

Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at IT Sligo

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1. Introduction

The safety and well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults are core values of this organisation.

2. Purpose

This document is intended to state the policies and procedures agreed by IT Sligo in respect of the protection of children and vulnerable adults. It covers the actions and behaviour of staff and students both on and off the campus.

3. Scope

3.1 While the majority of persons studying, working and using the facilities of IT Sligo are adults, it is acknowledged that there are a number of persons in IT Sligo who are under 18 years of age. Under the Child Care Act 1991 any person under 18 years of age is considered a child and should be protected under Children First, the National Child Protection guidelines. Categories of such persons include:

- Registered students who are not yet 18 years of age.
- Children and, on occasions, vulnerable adults who visit the IT Sligo campus. Examples include Open Day, Science Week, extra-curricular activities, music and sporting activities.
- From time to time, Transition-Year students are facilitated on work placements by IT Sligo and have shadowed registered students in order to gain a better understanding of college life.
- Students from second level organisations, for example Ballinode College, are often on IT Sligo premises.

3.2 A number of programmes at IT Sligo require students to work directly with children and vulnerable adults. These programmes currently include:

- Social Studies
- Performing Arts

- Early Childhood Care and Education
- Recreation and Leisure
- Health Science and Physiology and Health Promotion
- Higher Certificate in Business

These programmes are classified as 'designated programmes' for the purposes of vetting by the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU).

- 3.3** As a benchmark for good practice in other sectors, we refer to the National Standards for Children's Residential Services which states that " All staff, relief staff, students and volunteers are appropriately vetted before taking up duties, through the taking up of past employer references, including the most recent reference, and requesting criminal records checks from An Garda Siochana or other Police authorities as appropriate".
- 3.4** As part of the assessment process, staff of IT Sligo visit students on placement in a variety of settings and have access to children and vulnerable adults. Agencies are becoming increasingly concerned about accepting people onto their premises who do not have Garda vetting.

4. Definitions

Children	People under 18 years of age
Vulnerable adults	A person aged 18 years or over, who is in receipt of or may be in need of services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.
HSE	Health Service Executive
The Institute	Institute of Technology, Sligo
Vet	Definition of service by Garda Central Vetting Unit
GCVU	Garda Central Vetting Unit. The Garda Central Vetting Unit deals with requests to vet certain prospective employees and students working with vulnerable persons, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospective employees of the Health Service Executive and agencies funded by the Health Service Executive where the work involves access to children and vulnerable adults. • New employees and volunteers in the youth work sector and certain sports organisations • Staff, students and volunteers in the childcare sector • Staff working in care homes for older people
Nominating signatory	Person responsible for ensuring authorised signatories are available to engage with the GCVU
Authorised Signatory	Person authorised to communicate with GCVU on behalf of IT Sligo

Designated Child Protection Persons	Persons authorised to deal directly, on behalf of IT Sligo, with concerns raised regarding abuse of children or vulnerable persons.
Physical Abuse	May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. It may be the result of a deliberate act, but could also be caused through omission or failure to act to protect.
Emotional Abuse	The persistent ill- treatment of a child or young person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making a child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill- treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
Sexual Abuse	Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. It may involve physical contact, including rape or oral sex, or non-penetrative acts such as fondling. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females and by other young people. It also includes non-contact activities such as involving children in watching or taking part in pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in inappropriate ways.
Neglect	The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/ or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or failing to ensure that a child gets appropriate medical care or treatment.

5. Reference Documents

- 5.1 Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Department of Health and Children, May 2004
- 5.2 Children Act, 2001
- 5.3 The Child Care Act, 1991
- 5.4 Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
- 5.5 The Data Protection Act 1988
- 5.6 The Institute of Technology Act, 2006
- 5.7 Freedom of Information Act, 1997
- 5.8 IT Sligo Practice Placement manual: BA in Applied Social Care, 2009
- 5.9 IT Sligo Grievance Procedure PER017/061
- 5.10 IT Sligo Student Grievance Procedure STUD001/115
- 5.11 IT Sligo Charter (outlining the responsibility of the students and staff of IT Sligo and the communities it serves)
- 5.12 ITS Harassment Policy

6. Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults¹

- 6.1** IT Sligo has a duty to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from any form of abuse. This duty applies to all management, staff, students, and volunteers.
- 6.2** IT Sligo does not tolerate the abuse of children or vulnerable adults in any way, whether by intent, or as a result of neglect or ignorance. Such abuse is regarded as a denial of people's rights and liberty.
- 6.3** The public are protected and their confidence maintained by ensuring that only suitable candidates participate on academic programmes where they may have access to children or vulnerable persons. On these programmes, all registered students will undergo Garda vetting.
- 6.4** IT Sligo will ensure that all management, staff, and volunteers who have regular contact with children, or vulnerable adults (e.g. those involved with the designated programmes listed in Section 3.2) will undergo Garda Vetting and will receive certified training on child protection.
- 6.5** IT Sligo will ensure that all staff will receive child protection awareness instruction and a briefing on IT Sligo's child protection policy.
- 6.6** IT Sligo will appoint a Garda Vetting Signatory and a number of Designated Child Protection Persons, as required under the Child Protection Act.
- 6.7** Students are responsible for informing themselves of the requirements under this policy and registration as a student is considered confirmation of participation with the policy. IT Sligo undertakes to inform all students of this policy during the student induction.

¹ The use of term 'Child' in this document is intended to convey child, young person or vulnerable adult.

7. Code of Behaviour for staff and students on placement working with children/young people and vulnerable adults.

7.1 IT Sligo expects that all staff, which for these purposes includes anybody in paid or unpaid work on its behalf will be aware of this Code of Practice and adhere to its principles in their approach to all children. Sections 6.4 and 6.5 specify the nature of the training that will be provided to staff in respect of child protection.

7.2 When working with children/young people and vulnerable adults it is essential that:

- Everyone is treated with respect and dignity.
- Contributions should be acknowledged by positive comments.
- Staff and students should avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children and vulnerable adults.
- All classes, workshops, tutorials, assessments, examinations should be as open as possible.
- While physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children, it should only take place when it is acceptable to persons concerned. It should take place in areas where other children/young people or adults are present.
- Good Practice includes valuing and respecting children as individuals, and the adult modelling of appropriate conduct will always exclude bullying, shouting, racism, sectarianism or sexism. Staff of IT Sligo should never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child or vulnerable adult.
- Staff of IT Sligo should not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child, even in fun as this could be misinterpreted.
- Children and vulnerable adults should be encouraged to report cases of bullying to a Designated Child Protection Person or worker of their choice. Complaints must be brought to the attention of Institute management using existing procedures.
- It is important not to deter children from making a disclosure of abuse through fear of not being believed, and to listen to what they have to say. If this gives rise to a child protection concern it is important to follow the procedure for reporting such concerns, and not to attempt to investigate the concern oneself.
- IT Sligo is aware that those who abuse children can be of any age (even other children), gender, ethnic background or class, and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate action taking place.

8 Responding appropriately to a Child making an Allegation of Abuse

When dealing with a disclosure (that is if a child tells of an incident) it is important to support the child through listening and respecting what it is you are being told. In order to facilitate the child through this process it is important that you try to observe the following:

- Remain calm.
- Listen carefully to what is said.
- Explain to the child that the information will need to be shared with others - do not promise to keep secrets.

- Tell the child the matter will only be disclosed to those who need to know about it. This is not a breach of confidentiality.
- Allow the child to continue at her/his own pace.
- Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.

It is the responsibility of the person to whom a disclosure is made, to contact a Designated Child Protection Person. They are then to log the disclosure in an Incident Log Book held by the Student Support Services office, within the Registrar's function. When logging the incident it is important that as far as possible the incident is recorded using the language that the child used. Recordings should be purely factual without embellishments or comments.

9. Code of practice regarding students and staff involved with Placements

- 9.1** Staff and students involved with placements will be required to hold a current Garda Vetting report or produce evidence that they have a current report from, say, another employment, that indicates that the person is acceptable for working with children and vulnerable adults.
- 9.2** Staff and students are required to sign up to the placement principles agreed by the Programme Board, relevant to each particular placement context.

10 Procedures for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

10.1. Designated Child Protection Person.

10.1.1 IT Sligo has appointed a number of Designated Child Protection Persons (DCPP) who are responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children (see list in Appendix 1). These persons take action following any expression of concern by, normally, reporting an incident to the relevant person in the local HSE offices. If the (DCPP) cannot be reached, contact the Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager (071 9155203) or contact the HSE directly.

10.1.3 The role of the Designated Child Protection Person(s) is to:

- Know which external child protection agency to contact in the event of a child protection concern happening.
- Provide information and advice on child protection to members and staff of IT Sligo.
- Ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing under confidential cover.
- Liaise with the HSE and other agencies, as appropriate.
- Manage referrals to HSE, with adequate confidential information.
- Ensure that a proper record is kept of any referral and action taken, and that this is kept safely and in confidence.
- Keep relevant people in Institute informed about any action taken and any further action required.
- Ensures IT Sligo policy / procedures relating to child protection are followed for any particular incident.
- Advise the Executive Committee of child protection needs.
- Liaise with the HSE to review the operation of the Child Protection Policy regularly to ensure the procedures are working and that they comply with current best practice.

10.1.4 The Designated Child Protection Person will maintain his/her training and awareness of Child Protection issues to keep him/her updated on new developments. IT Sligo acknowledges its obligation to ensure that training (arranged by the HR Manager) and procedures are in place for DCPPs which comply with legal requirements and best practice.

10.2 Procedure for Reporting Concerns

10.2.1 Staff and students on placement could have their suspicion raised in a number of ways, the most likely of which are:

- The conduct of a member of staff
- A child “disclosing” abuse
- Bruising or evidence of physical hurt; which may or may not be accompanied by:
 - a. Unusual behaviour by a child.
 - b. A statement from a person who witnessed abuse.
 - c. A symptom which may not in itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is supported by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence;

d. Consistent signs of neglect over a period of time.

- 10.2.2** Any person, who suspects that a child is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, has a responsibility to report their concerns to a Designated Child Protection Person or directly to the HSE, via the Duty Social Worker by phoning the HSE.
- 10.2.3** Concerns about a specific child should be reported immediately by telephone to the DCPD and confirmed in writing within 24 hours using the form available from the DCPD (see Appendix 2). Delay could prejudice the welfare of a child. If the concerns relate to the conduct of a member of staff these should be reported by phone to the DCPD at the earliest opportunity.
- 10.2.4** The DCPD will consider the report and either refer this immediately to the HSE or, after taking appropriate advice (which may include discussing the circumstances on a confidential basis with the HSE), decide not to refer the concerns to the authorities but keep a full record of the concerns.
- 10.2.5** If a student or member of staff has a concern in respect of abuse, they should consider talking to a Designated Child Protection Person or a person in the appropriate section of the HSE.
- 10.3 Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse**
- 10.3.1** The following information should be contained in any report:
- Date
 - Time
 - People involved in the concern or disclosure
 - The facts
 - Any opinions to be supported by facts
- 10.3.2** In the case of a report to a Designated Child Protection Person, the DCPD will normally notify the Health Service Executive (HSE) Duty Social worker following the agreed procedures. The DCPD will also notify the Registrar that an incident has been reported (without disclosing any confidential information specific to the case), using the Incident Log Book. Should the incident require an investigation by the HSE, the Registrar is also notified of this.
- 10.3.3** All information related to any person will be treated in confidence, on a need-to-know basis, but will be released to appropriate parties as deemed necessary by IT Sligo.

11 Procedures for dealing with allegations against staff and students

11.1 In respect of the child/young person the DCPD will deal with issues related to the child or vulnerable person.

11.2 In respect of the person against whom the allegation is made the Human Resources Manager will deal with issues related to the staff member.

11.3 Stages:

- The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk.
- If allegations are made against the Designated Child Protection Person, then another Designated Child Protection Person should be contacted.
- The reporting procedures outlined in Section 10.2 of this document should be followed.
- Both the primary carers and child or vulnerable person should be informed of actions planned and taken. The child or vulnerable person should be dealt with in an age-appropriate manner.
- The staff member will be informed as soon as possible
 - of the nature of the allegation.
 - the staff member should be given the opportunity to respond.
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with Health Service Executive and Gardaí, as appropriate;
- While an investigation is taking place the interests of the child or vulnerable adult remain paramount. This may result in the member of staff being reassigned away from unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults, or in certain circumstances suspended from duty. Such a move would be without prejudice to the outcome of the investigation and will be carried out on a strictly confidential basis.

11.4 Disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, may be taken where a member of staff acts in breach of this policy.

11.5 Confidentiality

11.5.1 IT Sligo is committed to ensuring people's rights to confidentiality. The National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children states that the "welfare of the child is paramount." This means that considerations of confidentiality, which might apply to other situations, should not be allowed to over-ride the right of children to be protected from harm. However, every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned when an allegation has been made and is being investigated by the relevant body. Where appropriate, the parents are informed. In relation to child protection (and vulnerable adults) IT Sligo undertakes that:

- Information will only be forwarded on a 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard the child/young person and vulnerable adult.
- Total confidentiality is not guaranteed where the best interests of the child or vulnerable person are at risk.
- The provision of such information to the relevant parties is not a breach of confidentiality.

- Primary carers, children or vulnerable persons have the right to know if personal information is being shared and a report is being made to the Health Service Executive, unless doing so could put the child or vulnerable person at further risk.
- Images of children or vulnerable persons will not be used for any reason without the consent of the parent/carer.
- Confidential information will be stored in a secure place.

11.6 Appeal Process

11.6.1 Any student or staff member has the right of appeal in the event of their dissatisfaction with the decision of IT Sligo in respect of the vetting process.

11.7 Recruitment and Selection of staff and students

Students

- 11.7.1** All students studying on designated programmes are required to submit to Garda Vetting prior to commencing the programme. The report issued will be considered to be valid for 4 years. These students are responsible for proactively notifying IT Sligo of any change in their status i.e. charges leading to possible convictions.
- 11.7.2** IT Sligo Prospectus and web site must clearly state that Garda Vetting will be a requirement for designated Programmes, and that should the prospective student have a criminal record that it may seriously jeopardize their chances of being able to secure placement during the Programme, or subsequent employment.
- 11.7.3** On being offered a place on such a Programme, prospective students are given a Garda Vetting consent form by Admissions Office. This form is sent by the Admissions Office to the GCVU. A student is not fully registered on a programme until IT Sligo receives the report back from the GCVU and is satisfied that the candidate does not have a criminal record that precludes them from participating fully on the programme.
- 11.7.4** The offer of a place is conditional on the assessment by the Authorised Signatory (see list in Appendix 1) of the gravity of offences in respect of the chosen course.
- 11.7.5** Causes for exclusion may include the following;
- Previous child related convictions or a conviction of grievous bodily harm, drug abuse, theft
 - Refusal to sign application and/or declaration form
 - Concealing information on one's suitability for working with children
 - Refusal to consent to Garda clearance
 - Insufficient or inaccurate information regarding proof of identity
- 11.7.6** All those accepted on these programmes are made aware that they are obliged to notify the Designated Child Protection Person, Head of Department and Placement Co-ordinator should there be a change in their status regarding criminal convictions or charges pending.

Staff

- 11.7.7** All applicants for posts at IT Sligo are required to declare any criminal convictions. Possessing a criminal record will not necessarily bar an applicant from working at IT Sligo; the nature of a disclosed offence and its relevance to the post in question will be considered. However convictions for offences relating to children and for violence or assault are likely to be incompatible with working at IT Sligo.
- 11.7.8** The appointment of staff to work on designated programmes will be subject to satisfactory clearance from Garda vetting. The requirement to undergo vetting will be set out in the job description.
- 11.7.9** In implementing this policy, IT Sligo will ensure that, in the first instance all existing staff working on designated programmes will be subject to satisfactory clearance from Garda vetting.
- 11.7.10** All staff are responsible for notifying IT Sligo of any change in their status i.e. charges leading to possible conviction.
- 11.7.11** IT Sligo commits itself to ensuring the following:
- All staff take part in an induction training process
 - All staff are fully cognisant and compliant with the Child Protection policies and procedures of IT Sligo
 - All staff know the identity of the Designated Child Protection Persons to whom they are to bring any concerns regarding child protection issues
 - All staff are aware of the procedures for reporting allegations made against staff members or others contracted in by IT Sligo.
 - All new staff are required to undergo a probationary period.
 - By December 2012, all staff of IT Sligo will be provided with child protection awareness training

11.8 Involvement of Primary Carers

IT Sligo is committed to being open to and involving primary carers in a partner relationship. IT Sligo undertakes to ensure the following;

- Keep primary carers advised as regards IT Sligo's child protection policies.
- Inform primary carers, schools, youth groups, community groups of IT Sligo's relevant activities.
- Issue contact and consent forms where relevant.
- Comply with Health and Safety practices.
- Operate child centred policies and practices.
- Adhere to its recruitment guidelines.
- Use age appropriate activities.
- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parents/guardians/ primary carers where appropriate.

11.9 Managing and supervising staff

- 11.9.1** Following from Sections 6.4 and 6.5, any management, staff, and volunteers who have regular contact with children or vulnerable adults (e.g. those involved with the designated programmes listed in Section 3.2) will undergo Garda Vetting and will receive certified training on child protection. All such staff will also be made aware of the organization's code of behaviour, child protection policy and procedures, and the identity and role of Designated Child Protection Persons.

- 11.9.2** IT Sligo will ensure that all staff of IT Sligo will receive child protection awareness instruction and a briefing on IT Sligo's child protection policy.
- 11.9.3** Designated Child Protection Persons and other persons in positions of authority are provided with training on their roles with regard to managing child protection issues and in applying Institute policies.

Appendix 1: Authorised persons of IT Sligo in respect of the protection of Children and vulnerable persons.

Nominating signatory for Garda vetting

Appointee recommended by President of IT Sligo	Padraic Cuffe
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Authorised signatory for Garda vetting

Appointee nominated by nominating signatory (1)	Padraic Cuffe
Appointee nominated by nominating signatory (2)	Deirdre Johnston or person acting in role of Registration Secretary

Institute Child Protection committee

Brendan McCormack	Registrar
Padraic Cuffe	Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager
Deirdre Scott	Lecturer
Margaret Gilmore	Lecturer
Tom Reilly	Human Resources Manager
Marian Quinn	Student Counsellor

Designated Child Protection Persons

School of Business & Humanities	Roddy Gaynor
School of Business & Humanities	Margaret Gilmore
School of Engineering	Pat Thornton
School of Science	Eimear Donlon
Student Welfare Officer	Sheelagh O Gara

Appendix 2: Concern Referral Form**IT Sligo**

- 1 Name and contact information of the reporter: _____
- 2 The role of the reporter in child protection: _____
- 3 Name of child: _____
- 4 Age and Date of Birth of child: _____
- 5 Who does the child live with: _____
- 6 Address/place of residence: _____
- 7 Child's contact details: _____
- 8 Are you reporting your own concerns or passing on those of somebody else? Give details.

- 9 Brief description of what has prompted the concerns (include dates and times of any specific incidents and names of persons involved/witnesses):

- 10 Observations made by you: Physical signs? Behavioural signs? Indirect signs?

- 11 Have you spoken to the child? If so what was said?

- 12 Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so give details.

- 13 Have you consulted an external agency or reported this to anyone else?

- 14 Give details (name of person, name of organisation, date and time).

- 15 Does the child require medical attention?

- 16 Signature _____ Date _____