



SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

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Commencing Date:	
Approval Signature:	
Review Date:	

1. Background

We in Ardnashee School and College have a responsibility for the Pastoral Care, general welfare and safety of vulnerable adults in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each student is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our students can learn and develop to their full potential. All staff, teaching and non-teaching should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed.

2. Purpose and Scope

This Policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school

3. Objectives

We are committed to:

- Ensuring that the welfare of vulnerable adults is paramount at all times
- Maximising people's choice, control and inclusion, and protecting their human rights
- Working in partnership with others in order to safeguard vulnerable adults
- Ensuring safe and effective working practices are in place
- Supporting staff within the organisation

4. Procedure/Guidelines

DEFINITION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS

A Vulnerable Adult is a person aged 18 years or over, who is, or may be, in need of community care services **or** is resident in a continuing care facility by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, **or** 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 (DoH.(2000) "No Secrets" Guidance on Developing and Implementing Multi-agency Policies and Procedures to Protect Vulnerable Adults from abuse. London:HMSO)

WHAT IS ABUSE?

Defining abuse is complex and rests on many factors. The term "**abuse**" can be widely interpreted. However, "abuse" is defined in the Department of Health's No Secrets guidance as the "violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any

other person or persons.” Abuse may happen as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.

Here are some examples of abuse.

- **Physical abuse**
This includes hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking and misuse of medical/chemical restraint or inappropriate sanctions.
- **Sexual abuse**
This includes rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not, or could not, consent and/or was pressured into consenting.
- **Psychological/emotional abuse**
This includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, forced marriage, isolation or withdrawal of services or supportive networks.
- **Financial or material abuse**
This includes theft, fraud, exploitation; pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions; or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Neglect and acts of omission**
This includes ignoring medical or physical care needs; failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services; the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
- **Institutional abuse**
This is repeated instances of poor care of individuals or groups of individuals. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of structures, policies, processes and practices within an organisation. While this in no way condones the abusive practice on the part of individuals, it recognises the powerful influence that organisational culture has on individual behaviour.

The above should not be considered an exclusive or even exhaustive list of the types of abuse which can be experienced by vulnerable adults.

SIGNIFICANT HARM

The Law Commission in its 1995 report makes use of the concept of ‘significant harm’ as an important threshold when considering the nature of intervention and defines this as including not only ill-treatment (including sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical), but also the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. Significant harm may include the degree, extent, duration and frequency of harm. (*Law Commission for England and Wales (1995) Mental Capacity, Report No. 231. London:HMSO;*)

CONTEXT

Schools/Colleges will carry out their responsibilities under relevant legislation, regulations and professional guidelines which include the following;

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007
- Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003
- Children (NI) Order 1995
- Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) 2002
- Special Education Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005
- DENI Circulars 99/10, 2003/13 and 2006/06/07
- “No secrets: Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse” (2002) DoH
- Cooperating to Safeguard Children 2003 DHSSPS
- Area Child Protection Committee’s Regional Child Protection Policy and Procedures 2005
- The Mental Health (NI) Order 1978
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Section 75 Northern Ireland Act 1998

The school/college has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. This policy therefore complements and supports a range of other policies including:

- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Team Teach Policy
- First Aid and the Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policies
- RSE Policy
- Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras Policy
- e.Safety Policy
- Intimate Care Policy

These policies are available to parents/carers and vulnerable adults and anyone wishing a copy should contact the School Principal or visit the school website at www.ardnasheeschool.com

SCHOOL/COLLEGE SAFEGUARDING TEAM

The following are members of the schools Safeguarding team:

- Chair of the Board of Governors: Ms. Aisling Bonner
- Designated Governor for Child Protection: Mrs Deirdre Amor

- Principal: Mr. R. McFeeters
- Designated Teacher: Mrs J.McDevitt
- Deputy Designated Teacher: Mrs. G. Kennedy, Mrs. B. Cutliffe, (Mr. T.McCrossan and Mrs. S McCrossan also have designated teacher training)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff:

It is the responsibility of **ALL** staff working in Ardnashee School and College to record and report abuse. This responsibility extends to all staff, not just those specifically working with vulnerable adults. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all staff to;

- Adopt safeguarding guidelines including the code of behaviour for staff
- Act upon any concern, no matter how small or trivial it may seem, in accordance with the school/college procedures
- Promote safe practice and challenge poor and unsafe behaviour
- Ensure all health and safety procedures are adhered to
- Ensure they are aware of safeguarding procedures and are appropriately trained

The Chair of the Board of Governors

The Chair of the Board of Governors must:

- Ensure that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school environment
- Ensure that the school has a Vulnerable Adults Policy in place and that staff implement the policy
- Ensure that Governors undertake appropriate Vulnerable Adults and recruitment & selection training
- Assume lead responsibility for managing any complaint/allegation against the School Principal

The Designated Governor For Child Protection/Vulnerable Adults

The Designated Governor will provide the lead in order to advise the Governors on:

- The role of the designated teachers
- The content of the Vulnerable Adult policy
- The content of a code of conduct for adults within the school
- The content of the termly updates and full Annual Designated Teachers Report
- Recruitment, selection and vetting of staff

The Board of Governors

Board of Governors must ensure:

- That the school has a Vulnerable Adult Policy in place and that staff implement the policy;

- That confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed to an entire Board of Governors on a need-to-know basis.

The Principal

The Principal must ensure that:

- DENI Circular 2017 / 04 is implemented within the school
- That a designated teacher and deputy are appointed
- That all necessary referrals are taken forward in the appropriate manner
- That the Chairman of the Board of Governors (and the Board of Governors) is kept informed where appropriate
- That the school Vulnerable Adult policy is reviewed regularly
- That confidentiality is paramount; information should only be passed to the entire Board of Governors on a need to know basis.

The Designated Teacher (And Deputy)

The Designated Teacher and Deputy must: -

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities and role in relation to Vulnerable Adults
- Lead in the development of the school's Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Act as a point of contact for staff (and parents)
- Make referrals to Social Services **Adult Safeguarding Team** and/or **PSNI Central Referral Unit** where appropriate
- Liaise with the Education Authority's Designated Officers for Child Protection
- Maintain records of all concerns in relation to Vulnerable Adults
- Keep the School Principal informed
- Include in the written annual report to the Board of Governors any issues regarding Vulnerable Adult safeguarding activity

The Class Teacher

Teachers see Vulnerable Adults over significant periods and can notice physical, behavioural and emotional indicators and hear allegations of abuse.

The teacher must:

- refer concerns to the Designated/Deputy Teacher for Child Protection/Vulnerable Adults
- listen to what is being said and support the Vulnerable person
- act promptly
- make a concise written record of a Vulnerable Adult's disclosure
- Avail of relevant training regarding safeguarding Vulnerable Adults
- **NOT** investigate

Parents/Carers

Parents should play their part in Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults by:

- informing the school whenever anyone, other than themselves, intends to pick up the student after school;
- letting the school know in advance if the student is going home to an address other than their own home;
- familiarizing themselves with the School's Pastoral Care, Anti Bullying, Positive Behaviour and Vulnerable Adult Policies;
- reporting to the office when they visit the school
- raising concerns, they have in relation to their child with the school

PROCEDURE FOR MAKING COMPLAINTS IN RELATION TO ABUSE OF VULNERABLE ADULTS

How a Parent Can Make a Complaint

At Ardnashee School and College we aim to work closely with the parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of the Vulnerable Adult's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. If a parent has a concern they can talk to the class teacher or the Principal/Designated teacher for Vulnerable Adults/Child Protection. If they are still concerned they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors. At any time, a parent may talk to a Social Worker in the Trust's **Adult Safeguarding Team** or to the **PSNI**. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart in **Appendix 1**.

Where the school has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of the school staff

- Where staff become aware of concerns or are approached by a Vulnerable Adult they should not investigate – this is a matter for the Social Services **Adult Safeguarding Team** or **PSNI** – but should report these concerns immediately to the Designated Teacher, discuss the matter with him/her and make full notes. These notes or records should be factual, objective in nature and include what was seen, said, heard or reported, the place and time of who was present and should be given to the Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.
- The Designated Teacher may need to seek discreet preliminary clarification from the person making the complaint or giving the information or from others who may have relevant information. The Designated Teacher may also consult with the Education Authority's Designated Officer for Child Protection or Social Services **Adult Safeguarding Team** 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.

- The consent of the parent/carers and/or the Vulnerable Adult (if they are competent to give this) will normally be sought prior to making a referral to Social Services. The exception to this is where to seek such consent would put that Vulnerable Adult or others at increased risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm, or it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation.
- Where consent of the parent/carers and/or the Vulnerable Adult is sought to make a referral to Social Services **Adult Safeguarding Team** we will explain at the outset, openly and honestly, what and how information will, or could be shared and why, and seek their agreement to making the referral. In circumstances where the consent of the parent/carer and/or the Vulnerable Adult is withheld we will consider and where possible respect their wishes. However, our primary consideration must be the safety and welfare of the Vulnerable Adult and we will make a referral in cases where consent is withheld if we believe on the basis of the information available that it is in the best interests of Vulnerable Adult to do so.
- Where there are concerns about possible abuse and a referral needs to be made the Designated Teacher will telephone the Trust's **Adult Safeguarding Team**. He/she will also notify the Education Authority's Designated Officer for Vulnerable Adults/Child Protection.
- This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in **Appendix 2**.

The following are guidelines for use by staff should a Vulnerable Adult disclose concerns of a safeguarding nature.

Do's	Don'ts
Do listen to what the Vulnerable Person says. Do assure the Vulnerable person they are not at fault. Do explain to the Vulnerable Person that you cannot keep it a secret.	Don't ask leading questions. Don't put words into the person's mouth. Don't ignore the person's behaviour. Don't remove any clothing.

Do document exactly what the Vulnerable Person says, using his/her exact words.	
Do remember not to promise confidentiality.	

Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the school/college's staff

- If a complaint about possible abuse of a Vulnerable Adult is made against a member of staff, the Principal/Designated Teacher (or the deputy designated teacher if he/she is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Principal/Designated Teacher)
- If a complaint is made against the Principal/Designated Teacher the Chairperson of The Board of Governors will be informed and he/she will ensure that necessary action is taken.
- Where the matter is referred to the Social Services **Adult Safeguarding Team** or **the PSNI** the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with Vulnerable persons (and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by the appropriate authorities). The Chairman of the Board of Governors will also be informed immediately.
- Where an allegation is made against a member of staff and is pursued either as a formal referral or under the agreed disciplinary procedures for teachers, a detailed record of the complaint, signed by the Principal, shall be retained on the vulnerable person's file and the file of the member of staff concerned. An entry will also be made in the school's Record of Abuse.
- If, on foot of a subsequent investigation by one of the investigating agencies, the member of staff concerned is totally exonerated, the record on the file of the member of staff concerned shall be expunged, and the entry in the school's Record of Abuse of Vulnerable Adult Complaints deleted or struck through.
- However where disciplinary investigation or action is undertaken in the context of safeguarding, all details relating to the complaint and disciplinary sanction shall be maintained on the teachers file for a period of 5 years. The record on the vulnerable adult's file should be noted accordingly, and should be maintained indefinitely in case there should be subsequent complaints. In all other cases, the record on both the vulnerable adult's file and the staff member's file should be maintained indefinitely
- This procedure with names and contact numbers is shown in **Appendix 3**.

Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a volunteer

- Any complaint about the conduct of a person working in the school/college in a voluntary capacity should be treated in the same manner as complaints against a person who is on the school's staff, and the above procedures followed. If the Principal has any concern that a Vulnerable Adult may be at risk, the services of the volunteer should be terminated immediately.

ATTENDANCE AT SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS CONFERENCES

The Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher or Principal may be invited to attend a Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Conference convened by the Health & Social Care Trust's Adult Safeguarding Team and where possible a school representative will be in attendance. Feedback will be given to staff under the 'need to know' principle on a case-by-case basis.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING

Information given to members of staff about possible abuse of a Vulnerable Adult cannot be held "in confidence". In the interests of the vulnerable person, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the issue with other professionals, particularly the investigative agencies and where physical or sexual abuse is suspected, a legal duty to report this. However, only those who need to know will be told.

RECORD KEEPING/RETENTION

- All safeguarding records, information and confidential notes in respect of vulnerable adults are kept in separate files in a locked cupboard. These records are kept separate from any other file that is held on the vulnerable person.
- If a complaint about possible abuse is received by the school/college and is not referred to Social Services – or if it is referred and Social Services do not investigate – a record on the vulnerable adult's file will be permanently preserved.
- If the Social Services **Adult Safeguarding Team** inform the school/college that an investigation will take place, a record of this fact and associated documentation from Social Services will be maintained on the vulnerable person's file while he or she continues to attend the school/college.
- When the Vulnerable Adult leaves school/college, then all Social Services records will be destroyed and only the school records retained until the person reaches 30 years old.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL STAFF, PAID OR UNPAID

All actions concerning vulnerable adults must uphold the best interests of the vulnerable person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards vulnerable adults in their charge must be above reproach. The school/college has a **Code of Conduct** for

staff which is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of safeguarding vulnerable adults, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct. It is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences vulnerable adults gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector.

5. Monitoring/Evaluation

Ardnashee School and College will update this Policy and procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary and review it regularly.

On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.

Commencing Date:	September 2025 .
Review Date:	September 2028 .
Signed by Chairperson	Histing Bonner
Signed by Principal	R AL