with children you are at least within sight or hearing of other adults.
- Listen carefully when a child 'tells you' (sometimes through drawings and behaviour as well as words) that they are being harmed and report what you have discovered immediately to your line manager.
- Report immediately any suspicion that a child may be at risk of harm or abuse.
- Never dismiss what a child tells you as lies or exaggeration.
- Only restrain a child who is at imminent harm of inflicting harm to themselves or others.
- Never underestimate the contribution that you can make to the development of safe communities for children.

Staff Should Not:

- Exaggerate or trivialise another worker's concerns about a child or ignore an allegation or suspicion of abuse in the hope that it will either go away or that someone else will deal with it.
- Discuss personal issues about a child or their family with other people except where it concerns the wellbeing of the child.
- Be drawn into derogatory remarks or gestures in front of the children or young people.
- Allow a child or young person to be bullied or harmed by anyone else in the organisation.
- Allow children to swear or use sexualised language unchallenged.

Child Safeguarding Contacts

The **Gateway Service** can be directly contacted for help in the Lisburn, Dunmurry, Moira, Hillsborough, Ballynahinch Downpatrick, Newcastle, Bangor, Newtownards and Comber areas.

By Phone

The Gateway Service can be contacted by phone during office hours (9am-5pm Monday – Friday, excluding public/bank holidays) on **0300 100 0300**. The out of hours Emergency Duty Service number is **028 9504 9999**.

In Person

North Down Gateway Team

Family Resource Centre
James Street
Newtownards
BT23 4EP

North Down Gateway Team

Family Resource Centre
James Street
Newtownards
BT23 4EP

Down Gateway Team

Children's Services
81 Market Street
Downpatrick
BT30 6LZ

Greater Lisburn Gateway Team

Stewartstown Road Health Centre
212 Stewartstown Road
Dunmurry
Belfast
BT17 0FB

Greater Lisburn Gateway Team

Stewartstown Road Health Centre
212 Stewartstown Road
Dunmurry
Belfast
BT17 0FB

Other useful contacts:

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Link Social Worker | 028 4451 3807 |
| PSNI | Emergency 999 Non-emergency 101 |
| Government helpline for extremism concerns | 020 7340 7264 |
| NSPCC Whistleblowing hotline | 0800 028 0285 |
| NSPCC Childline | 0800 1111 |

List of other SOPs that relate to the Care of Children at SERC's Newcastle Creche:

| NUMBER | SOP / POLICY NAME |
|---------------|---|
| 001 | Photography and Videography |
| 002 | Confidentiality in the Creche |
| 003 | Complaints and Compliments |
| 004 | CCTV |
| 005 | Absence of Creche Manager |
| 006 | Management of Medicines in the Creche |
| 007 | Social Networking |
| 008 | Managing Aggression and Bullying Behaviour in the Creche |
| 009 | Creche Behaviour |
| 010 | Equality |
| 011 | Provision of Food and Drink |
| 012 | Provision of bottle feeds |
| 013 | Accidents in the Creche |
| 014 | Children with Special Needs |
| 015 | SERC HR SOPs |
| 016 | Intimate and Personal Care |
| 017 | SERC Capability, Disciplinary, Instructions for all staff, Code of Conduct, Grievance, Staff Absence and Recruitment SOPs |
| 018 | Consent |
| 019 | Data Protection |
| 020 | First Aid in the Creche |
| 021 | Infection Control in the Creche |
| 022 | Use of mobile phones in the creche setting |
| 023 | Smoking |
| 024 | Health and Safety in the Creche |
| 025 | Management of Records |
| 026 | SERC Whistleblowing SOP |
| 027 | Menu Planning |
| 028 | Parents Access to Records |
| 029 | Play |
| 030 | Security |
| 031 | Transport |
| 032 | Participation |
| 033 | Safeguarding |
| 034 | Participation |
| 036 | Maintenance of Play Equipment |
| 038 | Reporting Untoward Incidents |
| 039 | Fees |
| 040 | Management of emergencies |

Appendix 1.5: Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) – Information

Page 1 of 3

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) has been recognised by the Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland (SBNI) as a particular and complex issue. The definitions and guidance below have been taken from its Guidance published in October 2014 for use by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland and its member agencies.

Child Sexual Exploitation: Definition

“Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.” (SBNI 2014, adopted from CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI).

The key factor that distinguishes cases of CSE from other forms of child sexual abuse is the concept of exchange – the fact that someone coerces or manipulates a child into engaging in sexual activity **in return for something** they need or desire and/or for the gain of those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. The something received by the child or young person can include both tangible items and/or more intangible ‘rewards’ OR ‘benefits’ such as perceived affection, protection or a sense of value or belonging.

Identifying CSE

As a result of the complexity of the transactional interaction outlined above, and the often conflicting feelings this engenders in victims, young people are frequently reluctant to disclose experiences of CSE. Because of this – and because of the hidden nature of much of the abuse – CSE can be very difficult to identify. Many children and young people – and professionals – can misinterpret such experiences as consensual and fail to recognise the exploitation involved. This can contribute to misplaced feelings of loyalty or shame on the part of victims (many of whom will consequently not self-disclose) and a potential failure to identify abusive situations on the part of professionals. However, the fact that all such scenarios are typified by a power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse and/or some form of vulnerability or limited availability of choice on the part of the young person clearly delineates/distinguishes the experiences as abusive.

What does CSE look like in practice?

CSE can take a variety of different forms. It can take place in person or online, or a combination of both. It can involve both contact and non-contact sexual activities. The following examples, although all very different in nature and involving different sexual offences, would all fall under the definition of CSE:

- A 21-year-old male persuading his 17-year-old ‘girlfriend’ to have sex with his friends to pay off his drug debt.
-
- A 44-year-old woman posing as a 17-year-old female online and persuading a 12-year-old male to send her a sexual image, and then threatening to tell his parents if he didn’t continue to send more explicit images.
- A 14-year-old male giving a 17-year-old male oral sex in return for money.
- A 14-year-old male getting a 14-year-old female to text a topless image of herself in return for a bottle of alcohol.
- A 13-year-old female offering and giving an adult male taxi driver sexual intercourse in return for the taxi fare home.

- Three 15-year-old females being taken to party houses and given 'free' alcohol and drugs, then told they have to 'pay' for them by having sex with six adult males.
- A 12-year-old female being told she has to give oral sex to six 14-year-old males, if she wants to remain part of the peer group.
- A 12-year-old female who views a 19-year-old male as her 'boyfriend' and engages in sexual activity with him in order to maintain the relationship.
- A 15-year-old female bringing two 13-year-old females to a party (where they are sexually assaulted) in order to prevent her from being sexually assaulted again.

Who does CSE affect?

Any child under the age of eighteen can be a victim of CSE. Although younger children can also experience CSE, the abuse most frequently impacts upon those of a post-primary age with the average age at which concerns are first identified being 12-15 years of age.

Sixteen and seventeen year olds, though legally able to consent to sexual activity, can also be sexually exploited. The Sexual Offences (NI) Order includes a number of specific sexual offences that apply to this age group, including abuse through pornography or prostitution and abuse of a position of trust.

The majority of CSE victims across the UK are living at home. CSE can affect young people from any walk of life, and it is important that we are mindful of risk across the general youth population and the wide range of factors that can heighten young people's vulnerability to this form of abuse. These include, but are not limited to:

- Social isolation
- Low self-esteem
- Being in a state of poverty or financial hardship
- Living in difficult domestic circumstances
- Having a disability
- Substance misuse
- Prior experience of abuse, particularly sexual abuse
- Recent bereavement / family breakdown
- Experiencing bullying
- Disengagement from education
- Involvement in crime
- Online vulnerability and lack of recognition of risk in the online world
- Links with other young people who are sexually exploited

Identifying CSE

A key element of this is awareness of the potential indicators of CSE. These can include, but are not limited to:

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phone etc. without plausible explanation
- Leaving home/care without permission
- Persistently going missing or returning late
- Receiving lots of texts/phone calls prior to leaving

- Agitated/stressed prior to leaving home/care
- Returning distraught/ dishevelled or under the influence of substances
- Requesting the morning after pill upon return
- Truancy from school
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age
- Physical symptoms or infections e.g., bruising, bite marks, sexually transmitted infections
- Concerning use of the internet
- Entering or leaving cars driven by unknown adults or by taxis
- New peer groups
- Significantly older 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend'
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours
- Low self-esteem
- Change in personal hygiene (greater attention or less)
- Self harm and other expressions of despair
- Evidence or suspicion of substance misuse

In all circumstances, employees' professional judgement will be exercised and for the vast majority of employees this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. If employees have any doubts about this, or how they should act in a particular circumstance, they should complete the Cause for Concern App.

Appendix 1.6 Contractors working on SERC premises – Safeguarding guidance

Protecting students and yourself.

Do not be alone with a student at anytime. If you come to work in room and a student is present either ask them to leave or arrange to come back later on.

Do not use Social Media to comment on any College activities. The sharing of information on social media about college activities is strictly forbidden eg comments about students, staff incidents or behaviours.

When taking photographs of works – **ensure that no students or other people can be identified** from these. Photographs are important for contractors to record their work. However, it is very important that all photographs should be taken so that students or college staff and employees cannot be identified.

Reporting any concern – please raise any concerns with SERC point of contact. If you say or do something that could potentially be misconstrued, or if someone says or does something that concerns you, please raise it with your SERC point of contact.

Appendix 1.7: Disclosure of Criminal Convictions: Student Information Pack and Form

1.0 Introduction

Thank you for your interest in joining a course at SERC. The College is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all students, trainees and staff as they attend, while at the same time ensuring that there is an equality of opportunity for all applicants including those with criminal convictions.

To help us to fulfil these commitments, the College needs you to provide some information regarding any criminal convictions that you may hold. You can do this by Criminal Conviction Disclosure Form on page 4 of this document. In completing this you are only asked to provide information that is relevant given the nature of the offense, when it occurred and the type of course that you are applying to. If necessary, this information will be used to develop a suitable risk management plan.

You will not be required to disclose spent convictions, unless you are applying for courses in certain areas such as Childcare, Sports Studies, Health and Social Care (including Counselling and Social Work), Teaching/class room assistants or Youth Work. For courses in these areas you will be required to disclose all spent and unspent criminal convictions.

If a potential student discloses a criminal conviction(s), he or she will **not** automatically be excluded from the application process.

2.0 Scope

The disclosure of a criminal conviction means that the College will apply the Criminal Disclosure Procedure. This procedure allows a senior manager to consider the disclosure in the context of the occupational area that the applicant has applied to, the nature of the offence and the responsibility that the College has to care for all students and staff.

As part of this process and, if necessary, a risk assessment and management plan will be completed and agreed with the applicant as part of the application process.

3.0 Criminal Disclosure Process

The Criminal Disclosure Process is a separate and confidential procedure, which complies with the College's Data Protection policies. If an applicant declares that they have a prior criminal conviction when completing their on-line application, they will automatically be directed to the Criminal Disclosure Procedure and are required to complete the Disclosure of Criminal Convictions Form below.

Stage 1

The applicant completes the Criminal Disclosure form, which should be returned to the named person at the College.

Stage 2

A senior College manager will review the information on the form and if necessary, the applicant will be invited to attend a meeting about the disclosure, the meeting being referred to as the Disclosure Meeting.

Stage 3

The purpose of the Disclosure Meeting is to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made if possible, to ensure the safety of all students (including the applicant) and staff.

At the Disclosure Meeting, the applicant will be given an opportunity to explain the nature and circumstances of their conviction(s), and they should provide enough information to enable a risk assessment and a management plan to be prepared, if necessary. This plan, if agreed by the applicant and the College will be implemented if the applicant becomes enrolled at the College.

The applicant is entitled to bring another person with them to the Disclosure Meeting, and if required, the applicant's Probation Officer, or PSNI Public Protection Unit Officer (PPU) may also attend.

Stage 4

The senior College manager who attends the Disclosure Meeting will complete the risk assessment and management plan, which will then be approved by the Senior Management team of the College, before the applicant is asked to confirm and sign the management plan.

Stage 5

Applicants will be advised about the outcome of this process separately and as quickly as possible after the Risk Assessment meeting. Where a current/previous conviction may preclude an applicant from doing a particular course, the College may offer alternative appropriate courses to the applicant.

If the College becomes aware of a trainee / student offence that has not been disclosed, it will review the risk and decide if the student must withdraw from the course (if enrolled) or the applicant be prevented from enrolling (if not enrolled) until the Criminal Conviction Disclosure Procedure can be applied.

4.0 Criminal Conviction Disclosure Form Overview

All applicants who have indicated on the application form (on-line application form) that they may need to disclose information regarding a criminal conviction are required to complete the Criminal Conviction Disclosure form provided in this pack. This form will guide the applicant in relation the information that needs to be provided. Further information relating to relevant convictions is also contained within this pack.

Some jobs/roles are considered so sensitive or risky that all criminal offences must be declared regardless. A range of occupations (paid and unpaid) are excepted from legislation, and for these posts applicants must disclose information on both "spent" and "unspent convictions". SERC applies the same consideration when applicants are applying to courses, which relate to these job areas. These job areas are:

- Childcare
- Sports Studies
- Health and Social Care (including Counselling and Social Work)
- Teaching or class room assistants
- Youth Work.

All applicants should complete sections 1 and 3; while those applying for courses in the areas listed above should complete section 1, 2 and 3.

5.0 Data Protection

All information provided on this form will be managed confidentially and in line with SERC's Data Protection / GDPR Procedures.

Disclosure of Criminal Convictions Form



SECTION 1

Name: _____

Address: _____

Course Applied to: _____

Contact Number: _____

Campus: _____

SERC is committed to equality of opportunity for all, including those with criminal convictions. Information about criminal convictions is requested to assist the admissions process but will only be taken into account when it is considered relevant. Any disclosure will be seen in the context of the occupational area you wish to follow, the nature of the offence and the responsibility the College must care for other trainees and students, staff and others who attend the College.

This information is required by the Disclosure and Barring Programme in line with legislative requirements. A copy of the Access NI Code of Practice and Policy is available on the College website at www.serc.ac.uk.

Advice to Applicants

Any information provided will not be discussed with anyone else without your consent and you will be informed in due course who needs to know about your conviction(s). Any disclosure will be treated confidentially, and support is available for you if required

Question 1

Do you have any unspent criminal convictions that relate to any of the following types of offence:

- Violence or threat of violence
- Offence of a sexual nature
- Distribution or sale of illegal drugs

Please indicate:

YES _____

NO _____

If you have answered YES to **Question 1**, please provide details in the box below.

If you have answered NO to Question 1, please state 'none' in the box below and go to **Question 2** on this form.

| Date of Conviction | Offence | Sentence |
|--------------------|---------|----------|
| | | |

Please provide any other information that you may feel may be relevant such as:

- circumstances of the offence;
- comment on the sentence received.
- any relevant development in your situation since then;
- Whether or not you feel the conviction has relevance to the course that you wish to attend.

Question 2

Are you applying for a course in one of the following areas (which may be described as regulated activities):

- Childcare;
- Sports Studies;
- Health and Social Care (including Counselling or Social Work);
- Teaching or class room assistants;
- Youth Work.

Please indicate:

YES _____

NO _____

If you have answered 'YES' to **Question 2**, please go to **SECTION 2** and complete **Questions 3 and 4**.

If you have answered 'NO' to **Question 2**, please go to **SECTION 3**.

SECTION 2

Question 3

Are you currently subject to inclusion on the CHILDREN'S and / or ADULTS BARRED LIST?

Please indicate:

YES _____

NO _____

Question 4

Do you have any CONVICTIONS / CAUTIONS / INFORMED WARNINGS or DIVERSIONARY YOUTH CONFERENCES that are not subject to filtering?

Please indicate:

YES _____

NO _____

If you have answered YES to **Question 3** or **Question 4(a) or 4(b)** please provide the following details

| Date of Conviction | Offence | Sentence |
|--------------------|---------|----------|
| | | |

Please provide any other information that you may feel may be relevant such as:

- Circumstances of the offence;
- a comment on the sentence received;
- any relevant development in your situation since then;
- Whether or not you feel the conviction has relevance to the course that you wish to attend.

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

SECTION 3

Do you have any Disability that would require reasonable adjustments to be made for the Disclosure Meeting?

Please indicate:

YES _____

NO _____

I declare that any answers are complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and agree for this information to be shared as necessary for the purposes of my training / educational opportunities.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

When completed, please return this form to:

Paul Walsh
Head of Learner Welfare
SERC Downpatrick Campus
102 Market Street
Downpatrick
BT30 6LZ

For Office Use Only

Unique Reference: _____

Date Received: _____

Assigned Manager: _____

INFORMATION SHEET - Summary of Legislation

THE REHABILITATION OF OFFENDERS (EXCEPTIONS) ORDER (NI) 1979 **(amended by 1987, 2001, 2003, 2009, 2012 and 2014 Orders)**

Some jobs/roles are considered so sensitive or risky that all criminal offences must be declared regardless. A range of occupations (paid & unpaid) are exempted from the legislation, for these posts applicants **MUST** disclose information on both “spent” **AND** “unspent” convictions. The list of posts is extensive & can be summarised as follows:

- WORK THAT INVOLVES CONTACT WITH CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE OR VULNERABLE ADULT GROUPS – e.g. provision of health care or social services, work with children such as youth work, education, leisure centres, or with adults with learning disabilities, mental illness, the elderly, taxi drivers.
- PROFESSIONS THAT ARE REGULATED BY LAW - e.g. medical practitioner, nurse, chemist, optician, accountant, manager of an insurance company.
- POSTS INVOLVING NATIONAL SECURITY e.g. Security personnel/senior civil service posts.
- POSTS CONCERNED WITH ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE e.g. police officers, solicitors, probation officers, traffic wardens, judges, prison officers.

THE REHABILITATION OF OFFENDERS (NI) ORDER 1978

Other jobs/roles such as retail, general operatives, administration etc. which do not have access to the vulnerable or their personal details, may allow sentences to become ‘spent’ after fixed periods from the date of conviction.

If a conviction is ‘spent’ you do not have to mention it, even when asked, unless applying for a post which is “excepted” under this legislation (see above)

| Sentence | Aged 18 or over at conviction | Under 18 years at conviction |
|--|---|------------------------------|
| Absolute Discharge | 6 months | |
| Probation Order, Bind Over, Conditional Discharge, Care/Supervision Order | Date Order ceases OR 1 year – whichever longer | |
| Attendance Centre Order Juvenile Justice Centre Order Youth Conference Order, Reparation Order, Community Responsibility Order | 1 year after Order expires | |
| Hospital Order | 5 years or 2 years after Order expires – whichever longer | |
| Fine or Community Service Order Combination Orders | 5 years | 2 ½ years |
| Prison – (immediate or suspended) OR Young Offenders Centre – sentence of 6 months or less | 7 years | 3 ½ years |
| Prison – (immediate or suspended) OR Young Offenders Centre over 6 months up to and including 2 ½ years | 10 years | 5 years |
| A period of detention of less than 6 months under Article 45 of the CJ (Children) (NI) Order 1998 | N/A | 3 years |
| A period of detention over 6 months but less than 30 months under Article 45 of the CJ (Children) (NI) Order 1998 | N/A | 5 years |
| NB: CUSTODIAL SENTENCE OF MORE THAN TWO & A HALF YEARS CAN NEVER BECOME SPENT | | |

- Consecutive prison sentences count as a single term when calculating the rehabilitation period.
- If more than one sentence was imposed for an offence, the longer rehabilitation period applies.
- If a person receives new conviction during rehabilitation period:

- (i) for a summary offence (i.e. can only be tried at Magistrates Court) both rehabilitation periods expire separately;
- (ii) for a more serious offence (i.e. Which **could** be tried at the Crown Court) **neither** conviction will become spent until longest period expires.
- Cautions, reprimands and final warnings are not considered to be convictions and become “spent” immediately unless relevant to “excepted” posts.
- A spent conviction will remain on your criminal record. It is an offence for anyone to give information about spent convictions from official records except in the course of official duties.

Filtering Arrangements for Disclosure of Criminal Record Information in Northern Ireland Effective 14th April 2014

Introduction

This briefing provides an update on the arrangements for disclosing information about criminal records in Northern Ireland. It explains how the new filtering scheme will work in principle, but if you need more information or advice on your specific circumstances, please contact NIACRO’s Employment Advice Line on 028 9032 0157, or email us at niacro@niacro.co.uk.

What is filtering?

Filtering means that some old and minor convictions and other information (such as cautions/informed warnings/ diversionary youth conferences) will no longer be automatically disclosed on Standard and Enhanced Access NI checks. This means that some conviction information, which previously would have been disclosed, may not be in the future.

What will be disclosed?

While cautions or convictions which fall within the filtering scheme will no longer be automatically displayed on Standard and Enhanced Access NI checks, remaining relevant conviction information held on the applicant, on the criminal record database, will continue to be disclosed.

Note for Enhanced Disclosure Checks (EDCs):

The PSNI may decide to include information about convictions/ cautions which have been filtered by Access NI on the basis that they might be relevant and ought to be disclosed. This will show up in the ‘other information’ section of the EDC.

How do I know if my information will be ‘filtered’?

If you have more than one conviction, they will not be subject to the filtering process. If you have one conviction which is not for a specified offence, which is serious, mostly relating to sexual, violent or drug related offending, then it may be subject to filtering. This means that after a certain period, they will no longer be automatically disclosed on Standard and Enhanced AccessNI checked, as outlined in the table below.

For a full list of specified offences, which are exempt from filtering, visit: <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/accessni/disclosures/filtering.htm>

As cautions, informed warnings and diversionary youth conferences are **not convictions** they will be considered separately to convictions. If the caution, informed warning or diversionary youth conference is not for a specified offence, then it may be filtered in accordance with the table below. If they relate to specified offences, then they will not be subject to filtering.

PART 2 – CARE AND WELFARE PROCEDURE

1.0 Part 2 - Care and Welfare Procedure

SERC is committed to taking preventative steps to ensure that a culture of mutual respect between students, between staff, and between students and staff is nurtured and maintained. To do so the College will facilitate a wide range of activities to promote wellbeing amongst the students and staff and, will where appropriate, engage with external agencies and organisations to assist in developing appropriate care and support arrangements that will promote safety, wellbeing and resilience across the student body.

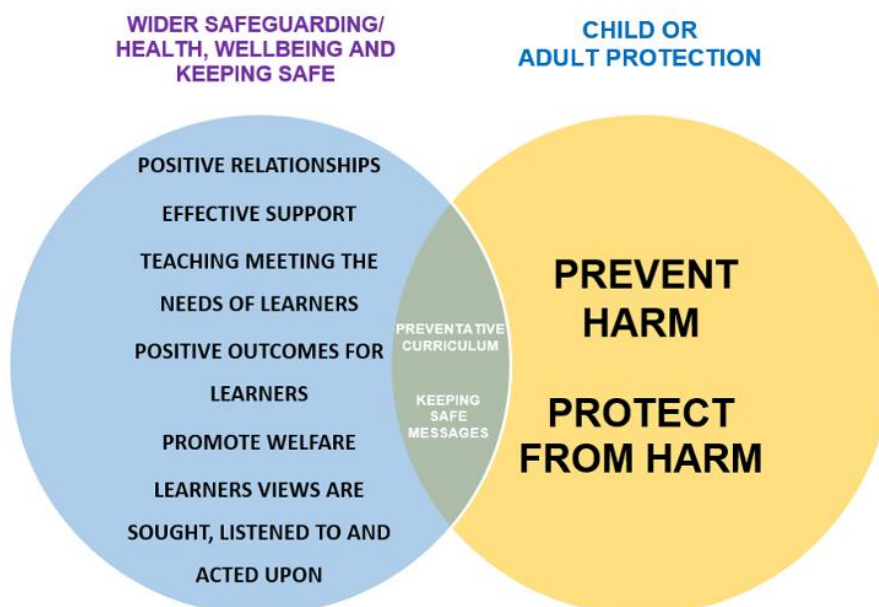
This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides further details of how the College will deliver on these commitments and to ensure that the needs of its Learners are met in an empathetic manner which supports and builds individual self-confidence and resilience.

2.0 Context for Care and Welfare Activities

The Safeguarding Continuum

Part 1 of this Operating Procedure provided detailed guidance regarding processes in place to prevent and respond to harm, and for protecting individual learners that have already suffered harm or who are likely to suffer from significant harm.

Part 2 of this Operating Procedure refers to the broad range of activities that the College will use to promote the care, safety, health and wellbeing of all learners. This includes what is often referred to as the preventative curriculum and keeping safe messages which aim to help learners to gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to live an active and fulfilled life.



3.0 Building Resilience and Wellbeing Framework

3.1 What is Resilience?

Resilience is defined as the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties and to successfully cope with the challenges of life.

3.2 Why is resilience important?

In a changing world we all face rapid and continuous change within both our private and professional lives. Sometimes these changes are for the better and can be easily managed. At other times such changes can be detrimental and have a negative impact on us. Often the very thought of change can also cause us uncertainty and stress. Everyone needs to be able to deal with the ups and downs of life in a fashion that does not leave them weakened or vulnerable both mentally and / or physically.

3.3 SERC Wellbeing Activities

By supporting all our students through the challenges of being a student at any age, SERC seeks to ensure that all students can achieve their full potential. SERC is committed to assisting its students (and staff) to enhance their overall wellbeing by assisting them to develop skills to help them to be resilient.

The College adopts a culture that promotes wellbeing and will provide each year a range of support services, activities, events and workshops to help all students to develop strategies to assist with the building of resilience as part of the student experience. This programme of activities and supports is known as the Wellbeing Framework. Wherever possible SERC will work with a range of external providers to assist providing these services.

3.4 Building Resilience – Key Responsibilities

In developing resilience at SERC, the following responsibilities are highlighted:

3.4.1 College Responsibilities

At the beginning of each academic year SERC will update its Wellbeing Framework; this being a schedule of activities, services and events that the College will deliver during that year to assist students to build their resilience. The Learner Welfare Team are responsible for preparing and leading the delivery of the Wellbeing Framework in conjunction with staff from the different units and departments within the College, and with external providers as necessary. Progress on the delivery and effectiveness of this work will be evaluated by the Learner Welfare Team as part of its annual Self Evaluation Review (SER).

SERC relies on the services offered by many external providers to assist in addressing the needs and concerns of our students. Their specialist knowledge and expertise are vital to ensuring that students receive the most appropriate advice and support at all times. Further details on the process for engaging the services of External Providers can be found in the Safeguarding SOP Part 1.

3.4.2 Staff Responsibilities

Staff are required to:

- Positively support resilience-based activities and to lead their students towards active participation with such activities and events.
- Seek opportunities through their own work to build student resilience.

- Take steps to positively support and enhance their own resilience. Managers have the responsibility to lead, guide and support their staff to be pro-active in managing their own well-being and resilience.
- Consider as part of their annual self-evaluation review of further actions that could be taken as individuals and teams to provide and enhance student resilience.

3.4.3 Student Responsibilities

Students at SERC are required to:

- Take personal responsibility for their own health and well-being and to engage in activities arranged to support them to build resilience both individually and in groups.
- Be open and engage with staff and other support organisations if at any stage they feel overwhelmed or in need of support to help them cope.
- Accept that such activities are an integral and important part of the learning experience while they learn at SERC.

4.0 Wellness to Study

This procedure has been established to deal with the small number of situations where a student/trainee is experiencing significant challenges to their mental or physical health, or as a result of the impact of medication to treat such a condition. It is only to be used when the wellbeing challenges are creating behaviours that are having a negative impact on the learning experience of the student/ trainee, other students /trainees and on the ability of staff to deliver effective learning and teaching. In using this procedure staff should, through the Cause for Concern App seek guidance from the Learner Welfare Team.

4.1 Purpose and Ethos

SERC is committed to supporting and responding to student needs and to seeking to ensure a positive student experience for all students so that they can fully engage and maximise the benefit of the learning opportunities associated with being part of a class. On occasion it may be the case that a student is too unwell, either as a result of physical or mental health issue(s) to participate appropriately in class learning activities. While the College respects all forms of illness and its obligations to make reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (and subsequent legislation), it must also ensure that an individual's condition does not inadvertently or otherwise disadvantage the student, the whole class or group or the wellbeing of the staff.

Should a student's wellness to study be raised as a concern, this procedure will guide staff on the appropriate actions that they should take, to protect the student, the other students and the staff involved. A student who is deemed to be unfit to continue their studies at any point in time (after due process has been applied) will not be withdrawn from their course or from the College, for the remainder of that academic year. However, an unwell student may be asked to take a **leave of absence (LOA)**, if this is appropriate.

4.2 College Responsibilities

1. In responding to and managing situations where a student's fitness to study is of concern, SERC will remain mindful of its duty of care and of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 including its responsibility to make reasonable adjustments if appropriate.
2. On occasions where a concern about the wellness of a student is highlighted, the College will instigate this process in a timely, transparent and supportive manner and in conjunction with a student's parents, carer or other representative. The purpose of instigating this process is to ensure safety and well-being of all staff and students. SERC will engage with the student in the following circumstances i.e. when a:
 - a. Student's words and actions demonstrate a risk to their own safety and/or wellbeing.
 - b. Student's behaviour is (or is at risk) of detrimentally affecting the teaching, learning and/or experience of other students.

- c. Student's behaviour is (or is at risk) of detrimentally affecting the day-to-day activities of the College and/or a placement provider.
3. In implementing this procedure, SERC will ensure that it offers and encourages students to seek appropriate support from the outset, for example by referring students to sources of support such as their GP, the Counselling Service, Youth Health Advice Service (YHAS) or other health care professionals or support organisations. In addition, any student being taken through this procedure will be entitled to be accompanied and/or represented at any stage by a staff member, a friend, a relative, a health care professional or disability support worker.
Where the student is under the age of 18, or is identified as being vulnerable, their parent/guardian may be notified of any proposed concerns and may accompany the student at meetings.

4.3 Staff Responsibilities

In working to support students under this procedure staff are required to:

1. Make students aware that this procedure exists, explain its purpose and underlying ethos as appropriate.
2. Engage with any student who is demonstrating concerning behaviours, or symptoms of being unwell, in an informal manner and discuss these concerns in a supportive and open manner.
3. If after informal conversations or discussions with the student, staff remain concerned about their wellness, they may seek additional advice and guidance from their DHOS and through completion of a Cause for Concern in a timely and appropriate manner.
4. In conjunction with College management and support staff meet, with and work with the student, their parents and carers (or other student advocate) to assist the student to recover their wellness in line with the guidance included in this SOP as appropriate.

4.4 Student Responsibilities

Students at SERC are expected to actively manage their own health and wellbeing. In addition, students are required to:

1. Talk to their tutor or another member of staff if they have concerns about their own health and wellbeing.
2. Commit to taking appropriate action/s as identified to enhance their wellness to continue their studies and to engage with the appropriate support services as necessary.

4.5 Wellness to Study Procedure

4.5.1 Stage 1

If a staff member becomes concerned about how well a student is during their interactions with them in class, or if the student raises a concern as to their own wellness, the staff member will in the first instance informally discuss this with the student.

Arising from such an informal conversation the staff member may:

- Take no further action at this time but monitor the student's behaviour and demeanour on an ongoing basis.
- Agree some actions with the student to help them improve their wellbeing.
- Reassure and highlight the support services that are available e.g., Inspire Student Counselling, Youth Health Advice Service.
- if they are still concerned about the student escalate their concerns by completing a Cause for Concern using the Cause for Concern App depending on the significance of any information that is shared during the informal conversation.

4.5.2 Stage 2

After due consideration and discussion with a student, a staff member who has serious concerns about the health and wellbeing of that student and who after engaging with the student both informally and formally, still has concerns about their wellness, demeanour and classroom behaviour, will request

through their DHOS that one of the Pastoral Care Managers, discusses with the tutor the student's situation and the actions that have already been taken.

Guidance

Situations that may result in this type of meeting being arranged could relate to:

- at student who takes frequent, but irregular panic attacks and often needs medical assistance during such episodes.
- Student who has threatened on more than one occasion to take their own life while on College grounds.
- A student who cannot effectively manage toileting while attending College.
- A student whose health-related issues are significantly impacting on other students.
- A student whose mental health is such that they cannot actively participate in class.

The Learner Welfare Team will then, if they feel it appropriate and timely arrange a meeting with the DHOS, Course Co-ordinator (Lead Tutor), parent, guardian or another representative of the student.

The outcome of this meeting will be one of the following:

1. To continue to keep the situation under review for an agreed period of time and with the understanding that subsequent action (see points below may be required).
2. Additional medical advice is sought to confirm:
 - i. Student is in the opinion of a medical professional well enough to engage in learning activities at SERC.
 - ii. Subject to certain reasonable adjustments that the student is well enough to engage in learning activities at SERC (e.g., mornings only, classroom only i.e., not work placement etc).
 - iii. Appropriate actions should the condition re-occur.
 - iv. Once this evidence has been obtained the Learner Welfare Manager with the DHOS and Lead Tutor will assess whether the College can meet these requirements and continue to meet the students ongoing requirements.
3. That the student is requested to take a voluntary Leave of Absence, until they feel that they are better able to re-engage in learning. This option may be used while waiting for medical evidence to confirm the student's wellness or otherwise to be provided, or to give time for more suitable reasonable adjustments to be made e.g., more flexible learning arrangements, reduced programme hours over a longer period, Learning Support assistance. This option may also be used where the student's condition is having a significant impact on other students / staff. Conditions for return to study should be discussed and recorded as part of this meeting.
4. The student is formally instructed by the Learner Welfare Manager that they must take a Leave of Absence pending medical evidence stating that the student is fit to re-engage in College activities. This does not mean that the student is being forced to withdraw from their course, as their place will be held open until the end of the academic year and welcome to re-apply for the same course in the following academic year.

It is intended that wherever possible outcome 4 is not exercised and that situations are managed using options 1 - 3.

4.5.3 Return from a Leave of Absence

When a student / their parent / carer or other advocate (e.g., Social Worker) believes that they have regained their wellbeing sufficiently to re-engage in learning at the College they should contact either their Deputy Head of School (who will liaise with the Learner Welfare Manager) or directly with one of the Learner Welfare Managers. This contact will result in a meeting being arranged by the Learner Welfare Manager with the student, and their representative and a representative from their Course team, the purpose of this meeting being to agree an action plan to assist the student to achieve appropriate outcomes given the circumstances.

4.6 Risk Assessment and Management Plans

On occasion it may be appropriate to prepare a Risk Assessment / Management Plan for a student who is returning from a period of leave under the “wellness to study procedure. In such as case the Risk Assessment / Management Plan procedure detailed in Part 1 Section 3.14 of the Safeguarding Care and Welfare SOP should be applied.

5.0 Supporting Transgender Students

SERC seeks to provide a positive, safe and supportive learning environment for all students including those who maybe transsexual, transgender or undergoing gender reassignment or who are questioning their gender.

The College has prepared this document, to identify practical actions to ensure the effective implementation of the Transgender Equality Statement, that SERC and the other Colleges have agreed. The purpose of this is to guide staff to help and support transgender students as they apply, enrol, attend and progress at SERC.

5.1 Student Disclosure

There is no compulsion for a student who is transgender, or who is questioning their gender, or who is transitioning to share any information about this with the College. Every student has the right to choose how much if any information that they share with the College.

However, if a student chooses not to share such information with the College will not be able to provide appropriate help and support as they complete their studies.

The procedures detailed in this section of the SOP, have been developed to ensure that appropriate, discrete support is put in place to ensure that the students’ needs are as they complete all aspects of their time at the College.

5.2 Key Actions – College

The college will continue to work with all staff and students to ensure an awareness and respect of gender identity issues is created and that all staff, including those from outside organisations are able to signpost any student who is experiencing transgender related concerns to avail of appropriate help and support.

The Learner Welfare Managers have links with external organisations who can provide further support and guidance as required.

5.3 Staff Responsibilities

Staff responsibilities in relation to working with transgender students are as follows:

1. Should the learner wish to do so, facilitate the student to raise any issues that they have and escalate these through the Cause for Concern App.
2. Adopt a manner that is supportive and appropriate to Transgender students (as for all students) and be mindful of sensitivities around the use of names and pronouns.
3. Bring to the attention of the appropriate staff any particular personal or course related issues that are pertinent, as they arise e.g., placements, assessment requirements. Advice on this can be provided by the Learner Welfare Team.
4. Be cognisant of the fact that many Transgender People also experience poor mental health, bullying, social isolation that they should report any concerns of this nature through the Cause for Concern App.

5.4 Student Responsibilities

As stated above the College will be supportive of all students who are Transgender, transitioning, no-binary, or questioning. However, for the College to be able to support these Students it is essential that the student does disclose their issues by talking to a member of staff. All students are assured by the College that staff will deal with any issues raised with their consent and will maintain confidentiality as required and agreed.

5.5 Procedure for Supporting Transgender Students

On becoming aware of a student experiencing gender identity concerns, a member of staff should encourage that student to contact an appropriate member of staff eg Learning Support, Training Organisation, Student Engagement or any tutor who will signpost the learner as appropriate.

The member of staff acting in these situations will meet the student and discuss all aspects of their concerns and aspirations and will seek to identify their needs both in the short and longer term. This conversation will be supportive in nature and will as appropriate, direct the student to explore and consider:

- How they want to be known in College.
- How they want to be known on official documentation (e.g., Certificates, Bank Accounts, Registers, Access NI) and whether they need to formally change their name?
- use of Appropriate bathrooms / changing rooms.
- Advice for work placement provider.
- Completion of Access NI forms if required by their course.
- Details of support services that are available.

This list is not exhaustive and in particular circumstances additional issues may be considered.

The Learner will be encouraged to seek external advice and guidance from organisations such as SAIL NI.

Subject to the student's consent staff will, once satisfied that the student has considered all of the appropriate advice and guidance that is available, agree recommended actions both for the College and the student. These agreed actions will be prepared under the following headings.

- 1. Administrative arrangements:** This will relate to how the student will be formally known on college systems and the actions that the student will be required to take to ensure their chosen identity is recognised by organisations such as Awarding Bodies and that Certificates are correct. A member of the Colleges Customer Services can advise a learner on how to formally change their names on the College systems.
- 2. Teaching and Learning requirements:** These recommendations will be prepared to assist teaching staff to make appropriate adjustments to ensure a positive experience for the student.
- 3. Placements and Work Experience:** These actions will provide guidance for both the student and workplace provider. Examples of issues that may be encountered here will relate to names on insurance policies, dress code and access to suitable toilets/changing areas.

The student will be advised that they can meet with staff again at any time to review the effectiveness of arrangements and to identify any further actions that may need to be taken.

6.0 Staff Advice for Dealing with Student Welfare Issues

In recent years staff have dealt with a wide range of issues. While every situation is different, and on many occasions can involve a multiple range of issues, a table has been created to provide some initial guidance for staff as to how to guide a student.

For guidance on dealing with the following issues please refer to table in Appendix 2.1.

- **Poor Course Performance**
- **Bereavement**
- **Caring Responsibilities**
- **Family Breakdown**
- **Homelessness**
- **Financial distress**
- **Relationship Issues**
- **Criminal Activity**
- **Poor Mental Health**
- **Poor Physical Health**
- **Substance Abuse**
- **Bullying (physical / cyber)**
- **Sexual Orientation / Gender Orientation/ Transgender**
- **Self-harm including / Thoughts of Suicide / Attempted Suicide**

7.0 Communication Plan

This Procedure will be uploaded to the College intranet and referred to in staff induction and training.

8.0 Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually, or when the need for change has been identified.

Appendix 2.1: Guidance on dealing with Student Welfare Issues

| Circumstance | Disclosure | Possible Appropriate Staff Actions | Complete Cause for Concern (CfC) |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|
| Poor Course Performance | | Course Team to monitor student performance and meet with the student with a view to ensuring better performance and/or the identification of underlying issues / circumstances. | CfC may be required if there are concerning underlying issues. |
| Bereavement | Student discloses that a family member or close friend has recently deceased. | Offer: 1 Lena by Inspire Counselling Services. 2 Flexibility with course work. | Monitor student and complete CfC if necessary. |
| Caring Responsibilities | Student discloses that they are a Carer for a family member. | Encourage student to avail of: 1 Lena by Inspire Counselling Services. 2 Flexibility with course work. 3 Signpost to SERCs Young Carers team | Monitor student and complete CfC if necessary. |
| Family Breakdown | Student discloses that home life has become dysfunctional. | Encourage student to engage with Social Services / Lena by Inspire Counselling Services as appropriate. | Complete CfC. |
| Homelessness | Student discloses that they are effectively homeless and are 'Sofa Surfing'. | Encourage student to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-engage with family. Assist Student to engage with Support Organisations such as MACs/YMCA. Refer to Housing Executive. Advise of Lena by Inspire Counselling Service. | Complete CfC. |
| Financial distress | Student discloses that they are experiencing financial difficulties. | Encourage student to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with Student Finance. If concerned about student's well-being – advise of Lena by Inspire Counselling Service. Seek family support; | Possible CfC if student well-being is affected. |
| Relationship Issues | Student discloses that they are experiencing low moods as a result of relationship issues e.g., with parents / friends / partners | Student to be advised of the availability of the Lena by Inspire Counselling Service/Youth Health Advice Service. | Complete CfC. |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| Criminal Activity | Staff member becomes aware of student involvement in criminal justice system after enrolment on course. | Student to be advised to complete Disclosure of Criminal Conviction forms (available in the Safeguarding, Section 5.4 of Part 1 of this SOP.) | Complete CfC if necessary. |
| Poor Mental Health | Staff member becomes aware of behaviours that would indicate poor mental well-being. | Examples may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student is very withdrawn • mood swings • panic attacks Advise student on Lena by Inspire Counselling | Complete CfC. |
| Poor Physical Health | Staff member becomes aware that a student has a physical health concern. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student should be advised to seek appropriate medical assistance. • Refer to Youth Health Advice Service. • Possible referral to Learning Support for guidance and accommodation with course work to assist student as appropriate. | Complete CfC. |
| Substance Abuse | Staff member becomes aware of a concern regarding possible substance abuse. | <p>Seek medical assistance if necessary.</p> <p>Refer to College Substance Abuse Policy for guidance which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noting date and time of alleged occurrence and informing Duty Manager who will involve other agencies if necessary; contact next of kin/emergency contact, arrange for student to return home safely appropriate medical intervention (if required). | Complete CfC if appropriate. |
| Bullying (physical / cyber) | Staff member becomes aware of a potential situation of bullying. | Take guidance from Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer. | Complete CfC. Advise Student that it may be appropriate to report this to the PSNI. |
| Sexual Orientation / Gender Orientation/ Transgender | | See section 5 of Part 2 of this SOP | Complete CfC if there is concern about the student's mental health / wellbeing. |
| Self-harm including Thoughts of Suicide / attempted Suicide | Staff member becomes concerned in relation to the student's wellbeing. | If in immediate danger contact Duty Manager / Emergency Services. Direct student towards GP / A&E / Lena by Inspire Counselling. Contact next of kin/emergency contact. | Complete CfC. |

Appendix 2.2: Document Change History

| Version | Date | Change Detail |
|---------|---------------|---|
| 1.0 | July 2023 | Transferred to new Accessibility Template |
| 1.1 | November 2023 | Changes to the Designated Safeguarding Officer names and the new review date of Sept 24. |
| 1.2 | May 2025 | Appendix 8 updated to reflect reference to Access NI Code of Conduct following Access NI Audit recommendation |
| 1.3 | October 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding, Care and Welfare SOP restructured into 2 sections: Part 1 Safeguarding Procedures and Part 2 Care and Welfare Procedures • Section 3.3.3 Role and Responsibilities of Staff – new section added, including reference to HR Staff Code of Conduct • Section 3.2.4 Details of the Safeguarding Monitoring and Review Group added • List of Designated Safeguarding Officers updated • Section 3.9 International Trips – new section added • Section 3.10 International Students residing with host families arranged by SERC - new section added • Section 3.13 Digital Safety – new section added • Section 3.14 Safeguarding Risk Assessment and Management Plan – new section added • Section 4.3 Contractors working on SERC premises added • Section 6.1 Reference to HR Staff Appointments SOP added |