

Child Protection Policy & Guidelines for Griffith College Personnel *

Introduction:

The following guidelines regarding the identification and reporting of child abuse will apply to lecturing and examining staff and, exceptionally, key administrative staff within Griffith College Faculties and in Griffith Halls of Residence (GHR) where they deal with students or children under eighteen years of age at the time of their admission to College programmes or the commencement of their residence within GHR.

The obligation to report abuse or suspected abuse as outlined in this document will also be extended where a student over the age of eighteen makes a disclosure alleging abuse.

The guidelines will be subject to review for compliance when the Criminal Justice (Withholding Information on Crimes against Children and Vulnerable Adults) Bill 2011 becomes law, given that the proposed legislation will make it a criminal offence not to report child abuse concerns.

Rationale:

The document “*Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*” was produced to provide guidance in relation to recognising the signs and symptoms of child abuse and with procedures for dealing immediately with such concerns. The Guidelines should be read in conjunction with Children First Guidelines (available to view from www.dohc.ie/publications) and not as a stand-alone document.

Reporting Procedure:

In situations where a teacher, lecturer, examiner or exceptionally, another member of staff suspects that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, (defined below) they should ensure that such concerns are reported IMMEDIATELY to the Mandated Person (formally the Designated Liaison Person DLP) for the College, namely,

Ms Mairead Lawless, Griffith College Dublin (01 4150415)
mandatedperson@griffith.ie

She will report it to the Child Protection Liaison Person in the local health board or the local Garda station.

It should also be noted that if a person over the age of 18 retrospectively discloses an historic incident of abuse, the person to whom that disclosure is made should consider whether there is any present risk to a child. For the avoidance of doubt, it would be best to report this to the Mandated Person. It is important that lecturers, teachers, examiners and other key personnel who interact with children on Griffith College premises should be vigilant at all times.

**NB : Leinster School of Music and Drama operates its own policy which has informed the development of these guidelines*

General Guidelines:

The rights of children are enshrined in the Constitution of Ireland and in international and domestic law. In Ireland, the key legislative provisions regarding the safety, well being and protection of children are as follows;

- The Child Care Act, 1991
- Domestic Violence Act, 1996
- Protections for Persons reporting Act, 1998
- The Education Act, 1998
- The Non Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997
- Freedom of Information Act, 1997
- The Education and Welfare Act, 2000
- Children's Act, 2001
- Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002
- *Criminal Justice (Withholding Information on Crimes against Children and Vulnerable Adults) Bill 2011 – not yet law*
- Children First Act 2011
- Children First Act 2015

The Statutory Authorities with responsibility for the protection and welfare of children are:

- The Health Service Executive
- *An Garda Siochana*

Recognising child abuse:

Child abuse can take different forms, but usually consists of one or more of the following:

- **Neglect:** Where a child's needs for food, warmth, shelter, nurture and safety are not provided to the extent that the child suffers significant harm.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Where a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not being met.
- **Physical Abuse:** Where a child is assaulted or injured in some way that is deliberate.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Where a child is used for the sexual gratification of another.

The Guidelines provide advice on the signs and behaviours that may be indicative of child abuse.

Lecturers, examiners and other personnel may find it useful to keep notes relating to any suspicious student behaviours during meetings with students, classes or examinations. These should be forwarded to the DLP as soon as possible where a member of staff suspects that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse.

What will the Health Board do with a report?

Once a report of suspected child abuse has been made to a health board, it is then a matter for that health board to decide upon the action, if any, which is necessitated by that report. The social worker handling the case may need to seek further clarification from the person who first raised the concerns. In some cases, the response of the health board will be to call a child protection conference.

Allegations or suspicions of child abuse concerning a member of College staff

As a teacher, lecturer, or other employee, the most important consideration to be taken into account is the protection of children, and their safety and well-being must be the priority.

As a teacher, lecturer or other employee you may be subject to malicious allegations. If you do find yourself in this situation you can refer to any notes you have made and have these available for further investigation.

It is important to note that there are two procedures to be followed by you in respect of an allegation:

- the reporting of any relevant notes to the DLP
- the procedure for dealing with the allegation as outlined in the Child Protection Guidelines. Child Protection Guidelines will advise that the accused should maintain strict confidentiality

Feedback from Health Boards.

The Children First guidelines place an onus on health boards to ensure that arrangements are put in place to provide feedback to parents in regard to the progress of a child abuse investigation regarding a teacher/lecturer or other employee. It is clearly stated in those guidelines that efforts should be made to investigate such complaints promptly bearing in mind the serious implications of such an allegation.

Peer abuse and bullying.

The Guidelines provide advice on the recognition and reporting of abuse perpetrated by a child's peers. It is important that potentially abusive behavior between children is not ignored and, as appropriate, certain cases should be referred to the health board through the DLP or dealt with by reporting any concerns to the parents of the children involved.

Teachers and lecturers are responsible in the first instance, for dealing with bullying in class. The more extreme forms of bullying behaviour, when perpetrated by adults rather than children, would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse. Only such serious incidences of bullying should be referred to the health board by the DLP.

Ensuring Best Practice in Griffith College:

Within this framework, Griffith College accepts the responsibility and obligation to safeguard the protection and welfare of any children in our care. We undertake to ensure a best practice response to child protection issues by having a clear child protection policy and procedures which are designed to underpin and demonstrate our commitment to our duty of care. The welfare of the child is paramount in every

circumstance. The guidelines outlined, give clear direction and guidance on child protection issues. It is incumbent upon every adult working with children to practice their 'moral responsibility' in reporting concerns, allegations, suspicions or a disclosure about child abuse to the Designated Liaison Person Ms Mairead Lawless. On that basis, Griffith College undertakes the following obligations to ensure that best practice is adhered to:

- Accepting an obligation on behalf of all staff working with children to observe this code of good practice;
- Ensuring all such staff undertake Child Protection Training; this training will be offered by Griffith College to provide staff with basic awareness and information training
- Having procedures in place to report disclosures, allegations, suspicions and awareness of all forms of abuse to the civil authorities
- All child protection concerns relating to staff countrywide should be reported to the DLP who will report it to the local health board or the local garda station

In making any report an individual needs to take the following into consideration;

1. The protection and safety of the child is paramount;
2. The principle of natural justice – a person is innocent until proven otherwise.
3. The principle of confidentiality – the number of staff that needs to be informed of a suspicion/allegation/disclosure of abuse should be kept to a minimum, due to the serious nature of such allegations.

Making the Report:

Where a disclosure/suspicion or allegation of child abuse comes to light, the lecturer or other member of staff in Griffith College must report it **without delay** to the Designated Liaison person for Griffith College (excluding LSMD), Ms Mairead Lawless, as outlined above. She will liaise with the local health board or Local Gardai.

In the case of an emergency, where a child is deemed to be at serious risk and where no contact can be made with the DLP in Griffith College the staff member concerned should in all such cases, call Reception. Reception will arrange for the Emergency Services (if called) to be directed to the correct part of the campus. Reception will have an escalation path of who to contact in the case of an emergency. In the unlikely event of your call not being answered by Reception, please follow the escalation path below:

- 999 or 112
- Reception - 401, 402, 403, 404, 405
- Security - PLK 3, 495, 086 8182370

Any intentional breach of the Code of Good Practice is a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with through applicable disciplinary procedures applying to staff employed by Griffith College.

There may be reluctance to report due to a fear of legal ramifications. The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 already offers civil immunity to anyone reporting child protection concerns to the proper authorities (Gardaí or HSE

personnel), once their concerns are reasonable and in good faith. Therefore, there is no legal reason why reporting should not take place.

It is important to note the following pointers in relation to promoting good practice :

- When lecturing, tutoring or examining children on a one-to-one basis or in small groups of children, you must do so in a room with a window or door with a window. If this is not available the door to the room must be ajar
- Children should never be left unattended
- Lecturers should at all times have access to a phone
- Insurance cover should be adequate
- Parental permission should be sought if a lecturer wishes to use camera equipment in a class where children are present or to film a show or display involving children. As a matter of good practice, it is suggested that you send out a permission form for the use of camera equipment in such an instance. If parents do not consent to filming, the child should not be filmed.

Contacts:

THE CHILD PROTECTION UNIT
NYCI
3 Montague Street,
Dublin 2, Ireland.
Tel: 01-4784122
Fax: 01-4783974
Email: childprotection@nyci.ie

Websites of interest:

www.childprotection.ie
www.hse.ie

Publications of interest:

Our Duty to Care downloadable from www.dohc.ie/publications
Child Care act available to view from www.irishstatutebook.ie

Contact Address for Health Board Information and Advice Officers
East Coast Area Health Board

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No.	Fax No.
Area 1, 2, 10 Wicklow	Southern Cross House, Southern Cross Business Park, Boghall Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow	01-2014273	01-2014288

Northern Area Health Board

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No.	Fax No.
Area 6, 7, 8	Child Care and Development Unit, NAHB 3rd Floor, Park House, North Circular Road, Dublin 7	01-8823431	01-8823491

South Western Area Health Board

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No.	Fax No.
Dublin South City, Dublin South West, Dublin West, Kildare, West Wicklow	Children and Families, Training and Development Unit, Unit 4044 City West Business Campus, Saggart, Co. Dublin	01-4691720	01-4691728

Midland Health Board

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No.	Fax No.
Longford, Westmeath, Laois, Offaly	Child Care Services, Training and Development, Market Square, Tullamore, Co. Offaly	0506-28350	0506-46226

Mid-Western Health Board

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No.	Fax No.
Tipperary North	Child Care Manager's Dept, Annbrook, Limerick Road, Nenagh	067-38314	067-38301
Clare	River House, Bort Road, Ennis County Clare	065-6863919	065-6863983
Limerick	87 O'Connell Street, Limerick	061-483520	None

North-Eastern Health Board

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No.	Fax No.
N.E.H.B-Region	Old Rooskey Offices, N.E.H.B., Rooskey, Monaghan	047-30470	046-73178
	N.E.H.B., 26 Brew Hill, Navan, Co. Meath	046-73178	046-27359

North-Western Health Board

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No.	Fax No.
Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal, Cavan	Markievicz House, Barrack Street, Sligo	071-55181	071-55131

South-Eastern Health Board

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No.	Fax No.
Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford, South Tipperary	Community Care, S.E.H.B., Athy Road, Carlow	0503- 33797/36520	0503-36550

South Health Board

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No.	Fax No.
North Lee, North Cork, Kerry	Ellis House, Ballyvolane Commercial Park, Ballyvolane, Cork	021-4529010	021-4529028
South Lee, West Cork	Ellis House, Ballyvolane Commerical Park, Ballyvolane, Cork	021-4529010	021-4529028

Western Health Board

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No.	Fax No.
Galway	Community Care Services, W.H.B., ALDI, Sean Quirke Road, Galway	091-548440	091-524226
Roscommon, Mayo	Mayo Community Services, St. Mary's Hospital, Castlebar, Co. Mayo	094-42579	094-20452