



Client
Department for
Employment and
Learning

Project
Scoping Study
The Protection
and Welfare of
Children and
Vulnerable
Adults in the
Northern Ireland
Further
Education Sector

Final Report

Division
Management
Consultancy

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Presented To:



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Prepared On Behalf Of



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FGS McClure Watters were commissioned by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) to complete a scoping study to consider the protection of children and vulnerable adults within the Further Education (FE) Sector in Northern Ireland, and to generate practical suggestions as to how any emerging issues may be addressed at both a local and regional level.

Methodology

The following methodology was used to complete the scoping study. This was agreed with the Project Steering Group¹ in June 2009:

- **Stage 1: Overall Project Planning**

This stage consisted of the Project Initiation Meeting (PIM) – held on the 5th of June 2009 - and the Project Initiation Document (PID) – issued on the 22nd of June 2009. The objective was to agree the work plan, consultees, research and documents to be reviewed, reporting dates and overall deadlines for completion of the study.

- **Stage 2: Desk Research & Information Request**

The aim of this stage was to review the key strategic policies impacting upon the protection of children and vulnerable adults in the FE Sector. This included a review of the relevant policies and strategies within the six regional Colleges, including details of the number of children enrolled and information relating to vulnerable adults.

- **Stage 3: Examination of Practice Elsewhere**

Stage 3 was a deskbased exercise to examine guidance and best practice. The output of this stage is an overview of approaches adopted in other sectors, including the FE Sector in England, and the lessons for Northern Ireland.

- **Stage 4: Consultations**

This stage involved a detailed consultation process with the aim of providing qualitative and quantitative information on the main issues faced by Colleges in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. The following table summarises the consultation exercise:

Stakeholder Group	Approach
Key Departmental Staff	Interviews completed with key personnel (from DHSSPS, DE and DEL)
Consultation with the 6 Regional Colleges	This involved a number of key activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey – Training Needs Analysis Questionnaire:

¹ The Steering Group consisted of representatives from DEL, the ETI and an FE Sector representative nominated by the six College Directors.

Stakeholder Group	Approach
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 27 completed by Deputy and Designated CPOs; and ▪ 5 completed by HR managers. • 2 Focus Group Sessions per College with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff and key personnel involved in Child Protection; and ▪ Students. • A Focus Group with past and current FE students organised by Barnardos. • A Focus Group with the FE HR Managers Group. • A Focus Group with the FE Student Services Manager Working Group.
Other Organisations	Interviews with a range of wider stakeholders including ETI, Access NI, Lifelong Learning, SELB, LSDA, ANIC, NSPCC, Barnardos, Mencap and NICCY.

Strategic Context Underpinning the Review

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 (SVG Order) and equivalent legislation in England, Wales and Scotland is establishing new safeguarding arrangements across the UK aimed at strengthening protection for children and vulnerable adults in workplace situations. The legislation is one of the Government’s key responses to the Bichard Inquiry Report (June 2004) which followed the murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman by Ian Huntley. The Bichard Inquiry identified systemic failures in current vetting and barring systems, including the following:

- Inconsistent decisions were being made by employers on the basis of information supplied with a criminal record check;
- The criminal record information is only valid on the day of issue;
- There are inconsistencies between the Disqualification from Working with Children List, the Disqualification from Working with Vulnerable Adults List and the Unsuitable People List; and
- The current barring system is reactive to harmful behaviour rather than preventative.

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 (SVG Order) provided the legislative framework for a new vetting and barring scheme for people who work with children and vulnerable adults. The purpose of the new scheme is to minimise the risk of harm posed to children and vulnerable adults by those that might seek to harm them through their paid or voluntary work. It will do this by barring unsuitable individuals not just on the basis of referrals but also at the earliest possible opportunity as part of a centralised vetting process that all those working closely with children and/or vulnerable adults will need to go through. These arrangements will enable vetting and barring processes to operate coherently across the UK.

The main elements of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order are as follows:

- There will be two aligned barred lists – one for those who are barred from working with children (the children’s barred list), and one for those who are barred from working with vulnerable adults (the adults’ barred list);
- The Independent Barring Board (IBB) established by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 will maintain the children’s barred list and the adults’ barred list and will make decisions about whether an individual should be included in one or both barred lists; and
- There will be a right of appeal to the Care Tribunal against inclusion in a barred list, with the permission of the tribunal, on a point of law or on a finding of fact made by the IBB.

The new Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) established by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups legislation recognises the need for a single agency to vet and register all those working or volunteering with vulnerable people and to bar unsuitable people. The agency responsible for vetting and barring individuals is the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). The ISA works in partnership with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and other delivery partners.

The VBS Scheme was introduced in October 2009 and covers those working or volunteering in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Those working in Scotland are subject to a separate, parallel scheme which is being developed by the Scottish government. The following increased safeguards were introduced under the VBS:

- It is now a criminal offence for individuals barred by the ISA to work or apply to work with children or vulnerable adults in a wide range of posts, including most NHS jobs, Prison Service employees, education and childcare. Employers also face criminal sanctions for knowingly employing a barred individual across a wider range of work;
- The three former barred lists in Northern Ireland (POCA, POVA and List 99) are being replaced by two new ISA barred lists; and
- Employers, local authorities, professional regulators and other bodies have a duty to refer information about individuals working with children or vulnerable adults to the ISA where they consider them to have caused harm or pose a risk of harm.

The VBS applies to: paid employees; volunteers; those joining the workforce or moving within it; existing employees or volunteers; workforce; students (age 16+) on work placement; and those coming to work in Northern Ireland from outside the United Kingdom.

The table below details some of the associated actions for the FE Sector resulting from the introduction of the VBS in Northern Ireland.

Vetting and Barring Scheme Northern Ireland – Associated Actions for Further Education

Associated Actions
Staff in regulated activity, teaching staff, tutors etc.
Staff in controlled activity – ancillary staff e.g. cleaners, catering assistants, receptionist (if they have the opportunity for contact with vulnerable groups).
Barred individuals can work in controlled activity if safeguards are put in place.
FE Colleges are Personnel Suppliers and as such have a requirement to check ISA registration of students placed in regulated activity as part of their course.
FE Colleges will register an interest in each student for the duration of the course.
<i>Source: The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order Implementation Team: Vetting and Barring Scheme Northern Ireland (Presentation)</i>

In addition to the SVG (NI) Order, there are a number of wider policies documents, reviews and plans that have implications for the FE Sector, these include:

- DHSSPS (2008): Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy & Action Plan 2008-2009;
- DHSSPS (2007): Care Matters in NI - A Bridge to a Better Future;
- DHSSPS (2007): The Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability;
- Professor Bain (2006): Schools for the Future: Funding, Strategy, Sharing (the Bain Review);
- DHSSPS (2006): Protect Life: A Shared Vision-The NI Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2006-2011; and
- NICCY (2005): A Right to Protection: Review of Vetting in NI.

Key findings

The key findings from the review are outlined below. Detailed information underpinning the results and recommendations is contained in sections 2 to 5 of the main report:

Guiding and informing the FE Sector

There is a need for guidance to be developed that specifically addresses the needs of the FE Sector in Northern Ireland. Reliance on policy and procedural guidance that is non-specific to the Sector has resulted in variances in policy content and procedural development. Consequently, Colleges have adopted an ad-hoc and inconsistent approach to a number of high risk issues (notably the policy and procedures in place for the identification and response to students who may pose a risk to others). There are a number of examples of good practice that may support the development of this policy and guidance including: DENI Pastoral Care in Schools, DENI Circulars 99/10, 2003/13 and guidance provided by DfES and supporting organisations in England. However, any policy guidance developed will need to be designed for the FE Sector and the specific issues relevant to the Northern Ireland context.

It is important that policy and guidance development is not viewed as a one-off action, it should be updated as required to reflect new legislation, best practice and the emerging needs of the Sector.

Using appropriate terminology

It has been suggested throughout the study that the term ‘Child Protection Officer’ does not reflect the specific requirements of the FE College network and may lead to confusion as to the purpose and focus of this post. It is therefore recommended that a title more appropriate to the FE Sector be adopted i.e. Student Safeguarding Officer.

Structures - designated and deputy officers

All Colleges have taken steps to address the introduction of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (SVG) legislation through key staff attending seminars relating to the new policies.

All Colleges should, as a matter of urgency, seek to finalise structures and appoint staff/designated positions with responsibility for child and vulnerable adult protection issues. Without this there is the risk that policies and procedures will be misinterpreted by both staff and students and that both suspected and reported cases may be dealt with in a manner that is not consistent with best practice.

These standards should include, as a minimum, a designated and deputy designated officer. As well as meeting minimum cross-Sector requirements, resources should also be sufficient to ensure adequate cross-campus protection (a minimum of one designated officer per campus) and take account of individual College staffing structures.

Structures should be developed to ensure that lines of reporting and responsibility are clear to those with designated and deputy designated responsibility and to the wider staff and student body. This is particularly important for Colleges where the appointment of multiple officers is required.

While overall responsibility of this issue lies with individual Colleges, it is recommended that assessment of child protection matters/issues should be considered as part of ETI’s inspection process.

Board of Governors

It is important that there is a named Board Member with responsibility for Child Protection. This will ensure that everyone recognises the importance the College authorities place on this issue. In addition, Board Member(s) need to be involved should an issue arise with the College Director/Chief Executive and therefore it is vital that all Governors are aware of their responsibilities.

A central resource

The Sector should consider the development of a central resource for dissemination of information and guidance. This central resource would ensure consistency in the range of

information available and should also provide access to wider information that may be of benefit to the Colleges. The webpage of the Association of Colleges' Employment Advisory Service is an example of good practice and it is recommended that consideration be given to the development of a similar resource in Northern Ireland.

Supporting the Sector

While the development of Sector specific policy and guidance and a central resource for dissemination of this information will go some way to ensuring minimum standards across the Sector, it is also recommended that consideration be given by the Sector to the development of a system that supports the network of CPOs. Best practice in this area is in place for the School Sector in NI, through the ELB network of Chief Welfare Officers and Designated Officers for Child Protection². It is recommended that, as a minimum, the provision of consistent and formalised information on referral, reporting and support structures associated with the protection of children and vulnerable adults is in place both within and outside the FE Sector. This should be provided in a consistent format to each College.

As highlighted in Section 5 of this report, the Association of Colleges (AoC) in England includes an Employment Advisory Service that provides advice and guidance to Colleges on safeguarding. The AoC webpage also provides a central source of information, factsheets, FAQs, etc. on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, the new Vetting and Barring Scheme, and the Ofsted limiting grade for safeguarding. In addition the AoC Employment Advisory Service can be contacted directly for advice on safeguarding policy and procedure in relation to employment and HR practice.

In addition to referencing the key guides and documents outlined above, the site contains a range of relevant guidance and information. These include access to briefings on a range of areas: ISA guidance and information; CRB guidance and information; Guidance on the requirements to keep and maintain a Single Central Record of recruitment and vetting checks; Information on Training in Safeguarding; and Information on Ofsted inspection requirements.

The resource provided by AoC provides a working example of the support required by Colleges in Northern Ireland.

Sharing best practice

There are various Pastoral Care arrangements in place throughout the FE Sector. All Colleges are currently engaged in the development of policies, procedures and guidance associated with the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Given this dynamic environment the opportunity to disseminate best practice and lessons learnt between Colleges would be of benefit to the Sector as a whole. This would potentially reduce resources allocated at an individual College level and ensure

² The Child Protection Support Services for Schools (CPSSS) is based within the Education Welfare Service. There are two designated officers for child protection in each ELB area who provide the Child Protection Support Service to schools. The service in each ELB is managed by the Chief Education Welfare Officer. The CPSSS includes a telephone helpline; training in Child Protection to designated school personnel which includes Governors; and a professional support to designated teachers.

consistency in approach, thereby minimising risk throughout the Sector. Measures to create a mechanism for sharing best practice and disseminating information is already underway with the creation of the Student Services Working Group in June 2009.

While pastoral care and issues associated with the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults are part of the remit of the Student Services Working Group, consideration should be given to the development of a Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult working group. This group may be a combination of HR and Student Services staff to reflect the role that both delivery areas have in implementing the requirements under SVG (NI) Order.

The initial priority of this group should be to examine and provide practical solutions to the issues outlined above and develop in detail throughout the main body of this report. Following this, the structure can then be used to ensure the ongoing dissemination of best practice and feedback into the policy development process on an ongoing basis. The operation of working groups at a sectoral level is characteristic of the primary education system, the NI Local Authority system and FE provision in England.

The development of a Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults working group that focuses solely on child and vulnerable adult issues would provide a number of benefits to the College network including:

- It would allow discussion and identification of key issues affecting the Sector e.g. systems to respond to the enrolment of students who may pose a risk to other students;
- The opportunity for the development of standardised policy, procedures and guidelines that could be adopted across the entire Sector, ensuring consistency of approach to the protection of children and vulnerable adults on a Sector-wide basis (the approach adopted by the AoC outlined in Section 5 is a particularly good example of this);
- The identification and development of best practice in staff training (at all levels) and the opportunity to create a centralised training plan for the Sector;
- The opportunity to share lessons and experience in awareness raising activities for students and develop best practice guidance;
- Create an opportunity for the examination of forums/activities that could support the network of CPOs e.g. the creation of a knowledge-based system such as a networking and information site for CPOs similar to that currently operated by the AoC.

Consideration should also be given to sharing best practice developed by DEL and the FE Sector with wider post-primary education and training providers e.g. Training Organisations and the College of Agriculture Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE). The sharing of best practice will help to support the operation of a system of protection for children and vulnerable adults that ensures consistently high levels of support, regardless of mode or location of study, throughout Northern Ireland.

Student who may pose a risk to others

It is recommended that a Sector-wide response is developed in relation to identifying and responding to students who may pose a risk to others including:

- Consistent Sector-wide legal advice on requesting information on notification of an offence committed by a student and on the power of Colleges to exclude students who may pose a risk should be sought;
- Guidance is provided on the development of consistent procedures for assessing risk and implementing a response – a sectoral strategy to assessing and managing risk is required; and
- Colleges have access to information in relation to engaging with external agencies.

Consultation with Access NI also raised this issue as students will be required to become registered from November 2010 (although all Colleges currently complete Access NI checks on students where required) and if registration fails, they will no longer be able to continue with their course. This therefore raises the need for students to be identified and given clear advice at the outset on their eligibility and ability to continue with their chosen route of study.

Systems in place to deal with concerns associated with a member of staff

To support Colleges in reporting and referring information to the ISA on employees, it is vital that all Colleges have in place systems to identify and deal with allegations of suspected abuse by a member of staff. A staff code of conduct including disciplinary procedures and a mechanism for sharing this information between the designated officer and HR should also be in place. Best practice suggests that while the DCPO is responsible for ensuring that an allegation is recorded and referred to the appropriate authority, HR is responsible for the implementation of internal disciplinary procedures and the subsequent reporting of the allegation to the ISA for recording purposes.

It is encouraging to note that five of the six Colleges have included within their current policies procedures for dealing with allegations against members of staff and five Colleges have developed a code of conduct for staff.

Raising awareness of policies and procedures

The policies and procedures detailed above will only be effective if the staff and student body are aware of them. An understanding of the processes and procedures in place within each College is particularly important for staff, as they need to fully understand and comply with the procedures in place to reduce the level of risk of inaction or inappropriate action and to ensure that the needs of students are adequately and appropriately addressed.

In order for any communication exercises to be truly effective, each College should ensure that structures and procedures are finalised and approved by the Governing Body. The

current system of draft policies and procedures and ongoing changes to staffing structures creates an uncertain environment and one that is not conducive to ensuring an understanding of policy, procedures and guidelines throughout the staffing body.

In terms of student awareness, further work is required to ensure that:

- All students are provided with information on College policies and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults (regardless of method of intake, frequency of study etc) in a format that is accessible to them;
- The services and structures in place to support students are promoted and understood by all students;
- All students have equal access to support services regardless of form and location of study;
- The student body ‘has a voice’ and is involved in the development of policies and procedures that are relevant to them. Best practice (refer to Section 2) suggests that such consultation can help ensure that policies, procedures and mechanisms to engage with students are appropriate; and
- Procedures are put in place to update them regularly and to assess student understanding of the structures and processes in place i.e. confirmation that they have read and understood the policy/support structures.

It is further recommended that research is undertaken to examine ‘what works’ for students in terms of the dissemination of information – it is vital that information is shared throughout the College network on new developments, sources of information and student feedback.

The responsibility of adequate awareness throughout the staff and student body lies with the FE Colleges themselves. It is vital, however, that DEL monitors levels of awareness, through the ETI, to ensure high standards throughout the Sector.

Standardised Training Policy and Framework

In the majority of cases, CPOs consulted during the drafting of this study had completed training relevant to their role within the last two years. This training covered a range of subject areas and had been provided by a range of agents including representatives from the Colleges themselves. While the majority of the respondents reported that the training had been beneficial in helping them in their role throughout the network feedback highlighted a number of key areas of need:

- The need for more intensive, regular and on-going refresher training (provided as a minimum every two years);
- The need for training to cover practical issues associated with procedures, reporting, recording and referral; and

- The need for training to cover scenario testing and role play situations to build confidence and expertise.

Respondents also highlighted a range of wider support (in addition to training) that would assist them in their role as CPO:

- The provision of up-to-date legislation and guidance from a central source;
- The standardisation of guidance and practice throughout the Sector;
- The opportunity to discuss issues/developments with peers;
- An agreed structure and approach to training and competencies for CPOs;
- Development of a support network for CPOs to reduce reliance on informal structures; and
- Centralised and regularly updated information on support services and referral agencies.

It is recommended that consideration be given to the development of a training policy for FE. The current ad-hoc approach to training adopted throughout the Sector leads to inconsistencies in training delivered (with staff, CPOs and senior management undertaking training in a range of topic areas, delivered by a range of providers). As demonstrated in Sections 3 and 4 of this report, this has led to gaps in training and awareness among the body of staff in FE. This could potentially weaken the level of protection available to the student body. It is essential that this training policy takes cognisance of best practice and includes as a minimum:

- A model that reflects the level of expertise and knowledge levels required by staff to ensure the protection of children and vulnerable adults in the FE setting i.e.:
 - Training for Governors/Senior Managers;
 - Overall managers of the system e.g., SVG/PCYPVA³ System managers
 - Training for CPO/DCPO;
 - Training for HR staff;
 - Training for staff, both full-time and part-time (lecturers, student support/liaison, support and back office staff); and
 - Training for contract and voluntary staff.
- Minimum standards for each staff level to ensure consistency across the Sector;
- Guidelines on the level and frequency of training required at each level i.e. initial, refresher, renewal etc; and

³ Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (SVG) / Protection of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults (PCYPVA).

- Processes in place to assess the extent to which the training policy is adhered to, its effectiveness and need for revision.

It is further recommended that this training occurs at a local level and is delivered in partnership with other stakeholders. Not only will this ensure a standardised approach to training across sectors but it will also support the development of relationships at a local level that will strengthen the protection of children and vulnerable adults. This joint approach to training could potentially result in resource savings for the Colleges, who will be able to maximise economies of scale in both the development and purchase of relevant training.

In recognition of the timescale required to develop this policy, its associated training framework and the sourcing and recruitment of appropriate training providers, it is recommended that the FE Sector ensures that all FE staff are aware of and understand the policies and procedures in place for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. This should include, as a minimum, the name of designated and deputy child protection officers, recognition of the symptoms of abuse and the reporting and recording protocols both within and outside FE.

It is recommended that DEL, through the ETI, monitor the extent to which both Designated and Deputy Designated Child Protection officers receive appropriate training that supports them in the effective delivery of their post.

Annual review and evaluation

Following the development of Sector specific policy and guidance, a procedure for evaluation and review should be developed for the Sector by ETI. The current system of assessment used by ETI and informed by DE guidance, while comprehensive, should be tailored to FE. The outcomes of this process should support the updating and renewal of policies, procedures and practices on an ongoing basis.

The annual review and inspection process should be completed by ETI.

1 INTRODUCTION & TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1 Introduction

FGS McClure Watters were commissioned by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) to complete a scoping study to consider the protection of children and vulnerable adults within the Further Education (FE) Sector in Northern Ireland, and to generate practical suggestions as to how any emerging issues may be addressed at both a local and regional level.

In this section we set out the terms of reference for the study, the approach adopted to meet these requirements and the overall structure of the report.

1.2 Terms of Reference

The aim of this report, as specified by DEL in the terms of reference, is to ensure that the FE Sector is fully aware of, and responsive to, the needs of its students in the context of the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

DEL set out the following requirements for this scoping study:

1. To engage with key stakeholders throughout the scoping exercise, to include student representative groups, FE Colleges, Access NI, the Department of Education, NICCY, Social Services and other relevant children's organisations;
2. To determine the current level of protection and support for children and vulnerable adults in the FE Sector, and, in particular, identify any gaps in those arrangements; and
3. To determine the level/degree of further research which might be required. This should also include any methodological issues that are likely to arise in a fuller research project, including, for example, sensitivities around data collection.

In order to meet DEL's requirements, this study includes an assessment of:

- The ability of the FE Sector to implement new legislation, their awareness of sources of information and guidance and whether further work or guidance is required;
- College policy, procedures and practice to take account of the protection of, and support available to, children and vulnerable adults and whether particular issues need to be addressed;
- The extent to which policies, procedures and practices meet the Department's commitment to implementing wider strategies;
- The operation of services in respect of the protection of children and vulnerable adults within Colleges and, in conjunction with statutory and stakeholder organisations, to ascertain whether further work is required;

- The ability of the Sector to share good practice and disseminate information to colleagues;
- Current levels of training needs of Child Protection Designated Officers and other relevant College staff; and
- Whether a full research study is required based on scoping study findings.

1.3 Methodology

The following methodology was used to complete the scoping study. This was agreed with the Project Steering Group⁴ in June 2009:

- **Stage 1: Overall Project Planning**

This stage consisted of the Project Initiation Meeting (PIM) – held on the 5th of June 2009 - and the Project Initiation Document (PID) – issued on the 22nd of June 2009. The objective was to agree the work plan, consultees, research and documents to be reviewed, reporting dates and overall deadlines for completion of the study.

- **Stage 2: Desk Research & Information Request**

The aim of this stage was to review the key strategic policies impacting upon the protection of children and vulnerable adults in the FE Sector. This included a review of the relevant policies and strategies within the six regional Colleges, including details of the number of children enrolled and information relating to vulnerable adults.

- **Stage 3: Examination of Practice Elsewhere**

Stage 3 was a desk-based exercise to examine guidance and best practice. The output of this stage is an overview of approaches adopted in other sectors, including the FE Sector in England, and the lessons for Northern Ireland.

- **Stage 4: Consultations**

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⁴ The Steering Group consisted of representatives from DEL, the ETI and an FE Sector representative nominated by the six College Directors.

Stakeholder Group	Approach
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Focus Group Sessions per College with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff and key personnel involved in Child Protection; and ▪ Students. • A Focus Group with past and current FE students organised by Barnardos. • A Focus Group with the FE HR Managers Group. • A Focus Group with the FE Student Services Manager Working Group.
Other Organisations	Interviews with a range of wider stakeholders including ETI, Access NI, Lifelong Learning, SELB, LSDA, ANIC, NSPCC, Barnardos, Mencap and NICCY.

The remainder of this report presents the findings emerging from the completion of each of the above stages. Detailed conclusions and recommendations are presented in Section 6.

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

In this section, we consider the strategic context for the introduction of the new legislation to protect the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. In particular, we consider the implications of key strategies, policies and legislation for the role of the FE Sector in safeguarding these vulnerable groups. The section is structured as follows:

- DEL and the FE Sector;
- The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults;
- Key definitions;
- Links and implications for the FE Sector; and
- Existing guidance for the development of policies and procedures.

2.2 DEL & the FE Sector

The FE Division of DEL is responsible for the policy, strategic development and funding of the statutory FE Sector and the Essential Skills Strategy. In addition, the Division is also responsible for curriculum and qualifications below degree level.

The strategic aim for the Sector, as outlined in the policy document: “FE Means Business”, is that “Further Education should be at the heart of lifelong learning in order to strengthen economic development, enhance social cohesion and advance the individual’s skills and learning”.

2.2.1 Review of the Strategy for FE for Northern Ireland

Following a review of Further Education (“FE Means Business”), which was published for consultation in March 2004, identified that the strategic focus for the FE Sector should be on:

- strengthening its role in supporting economic development;
- strengthening the model of incorporation;
- creating new strategic partnerships between the FE Sector and other institutions, employers, and voluntary and community organisations;
- improving the Sector’s performance;
- developing a new model for funding the Sector; and
- re-organising the Sector’s structure.

Through a process of mergers and amalgamations, since 1st August 2007 the previous configuration of 16 Colleges has been reduced to six larger management units. The six regional Colleges are:

- ***Southern Regional College (SRC)***

(Armagh College, Newry and Killeel Institute & Upper Bann Institute)

- ***NorthWest Regional College (NWRC)***

(North West Institute & Limavady College)

- ***South West College (SWC)***

(East Tyrone College, Fermanagh College & Omagh College)

- ***Northern Regional College (NRC)***

(East Antrim Institute, North East Institute & Causeway Institute)

- ***Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC)***

(Belfast Institute & Castlereagh College)

- ***South Eastern Regional College (SERC)***

(East Down Institute, Lisburn Institute, North Down & Ards Institute)

The impact of this has been a significant period of restructuring throughout the network with staffing arrangements and reporting structures still at relatively early stages of implementation. In a number of cases this has had an impact on the ability of individual Colleges to put in place structures to respond to child and vulnerable adult welfare issues.

There are in excess of 2,000 full-time lecturers and 3,400 part-time lecturers employed in the FE Sector. In 2007/08, there were 29,213 full-time students and 112,887 part-time students enrolled on vocational courses. In addition, there were approximately 55,000 enrolments on non-vocational courses, which include a wide range of leisure, culture and hobby courses.

Information provided by the Colleges provides an indication of the scope of provision required throughout the Sector:

Table 2.1

All Colleges (SRC, SERC, NRC, BMC, NWRC & SWC) – Number of students enrolled

No. of Students Enrolled 2009/10 ^A	SRC ^E	SERC	NRC	BMC	NWRC ^B	SWC	Total
Aged 14 -16 years	1,899	1,072	1,172	1,683	3,114	1,213	10,153
Aged 16 -19 years	6,455	5,010	5,980	5,443	5,029	7,179	35,096
Aged 19+ years	11,722	12,610	7,711	19,263	11,393	9,403	72,102
Vulnerable adults ^{S D} enrolled e.g. registered disabled, with SENs etc	642	310	436	n/a	2,627	1,846	5,861^C
Total	20,076	18,692	14,863	26,389	19,536	17,795	117,351

Notes:

- A. *This numbers refer to the number of students as per December 2009 unless stated. The total number of students for the academic year 2009/10 may vary after the January 2010 enrolment sessions and/or other ongoing enrolments throughout the year.*
- B. *Number of enrolments as per December 2009.*
- C. *The total no. of vulnerable adults does not include the BMC figures.*
- D. *Note that the figures for each college act as a proxy only. The range of information required to identify the total number of students categorised as vulnerable adults within the student body is not collected at enrolment. Please refer to Footnote 4 for further information.*
- E. *Figures at April 2010*

Source: provided by individual Colleges Dec 09/Apr 10

2.3 The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

2.3.1 Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 (SVG Order) and equivalent legislation in England, Wales and Scotland establishes new safeguarding arrangements across the UK aimed at strengthening protection for children and vulnerable adults in workplace situations. The legislation is one of the Government's key responses to the Bichard Inquiry Report (June 2004) which followed the murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman by Ian Huntley. The Bichard Inquiry identified systemic failures in current vetting and barring systems, including the following factors:

⁵ A person is described in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as a vulnerable adult if they have attained the age of 18 and are: living in residential accommodation, such as a residential care home, a nursing home or a residential special school; living in sheltered housing; receiving domiciliary care in his or her own home; receiving any form of healthcare; detained in a prison, remand centre, young offender institution, secure training centre or attendance centre, or under the powers of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; in contact with probation services; receiving support, assistance or advice to help them live independently, for example through the Supporting People programme receiving a service or participating in an activity that is specifically targeted at people with age-related needs or disabilities; expectant or nursing mothers in residential accommodation; receiving direct payments from Health and Social Care Trusts in lieu of social care services; or requires assistance in the conduct of his or her own affairs.

- Inconsistent decisions were being made by employers on the basis of information supplied with a criminal record check;
- The criminal record information is only valid on the day of issue;
- There are inconsistencies between the Disqualification from Working with Children List, the Disqualification from Working with Vulnerable Adults List and the Unsuitable People List; and
- The current barring system is reactive to harmful behaviour rather than preventative.

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order provided the legislative framework for a new vetting and barring scheme for people who work with children and vulnerable adults. The purpose of the new scheme is to minimise the risk of harm posed to children and vulnerable adults by those that might seek to harm them through their paid or voluntary work. It will do this by barring unsuitable individuals not just on the basis of referrals but also at the earliest possible opportunity as part of a centralised vetting process that all those working closely with children and/or vulnerable adults will need to go through. These arrangements will enable vetting and barring processes to operate coherently across the UK.

The main elements of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order are as follows:

- There will be two aligned barred lists – one for those who are barred from working with children (the children’s barred list), and one for those who are barred from working with vulnerable adults (the adults’ barred list);
- The Independent Barring Board (IBB) established by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 will maintain the children’s barred list and the adults’ barred list and will make decisions about whether an individual should be included in one or both barred lists; and
- There will be a right of appeal to the Care Tribunal against inclusion in a barred list, with the permission of the tribunal, on a point of law or on a finding of fact made by the IBB.

There will be four routes to inclusion on one or both of the barred lists:

- Automatic inclusion on one or both of the barred lists as a result of receiving a caution or conviction for specified offences. The individual will not have a right to make representation or a right of appeal in these cases;
- Automatic inclusion on one or both of the barred lists for certain specified offences. There will be a right to make representations and a right of appeal following inclusion;
- Specified behaviour (the term “relevant conduct” is used in the Order) that leads to consideration for inclusion on one or both of the barred lists. This includes, for example, conduct which harms a child in the case of the children’s barred list, or conduct which harms a vulnerable adult in the case of the adults’ barred list;

- Risk of harm: where evidence suggests that an individual may present a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults - this will lead to consideration for inclusion on one or both of the barred lists; and
- An individual who is included in the children's barred list must not engage in regulated activity in relation to children. An individual who is included in the adults' barred list must not engage in regulated activity in relation to vulnerable adults.
- Regulated activity involves contact with children and/or vulnerable adults and is:
 - Of a specified nature frequently or intensively; or
 - In a specified place frequently or intensively; or
 - A defined position of responsibility; or
 - School governor, member of an ELB, trustees of certain charities; or
 - Fostering, childminding and day care provision; or
 - Management/supervision of workers in regulated activity.

There will be a series of criminal offences to:

- Prevent barred individuals from engaging in regulated activity in relation to children or vulnerable adults;
- Ensure that people permitted to engage in regulated activity in relation to children or vulnerable adults with the permission of a "regulated activity provider" are subject to monitoring; and
- Ensure that relevant employers check whether an individual is barred or is subject to monitoring before engaging an individual in a regulated activity in relation to children or vulnerable adults.

2.3.2 Vetting and Barring Scheme

The new Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) established by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups legislation recognises the need for a single agency to vet and register all those working or volunteering with vulnerable people and to bar unsuitable people. The agency responsible for vetting and barring individuals is the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). The ISA works in partnership with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and other delivery partners.

The VBS Scheme was introduced in October 2009 and covers those working or volunteering in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Those working in Scotland are subject to a separate, parallel scheme which is being developed by the Scottish government. The following increased safeguards were introduced under the VBS:

- It is now a criminal offence for individuals barred by the ISA to work or apply to work with children or vulnerable adults in a wide range of posts - including most NHS jobs, Prison Service employees, education and childcare. Employers also face criminal sanctions for knowingly employing a barred individual across a wider range of work;
- The three former barred lists in Northern Ireland (POCA, POVA and List 99) are being replaced by two new ISA barred lists; and
- Employers, local authorities, professional regulators and other bodies have a duty to refer information about individuals working with children or vulnerable adults to the ISA where they consider them to have caused harm or pose a risk of harm.

The VBS applies to: paid employees; volunteers; those joining the workforce or moving within it; existing employees or volunteers; workforce; students (age 16+) on work placement; and those coming to work in Northern Ireland from outside the United Kingdom. Under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 and a vulnerable adult is defined as someone who has attained the age of 18 and meets one of the following criteria:

- Is in residential accommodation;
- Is in sheltered housing;
- Receives domiciliary care;
- Receives any form of health care (treatment, therapy, palliative care);
- Is detained in lawful custody;
- Is under the supervision of a probation officer;
- Receives a prescribed welfare service (supporting people);
- Receives a service/takes part in activity provided to persons because of:
 - Particular age related needs;
 - Any form of disability; and
 - Prescribed physical or mental health problem; or
- Requires assistance in the conduct of his own affairs.

Implementation Dates

Table 2.2 sets out the key implementation dates associated with the establishment of the ISA and the implementation of the VBS.

Table 2.2
Implementation Dates

Key dates for the establishment of the ISA and the implementation of the VBS	
2 nd January 2008	ISA established
13 th March 2009	ISA barring decision-making started in NI
12 th October 2009	Introduction of regulated activity and the VBS requirements to refer
26 th July 2010	Facility to register with the ISA. Employees can register directly or via their employer if they have the facility. It is a requirement for employees (both paid and unpaid) working in specified positions to register with the ISA and pay a registration fee
1 st November 2010	Requirement to register with the ISA (new/moving employees/volunteers) and offences for non-compliance
1 st February 2011	Phasing of existing regulated activity workforce commences
1 st January 2014	Introduction of controlled activity
25 th July 2015	Requirement to register with the ISA and offences for non-compliance (existing workforce)
<i>Source: The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order Implementation Team (DHSSPS): Vetting and Barring Scheme Northern Ireland (Presentation by Pamela Mallon)</i>	

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) is leading on the development of VBS policy and legislation.

Key Definitions

The table below sets out a number of key definitions underpinning the SVG (NI) Order 2007.

Table 2.3
Key Definitions Underpinning the SVG (NI) Order 2007

Key definitions	
Child	A person who has not yet attained the age of 18
Vulnerable Adult	Someone who has attained the age of 18 and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is in residential accommodation; • is in sheltered housing; • receives domiciliary care; • receives any form of health care (treatment, therapy, palliative care) • is detained in lawful custody; • is under the supervision of a probation officer;

Key definitions	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> receives a prescribed welfare service (supporting people); receives a service/takes part in activity provided to persons of particular age related needs, any form of disability, prescribed physical or mental health problem; is a direct payment recipient; requires assistance in the conduct of his own affairs.
Regulated activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any activity of a specified nature that involves contact with children or vulnerable adults frequently, intensively and/or overnight (such activities include teaching, training, care, supervision, advice, treatment and transportation) Any activity allowing contact with children or vulnerable adults that is in a specified place carried out either frequently or intensively Fostering and childcare Any activity that involves people in certain defined positions of responsibility (such positions include a school governor, director of social services and trustee of certain charities)
Controlled activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent or intensive support work in the health and further education sectors (such work includes cleaners, caretakers, shop workers, catering staff and receptionists) Individuals working for specified organisations (e.g., an HSS Trust or an ELB) who have frequent access to health, educational or personal social service records about children and vulnerable adults Support work in adult health and social care settings (such work includes day centre cleaners/cooks who have contact with vulnerable adults and those with access to health or personal service records) Controlled activity must be carried out on a frequent or intensive basis
Frequently	Once per month or more often, on an ongoing basis (guidance only) i.e. on a repetitive basis
Ongoing basis	Established the third time the activity is carried out at least once a month
Intensively	Three or more days in a 30 day period and will cover extended periods of contact either with children or vulnerable adults
<i>Source: DHSSPS NI</i>	

2.3.3 Wider Policy and Strategic Documents

In addition to the SVG (NI) Order, there are a number of wider policies documents, reviews and plans that have implications for the FE Sector, these include:

DHSSPS (2008): Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy & Action Plan 2008-2009

The strategy highlights the importance of the competence and ability of a person to give consent. This is a particularly important issue when dealing with children and adults considered to be vulnerable due to age, disability, illness or other factors. The definition of

sexual violence used throughout the strategy is “any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted and takes place without consent or understanding”.

Vulnerable adults are particularly predisposed to abuse due to the fact that they are often unable to protect themselves. The current definition of abuse relates to “the physical, psychological, emotional, financial or sexual maltreatment, or neglect of a vulnerable adult by another person”. Abuse can be categorised under the following forms:

- Physical abuse (including inappropriate restraint or use of medication);
- Sexual abuse;
- Psychological abuse;
- Financial or material abuse;
- Neglect and acts of omission;
- Institutional abuse; and
- Discriminatory abuse.

The action plan lays out the following key actions and activities that specifically impact on children and vulnerable adults, including those in the FE Sector:

Table 2.4
 Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy & Action Plan 2008/09 – Key Actions and Activities

Key Action	Activity
Improve education in Schools and FE and HE Institutions to increase awareness among children and young people	Support the work delivered through the Personal Development Programme which incorporates Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) in Schools to encourage the development of healthy relationships and respect. Encourage FE and HE Institutions to include in their pastoral care arrangements appropriate information, advice and support around the issue of sexual violence and abuse.
Promote personal safety for those who are most at risk	Formulate and promote a framework of practical steps which people can take to increase their personal safety. Integrate strategic messages about sexual violence and abuse with those about domestic violence, the reduction of alcohol and drug harm, sexual health, mental health and the protection of children and vulnerable adults; develop guidance and consistent messages about specific risk factors.
Promote closer working	Promote and further develop close working practices and protocols within and between statutory and voluntary agencies to protect those most at risk, including children and vulnerable adults.

Key Action	Activity
	Encourage commitment by all agencies involved in the protection of those most at risk through strengthening interagency, multidisciplinary co-operation and sharing of information and best practice.
Source: DHSSPS (2008): Tackling Sexual Violence & Abuse Action Plan 2008-09	

DHSSPS (2007): Care Matters in NI - A Bridge to a Better Future

This paper sets out a vision for the services of children in care and children on the edge of care. It aims to realise this through:

- Ensuring the voices of children and families are heard;
- Preventing children on the edge of care coming into care;
- Promoting stability and permanence for children in care; and
- Improving services and outcomes for children who have left care.

The paper notes that looked-after children are less likely to go on to further education and training post-16 than their peers and the paper acknowledges the disruption that can be caused to children in care during the transitional stage from school leaving age. The paper recognises the importance of the FE Sector in providing an opportunity for learning to those who have not always done well through the traditional school system.

The paper lays out a number of actions to address the welfare issues faced by children in care and children leaving care that enter the FE Sector. The issues faced and actions to address these are as follows:

Table 2.5
 Care Matters in NI – A Bridge to a Better Future – Issues and Actions.

Issue	Actions
FE Colleges should track the progress of children in care and care leavers in order to identify any gaps in support through the following actions.	DHSSPS publishes global information as part of the annual census of those in care/leaving care. DEL has agreed to support the participation of NI FE Colleges in a pilot programme to achieve Frank Buttle charter mark status. In striving to achieve this, individual Colleges will be required to ensure that they have robust mechanisms in place to identify and track the progress of those with care experience in their student body.
The FE Sector needs to fully understand the needs of children in care/care leavers.	The FE Sector's participation in the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark pilot programme will assist FE Colleges in effectively addressing the personal needs of children in care/care leavers.
Apply a flexible system to support	FE Colleges will be encouraged to address this action through

Issue	Actions
children in care re-integrating and in sustaining learning as they are vulnerable to missing parts of their schooling.	the training of Senior Managers and the development of College Development Plans. In addition the work on the Frank Buttle FE Pilot will have an impact here.
Act to give children in the care system a stronger voice in the FE Sector.	FE Colleges should cover children in care and care leavers in their annual College Development Plans.
Source: DHSSPS (Mar 2007): Care Matters in NI - A Bridge to a Better Future	

DHSSPS (2007): The Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability

The underpinning principle of the Review was to value those with mental health needs or a learning disability. This includes their rights to full citizenship, equity of opportunity and self-determination. The vision also looks to a reform and modernisation of services that will make a real difference to the lives of people with mental illness or a learning disability. The review recommended that any future legislation should be reformed under a rights-based approach that respects the decisions of all who are assumed to have capacity to make their own decisions. This rights-based approach moves from public protection as the priority to safeguarding the rights and dignity of people with a mental health disorder or learning disability.

Statistics from the Review suggest that up to 20% of children and young people in NI have mental health problems serious enough to require intervention. A key recommendation of the Review is that appropriate training and education, in relation to the care of vulnerable people, should be built in to training programmes for health and social care staff, including those working in the independent sector, and carers. This training should be undertaken on an inter-agency and multi-disciplinary basis where possible.

Professor Bain (2006): Schools for the Future: Funding, Strategy, Sharing (the Bain Review).

The Bain Review provides the guidelines for school rationalisation and points to the need for new learning agreements across Colleges and schools. The aim of this Review of the Northern Irish education system was: “To examine funding of the education system, in particular the strategic planning and organisation of the schools’ estate, taking account of the curriculum changes, including the wider provision for 14-19 year olds, and also demographic trends.”

Within the education service, a number of significant policy developments have recently been introduced in the post-primary phase. At the 14-19 stage, the Curriculum Entitlement Framework has been developed to enable pupils to choose a more flexible range of courses to make up their course of study. The revised curriculum offers students 27 subjects at Key Stage 4. At least one-third of these courses must be general (academic) and at least one-third applied (vocational or professional/technical).

The implementation of the Entitlement Framework carries significant implications for the planning and provision of facilities in schools and the FE Sector. The report provides analysis that questions the ability of smaller schools to provide the range of vocational courses that will be required under the Entitlement Framework. Collaboration between schools and the FE Sector will therefore be required for successful implementation.

The introduction of the Entitlement Framework and the strengthening of its purpose has seen a significant number of 14-19 year olds interacting with the FE Sector. This has many implications for the FE Sector in terms of child protection which must be reflected in their policies and procedures. Also, given that up to 20% of students in mainstream education have Special Education Needs, FE Colleges must be aware of the need to safeguard these vulnerable students.

DHSSPS (2006): Protect Life: A Shared Vision-the NI Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2006-2011

The overall aim of this strategy is to reduce the suicide rate in NI. The objectives are to:

- Raise awareness of mental health and well-being issues;
- Ensure early recognition of mental ill-health, and to provide appropriate follow-up action by support services;
- Develop co-ordinated, effective, accessible and timely response mechanisms for those seeking help;
- Provide appropriate training for people dealing with suicide and mental health issues;
- Enhance the support role currently carried out by the voluntary/community sectors, bereaved families and individuals who have made previous suicide attempts;
- Support the media in the development and implementation of guidelines for a suitable response to suicide related matters;
- Provide support for research and evaluation of relevant suicide and self-harm issues; and
- Restrict access, where possible, to the means of carrying out suicide.

The strategy highlights the role the education sector can play in reducing the incidence of suicide by recognising vulnerable young people at risk and incorporating mental health education in the curriculum. The strategy proposes a number of actions to be taken with regard to children and young people:

- To ensure the inclusion of promoting positive mental health as a key element of the “Healthy Schools” programme and ensure that children and young people are protected from all forms of bullying.
- To raise awareness of and ensure availability and timely access to appropriate intervention services (e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, mentoring schemes and other appropriate statutory and voluntary services).

- To make suicide awareness and positive mental health & well-being training, including how to deal sensitively with disclosure of self-harm or suicidal behaviour, a priority for teachers, youth workers, etc.
- To promote a culture of help-seeking behaviour, particularly among young people.
- Encourage the inclusion of coping and life skills, emotional literacy and programmes that promote positive mental health in the school curriculum.
- To develop and implement practices, protocols and referral pathways to smooth the transition from youth to adult Health and Social Services.

NICCY (2005): A Right to Protection: Review of Vetting in NI

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) was asked by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to undertake a review into child protection vetting arrangements in March 2004.

This review of the arrangements for vetting people working with children was carried out between July 2004 and March 2005. The aim of the review was to identify changes to the vetting arrangements that would increase the protection of children. The review examined the arrangements that were in place at the time: police checks carried out by PSNI, the Pre-employment Consultancy Service administered by DHSSPS and the operation of List 99 by DE. It considered the sources of information used to make a check, the posts that were subject to checks, who was carrying out the checks, the mechanisms for ensuring checks took place and the links between vetting and good recruitment and child protection policies. The review found weaknesses in all areas examined:

- The vetting system has no statutory basis, leading to uncertainty about its scope and validity and absence of due process in the listing arrangements.
- There is no requirement to vet, and no duty to report information that a person may pose a risk if working with children. In practice, government departments generally do not take steps to report concerns that an individual may be unsuitable to work with children.
- The overall operation of the system is split between the PSNI, the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety, the Department of Education and the NIO. There is no one access point for vetting information, or for guidance, training and information.
- It takes between four and eight weeks to process a vetting request on a potential appointee. This delay was a disincentive to carry out vetting.
- There is a general failure by the respondents to the questionnaires to monitor or audit their own vetting practice, or that of agencies or affiliated bodies.
- There is inadequate guidance, support and training for organisations wanting to carry out vetting effectively.

- There is no systematic sharing of the various sources of information within Northern Ireland, and between Northern Ireland and other jurisdictions in the UK.
- The limitations of the provision for vetting in the Republic of Ireland, and the absence of reciprocal vetting arrangements throughout Ireland, places children in Northern Ireland at risk.
- The data used as the basis for making checks does not draw on all relevant sources of verified information, such as findings in disciplinary proceedings, that may indicate if an individual is unsuitable to work with children.
- A check can generally only be carried out in anticipation of appointment. It is possible to carry out a check on an existing employee, or to carry out a repeat check, only in very restricted circumstances.
- Checks can not be carried out on individuals who are self-employed.
- Checks can not be carried out on many posts which give an individual access to personal information about children, including individuals administering the vetting system.
- Checks can not be carried out on many individuals whom children will regard as trustworthy because of the position they hold.
- There is considerable uncertainty and confusion about the meaning of the substantial unsupervised access test, which forms the basis for authorising a check. This has led to inconsistency in vetting practice.
- There is no requirement to carry out a check for any post.
- It is not possible for a parent to vet an individual for instance tutoring his or her child.
- The PECS register indicates that some bodies who provide services for children do not carry out checks.
- There is inadequate information about how vetting is carried out by religious organisations.
- There is no legal obligation to carry out a check on any post.
- There is a failure to mainstream, audit and monitor vetting practice in all sectors.
- The review found a general failure to link vetting to good recruitment and child protection policies.

The review lists the expected improvements that the reforms in the vetting arrangements would bring:

- The links between the information held on systems within NI and between NI and the other jurisdictions of the UK will be significantly strengthened;
- There will be greater clarity about the obligation to share information between agencies, and in particular between social services and the police;

- The links between vetting and recruitment and child protection will be strengthened in the education sector;
- The substantial unsupervised access test will be replaced by a statutory definition of a regulated position;
- Childcare organisations will have a duty to report individuals as unsuitable to work with children and to carry out checks before appointing to a child care position;
- The provision for accrediting non-childcare organisations will provide a mechanism for extending reporting and checking duties to them, primarily by making funding and other benefits, including insurance, dependent on accreditation;
- Certain individuals will be disqualified from working with children; and
- It would be an offence in certain circumstances to employ a disqualified person to work with children.

The review found that the proposed changes would not achieve the desired outcome of vetting everyone who works with a child. It proposed the following changes to the substantive law and in the implementation of the vetting system:

- A consideration of the criminal law as it applies to children in NI, and of the scope of duty to report suspected criminal conduct against children;
- The introduction of an express general duty to check individuals appointed to a regulated position;
- A reconsideration of the meaning of regulated position to widen and clarify its scope;
- The management of the vetting system should be integrated across responsible government departments. This would provide a central access point for service users, maximise the use of existing expertise and facilitate the issuing of consistent guidance on vetting standards, recruitment policy and the links between these and child protection;
- Each department, council and other autonomous public bodies should assume responsibility for mainstreaming vetting policy and practice by an ongoing process of monitoring and auditing vetting and reporting arrangements;
- The reforms should be supported by an effective awareness-raising and training programme which includes employers, parents and children; and
- The reforms must be supported by an adequate allocation of resources.

The report recommends that the one key change required to protect children is the development of compatible cooperative vetting arrangements between NI and other jurisdictions from which individuals come to work with children here.

2.4 Specific links to, and implications for, the FE Sector

Since the 1990s, both DEL and DE have issued guidance relating the protection of children and vulnerable adults. In 2006, DEL issued guidance to FE Colleges to ensure that all current and potential employees were subject to criminal background checks. At this time, criminal background checking of current employees was a voluntary process which employees could opt out of, however, the Department recommended that criminal background checks were completed for all staff by October 2006⁶. The introduction of the SVG (NI) Act in October 2009 made it mandatory for Colleges to ensure that all potential staff and volunteers are registered with the ISA before commencing employment.

The VBS will have implications for the FE Sector as it has staff that are working in regulated activities, i.e. teaching staff and tutors. FE Colleges will also have staff working in controlled activities, i.e. ancillary staff (e.g. cleaners, catering assistants, receptionists). The FE Sector will also be supplying work placement students who may be placed in regulated activities. The FE Colleges will be required to check the ISA registration of these groups prior to placement.

Table 2.6 details some of the implications for the FE Sector resulting from the introduction of the VBS in Northern Ireland.

Table 2.6
 Vetting and Barring Scheme Northern Ireland – Associated Actions for Further Education

Associated Actions
Staff in regulated activity, teaching staff, tutors etc.
Staff in controlled activity – ancillary staff e.g. cleaners, catering assistants, receptionist (if they have the opportunity for contact with vulnerable groups).
Barred individuals can work in controlled activity if safeguards are put in place.
FE College is also a Personnel Supplier and as such has a requirement to check ISA registration of students placed in regulated activity as part of the course.
FE College will register an interest in each student for the duration of the course.
Source: <i>The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order Implementation Team: Vetting and Barring Scheme Northern Ireland (Presentation)</i>

2.5 Developing policy and procedures

There are a number of best practice guides and reports that provide advice to organisations and others on their responsibilities in relation to child protection. While these documents reflect up-to-date legislation, they are not specific to the FE Sector, but as noted in Section 3, these documents are often referred to by Colleges during development of their own policies.

These guides include:

⁶ Defined by DEL within the following circular: FE 09/06 Child Protection: Criminal Background Checking of all staff

DENI Pastoral Care in Schools, Child Protection 2007

This document provides advice to schools and others on their responsibilities in relation to child protection, including the action to be taken to enable cases of suspected abuse to be properly considered and pursued. The main elements of the guidance are summarised in Box 1 below:

Box 1: Basic Principles of Child Protection	
It is a child's right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously and to be consulted about the proposed action.	All schools and Colleges should take all reasonable steps to ensure that children's welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved.
A designated and deputy teacher should be named who has specific responsibility for child protection matters.	The designated officer should have responsibility for co-ordinating action on child protection matters within the school and liaising with Social Services and the police over cases of actual or suspected abuse.
All staff (teaching and non-teaching) should know who this person is.	The designation of a teacher for the above role should not be seen as diminishing the role of all members of staff in being alert to signs of abuse and being aware of the procedures to be followed.
Clear procedures should be in place to be followed where the school has been alerted to possible abuse.	All staff, teaching and non-teaching, should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed.
All schools should maintain a summary of their child protection arrangements, including arrangements for raising awareness amongst parents.	Accurate recording and reporting procedures should be in place.
Child protection arrangements should be accessible within the school and understood by children so that they know what to do and whom to go to.	Policies should be consistent with the child protection policies of other agencies e.g., ELB, Social and Health Services etc.
Source: DENI, Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection	

In addition to the above, the guide also provides a range of useful information to support the school in the development of policy and procedures including:

- Sample policy format and statements for inclusion;
- Details of the procedures to be followed in cases of suspected or reported abuse;
- Sample documents to be used in the referral and reporting process e.g., a suggested pro-forma for referral;
- Guides on reporting mechanisms and record-keeping;
- Details on child protection structures and sources of information and advice in NI; and
- Information on useful local and national helplines.

The Volunteer Development Agency (VDA), Getting it Right: Standards of Good Practice for Child Protection

This document was developed by the VDA as part of the ‘Duty of Care’ project supported by the DHSSPS and is designed to support organisations working with children and young people to meet recognised and agreed minimum standards for child protection. The key elements of the guide are set out in Table 2.7 below and are categorised as follows:

- **Developing policy:** a child protection policy will set out an organisation’s commitment to practice that protects children from harm – it applies to everyone associated with the organisation;
- **Procedures:** an organisation’s child protection procedures will describe the practice to be followed to uphold the child protection policy; and
- **Guidelines:** guidelines are advice on how something should be done. A child protection policy will contain guidelines on how the policy objectives should be upheld.

All basic guidelines detailed within the report are developed in detail within the document Our Duty to Care, Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People. This report also provides detailed suggestions for each of the standards within the ‘Getting it Right’ Guidelines. These are summarised in the following table:

Table 2.7
 Minimum Standards for Child Protection: Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

Developing Policy	
Statement of the intention to keep children safe while in the care of the organisation, including a summary of the proposed actions the organisation will take to safeguard children.	
Developing Procedures	
Recruitment and selection procedures	Including all appropriate checks.
Effective management of staff and volunteers	Adequate induction; Probationary periods; Training in child protection appropriate to role; Training should be updated and reviewed regularly; A minimum of 4 hours is required for basic awareness training; Support and supervision; and Annual appraisal and review to highlight future support and training needs.
Reporting concerns and designating staff	Policies and procedures in place to facilitate staff in reporting concerns or disclosures; All concerns reported to designated officer; Development of pro-forma for reporting concerns; Appointed designated staff member who has completed child protection

	training to deal with child protection concerns, disclosures and allegations; and Good practice for two staff - one designated and one deputy.
Developing Guidelines	
Code of behaviour	All staff know what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. All students know what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. Examples for inclusion include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive statement about how staff should act towards children; - behaviours to be avoided; - unacceptable behaviour; - anti-bullying guidelines; - guidelines relating to physical contact; - guidelines relating to special needs; and - sanctions.
Sharing information	It is important that written information on policies and procedures is circulated to everyone connected with the organisation in a way that is understandable to them. A clear statement of confidentiality should be included. All staff are aware of and follow a written procedure for record keeping.
General safety and management of activities	Examples for inclusion include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there are procedures for recording accidents and incidents; - there is adequate and appropriate up to date insurance; - there is a system for ensuring safety and equipment; and - there are clear ratios for supervision of children at various activities.
Source: The Volunteer Development Agency (VDA): Getting it Right – Standards of Good Practice for Child Protection	

Area Child Protection Committees, Regional Policies and Procedures

The Regional Child Protection Policy and Procedures document details the key elements of the Child Protection Process in Northern Ireland, including facilitating an understanding of the role of staff in various agencies and providing guidance of the recognition of child abuse and the legal framework by which children are protected. Chapter 3 of the report deals specifically with the roles and responsibilities of the main agencies and professionals involved in child protection. This section includes specific reference to the role of education providers (although it focuses on the schools system). Table 2.8 summarises the main responsibilities of the education sector in relation to Child Protection:

Table 2.8
 The Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Sector in Child Protection

Main Elements of Child Protection in Education
<p>Through the curriculum pupils are encouraged to develop strategies to keep safe.</p> <p>Through vetting to ensure that only suitable persons work with pupils.</p> <p>Through responding appropriately when child abuse concerns are raised about an individual pupil.</p>
Key Requirements
<p>Named Designated and Designated Deputy Teacher.</p> <p>The Designated Teacher acts as a focal point for child protection and liaises with agencies outside the school as appropriate.</p> <p>A child protection policy should be in place and implemented.</p>
Procedures to be Followed
<p>Where there is cause for concern about a child, the teacher or other member of staff should consult the Designated Teacher.</p> <p>The Designated Teacher will consult with the Principal and together they will agree the subsequent action and who will undertake it. This will normally be the Designated Teacher.</p> <p>The Designated Teacher may seek advice from the Designated Officer for Child Protection at the relevant Education and Library Board and/or local Social Services.</p> <p>When the decision to refer is made, the Designated Teacher should make the referral to Social Services in writing, using the standard referral form. This form should be copied to the Designated Officer for Child Protection in the relevant Education and Library Board.</p> <p>A parent/carer is told by the school that a referral is to be made to Social Services unless the parent/carer is the subject of the allegation.</p> <p>The Designated Teacher should make a record of all the discussions held and actions taken within 24 hours of a referral.</p> <p>If an acknowledgement of the referral is not received from Social Services within 5 working days, then the Designated Teacher should follow this up.</p> <p>After referral, schools and ELB staff will co-operate with the child protection investigation. This can involve providing factual information about the pupil for the purposes of the multi-agency assessment of risk and the Child Protection Plan. School staff may be invited to contribute to a Child Protection Case Conference if appropriate.</p>
<p>Source: Area Child Protection Committees, Regional Policies and Procedures</p>

DE, Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS): School Governors Handbook Child Protection (January 2007).

This handbook is intended to assist school governors in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities regarding their safeguarding role in order to promote consistency and clarity of approach across all schools. In recognition of the key role that schools – especially school governors and managers – play in the life of a child, the aim of this handbook is to make sure that everyone involved in working with children takes responsibility for protecting them and that

those in key positions have a clear understanding of their role in adhering to policy and procedures.

This handbook outlines the legislative and policy context in education, explains what this means for the role of governor, identifies the key child protection professionals in a school setting and provides governors with a helpful checklist that can be used as a guidance and auditing resource.

The main areas covered by the handbook are as follows:

- The Law in Northern Ireland;
- Guidance and procedures that help you understand the Law;
- Legislative and policy context implications for School Governors;
- Roles and responsibilities by key personnel;
- Guidance on the content of child protection policies;
- Role of the School Inspectors;
- Child Protection Training For School Governors;
- Checklist For Governors; and
- Guidance and contact details for sources of additional help.

2.6 Summary

The strategic context details the requirements for organisations that deliver services to children, young people and vulnerable adults to have in place policies and procedures to protect their welfare and general wellbeing. In particular, the SVG (NI) Order 2007 introduces robust new vetting and barring measures and supported the need for the development of policies and procedures that identify and support groups who may be at harm. While there is guidance in Northern Ireland that advises organisations involved in the delivery of education, no centralised FE-specific guidance has been developed. There is clearly a need for the development of guidance that relates to the specific requirements of the FE that recognises the implications for both student support-related activities and employee human resource-based issued.

3 REGIONAL COLLEGES PROFILES

3.1 Introduction

This section presents information on:

- The policies in place throughout the College network specifically related to the protection and welfare of children and vulnerable adults;
- Procedures in place relating to the protection and welfare of children and vulnerable adults, including:
 - Staff resources and structures related specifically to the protection of children and vulnerable adults;
 - Systems in place to ensure awareness throughout the staff and student body of the procedures and resources in place; and
 - HR procedures relating to registration and vetting and barring procedures for relevant staff and students.
- Wider policies and support structures in place targeted at the protection and wider pastoral care needs of students; and
- The structures in place for the sharing and dissemination of good practice throughout the College network.

Following on from the presentation and analysis of this information, the section presents a number of key issues for further consideration by DEL and the FE Sector.

3.2 Policy and their development

As part of their role as an education provider, Colleges are required to have in place satisfactory arrangements for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. This includes the development of effective policies and procedures for recording and taking action in relation to any incidents, concerns or allegations related to the personal safety of a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

All Colleges have developed a policy for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults who access FE provision. Consultation with College representatives indicated that DEL had provided no guidance on the actual required content and structure of the policy for the protection of children and vulnerable adults (guidance from DEL has focused primarily of the implications of the VBS) and, as such, the Colleges have used a number of sources to inform them of best practice in drafting their policy. This has included:

- Reference to DENI Circulars 99/10, 2003/13 and 2006/06/07;
- DENI Pastoral Care in Schools, Child Protection; and

- Area Child Protection Committees, Regional Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

In addition to accessing information from a range of sources, consultees also reported informal sharing of formats and contents between peers throughout FE and wider education in Northern Ireland.

There is some concern that this ad-hoc approach to policy development and a reliance on best practice guidance that focuses primarily on the school sector could lead to the development of policies that do not necessarily reflect the particular challenges and issues regarding the protection of children and vulnerable adults in the FE setting. The development of policies by FE Colleges without reference to a minimum set of guidelines specific to the Sector leaves the content and underpinning procedures of the policies open to interpretation at individual College level and, as demonstrated in the remainder of this section, has led to each College adopting various procedures to support the implementation of policy. It is recommended that the Colleges, in association with DEL, consider the development of a common policy and procedural template, drawing on the key existing guidance already developed by DHSSPS, the VDA, the Area Child Protection Committees and guidance throughout the rest of the UK as referred to in Sections 2 and 5 of this study.

Table 3.1 details some key characteristics of current policies for the protection of children and vulnerable adults throughout the FE Sector.

Table 3.1
 Key Characteristics of Policies for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults in FE

	BMC	NRC	NWRC	SERC	SRC	SWC
Date of development	Aug 09	Mar 09	Mar 09	Sep 08	Mar 09	Mar 08
Approved by/status	Draft	Draft	Chief Executive	Education Committee	Chief Executive	Draft
Students involved in policy development process	No	No	No	No	No	No
Evidence of ratification by the Governing Body	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Reference to both children and vulnerable adults	Yes	Yes	Yes ⁷	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reference to SVG (NI) Order 2007	Yes	No - ref to POCVA 03	No - ref to POCVA 04	No	No	No - ref to POCVA 03
Links to wider College policies	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Guidance on 'recognition' of symptoms of abuse	Yes (definition only)	Yes	Yes (definition only)	Yes	Yes (definition only)	Yes (definition only)
Includes procedures for referral and reporting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Includes procedures for entitlement framework/school partnership pupils	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Details included of Designated and Deputy Officer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dealing with allegation against a member of staff	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dealing with allegations against a Director	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Available to both staff and students	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Protocol for managing sex offenders	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Reference to staff code of conduct	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

⁷ Title is Child Protection Policy – only

The salient points emerging from this analysis include:

- No College reported that students had been involved in the policy development process. It is our understanding that ETI have raised this issues with Colleges and that, going forward, student consultations will be built into the policy development process;
- At the time of reporting, policies were at various stages of development and no policy had been ratified by the Governing Body;
- Only one policy, produced by BMC, makes reference to the SVG (NI) Order 2007, however NRC, NWRC and SWC make reference to POCVA which has been superseded by SVG;
- Three of the six policies make links to the wider policies of the College. Links noted within these policies include: Student Disciplinary Policy, Staff Disciplinary Policy, SENDO, Section 75, Drug Awareness Policy, Internet Policy, Work Placement Policy, Appointment Policy and Procedures. While this suggests that a number of Colleges are aware of the link to wider policies, there is no consistency in this;
- Two policies included guidance on the recognition of ‘symptoms of abuse’. The remaining four policies included definitions of abuse only;
- All policies included information on the procedures in place for referral and reporting;
- All policies included reference to staff members with Designated and Deputy Designated responsibility for child protection. In a number of cases, the appointment of staff to the designated posts and overall structures are at draft stage;
- Two Colleges have included details of the protocols in place for managing sex offenders who are part of the student body (although as referenced below this is an issue that is at the forefront of considerations for all Colleges); and
- All but one policy makes reference to a code of conduct for staff.

Overall there are some similarities across the FE Sector in the policies developed, although, as noted above, the lack of specific guidance for FE Colleges has resulted in the development of policies throughout the sector that vary widely in content and level of detail provided.

3.3 Staff Resources and Structures Related Specifically to the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

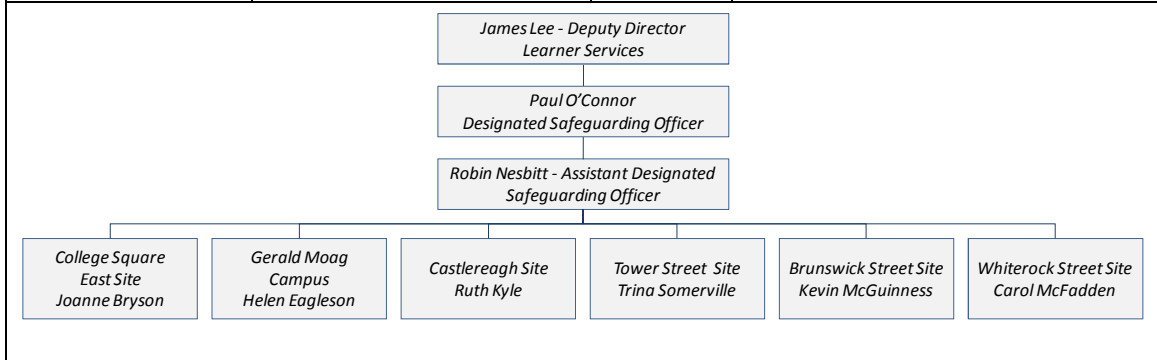
The nomination of staff members with responsibility for the protection of children and vulnerable adults is a central tenet of Colleges fulfilling their statutory responsibility and, as noted in Section 2, is a minimum requirement for education providers in Northern Ireland. Best practice indicates that often these persons are responsible for responding to cases of concern raised by the wider

staffing body and disclosures made by the student body. These persons are also responsible for the decision to refer the matter to an outside body.

This study found that each College has in place a person or persons with responsibility for child protection. The levels of staffing, the location of these individuals (i.e. College campus) and overall structures (including role and responsibility) are presented in turn for each College. Information from each College has been sourced from the policies in place for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults and interviews with key College representatives held in October 2009.

Table 3.2
Safeguarding structures – BMC

Role	Responsibility	Named individual	Position
Designated Safeguarding Manager (DSM)	Oversight and co-ordination of all strategic and operational college safeguarding matters.	Yes	Head of Information and Student Services.
Assistant DSM	To assist and support the DSM in their role.	Yes	Student Services Manager.
Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)	To provide information, advice, reporting of concerns, disclosure of allegations on an individual campus basis.	Yes	Range of teaching and non teaching positions.



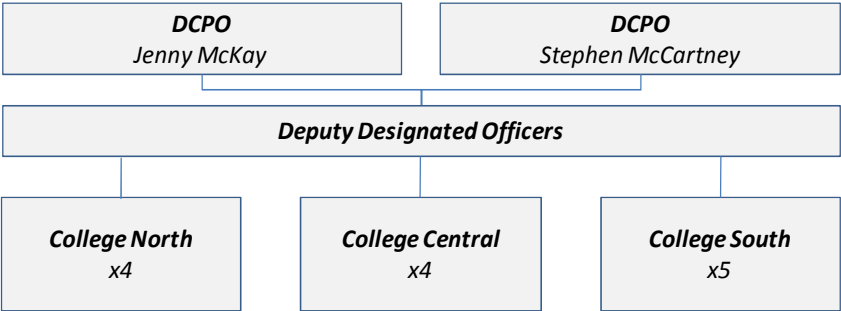
```

graph TD
    A["James Lee - Deputy Director  
Learner Services"] --> B["Paul O'Connor  
Designated Safeguarding Officer"]
    B --> C["Robin Nesbitt - Assistant Designated  
Safeguarding Officer"]
    C --> D["College Square  
East Site  
Joanne Bryson"]
    C --> E["Gerald Moag  
Campus  
Helen Eagleson"]
    C --> F["Castlereagh Site  
Ruth Kyle"]
    C --> G["Tower Street Site  
Trina Somerville"]
    C --> H["Brunswick Street Site  
Kevin McGuinness"]
    C --> I["Whiterock Street Site  
Carol McFadden"]
  
```

Source: BMC

BMC have appointed a range of positions including a Designated Safeguarding Officer, an Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer and 6 DDCPOs covering each of the BMC campus locations.

Table 3.3
Safeguarding structures – NRC

NRC			
Role	Responsibility	Named individual	Position
Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO)	Overall responsibility for child protection and vulnerable adult matters; responsible for referrals.	Yes	Head of Student Services and Marketing.
Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO)	Overall responsibility for child protection and vulnerable adult matters; responsible for referrals.	Yes	Student Support Manager.
Deputy DCPO (DDCPO)	Responsible for child protection and vulnerable adult matters on a campus specific basis.	No	Range of teaching and non-teaching positions.
 <pre> graph TD JMcKay[DCPO Jenny McKay] --- DDO[Deputy Designated Officers] SMcCartney[DCPO Stephen McCartney] --- DDO DDO --- CN[College North x4] DDO --- CC[College Central x4] DDO --- CS[College South x5] </pre>			
Source: NRC			

NRC has adopted an area-based team approach to the protection of children and vulnerable adults, with DDCPOs in place across each of the eight campuses on a College North, College South and College Central basis. Supporting this team of 11 campus-based officers are designated officers with overall responsibility for decision making and referral (note that the DCPOs are included within the DDCPO complement and have not been double counted in the total). Only the DCPOs are named within the policy.

Table 3.4
 Safeguarding structures – NWRC

NWRC			
Role	Responsibility	Named individual	Position
Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO)	Overall responsibility for child protection and vulnerable adult matters.	Yes	Health, Welfare and Child Protection Officer.
Deputy DCPO (DDCPO) x2	Assume responsibility in the absence of the DCPO.	Yes	Range of positions.
<pre> graph TD A["DCPO Anne McGarrigle"] --- B["DCPO City Factory Named"] A --- C["DCPO City Factory Named"] </pre>			
Source: NWRC			

Within NWRC a dedicated post has been developed for the DCPO (a Health Welfare and Child Protection Officer). This person is responsible for matters relating to child protection and vulnerable adults across the three campus locations (Derry, Strabane and Limavady) and the eight training and delivery sites within the College. Supporting the DCPO are two DDCPOs, both located in the City Factory Campus and available for child protection duties if required.

Table 3.5
Safeguarding structures – SERC (detailed in current policy)

Role	Responsibility	Named individual	Position
Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO) x 6	Overall responsibility for child protection and vulnerable adult matters.	Partial – 4 named within the policy.	A range of non-teaching staff including School Links Co-ordinators.
Source: SERC			

Consultation with SERC indicated that, following the development of their Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy, they have appointed additional members of staff to the child protection and vulnerable adults team (refer to Table 3.6). This resource-intensive approach was adopted to ensure that a designated officer would always be available at each campus to provide support. The current structure is as follows:

Table 3.6
Safeguarding structures – SERC (provided during consultation)

Source: SERC			

Table 3.7
Safeguarding structures – SRC

Role	Responsibility	Named individual	Position
Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO)	Overall responsibility for child protection and vulnerable adult matters.	Yes	A range of teaching and non-teaching staff.
Deputy DCPO (DDCPO)	Assume responsibility in the absence of the DCPO.	Yes	A range of non-teaching staff.

Designated Child Protection Officers

Armagh Campus Emma Headley	Banbridge Campus Cate Toman	Kilkeel & Newry Campus Marguerite McConville	Lurgan Campus Jason Moles	Portadown Campus Colette Haughey
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Deputy Designated Child Protection Officers

Armagh Campus Jacqueline Simms	Banbridge Campus Catherine Daly	Kilkeel & Newry Campus Siobhan Blaney	Lurgan Campus Catherine Daly	Portadown Campus Catherine Daly
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Source: SRC

In addition to the structure detailed above, SRC have recently appointed a further 3 DCPOs and 3 DDCPOs to cover the Training for Success (TFS) and Trade Campuses at Greenbank Newry, Armagh and Portadown. Therefore, within SRC a team of 8 DCPO and 8 DDCPOs operate across each of the campus locations under the direction of the Assistant Director for Student Services and Marketing. The majority of these posts are held by non-teaching staff working within student services. College representatives have indicated that non-teaching staff were chosen as they are located full-time on each campus and are therefore more easily accessible than teaching staff throughout the day rather than staff who may be based across campuses.

Table 3.8
 Safeguarding structures – SWC

Role	Responsibility	Named individual	Position
DCPO	Responsibility for dealing with the protection of children and vulnerable adults.	Yes	Designated Teacher for Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults.
DCPO Assistants	Assume responsibility in the absence of the DCPO.	Yes	Various posts.
<pre> graph TD A["DCPO Des O'Doherty"] --- B["DCPO Assistant Enniskillen"] A --- C["DCPO Assistant Dungannon / Cookstown"] </pre>			
Source: SWC			

SWC have nominated one individual who is responsible for matters relating to child protection and vulnerable adults across the four campus locations (Omagh, Dungannon, Enniskillen and Cookstown). The DCPO is based in the Omagh campus. There are two assistant DCPOs, one based in Enniskillen and one in Dungannon/Cookstown. These individuals have been in place since the start of the academic year 2009/10.

Table 3.9 summarises the information presented above:

Table 3.9
 Safeguarding Structures Overview – FE Regional Colleges CPOs Representation

College	No. of Students	No. of DCPOs	Ratio of CPOs to Students	Cross Campus Representation
NRC	14,863	13	1,143	YES
BMC	26,389	8	3,299	YES
NWRC	19,536	3	6,512	YES
SWC	17,795	3	5,932	YES
SRC	20,076	16	1,255	YES
SERC	18,692	17	1,099	YES
Total	117,351	60	1,956	
<i>Source: NI FE Colleges.</i>				

The information presented above indicates that all Colleges have a least one member of staff responsible for matters regarding the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Beyond this, Colleges have developed a range of structures including representation across campuses, multiple numbers of designated and deputy officers and the creation of posts that are dedicated to the welfare and protection of children and vulnerable adults only. It is beyond the scope of this report to assess the suitability of these structures; nevertheless there are a number of key points that should be considered by both DEL and the Colleges going forward:

- All Colleges should, as a matter of urgency, seek to finalise structures and appoint staff. In the interim there is the risk that policies and procedures may be misinterpreted by both staff and students;
- The development of minimum standards in resourcing levels should be considered to ensure consistency throughout the Sector. Guidance provided by the Department for Education and Skills in 2007 states that, in FE Colleges in England, the Designated Officer should be a senior member of staff. Guidance aimed at the wider education system and the voluntary sector in NI requires the appointment of a designated and deputy officer with no specific reference to the grade at which the position should be held. It is therefore recommended that clear requirements for FE Colleges in NI should be put in place. Outside of this, Colleges should develop a structure that reflects their particular requirements (i.e. campus locations, staffing structure etc.);
- Structures should be developed to ensure that lines of reporting and responsibility are clear to those with designated and deputy designated responsibilities and also to the wider staff and student body. This is particularly important for Colleges that have developed structures requiring the appointment of multiple officers.

3.3.1 *The role of the Board of Governors*

During the consultation process, Colleges were asked to identify the representative on the Board of Governors with responsibility for Child Protection. This system of nomination is an inspection requirement of the ETI and forms part of their current inspection process for Colleges and reflects the guidance and standards required within the Schools system by DE.

Table 3.10

Representative on the Board of Governors who is responsible for Child Protection

College	Name of the representative on the Board of Governors who is responsible for Child Protection
BMC	Ms Patricia Harron
NRC	No specific Governor holds this responsibility
NWRC	No specific Governor holds this responsibility Mr Seamus Murphy – College Director named as having overall responsibility
SERC	No specific Governor holds this responsibility
SRC	Mr Arnold Hatch, Chair of Board of Governors
SWC	No specific Governor holds this responsibility Mr Malachy McAleer – College Director named as having overall responsibility
Source: Individual College Consultations completed December 2009	

At the time of consultation, two Colleges had appointed a representative on the Board of Governors with responsibility for child protection issues, two Colleges had not appointed a representative and two Colleges reported that the College Director was the person on the Board of Governors with overall responsibility for child protection issues. Discussion with the Colleges indicated that they were unsure of the suitability of this requirement within the FE context and reported that they would benefit from clarification of the requirement from the ETI and DEL. It is important that there is a Board Member other than the College Director with responsibility for Child Protection to ensure that everyone recognises the importance the College authorities place on this issue and to ensure that another Board Member is available should there be a need to investigate the College Director.

3.4 Raising awareness of policies and procedures

The policies and procedures detailed above will only be effective if the staff and student body are aware of them. An understanding of the process and procedures in place within each College is particularly important for staff, as they need to fully understand, and comply with, the procedures in order to reduce the level of risk caused by inaction or inappropriate action and to ensure that the needs of students are adequately and appropriately addressed. Note that DENI guidance states that *'the role of the designated teacher should not be seen as diminishing the role of the*

members of staff in being alert to the signs of abuse and being aware of the procedures to be followed. The following sub-section examines the systems that Colleges currently have in place to ensure awareness across the staff and student body.

3.4.1 Staff

As noted in Table 3.11, all Colleges have made their policy available on their College webpages. However, this in itself does not ensure that staff and students are aware of the policy and understand its supporting procedures and structures. The table below presents examples of activities undertaken by the Colleges to raise staff awareness (note the table excludes the posting of the policy on the College website facility).

Table 3.11
Techniques used for raising staff awareness of policies and procedures

College	Techniques used for raising staff awareness of policies and procedures
BMC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentation by Student Services Manager delivered at the College's annual staff development programme (one-off, Feb 09) – focussed on Vetting and Barring Scheme. ▪ A rolling programme of staff training on Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults is currently being delivered. ▪ Statement detailing designated staff to be included in all BMC publications (once staff appointed and training delivered).
NRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Posters in public places e.g., reception, canteen and staff rooms. ▪ Induction process for all new staff – child protection session included in this. ▪ Annual compulsory training for all existing staff.
NWRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mandatory training for all staff in a lecture format (yearly basis). Follow-up training also delivered to staff who are employed outside of this training period. ▪ Full training delivered to all Heads of School. ▪ Training delivered to all new staff. ▪ Posters in every classroom providing CPO contact details.
SERC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training delivered to all new staff at induction. ▪ All staff receive on-line child and vulnerable adult training - refreshed every two years. This training is mandatory and a tracking function has been developed to ensure completion.
SRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training delivered to all new staff at induction. ▪ New training programme currently being adopted by the Staff Development Team, this scheme will mirror the SERC scheme.

College	Techniques used for raising staff awareness of policies and procedures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mandatory online child protection training will be available from September 2010 – all staff will be required to complete this training by December 2010.
SWC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child and Vulnerable Adult training delivered to all staff once a year. ▪ All new staff receive child protection information as part of their induction.
Source: FE Regional Colleges September - December 2009	

The information presented above indicates that Colleges utilise a number of methods to raise awareness of child protection and vulnerable adult policies and procedures. These include:

- Five of the six Colleges putting in place systems to ensure that all new staff receive information and training as part of their induction. Only BMC have yet to develop this approach. In addition to the formal induction and training techniques, NRC and NWRC have designed and displayed posters throughout the College detailing CPO names and contact details; and
- Mandatory staff training (in College procedures and processes) is currently in place in four of the six Colleges. NRC, NWRC and SWC deliver this training on a yearly basis, with SERC delivering to staff every two years (however NRC have indicated that, post-induction, the training for staff is not mandatory, with only staff who self-nominate receiving training). The number of staff who have received this training is detailed in Table 3.12 (note that NRC did not submit information on numbers of staff trained). BMC and SRC have indicated that they are in the process of developing mandatory training for all staff. Further information for both BMC and SRC is detailed below).

Table 3.12

Child Protection Training received by staff of each College in College policies and processes (including Senior Management, lecturers, other staff and students).

College	Level	% of staff trained	Title of Course ⁸	Date of most recent
SERC	Senior management	100%	SERC Child Protection	Sep 09
	Teaching	100%	SERC Child Protection	Sep 09
	Non-teaching	100%	SERC Child Protection	Sep 09
SWC	Senior management	100%	Vulnerable Adults	Oct 09
	Teaching	100%	Vulnerable Adults	Oct 09

⁸ Note it was beyond the scope of this report to review whether the training being taken up by staff was fit for purpose. We feel this should be reviewed separately.

College	Level	% of staff trained	Title of Course ⁸	Date of most recent
	Non-teaching	100%	Vulnerable Adults	Oct 09
NWRC	Senior management	100%	Child Protection Training	Jan to Sep 09
	Teaching	58%	Child Protection Training	Jan to Sep 09
	Non-teaching	75%	Child Protection Training	Jan to Sep 09
SRC	Senior management	100%	Child Protection Training	Jan to Sep 09
	Teaching	50%	Child Protection Training	Jan to Sep 09
	Non-teaching	50%	Child Protection Training	Jan to Sep 09

Source: SERC, SWC and NWRC HR Managers.

The information presented above suggests that there are some gaps in training for staff in SRC and BMC, although, as noted above, both these Colleges are in the process of developing staff training programmes. Within SRC, mandatory online child protection training will be available from September 2010, with all staff being required to complete this training by December 2010. BMC indicated that it has engaged in significant training for staff in relation to the areas of child protection, The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 awareness, Access NI arrangements and the implication of the new Vetting and Barring Scheme. All staff in the College have the opportunity to refresh and update their training as part of the College's annual staff development conference in February. From September 2010, the College will initiate a rolling programme of internal staff development and awareness-raising with regard to safeguarding and protection issues for vulnerable adults and young people.

In order for any communication exercises to be truly effective, each College should ensure that structures and procedures are finalised and approved by the Governing Body. The current system of draft policies and procedures and ongoing changes to staffing structures creates an uncertain environment and one that is not conducive to ensuring an understanding of policy, procedures and guidelines throughout the staffing, and indeed student, body.

Awareness from the perspective of CPOs

The following tables present the extent to which CPOs feel that teaching and non-teaching staff are aware of child protection and vulnerable adult policies and processes (this information was gathered as part of the CPO training needs survey⁹).

Table 3.13

Awareness of the **teaching staff** on child protection and vulnerable adults policies and processes from CPO’s perspective (average rank).

College	Not aware at all	Not aware	Not aware or unaware	Aware	Very Aware
NWRC					
SWC					
SERC					
SRC					
BMC					
NRC					

Source: FGS McClure Watters, Survey of Child Protection Officers (2009).

The information presented above indicates that there are varying levels of awareness among teaching staff throughout the College network. Clearly the levels reported in SRC, BMC and NRC suggest that increased levels of awareness-raising activities are required (it should be noted that NRC reported that an annual staff training programme is in operation and both BMC and SRC are in the process of developing training). The above analysis is based on the perception of respondents to the CPO Training Needs Survey and therefore may not be an adequate reflection of actual levels of awareness. It is recommended that the Colleges consider further investigation in this area to ascertain levels of awareness, understanding of procedures and the effectiveness of the training currently delivered to staff.

The table overleaf examines levels of awareness amongst non-teaching staff from the perspective of the CPOs. While these staff members may be in contact with students on a less regular basis than teaching staff, it is nonetheless important that they are aware of, and provided with an understanding of, the policies and procedures in place.

⁹ The questionnaire was sent via email to all the potential CPO respondents. A total of 31 CPOs successfully completed the questionnaire, which equates to 60% of the prospective respondents.

Table 3.14

Awareness of the **non-teaching staff** on child protection and vulnerable adults policies and processes from CPO’s perspective (average rank).

College	Not aware at all	Not aware	Not aware or unaware	Aware	Very Aware
NWRC					
SWC					
SERC					
SRC					
BMC					
NRC					

Source: FGS McClure Watters, Survey of Child Protection Officers (2009).

Overall the levels of awareness recorded for non-teaching staff are broadly similar to those recorded for teaching staff.

Specific feedback received from CPOs in regard to staff awareness included:

- *“I think most staff are aware of these processes but may not always know how and when to implement them”;*
- *“Staff are generally very aware of the policies and procedures, but keen to pass it to the designated people with responsibility”;*
- *“If I as the Child Protection Officer have limited knowledge, it would be safe to say that many staff are in a less informed position. Staff teaching on Child Care programmes are more than likely to have this information”;*
- *“They don’t want to know and plead ignorance around serious matters – one lecturer put a student’s name in an e-mail to various staff!”;*
- *“Lecturing staff are aware of who the CPO on campus is but I doubt they are familiar with the policies and processes, although literature is available”;*

A number of survey respondents put forward suggestions on how to increase staff awareness and understanding of the child protection and vulnerable adults policies and procedures. The recommendations focused on more regular and in-depth training sessions, regular updates and involvement with external stakeholders. Specific examples included:

- *“More information in manageable formats such as newsletters or posters, online training sessions, clear guidelines and accessible information, etc.”;*
- *“More work alongside police and local community groups”;*

- *“More practical approach adopted with scenarios and cases, providing not general but specific information about the situation of the College and relevant issues”.*

3.4.1 Awareness-raising amongst students

As noted in Section 2 and Section 5, best practice developed for the education sector in NI and the FE Sector in England dictates that students should also be made aware of child protection systems and how to access them. Table 3.15 details some of the techniques currently in place within the Colleges to raise student awareness.

Table 3.15
Techniques used for raising student awareness of policies and procedures

College	Techniques used for raising student awareness of policies and procedures
BMC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Induction procedures are currently under review. ▪ Fold out wallet size ‘Met Map’ that provides students with key information on support and services available to students.
NRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Posters in public places. ▪ Student services guide provided to new students includes information of child and vulnerable adult protection. CPO not named. ▪ Policy discussed at weekly timetabled pastoral support period for each pupil. ▪ Child and vulnerable adult protection covered at induction.
NWRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child and vulnerable adult protection covered at induction (consistent across all groups - FE, HE, VEP, Training for Success etc). Induction sessions follow an interactive format and are developed in conjunction with students. ▪ Student diary provided to all students which refers to policy. CPO is named. ▪ Coloured poster in each classroom. CPO named and photo included (campus-specific poster developed). ▪ Leaflets on child and vulnerable adult protection displayed in prominent places across each campus (ensures evening students can also access services). ▪ Plasma screens used to provide information.
SERC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child and vulnerable adult protection covered at induction, followed up by online awareness testing for students in class tutorials. ▪ Posters in each campus.
SRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child and vulnerable adult protection covered at induction. ▪ Leaflet on child and vulnerable adult protection posted to all homes. ▪ New Student Services guide in process of development. ▪ Weekly tutorial system in place for all full-time students.

College	Techniques used for raising student awareness of policies and procedures
SWC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All students provided with the leaflet Policy for the Protection of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults - A guide for young people, their relatives and careers, during induction. However, CPO is not named nor are contact details provided. ▪ All school links pupils provided with information. CPO is named. ▪ Child and vulnerable adult protection covered at induction. ▪ Information included in Student Handbook and Diary. CPO is named
<p>Source: FE Regional Colleges September to December 2009</p>	

The information presented above indicates that all of the Colleges, with the exception of BMC, currently provide information to students on the child protection systems in place. In order to ascertain the extent to which the various methods used had resulted in awareness amongst the student body, focus group sessions were completed with groups of students at each of the six Colleges. A total of 61 students attended these sessions. The participants included male and female students, a range of ages, and stage of study (i.e., recently enrolled, existing student etc) and subject areas.

The table below summarises the feedback received at each of the College sessions. Following this table, the key themes emerging from the sessions are discussed.

Table 3.16

Summary of the feedback received from students during the focus group sessions

College	Feedback from students
BMC	<p>No students knew about College policies and they had not been involved in their development. A small number thought that they could be accessed online.</p> <p>No awareness of child protection systems and low levels of awareness of wider student support services e.g., low awareness that the College offered a counselling service.</p>
NRC	<p>The group knew of some policies e.g., health and safety and code of conduct. The majority of the group were made aware of the support available via their tutor. There were low levels of awareness of wider support available and how to access it.</p> <p>No awareness of child protection systems and low levels of awareness of wider student support services, e.g., a small number knew that the College offered a counselling service or careers service.</p>
NWRC	<p>Students were aware of College policies, reporting that they can access them online, via student services or find information on one of the noticeboards throughout the College. All knew of student services, the support offered and its locations. All felt that if they had a problem they would know where to go.</p>
SERC	<p>Students were aware of the type of support available and how to access it. Induction informed them of services and the individuals involved in the delivery. No students had accessed policies, however they were aware that they could access policies online.</p>

College	Feedback from students
SRC	Some levels of awareness of policies and support services (e.g., counselling). Students reported that, while induction was given on a class by class basis, they felt that too much information was given during a busy time of the year. Overall some awareness of policies. While students are aware that there is information available online, they indicated that they required access to a computer to view it.
SWC	Varying levels of awareness. Induction had been given but half of the group (all male) were unaware of support structures and policies, the length of the induction session was highlighted as a particular problem. A student handbook was seen as useful and a good way to access information at any stage.
Source: FE Regional Colleges – Focus Groups with Students, September – December 2009	

The key themes emerging from the student focus group sessions are as follows:

- No students reported being involved in the policy development process. While a number of Colleges operate a class representative system, this tended to focus on class-based issues only. Overall students felt that the opportunity to 'have a voice' and input into College policies would be of benefit to them and the College.
- Overall there are low levels of awareness of child protection systems and student support services (with the exception of NWRC and SERC). Across the Sector, awareness of child protection structures and designated officers is low.
- A number of key themes emerged in regard to the methods and techniques used by Colleges to raise awareness of amongst the student body:
 - The majority of students noted that they had been involved in an induction session or had been provided with an induction pack which included child protection/vulnerable adults protection information;
 - It was felt that induction should be made available to all students, not just new enrolments. Students felt it was important that they be given updates and reminders of the support available during their time at the College;
 - While induction sessions told students about key services and support, students reported that they often may not know where the physical location of the relevant office is. Students reported that they needed to know where to go in order to access the support available;
 - A selection of students indicated that the amount of information included in the induction sessions was often 'boring' and hard to digest;
 - A number of students suggested that important information on student services and wider pastoral support available may be better delivered outside of the first few weeks of term,

- Students reported that this was a very intensive period and their focus is on class and course-based issues at this stage of the academic year;
- Students highlighted the need for the entire student body to receive induction and information on services i.e., FE, HE, Training for Success, students on Access courses, VEP/extended curriculum students etc. This was also a suggestion noted within the wider consultation sessions where staff engaged in the delivery of courses outside of 'mainstream full-time FE' noted that induction and awareness-raising activities did not reflect the wider experiences of pupils;
 - While students often referred to information being available on the College intranet, this was not seen as an effective mechanism for accessing support and information. Students noted that, in order for this to be effective, they would need to have support in accessing and understanding it and also have access to a computer on a regular basis; and
 - Where students had been provided with a student diary/handbook, they reported that this was a useful way to access information as it provided access to the information at any time. However, a small number of students made reference to the need to streamline the information provided and suggested that key information on support services and policies should be provided on a single page/document rather than subsumed within the student handbook/diary.
- A number of key themes emerged in regard to the individual that students approached for support:
 - Class tutors or lectures were highlighted as a first point of contact for many students. However the students raised a number of issues with this system:
 - The appropriateness of this system when the student had a concern relating to their tutor. Many stated that they would prefer to someone that they perceived as 'neutral'; and
 - Students were unsure that concerns would be treated confidentially.
 - Overall, students felt that it was important to be able to trust the person providing support. Many made reference to need to put a face to a name or service as an important aspect in building trust.

The information presented above suggests that there are currently some elements of good practice in operation throughout the College network, including:

- The use of interactive induction sessions delivered by NWRC that use video footage to demonstrate to students the location of student support services and the engagement of students in the preparation of these induction materials;
- The use of student focus groups to feedback on induction process at SRC;

- An overview of child and vulnerable adult protection covered at induction (SERC, NWRC, SWC, SRC and NRC);
- The use of online awareness testing for students on key policy areas and student support services by SERC;
- The development of campus-specific colour posters that detail student services (including child protection officers) which include name, photo and contact details – these are available in all classrooms and are accessible to all students and staff at NWRC (refer to Appendix I);
- The provision of leaflets and/or posters detailing designated child protection officers throughout the College (SERC, NRC and NWRC); and
- The development of a fold-out wallet size ‘Met Map’ by BMC (refer to Appendix I) that provides students with key information on support and services available to students.

Despite this good practice, student feedback has indicated that further work is required to ensure that:

- All students are provided with information on College policies and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults (regardless of method of intake, frequency of study etc.) in an appropriate and accessible format;
- The services and structures in place to support students are promoted effectively and understood by all students;
- All students have equal access to support services regardless of form and location of study;
- The study body ‘has a voice’ and is involved in the development of policies and procedures that are relevant to them. Indeed best practice (refer to Section 2) suggests that engaging with students can help to ensure that the policies, procedures and mechanisms to engage with students are appropriate; and
- Procedures are put in place to update students regularly and to assess their understanding of the structures and processes in place, i.e. confirmation that they have read and understood the policy/support structures.

It is recommended that further research is undertaken to examine ‘what works’ for students in terms of the dissemination of information – it is vital that information is shared throughout the College network on new developments, sources of information and student feedback.

3.5 Procedures - the vetting and barring of staff and students

Consultation with HR managers indicated that they feel they have well-developed processes and procedures in place through POCVA and that the requirements of the SVG Order are an extension of this. HR managers indicated that, given the timelines involved in the implementation of the requirements of SVG, they are confident that all requirements will be implemented to the standard required and the deadlines set. They have updated or will update their HR forms to ensure they comply with the checks required.

Each College is represented on the College HR Forum and the SVG requirements for Colleges have been on the agenda at a number of these meetings over the last year. However, as mentioned, all feel that SVG is only an extension of what exists already and all have confirmed that they can meet the deadlines set. The HR Forum allows for the discussion and sharing of practice in relation to such issues across the Colleges. In addition, the NWRC HR Director has looked into GB SVG practice and has shared this with the Group.

The HR Forum voiced some concern over the need to clearly define regulated and controlled activities in the FE context. The HR managers feel that all activities in the Sector should be regulated and will be putting a paper to their Chief Executives on this issue. They would also wish to have a requirement that all staff not previously checked are checked as a matter of priority.

In addition to registering staff and students, Colleges are also required to report incidents to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). The ISA have published criteria for referral and a referral form by use by employers. It is recommended that, through the HR Forum, all Colleges are kept up-to-date on their forthcoming requirements and that processes are monitored in relation to the vetting, barring and reporting mechanisms required.

To support Colleges in reporting and referring information on employees to the ISA, it is vital that all Colleges have in place systems to identify and deal with allegations of suspected abuse by a member of staff, a staff code of conduct including disciplinary procedures and a mechanism for sharing this information between the designated officer and HR. Best practice suggests that while the DCPO is responsible for ensuring that an allegation is recorded and referred to the appropriate authority, HR should be responsible for the implementation of internal disciplinary procedures and the subsequent reporting of the allegation to the ISA for recording purposes.

3.5.1 *The scale and cost of registration*

Access NI have estimated that from July 2010, approximately 600,000 posts in NI will require disclosure. Given this volume, Access NI are currently talking to all registered bodies to gather information to enable it to plan ahead for the future volume of work that will be required. To facilitate this, Access NI have requested the following information from Colleges:

- numbers currently in regulated activity;

- estimated numbers in regulated activity by 2015;
- estimated number of movers;
- estimated number of new recruits; and
- deadline for registration.

Based on returns received by Access NI to date, it is estimated that 40,000 individuals will be required to register by 2015 (this includes student placement registrations). This represents 7% of all posts requiring disclosure in Northern Ireland.

As noted in Section 2, fees for registration will be £58 (£30 for Enhanced Disclosure and £28 for ISA registration). This represents an increase of £28 over the existing Enhanced Disclosure fee. It is therefore estimated that the total cost for the FE Sector up to 2015 will be £2.3million.

In addition to incurring direct costs, Access NI have indicated that the new systems will also increase the administrative burden placed on Colleges with a requirement to:

- Have systems in place to register an interest in individuals as they enter employment within the College;
- Have systems in place to de-register interest in individuals who leave; and
- Have a system in place for reporting incidents to the ISA.

3.5.2 Admission and enrolment of students who may pose a risk to others

Over the course of the consultations, the issue of policies and procedures to deal with potential and current students who may pose a risk to other students was raised. This issue has been brought to the forefront by NWRC who have included within their application and enrolment form the following questions:

- *Have you ever been investigated for allegations relating to adult or child abuse? If YES you are required to send information giving details of dates, details and outcomes of all incidents to the 'Designated Child Protection Officer' at the College.*
- *Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence of a violent or sexual nature?*
- *Have you ever been convicted of the distribution and/or sale of illegal drugs?*

NWRC introduced these questions in response to the number of students who were enrolling for a course that required the completion of an Access NI check and who subsequently failed this check. This ensures that the College has the information required to provide people with relevant careers advice and supports their obligation to meet their duty of care to protect students. NWRC

have developed a risk assessment procedure in response to collating this information and work with students, the PSNI and statutory services to redirect an individual chosen course of study and put in place systems for management if required. A copy of this procedure is attached in Appendix II.

While NWRC may be informed if a person chooses to complete this section of the form, the other Colleges indicated that they can be made aware of students who may pose a risk to others through other channels e.g.:

- Identified as part of the Access NI checks for students on placement (where the placement requires a check to be completed);
- Students may disclose information to a member of staff at interview stage; and
- Colleges can be made aware of potential issues by an outside agency, e.g., contact from Social Services, PSNI, probation officers, although there is no consistency or agreed procedure for the sharing of information throughout the College network between Colleges and other statutory services.

As noted in Table 3.1 only SERC has included within its policy details of a protocol for the “management of sex offenders in the college”, this protocol is attached in Appendix II.

Discussion of this issue with College representatives has indicated inconsistencies in approach throughout the Sector with a number of Colleges reporting that they understand, or have been provided with legal advice, indicating that they are not entitled to ask a question similar to that included in the NWRC enrolment form. Consultation has also indicated there is potential for a student to be excluded from one College as a result of a disclosure and not at another College, with inconsistencies in the interpretation of the ‘right’ to exclude students.

It is recommended that a Sector-wide response is developed in relation to identifying and responding to students who may pose a risk to others including:

- Consistent and Sector-wide legal advice is sought on requesting information on notification of the commitment of an offence;
- Consistent and Sector-wide legal advice is sought on the power of Colleges to exclude students who may pose a risk;
- Guidance is provided on the development of consistent procedures for assessing risk and implementing a response – a Sectoral agreed strategy to assessing and managing risk are required; and
- Colleges have access to information in relation to engaging with external agencies.

Consultation with Access NI also raised this issue as students will be required to become registered from November 2010 (although all Colleges currently complete Access NI checks on

students where required) and if registration fails, they will no longer be able to continue with their course. This raises the need for students to be identified and given clear advice at the outset (i.e. at enrolment) on their eligibility and ability to continue with their chosen route of study.

3.6 Sharing Best Practice

As noted above, all Colleges are currently engaged in the development of policies, procedures and guidance associated with the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Given the dynamic environment within which the Colleges operate and the rapidly changing legal and policy environment, the dissemination of best practice and lessons learnt between Colleges would be of benefit to the Sector as a whole. This could potentially reduce resources allocated at an individual College level and ensure consistency in approach. Measures to create a mechanism for sharing best practice and disseminating information is already underway with the creation of the Student Services Working Group (established in June 2009). Table 3.17 below presents information on the aim, membership and remit of the Student Services Working Group:

Table 3.17
 Student Services Working Group – Aim, Membership and Remit

Aspect	Description
Aim	To develop a shared approach to the development and delivery of responsive student services across the six regional Colleges. The group will work under the direction and guidance of the Directors' Group on common policy issues and on wider strategic issues impacting on student services.
Membership	Membership will comprise of the Senior Student Services Manager or appointee from each Regional College.
Remit	<p>To inform the Directors' Group on the implications of new policy and strategic developments related to Student Services.</p> <p>To present all development proposals to the Directors' Group prior to implementation across the Colleges.</p> <p>To engage with DEL in the development of Student Services and related policies common to the FE/HE Sector.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with relevant external partners to improve Student Services within the Regional Colleges.</p> <p>To inform the Directors' Group on common issues in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Learning Support b. Careers Information Advice and Guidance c. Pastoral Care d. Protection of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults e. Student Finance f. Student Activities and Student Union (Class representatives and Student

Aspect	Description
	Council) g. International Students h. Learning Resource Centres i. Admissions j. Health and Well Being of Students k. Educational Visits and policies relating to this area l. Quality of Student Services including IQ:RS To exchange ideas and research between student services practitioners, stimulate networking opportunities and share good practice.
Source: Student Services Working Group	

While the Student Services Working Group includes as part of its remit pastoral care and issues associated with the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults, feedback received during the College consultation sessions and the CPO training needs analysis has indicated that the development of a Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults working group that focuses solely on these issues would provide a number of benefits to the College network. The following points were made:

- It would allow discussion and identification of key issues affecting the FE Sector, e.g., systems to respond to the enrolment of students who may pose a risk to other students;
- It would provide the opportunity for the development of standardised policy procedures and guidelines that could be adopted across the entire Sector, ensuring consistency of approach to the protection of children and vulnerable adults on a Sector-wide basis (the approach adopted by the AoC outlined in Section 5 is a particularly good example of this);
- It could facilitate the identification and development of best practice for staff training (at all levels) and create the opportunity for a centralised training plan for the Sector;
- It would provide an opportunity to share lessons and a forum for developing best practice in awareness-raising activities for students; and
- The creation of opportunities for the examination of forums/activities that could support the network of CPOs, e.g., the creation of a knowledge based system or a networking and information site for CPOs similar to that currently operated by the AoC.

It is recommended that the College network considers the development of Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults working group that operates as a sub-group to the Student Services Working Group. It is recommended that the sub-group be comprised of the Designated Child Protection Officers and sets a time-bound terms of reference to examine and provide practical solutions to the issues outlined above.

4 DESIGNATED & DEPUTY CHILD PROTECTION OFFICERS TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this section we examine the training needs of Designated and Deputy Child Protection Officers (hereafter referred to as CPOs) throughout the Northern Ireland FE College Network.

To capture this information, all CPOs were issued with a questionnaire requesting their views on their training and support needs. The questionnaire was sent via email on 5th October 2009 to all the potential CPO respondents. Up to 5 email reminders were sent in the following month and follow-up phone calls were made. The final reminder was sent on the 9th November 2009. A total of 30 CPOs completed and returned the questionnaire which equates to 64% of all potential respondents. The remainder of this section presents the key findings.

4.2 A Profile of CPOs

In addition to undertaking the role of Designated or Deputy CPO within the College, 33% of respondents held a teaching post and 67% a non-teaching post. Of those that are employed in non-teaching roles, the majority are involved in student support/student services, with a small number employed in a training capacity.

The table below presents the length of time the respondents have been CPOs within their respective College:

Table 4.1

Questionnaire – Length of Period being Designated/Deputy Child Protection Officer

Period	No. of Respondents	%
< 1 year	9	35%
1-2 years	7	27%
3 years	4	15%
4 years	3	12%
5 years	2	8%
Over 5 years	1	4%
Total	26*	100%
* four respondents did not record length of time in post		
Source: FGS McClure Watters (2009).		

The majority of CPOs are relatively new to their post, with 35% acting as CPO for less than a year and a further 27% between in post for 1 to 2 years.

Those respondents who have been in their position over 1 year (18 respondents) stated that, on the whole, their role has developed over the last 12 months as a result of the College merger process and the widening of the post to include vulnerable adults. Six respondents noted that they had experienced an increase in activity due to a marked growth in the number of referrals from students (issues for referral included alleged abuse, anorexia, depression, self-harm, mental health problems, etc.).

4.3 Training Received

The training received to enable the respondents to undertake their role as CPO includes an array of training courses from a variety of sources. If we look at the date the respondents received their last training course/session, the breakdown is quite positive, with 30% receiving training in the last 6 months and a further 44% within the last year:

- 30% received training in the last 6 months;
- 44% received training between the last 6 months and 1 year;
- 18% received training between the last year and 2 years; and
- 2 respondents stated the last training they received happened 3 or 4 years ago.

In order to assess the relevance of the training received, it has been categorised as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| • Specific training Post-2007 | Training specific to the role of CPO received post-2007 |
| • Specific training Pre-2007 | Training specific to the role of CPO received pre-2007 |
| • Human Resource Training | Training specific to human resource implications of the VBS |
| • General Training | Training related to the wider pastoral care needs of students e.g., health, debt advice, etc. |

The following table summarises the training received by each CPO by College.

Table 4.2
 Training Received by CPOs and College

Respondents by College	No. of Courses Undertaken by Training Category and Individual			
	Specific Pre 2007	Specific Post 2007	Human Resources	General
BMC	1	1	2	
BMC Total	100%	100%	100%	0%
NRC1	3			
NRC2		1		
NRC3	2	1		
NRC4		1		
NRC5		1		
NRC6		1		
NRC7		1		
NRC Total	30%	85%	0%	0%
NWRC	2	7	1	
NWRC Total	100%	100%	100%	0%
SERC1		2		1
SERC2		2		
SERC3		1		
SERC4		1		
SERC5		1		
SERC6		1		
SERC7	1	1		
SERC8		1		
SERC9		1		
SERC10	3			2
SERC Total	20%	90%	0%	20%
SRC1	2	2		
SRC2		2		1
SRC3		2		
SRC4	2	1		
SRC5	1	1		1
SRC6		2		
SRC7		1		
SRC Total	43%	100%	0%	29%
SWC	3			
SWC Total	100%	0%	0%	0%
Total No.*	17	24	2	4
Total %*	63%	89%	7%	15%

Notes:
 * The 'Total No.' and 'Total %' have been calculated from the total number of individuals that received training, regardless of the number of courses. Then, they show the number and % of the total respondents that did receive the relevant training.
Source: FGS McClure Watters Survey of Child Protection Officers (2009).

The salient points emerging from the table above include:

- All the respondents reported that they had received specific training for their role as CPO, with the majority (89%) receiving this training post-2007. Examples of specific training included SENDO; Vulnerable Adults and Young People provided by the Volunteer Development Agency; in-house refresher sessions on Child Protection for Designated Officers; Keeping Safe Update for CPOs by the Volunteer Trust, etc.
- Overall only 11% of CPOs (3 CPOs – one in SERC, one in SRC and one in NRC) reported that the specific training they had received was undertaken pre-2007. Specific training before 2007 included UNOCINI Training provided by Child Net International; designated Teacher Training by WELB; Designated Officers Child Protection by EHSS Trust; Child Protection Training by NEELB, etc.
- In addition to specific training, 4 respondents had also received general training such as PIPS Suicide Prevention training, Mental Health First Aid and CEOP Ambassador training.
- 2 respondents (7%) reported that they had received training in the implementation of New Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS).

CPOs reported that the training was delivered by a range of in-house and external providers, with 56% of the training delivered in-house by the Colleges and 43% provided by external bodies. The majority of specific training (65%) received by CPOs post-2007 was delivered by external agencies, including DEL, the Volunteer Development Agency, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust, Western Education & Library Youth Service, Western Education & Library Board (WELB), Child Net International, PSNI, Learning and Skills Development Agency, Queen's University of Belfast (QUB), Public Initiative for the Prevention of Suicide and Self-Harm (PIPS), East Health & Social Services Trust, Volunteer Trust, Globalclub and Health Promotion and Headstart.

4.4 Extent to which training received supports CPOs in their role

Overall, the respondents perceived the training they had received enables them to undertake their duties as Designated or Deputy Child Protection Officers more effectively. However, reference was frequently made to the complexity of their role and the need for training that goes beyond theoretical study. Table 4.3 presents a summary of the responses received:

Table 4.3

Extent to which respondents reported that the training they received was sufficient to enable them to undertake CPO role.

Colleges	Yes, Sufficient		Somewhat Sufficient*		Not Sufficient	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
BMC	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%
NRC	5	83%	1	17%	0	0%
NWRC	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%
SERC	7	70%	3	30%	0	0%
SRC	4	70%	3	30%	0	0%
SWC	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Overall*	18	69%	8	31%	0	0%

* one respondent did not complete this question

Source: FGS McClure Watters Survey of Child Protection Officers (2009).

Just over two-thirds of respondents reported that the training they had was sufficient to enable them to undertake their CPO duties. While the remaining one-third reported that the training was good or somewhat sufficient, they also raised a number of weaknesses in relation to the training or the training process, including:

- *Good training, but do not feel confident enough to be able to handle child protection issues.*
- *All of the training has really been so useful and beneficial. However I feel unless I researched and found out about these courses they did not always become available through Further Education via DEL.*
- *I would perhaps benefit from additional training on completing the necessary paperwork.*
- *The training clarified the processes and procedures to follow when handling child protection issues. By providing scenario situations it highlighted how complex the role of Designated CPO can be. From that I feel that as a CPO I would need regular refresher training as I really don't get that many referrals (only a few per year) and because it isn't something I'm*

constantly dealing with then regular training would support my knowledge/skills in the meantime.

- *The training received was very useful but the amount of training has been limited making it difficult to undertake the role effectively.*
- *Training gives a brief insight into cases, but every case is individual. I have only been called upon a few times but I have had to call in assistance from other CPOs as I was unsure what steps to take.*
- *Good initial foundation, but ongoing training should be made available.*

Although the majority of respondents stated the training provided was sufficient or good enough to enable them to carry out their role, 70% suggested some improvements to the training they receive. The most common suggestion for improvement was the need for training that focused on practical examples, role plays, case studies etc. Examples included:

- *Some more case studies would help, along with how to conduct an interview.*
- *More scenario training should be made available as a number of cases have been presented this year and clarification is quite often needed.*
- *Perhaps a role play of situations may have helped to give me a clearer idea of the exact procedure to be followed when an issue arises.*
- *More specific examples of procedure within the college.*

CPOs also highlighted the need for longer training sessions or more regular training (13%):

- *I think a full day's training or two ½ days would have given us more time to question and embed the information.*
- *Regular training should be provided i.e. available at least once per term.*

Other suggested improvements include:

- The creation of an online communication system with a forum to establish contacts, share knowledge and promote standardised practice;
- Guidance on how to conduct an interview;
- Guidance on how to complete paperwork;
- Provision of training by external specialised bodies using up-to-date information; and
- The opportunity to discuss the College's child protection policy with peers.

4.5 Specific training and development needs

CPOs were asked to detail specific training and development requirements that would support them in their role. The responses have been summarised in the table below into five main categories.

Table 4.4
 Specific Training and Development Needs

Area of Training / Development	No. of responses
CPO training (practical issues and case studies)	14
New/changes in legislation	8
Wider issues affecting students	7
Awareness of support services and referral agencies	5
Forum/discussion groups	3
<i>Source: FGS McClure Watters Survey of Child Protection Officers (2009).</i>	

The most common type of training and development suggested by the CPOs to support them in their role was training specific to CPO duties. As suggested by the preceding responses, this focused on practical issues such as completion of paperwork, casestudy based learning, interview protocol, identification and awareness training, and best practice and procedure updates.

Other suggestions included:

- Information on new and developing legislation: respondents reported that this would ensure that they are up-to-date on legal requirements and could confidently fulfil their role for the College;
- Training/information on wider issues affecting students including: mental health, general well-being issues; keeping safe online/new technology; training around sexual orientation; self-harm etc; and
- Provision of information on wider support/referral structures. Respondents reported that a better understanding of outside agencies and referral organisations would ensure that the students received the necessary and appropriate support and that the CPOs themselves followed the correct protocol. In particular, a number of respondents referred to the need for a system of support to be in place similar to those in place for CPOs within the school system provided by the ELBs.

4.5.1 Keeping up-to-date

If we look at the systems the CPOs use to keep up-to-date with the latest developments and best practice in the Child and Vulnerable Adults protection arena, there is no consistent source of information or methods used, with each College or individual CPO developing their own approach. The following summarises the systems reported by the CPOs:

- BMC – regular internal and external training in relation to Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults managed through departmental training needs analysis forms provided by the Head of the Department to the College's Staff Development section. The system is reviewed quarterly and an annual review takes place in line with existing business planning practice.
- SERC – The CPO and Pastoral Care managers organise events for CPOs (e.g. conferences) and keep staff up-to-date through emails and regular reports/articles/in-house updates. Other methods reported include: reading policy developments or journals, information from DEL & DE, forums held alongside LSDA, EGSA and other organisations, etc.
- NRC – Informal update systems are used e.g. through friends and colleagues who work in this area, information distributed by the College, discussions with the Head of Student Services or reading press and relevant literature. One respondent stated that they did not keep up-to-date with the latest developments and best practice.
- SRC – the College provides in-house training sessions and holds regular meetings. Other systems stated are research reports, journals and the internet.
- NWRC – in NWRC the CPO has registered with various agencies and groups and holds meetings with Western Education & Library Board Education officers to share practice from the Area Child Protection Committees.
- SWC – the CPO that completed the questionnaire referred to self-guided learning as part of their professional development.

A number of recommendations were put forward to strengthen the process of keeping up-to-date with the latest developments and best practice, including:

- The development of an online knowledge-based system e.g. a networking and information site for CPOs;
- Affiliation with external bodies that could provide newsletters and details on policy and strategy developments;
- Meeting with other CPOs from different workplaces to learn through sharing experiences , good practice and common practice;
- More regular planned training;

- DEL should be more supportive of the teenage plus age group (+16) and make Colleges aware of issues specific to Further Education (not schools);
- The 99/10 Pastoral Care in Schools Child Protection should be urgently updated to include new legislation and adapted to web-based format;
- Circular 2007/01 on the DE website should be made easier to understand and used as guidance; and
- Development of a formal and agreed child protection structure within FE and HE.

The CPOs were also asked to provide detail on the structures in place to support them in their role. The most common source of support was informal structures such as advice, guidance and counselling provided by line managers or colleagues within the College. This suggests that formal structures are not in place and CPOs therefore resort to informal systems of support.

While the majority of CPOs reported that the current systems of support are sufficient, with only 7% rating them as insufficient, the respondents suggested a number of ways in which the support they received could be strengthened:

- Regular meetings/activities/development sessions;
- Regular updates from police and local community groups to provide CPOs with an understanding of the potential problems in the local area;
- More awareness of relevant training available; and
- More formal support structure akin to that provided by DE for management and advice around issues faced by CPOs.

4.6 Summary

In the majority of cases, CPOs had received training relevant to their role over the last two years. This training covered a range of subject areas and had been provided by a range of agents, including representatives from the Colleges themselves. While the majority of the respondents reported that the training had been beneficial in helping them in their role as CPO, the following improvements/additional training requirements were suggested:

- The need for more intensive and regular refresher training;
- The need for training to cover practical issues associated with procedures, reporting, recording and referral;
- The need for training to cover scenario testing and role play situations to build confidence and expertise;

In addition, respondents also highlighted wider support (in addition to training) that would assist them in their role as CPO:

- The provision of up-to-date legislation and guidance from a central source;
- The standardisation of guidance and practice throughout the Sector;
- The opportunity to discuss issues/developments with peers;
- An agreed structure and approach to training and competencies for CPOs;
- Development of a support network for CPOs to reduce the reliance on informal structures; and
- Centralised and updated information on support services and referral agencies.

5 EXAMINING PRACTICE ELSEWHERE

5.1 Introduction

As outlined in Section 2, there are a number of best practice guides and reports that provide advice to organisations in Northern Ireland on their responsibilities in relation to child protection, however these guides and reports do not relate specifically to the FE Sector.

This section therefore examines practice elsewhere and, in particular, focuses on the provision of information to the FE Sector in England. In summary, this section includes:

- A review of guidance and information available to FE Colleges in England;
- The approach adopted in England to disseminate information to FE Colleges;
- Guidance and best practice used to involve students in policy development and raise levels of awareness;
- The approach adopted by Lisburn City Council – this approach has been included within this section as it was highlighted by NICCY as representing best practice in the development of policies and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults in Northern Ireland; and
- A review of a multi-agency approach to training developed within London that may provide useful guidance for FE Colleges in going forward.

5.2 Guidance and information available to FE Colleges in England

5.2.1 *Current guidance for Colleges on safeguarding children*

Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education, published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2007

The principal document for FE Colleges in England is Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education, published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2007 (which came into force on 1st January 2007). This document sets out the responsibilities of all local authorities, schools and FE Colleges in England to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. The document sets out:

- The responsibilities of Colleges (including the role of Governing Bodies), details relevant legislation and provides guidance to inform policy and procedure developments;

- The responsibilities of Colleges to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including guidance on the organisational and management arrangements that need to be put in place and provision of details on where to access further advice;
- Guidance on safer recruitment and selection in education settings, including recruitment and selection best practice and HR processes;
- Detailed guidance on the recruitment and selection checks to be made in education settings; and
- Guidance on handling allegations of abuse against teachers, other staff or volunteers.

The document also provides a number of appendices that provide practical examples and templates for use by the Sector e.g.:

- Recruitment and selection checklists;
- Agency staff/contractors flow chart;
- Reporting individuals to the Secretary of State; and
- Guidance for work experience organisers.

Note that this document does not provide guidance about what action an individual should take to safeguard a child about whom they have concerns. This guidance is provided in a separate document: **What to do if you are worried that a child is being abused, HM Government 2006**. However, the document does refer to the need to ensure that all allegations of abuse made in an education setting are dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently.

In particular the document details that the Governing Bodies of FE Colleges should ensure that a range of activities are undertaken- these are summarised in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1

The Role of Governing Bodies of Further Education Colleges in England

Role of Governing Bodies of FE Colleges in England
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The institution has a child protection policy and procedures in place that are in keeping with locally agreed inter-agency procedures, and the policy is made available to students or parents on request. • The institution operates safe recruitment procedures and makes sure that all appropriate checks are carried out on staff and volunteers who work with children. • The institution has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers that comply with locally agreed inter-agency procedures – guidance is

Role of Governing Bodies of FE Colleges in England

provided on these procedures.

- A senior member of the institution’s staff is designated to take lead responsibility for dealing with child protection issues, providing advice and support to other staff, liaising with the local authority and working with other agencies. The designated person must have the status and authority within the institution’s management structure to carry out the duties of the post including committing resources to child protection matters, and where appropriate directing other staff. Dealing with individual cases may be a responsibility of the student welfare or student support staff in institutions, but it is important that a senior member of staff takes responsibility for this area of work.
- Where an institution provides education and/or training for pupils under 16 years of age who are on the roll of secondary schools, the designated person liaises with the schools concerned and ensures that appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard the children.
- In addition to basic child protection training, the designated person undertakes training in inter-agency working that is provided by, or to standards agreed by, the Local Safeguarding Children Boards, and refresher training at two yearly intervals to keep his or her knowledge and skills up-to-date.
- The principal, and all other staff who work with children, undertake training to equip them to carry out their responsibilities for child protection effectively. This is kept up-to-date by refresher training at three yearly intervals, and temporary staff and volunteers who work with children are made aware of the institution’s arrangements for child protection and their responsibilities.
- The institution remedies without delay any deficiencies or weaknesses in regard to child protection arrangements that are brought to its attention. It undertakes an annual review of its policies and procedures relating to safeguarding and how the above duties have been discharged.

Source: *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education, published by the Department for Education and Skills (2006).*

What to do if you are worried that a child is being abused, HM Government 2006

This document provides best practice guidance for those who work with children in order to safeguard their welfare. It also contains an appendix to help practitioners with the legal issues surrounding the sharing of information. The guidance provides general information for anyone whose work brings them into contact with children and families, focusing particularly on those who work in social care, health, education and criminal justice services. Addressing issues affecting each of these target audiences, the document outlines the following:

- What you should do if you have concerns about a child's welfare;
- What will happen once you have informed someone about those concerns; and
- What further contribution you may be asked or expected to make to the processes of assessment, planning, working with children and reviewing that work.

The guidance is accompanied with flowcharts following the procedure from referral, initial assessment, emergency action that might need to be taken, through to what happens after a strategy discussion and child protection review conference.

5.2.2 *Current guidance for Colleges on safeguarding vulnerable adults*

The current guidance on safeguarding vulnerable adults applicable to Colleges in England is the 2007 NIACE (National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education) guidance: “Safer Practice, Safer Learning: A whole organisation approach to safeguarding vulnerable adults for the learning and skills sector”. The guide sets out the safeguarding responsibilities of FE Colleges in England to create a safe learning environment for vulnerable adults. Guidelines are given on producing support policies and procedures, as well as suggestions for raising awareness of abuse. The guidelines are consistent with, and refer to, the DfES requirements. The document sets out the following specific requirements for Colleges:

Table 5.2
 Broad Areas of Responsibility Proposed for the Designated Senior Person for Child Protection

Broad Areas of Responsibility Proposed for the Designated Senior Person for Child Protection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review whether your organisational values, ethos, policies and procedures reflect the requirement to create and maintain a safer learning and training environment. For example, FE Colleges should identify sources of advice, support and access to training, and develop policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding. • Review the extent to which staff and learners understand what abuse is and then take appropriate measures to increase knowledge and understanding. • Must identify sources of advice, support and access to training. This may be in conjunction with the local Safeguarding Board who can be contacted through the local authority. • Develop a policy for safeguarding and monitor the effectiveness of its implementation, planning and co-ordination of delivery of services, and allocating resources and working in partnership with other agencies (for example, healthcare and social services child and vulnerable adult safeguarding teams) and local Safeguarding Boards or partnerships as

Broad Areas of Responsibility Proposed for the Designated Senior Person for Child Protection

appropriate.

- Identify a senior named person to have specific responsibility for safeguarding issues.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding vulnerable adults and creating an environment that promotes well-being and ensures personal safety and security.
- Ensure that a safe environment is provided for vulnerable adults and that policies and procedures are put into operation for recruitment of staff and volunteers, carrying out risk assessments, record keeping and dealing with allegations of abuse.
- In the case of abuse having taken place, there should be clear arrangements to support individuals as the top priority, and also the wider cohort of learners, staff and the local community as appropriate.

Policies and procedures should be developed to include the following:

- Each organisation should develop recruitment procedures that reflect the guidance provided by the DfES (2006).
- Reference and adherence to overall strategic statements, standards and quality assurance processes.
- Detail of partnerships and existing external structures.
- Definitions of vulnerable groups. However, it is important that policies on safer environments, protecting vulnerable groups, personal safety and security encompass all learners and staff.
- How to support vulnerable adults who have alleged that abuse has taken place. This will include contacting their social worker, next of kin or advocate as appropriate. To support the adult while investigations are being conducted a longer-term plan ensuring they are not placed at risk of further abuse or harm, will need to be put in place.
- Definitions of abuse and harm. Policies should ensure that staff have a good understanding of harm and abuse and the actions that constitute them.
- Actions to be taken by a member of staff. Procedures should be robust enough so that any member of staff can pick them up and understand exactly what to do if faced with an abuse situation. It is strongly recommended that procedures are produced in conjunction with the local safeguarding partnership. Their procedures will be based on the 'Safeguarding Adults' framework (ADSS, 2005). It is important that any accusation is listened to carefully and reported fully in writing. In all cases, measures must be in place to support the vulnerable

Broad Areas of Responsibility Proposed for the Designated Senior Person for Child Protection

adult appropriately.

- Guidance on recording and reporting allegations and maintaining confidentiality should be sought by the policy writer from local safeguarding vulnerable adults partnerships.
- Designation of child and vulnerable adult safeguarding officers. The policy and procedure should indicate who is/are the nominated child and/or vulnerable adult safeguarding staff, and the procedure for contacting them.
- Appropriate contact with learners. Clear policies and procedures must be constructed that ensure staff and volunteers understand what appropriate and inappropriate physical contact with learners is.

Source: 2007 NIACE (National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education) guidance: "Safer Practice, Safer Learning: A whole organisation approach to safeguarding vulnerable adults for the learning and skills sector".

5.2.3 *Engaging with students and raising their awareness*

As noted in Section 3, there is a need for Colleges in Northern Ireland to ensure that students are involved in and fully informed of safeguarding activities. Chapter 4 of 'Safer Practice, Safer Learning' deals specifically with this issue and sets out a number of models and examples of best practice that may be useful in informing future campaigns and techniques for the FE Sector in Northern Ireland.

Suggested ways in which learners might be involved:

The document presents the following model for learner involvement, which suggests that this can be measured in a continuum from that which is strong on stakeholder advocacy to that which is directed by non-stakeholder managers and has little learner involvement. The model indicates that the more learners are actively involved in quality improvement activities, the better their ownership of change will be.

Led	Tokenism	Consultation	Representation	Participation	Self Managing
Power of the Practitioner or Organisation			Power of the Learner		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led: The practitioner or organisation has complete authority. • Tokenism: Practitioners or organisations set the agenda and take the decisions, but may consult one or two learners. • Consultation: Practitioners or organisations decide what they want to ask, and how much control they want to give the learners. They are still seen as leaders. • Representation: A number of learners express the views of their peers. It is important to consider which issues are not on the agenda, and how effective this approach is in practice. 					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation: Joint decision-making, where all parties have some control. All responsibilities are shared. • Self-managing: Learners have effective control over the decision making.
<p><i>From Nightingale, C. (2006) 'Nothing about me, without me', adapted from Duffen and Thompson (1999).</i></p>

A specific example of learner engagement in action is that conducted by Sea Breeze College (USA):

Sea Breeze College

As part of a learner involvement initiative, learners with learning difficulties at Sea Breeze College assessed the information the College was giving them. They decided that the College handbook for learners was inaccessible and difficult to read, so taking advice from staff about the meaning of the different sections of the handbook, they advised the College on how to produce the handbook to make it more accessible by using easy-read language and symbol and picture systems such as Widgit and Change Picture Bank.

Suggested ways to disseminate information to users

The document recommends that learners should be involved in the development of products that are both appropriate for them and the type of education or training provision they are in. Suggestions include:

- **Learners' handbooks:** The report recommends that handbooks should include information about well-being, personal safety, security and safeguarding issues, such as:
 - a description of the provider organisation that includes the mission statement, organisational structure with a message stating a commitment to well-being, security and a safer environment;
 - what to expect from the provision regarding its commitment to learners and their safety;
 - how to use the internet, to include the College policy and practice on internet security;
 - the College or provider services, to include learning support services, student services and where to go to seek help;
 - reporting procedures for ill-health, health and safety incidents, abuse, bullying and harassment;
 - policies and procedures on expected behaviours and codes of conduct;
 - equality and diversity policies that make it clear that discrimination, abuse, harassment and bullying are not tolerated. In order to help learners understand relevant abuse terminologies, it is recommended that the handbook includes materials that define harm

- and abuse, including sexual abuse, physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, financial or material abuse, neglect or acts of omission and discriminatory abuse;
- who to contact, including personal tutors. This might include contacts for different situations such as reporting abuse, security issues or unreasonable behaviour;
 - details of the induction programme. This should include sessions on individuals' rights and responsibilities in relation to personal safety, security and well-being;
 - tutorial, mentoring and pastoral support systems. This should include how to access support and counselling, both that available within the College as well as from external bodies and providers; and
 - vulnerable adult safeguarding procedures.
- **Posters and information leaflets:** Posters and information leaflets can be used as quick visual reminders or points of information for staff, learners and visitors alike. The document provides samples of posters and leaflets that can be used. A number of recommendations for their development include:
 - These materials should be developed in consultation with learners.
 - That general information leaflets and posters should be kept as succinct and brief as possible. It can be tempting to put a great deal of detail into both.
 - Short information leaflets can be used as the basis of targeted input during induction or tutorial periods, ensuring that the detailed explanation is learner-centred and appropriate to their knowledge, experience and requirements.
 - **Whole-organisation campaigns:** This is noted within the report as an effective method of creating a whole-organisation approach to safeguarding. Targeted activities, clear marketing and branding of personal safety, well-being or security activities can help to build belief among learners and staff in the organisation's commitment to the campaign. A specific example of this is the RESPECT campaign initiated by Lincoln College:

The RESPECT campaign

Lincoln College initiated a RESPECT campaign in 2003. The aim was to protect the physical environment of the College and improve the treatment of people within it, including vulnerable adults. They aimed to embed values of respect for the College and for others into all aspects of College life. Following this, many other Colleges have been keen to implement their own RESPECT campaigns. For example, Peterborough Regional College have based their campaign on four components: respect yourself, respect others, respect difference and respect the environment.

Within the RESPECT campaigns, posters, student handbooks and regular newsletters highlight that the particular College will not tolerate vandalism, littering, bullying and disrespectful behaviour towards others – staff, learners and visitors. All students are informed about the campaign in their inductions, and the Colleges run regular tutorials based around different themes and issues, such as the effects of bullying, drugs and alcohol and respecting other cultures and faiths.

The RESPECT campaigns have their own branding and logos to raise their profiles. Colleges have produced branded materials such as wristbands, identity badges, t-shirts and water bottles. Media and performing arts students have developed production pieces and DVDs to further learners' and staff awareness of the RESPECT campaigns.

Lincoln College also facilitate a bullying and harassment support group run by trained staff. In conjunction with this they are developing their own 'anti-bullying' website, where students can report bullying anonymously.

5.3 Disseminating information to Colleges

In England, the Association of Colleges (AoC) Employment Advisory Service provides advice and guidance to Colleges on safeguarding. This webpage also provides a central source of information, factsheets and FAQs on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, the new Vetting and Barring Scheme under the Independent Safeguarding Authority, and the Ofsted limiting grade for safeguarding. In addition, the AoC Employment Advisory Service can be contacted directly for advice on safeguarding policy and procedure in relation to employment and HR practice.

In addition to referencing the key guides and documents outlined above, the site contains a range of relevant guidance and information, including:

- Access to briefings on safeguarding-approximately 13 are included on the site covering a range of areas e.g.:
 - Safeguarding and Inspection;
 - New Safeguarding Referral Form;
 - ISA update: what's happening on 12 October 2009?; and
 - New vetting and barring scheme: frequently asked questions (FAQs).
- ISA guidance and information;
- CRB guidance and information including:
 - CRB Code of Practice for registered bodies;

- Requirement to have a policy statement on recruiting ex-offenders (includes sample policy statement); and
- “Employing ex-offenders: a practical guide” – published by the CRB and CIPD.
- Guidance on the requirements to keep and maintain a Single Central Record of recruitment and vetting checks. This requirement was introduced for FE Colleges under The Further Education (Providers of Education) (England) Regulations 2006;
- Information on Training in Safeguarding - including links to the Learning and Skills Improvement Service; and
- Information on Ofsted inspection requirements.

5.4 Lisburn City Council

During the consultation process, NICCY highlighted that, in their opinion, Lisburn City Council (LCC) had developed best practice policies and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. This sub-section presents an overview of the approach adopted by LCC.

5.4.1 *The need for a policy and its content*

The need for the development of child protection policies and procedures within LCC stems from its direct provision of services to thousands of children annually and the funding of a wide range of leisure services. LCC also acknowledges that employees come into contact with children in the course of their work in other Council departments e.g. the Parks Service, Dog Wardens etc. The importance of Councils putting in place policies and procedures was highlighted in the DHSSPS document “Co-operating to Safeguard Children” in 2003 which stated that ‘it is essential that local councils should have clear policies and procedures’ for dealing with cases of possible abuse. Reflecting this, the Council’s Child Protection Policy provides the mechanism for tackling all aspects of child protection in relation to the Council i.e.:

- Reporting concerns;
- Recruitment and vetting;
- Employee code of conduct;
- Identifying signs and symptoms of abuse; and
- Identification of a Designated Child Protection Officer.

Since the launch of the policy in 2003 and the appointment of the designated child protection officer, the Council has added the following to its Child Protection Procedures:

- Employee code of conduct;
- Child supervision levels for council-run activities;
- Child protection leaflets – employees;
- Public information;
- Photographic images of children guidelines;
- Managing challenging behaviour guidance;
- Control of contractors guidance;
- Guidance issued to those organisations block-booking council facilities; and
- Membership of Leisurewatch;
- Child comment cards.

Within the Council, the Chief Executive has overall responsibility for policy, but the Designated Child Protection Officer carries out the following:

- Monitoring the implementation of the policy and procedures;
- Ensuring that referrals are made to Social Services;
- Keeping case materials secure; and
- Reporting to Senior Management annually on child protection.

5.4.2 *Sharing best practice*

LCC has a Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) which meets every other month and is chaired by the Designated Child Protection Officer. Membership of this Group is drawn from many units of LCC with particular representation from Leisure Services. This Group tackles the practical issues of child protection and has produced accompanying procedures to the Child Protection Policy. The CPWG has been in existence since 2004 and the consultees reported that it has affected many changes throughout the Council, including the additions to policy and procedures outlined above.

Annually, the Designated Child Protection Officer reports to the Management Team. If there are any issues which need to be addressed during the year, the Designated Child Protection Officer requests that these are tabled for discussion by the Management Team. This team has been supportive of child protection since the implementation of the Child Protection Policy in 2003.

In addition to the specific LCC arrangements, Local Councils in Northern Ireland have established the Local Government Child Protection Network (LGCPN) to share best practice and facilitate discussion between Designated Child Protection Officers. The LGCPN is a network with representatives, mainly Child Protection Officers and Human Resources Officers, from a range of

Councils throughout Northern Ireland. The network discusses a range of current child protection issues and is an opportunity for Councils to discuss their approaches to child protection issues and practices. LCC have also developed close links with Family and Child Care social workers at South East Trust.

5.4.3 Training

LCC has developed a programme of training that covers staff and contractors engaged by the Council. This training includes a framework and minimum renewal timescales.

Employees

All employees were trained in Child Protection Policy when it was first implemented. This training was developed by the Designated Child Protection officer and the NSPCC. All new employees are trained in Child Protection Policy as part of their induction programme which takes place quarterly. The Health and Safety Officer delivers this training.

All employees in regulated posts receive Advanced Level Keeping Safe training- this is delivered as a one day course when they start work and as refresher training every 3 years. The content of this training was developed by the Volunteer Development Agency and is delivered by Keeping Safe trainers - there are currently two such trainers within the Council.

Employees who have some contact with children receive Basic Level Keeping Safe training (half day course) when they start work and refresher training every three years. This course focuses on signs and symptoms of abuse and the procedure to follow when reporting concerns. Such staff include Building Control Officers, Environmental Health Officers, Dog Wardens, Parks staff, etc.

Contractors

LCC are in the processes of introducing training for contractors used and in December 2009 all contractor managers and supervisors were invited to an awareness session with the Council's Keeping Safe trainers. This session was to update contractors on all Council policies and procedures in relation to child protection and has outlined the procedure to follow when reporting concerns while on LCC premises.

LeisureWatch Staff

Training is given to all front line staff of open access facilities – this is a one day course followed by annual refresher training. This focuses on how to deal with adults whose behaviour raises cause for concern amongst employees. Managers are given specific training on how to refer concerns.

The approach adopted by LCC reflects aspects of good practice drawn from both the Northern Ireland and English contexts.

5.5 Developing a joined up approach to training

The information presented in the preceding chapters suggests that a cross-sectoral approach to training would be of benefit at individual College level and to the FE Sector as a whole. A particularly good example is that adopted in London, where a multi-agency safeguarding training framework has been developed. The following sub-section presents an overview of the approach adopted and the training framework produced.

5.5.1 Introduction

Competence Matters: a London Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Training Framework has been designed to improve the quality, content and delivery of Safeguarding Children training across London. This has been informed by and builds upon good practice drawn from across London. The London Child Protection Committee (LCPC) was commissioned to design the framework to bring London to the leading edge of the delivery of effective and purposeful Safeguarding Children training, and to promote consistency and competency across the children's workforce. Details on the framework are outlined in the following paragraphs.

The framework is intended to be flexible so that it can be integrated easily into local training strategies and reflects the needs and experiences of children and young people in each borough. Over time, this framework will continue to evolve to meet the developing needs of those who require Safeguarding training.

"Competence Matters" offers a framework for a London-wide comprehensive Safeguarding Children training programme. It is intended to assist Training Officers and Sub-Committees with the planning, commissioning and delivery of a comprehensive and standardised Safeguarding Children training programme. The Framework was published in 2004.

The mandate for the framework was established by the principles of the Children Act (2004), namely; co-operation; information-sharing; listening to children; and safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. In addition, the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (NSF) supports the Act and further endorses the development of the framework. Published in 2004, it sets important new standards for children's health and social care.

The LCPC envisages that this framework will result in the following benefits:

- Providing the standard for locally commissioned training across London, and in doing so, promote consistent locally delivered Safeguarding Children training for all practitioners;
- Assisting employers by enabling recruitment of practitioners with a common standard of skills and competencies across boroughs;
- Improving practitioners' ability to transfer from employer to employer;

- Enabling economies of scale to be achieved through joint commissioning;
- Providing an effective response to the requirements of the Joint Area Reviews;
- Assisting staff career development by lending itself to LCPC certification initially, and accreditation through a London university in the longer term; and
- Promoting the London Child Protection Procedures.

During the consultation phase of the project, colleagues across the partner agencies were asked to think about the potential advantages or disadvantages of this framework, and how it might affect their role – be it strategic, support or operational. The advantages identified reflect the positive messages about multi-agency safeguarding training expressed in legislation and guidance. Responses included:

- *“It will hopefully reduce the difficulties associated with a highly mobile workforce”;*
- *“Standards and structure being the same regardless of where one works”;* and
- *“It will enable employers to have a clearer grasp of training levels/standards of employees”.*

5.5.2 The Model

The model divides professionals into three broad groups as identified below:

Group A	In this group, workers have contact/work with children and young people and with their parents/carers. They have a responsibility to contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the community.
Group B	Training within this group is for people who work regularly with children and young people and adults who are parents/carers. They have considerable professional and organisational responsibility for safeguarding and promoting children’s well-being.
Group C	This group of people have particular responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. People in this group hold particular professional or organisational authority and have a substantial degree of personal responsibility and autonomy to act on child welfare concerns.

This framework can be developed to provide ‘ideal type’ modular pathways for the more obvious professional roles. These demonstrate how line managers, workforce development consultants and professional development advisors may wish to guide professionals through the development opportunities that the framework affords. The framework draws on the enormous range of areas of potential learning and development identified by those consulted for this project.

The table overleaf provides an overview of the training framework and associated aims for individuals within groups A, B and C.

Table 5.3
 Joined-Up Approach to Training Model

Group A (or equivalent)	
Training Framework	Aim / focus of training
Safeguarding children – a shared responsibility	To develop an awareness of, and ability to act on, concerns about the safety and welfare of children and young people.
Introduction to physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect	To raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of all forms of harm and abuse and the risks to children.
Identifying vulnerability and promoting resilience in children and young people	To understand what is meant by “vulnerability” and “resilience” and to work together to promote resilience
Child development in relation to well-being and harm	To provide participants with a basic guide to child development in relation to safeguarding.
Good practice in equality and diversity across London <i>Level 1</i>	To raise awareness and explore issues of race, culture, faith, ethnicity and difference, and how these affect the process and safeguarding children for professionals and families.
Domestic violence as a serious child protection issue (Level 1)	To raise awareness that domestic violence is a serious child protection issue, and of the risks to children living with domestic violence.
Children in special circumstances	To raise awareness of vulnerable children.
Information sharing & making referrals to safeguard children	To demystify law and guidance around information sharing and provide participants with practical advice on when and how to share information in order to make a referral.
Recording and record-keeping	To develop key skills in effective recording and record-keeping.
Safe working practices	To raise awareness about the importance of safe working practices for professionals and volunteers.
Communicating with children about concerns <i>Level 1</i>	For participants to develop skills in listening to and communicating with children where there are concerns about abuse.
Understanding dynamics in working relationships	To understand the dynamics and challenges in working relationships and how they impact on safeguarding practice.
Group B (or equivalent)	
Training Framework	Aim / focus of training
Safeguarding children – a shared responsibility	To develop knowledge, skills and the ability to work together on the processes for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
The legal framework for safeguarding practice	To familiarise participants with the legal framework that informs safeguarding practice.
Focus on neglect	Raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of neglect and the impact that neglect has on children.

Table 5.3
 Joined-Up Approach to Training Model

Focus on sexual abuse	To raise awareness of signs and symptoms of sexual abuse and the impact that sexual abuse has on children.
Focus on emotional abuse	To raise awareness about emotional abuse and to consider how professionals can work effectively together to improve outcomes for children who are emotionally abused.
Focus on physical abuse	Raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of physical abuse and the risks of physical abuse to children.
Court skills (Level 1)	To familiarise participants with the court setting and increase understanding of criminal and civil proceedings, including key considerations for giving evidence.
Working with parents and families who are difficult to engage	To help practitioners explore strategies for working with families that present particular challenges and to improve skills in maintaining effective working relationships.
Making a good referral about the safety of children and young people	To enable participants to make effective referrals about the safety and well-being of children, thus contributing to improving outcomes for children at risk of harm.
Managing issues of consent, confidentiality and information sharing	For participants to improve their competence in dealing with issues of confidentiality, consent and information sharing.
Good practice in equality and diversity across London (Level 2)	To consolidate and build upon participants' existing knowledge of equality and diversity issues, enabling practitioners to work more effectively with children and families in London.
Risk assessment	To develop an understanding of theories of risk assessment and become competent and confident in applying them when working with children and young people.
Family group conferencing: key principles and practice	To enable workers to provide better outcomes and positive working partnerships with children and their families through the use of Family Group Conferences.
Communicating with children about concerns <i>Level 2</i>	For participants to build on and improve their skills in listening to and communicating with children where there are concerns about abuse.
Children, young people and attachment	To promote positive outcomes for children in need by providing an overview of attachment theory and its impact on professional practice.
Child protection conferences and core groups	To give participants an understanding of Child Protection Conferences and their roles and responsibilities when contributing to conferences and core groups.
Group C (or equivalent)	
Training Framework	Aim / focus of training
Safeguarding children –a shared responsibility	To enhance knowledge and skills and the ability to work together on the processes for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in complex and challenging situations.
Court skills	For participants to build upon their knowledge of the court process and increase their competence and confidence in preparing and giving evidence.

Table 5.3

Joined-Up Approach to Training Model

Skills in complex analysis and risk assessment for safeguarding practice	To further develop an understanding of theories of risk assessment and analysis and to develop enhanced skills for use in complex cases.
Overcoming dangerous dynamics in professional practice	For participants to gain a clear understanding of the dangerous dynamics in safeguarding work and formulate a range of strategies to deal with them.
Joint investigation training	To improve inter-agency working and the well-being and safety of children through working together.
Achieving best evidence	To enable participants to undertake interviews with children who have been abused, according to the Home Office guidance “Achieving Best Evidence”.
Source: Competence Matters: a London Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Training Framework.	

The information presented throughout this section suggests that there are clear systems and procedures of good practice that, if implemented within the FE Sector in NI, would reduce risk and support the operation of an efficient operating environment which supports the protection of staff and students.

6 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This section draws on the information presented in the preceding sections to conclude on the overall findings of the study and highlight the key issues going forward. The section also makes reference to a number of areas where additional research is required to ensure that policy only developed addresses the specific needs of the FE Sector.

6.2 Guiding and informing the FE Sector

6.2.1 Sector specific policy and guidance

There is a need for guidance to be developed that specifically addresses the needs of the FE Sector in Northern Ireland. Reliance on policy and procedural guidance that is non-specific to the Sector has resulted in variances in policy content and procedural development. Consequently, Colleges have adopted an ad-hoc and inconsistent approach to a number of high risk areas (notably the policy and procedures in place for the identification and response to students who may pose a risk to others). There are a number of good practice examples that could support the development of this policy and guidance, including: DENI Pastoral Care in Schools, DENI Circulars 99/10, 2003/13 and guidance provided by DfES and supporting organisations in England. However, any policy guidance developed will need to be designed for the FE Sector and the specific issues relevant to the Northern Ireland context.

It is important that policy and guidance development is not viewed as a one-off action- it should be updated as required to reflect new legislation, best practice and the emerging needs of the Sector.

6.2.2 Using appropriate terminology

It has been suggested throughout the study that the term Child Protection Officer does not reflect the specific requirements of the FE College network and may lead to confusion as to the purpose and focus of this post. It is therefore recommended that a title more appropriate to the FE Sector be adopted i.e. Student Safeguarding Officer.

6.2.3 Structures - designated and deputy officers

All Colleges should as a matter of urgency seek to finalise structures and appoint staff/designated positions with responsibility for child and vulnerable adult protection issues. Without this, there is the risk that policies and procedures will be misinterpreted by both staff and students and that both suspected and reported cases may be dealt with in manner that is not consistent with best practice.

There should be a minimum, a designated and deputy designated officer. As well as meeting minimum cross-Sector requirements, resources should also be sufficient to ensure adequate

cross-campus protection (a minimum of one designated officer per campus) and take account of individual College staffing structures.

Structures should be developed to ensure that lines of reporting and responsibility are clear to those with designated and deputy designated responsibility and also to the wider staff and student body. This is particularly important for Colleges where the appointment of multiple officers is required.

While overall responsibility of this issue lies with individual Colleges, it is recommended that assessment should be considered as part of ETI's inspection process.

6.2.4 Board of Governors

It is important that there is a Board Member with responsibility for Child Protection. This will ensure that everyone recognises the importance the College authorities place on this issue. In addition, Board Members need to be involved should an issue arise with the College Chief Executive and therefore it is vital that all Governors are aware of their responsibilities.

6.2.5 A central resource

The Sector should consider the development of a central resource for dissemination of information and guidance. This central resource would ensure consistency in the range of information available and should also provide access to wider information that may be of benefit to the Colleges. The webpages of the Association of Colleges' (AoC) Employment Advisory Service is an example of good practice and it is recommended that consideration be given to the development of a similar resource in Northern Ireland.

6.2.6 Supporting the Sector

While the development of Sector-specific policy and guidance and a central resource for dissemination of this information will go some way to ensuring minimum standards across the Sector, it is also recommended that consideration be given by the Sector to the development of a system that supports the network of CPOs. Best practice in this area is in place for the school sector in NI, through the ELB network of Chief Welfare Officers and Designated Officers for Child Protection¹⁰. Regardless of the development of this support structure, it is recommended that, as a minimum, the provision of consistent and formalised information on referral, reporting and support structures associated with the protection of children and vulnerable adults is in place both within and outside the FE Sector. This should be provided in a consistent format to each College.

¹⁰ The Child Protection Support Services for Schools (CPSSS) is based within the Education Welfare Service. There are two designated officers for child protection in each ELB area who provide the Child Protection Support Service to schools. The service in each ELB is managed by the Chief Education Welfare Officer. The CPSSS includes a telephone helpline; training in Child Protection to designated school personnel which includes Governors; and professional support to designated teachers.

As highlighted in Section 5 of this report, the AoC in England includes an Employment Advisory Service that provides advice and guidance to Colleges on safeguarding. The AoC webpage also provides a central source of information, factsheets, FAQs, etc. on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, the new Vetting and Barring Scheme, and the Ofsted limiting grade for safeguarding. The AoC Employment Advisory Service can also be contacted directly for advice on safeguarding policy and procedure in relation to employment and HR practice.

In addition to referencing the key guides and documents outlined above, the Employment Advisory Service site contains a range of relevant guidance and information. This includes access to briefings on a range of areas: ISA guidance and information; CRB guidance and information; guidance on the requirements to keep and maintain a Single Central Record of recruitment and vetting checks; information on training in safeguarding; and information on Ofsted inspection requirements.

6.2.7 *Sharing best practice*

All Colleges are currently engaged in the development of policies, procedures and guidance associated with the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Given this dynamic and constantly changing environment, the opportunity to disseminate best practice and lessons learnt between Colleges would be of benefit to the Sector as a whole. This would potentially reduce resources allocated at an individual College level and ensure consistency in approach, thereby minimising risk throughout the Sector. Measures to create a mechanism for sharing best practice and disseminating information is already underway with the creation of the Student Services Working Group in June 2009.

While pastoral care and issues associated with the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults are part of the remit of the Student Services Working Group, consideration should be given to the development of a Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult working sub-group. This group may be a combination of HR and Student Services staff to reflect the role that both delivery areas have in implementing the requirements under SVG NI Order.

The initial priority of the sub-group should be to examine and provide practical solutions to the issues outlined in this report. Following this, the structure can then be used to ensure the ongoing dissemination of best practice and feedback into the policy development process on an ongoing basis. The operation of working groups at a sectoral level is characteristic of the primary education system, the NI Local Authority system and FE provision in England.

The development of a Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults working group focused solely on child and vulnerable adult issues would provide a number of benefits to the College network:

- It would allow discussion and identification of key issues affecting the Sector e.g. systems to respond to the enrolment of students who may pose a risk to other students;
- The opportunity for the development of standardised policy procedures and guidelines that could be adopted across the entire Sector, ensuring consistency of approach to the

protection of children and vulnerable adults on a Sector-wide basis (the approach adopted by the AoC outlined in Section 5 is a particularly good example of this);

- The identification and development of best practice in staff training (at all levels) and the opportunity to create a centralised training plan for the Sector;
- The opportunity to share lessons and experience in awareness-raising activities for students and development of best practice guidance; and
- Creation of an opportunity for the examination of forums/activities that could support the network of CPOs e.g. the creation of a knowledge-based system such as a networking and information site for CPOs similar to that currently operated by the AoC.

Consideration should also be given to sharing best practice developed by DEL and the FE Sector with wider post-primary education and training providers e.g. Training Organisations and the College of Agriculture Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE). The sharing of best practice will help to support the operation of a system of protection for children and vulnerable adults that ensures consistently high levels of support, regardless of mode or location of study, throughout Northern Ireland.

6.2.8 Student who may pose a risk to others

It is recommended that a Sector-wide response is developed in relation to identifying and responding to students who may pose a risk to others, including:

- Consistent Sector-wide legal advice on requesting information on notification of an offense committed by a student and on the power of Colleges to exclude students who may pose a risk should be sought;
- Guidance is provided on the development of consistent procedures for assessing risk and implementing a response – a sectoral strategy to assessing and managing risk is required; and
- Colleges have access to information in relation to engaging with external agencies.

Consultation with Access NI also raised this issue as students will be required to become registered from November 2010 (although all Colleges currently complete Access NI checks on students where required) and if registration fails, they will no longer be able to continue with their course. This therefore raises the need for students to be identified and given clear advice at the outset on their eligibility and ability to continue with their chosen route of study.

6.2.9 Systems in place to deal with concerns associated with a member of staff

To support Colleges in reporting and referring information to the ISA on employees, it is vital that all Colleges have in place systems to identify and deal with allegations of suspected abuse by a member of staff. A staff code of conduct, including disciplinary procedures and a mechanism for sharing this information between the designated officer and HR, should also

be in place. Best practice suggests that, while the DCPO is responsible for ensuring that an allegation is recorded and referred to the appropriate authority, HR is responsible for the implementation of internal disciplinary procedures and the subsequent reporting of the allegation to the ISA for recording purposes.

It is encouraging to note that five of the six Colleges have included within their current policies procedures for dealing with allegations against members of staff and five Colleges have developed a code of conduct for staff.

6.3 Raising awareness of policies and procedures

The policies and procedures detailed above will only be effective if the staff and student body are aware of them. An understanding of the processes and procedures in place within each College is particularly important for staff, as they need to fully understand and comply with the procedures to reduce the level of risk of inaction or inappropriate action for the College and to ensure that the needs of students are adequately and appropriately addressed.

In order for any communication exercises to be truly effective, each College should ensure that structures and procedures are finalised and approved by the Governing Body. The current system of draft policies and procedures and ongoing changes to staffing structures creates an uncertain environment and one that is not conducive to ensuring an understanding of policy, procedures and guidelines throughout the staffing body.

In terms of student awareness, further work is required to ensure that:

- All students are provided with information of the College policies and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults (regardless of method of intake, frequency of study, etc) in a format that is accessible to them;
- The services and structures in place to support students are promoted and understood by all students;
- All students have equal access to support services regardless of form and location of study;
- The student body ‘has a voice’ and is involved in the development of policies and procedures that are relevant to them. Best practice (refer to Section 2) suggests that engaging with students can help to ensure that the policies, procedures and mechanisms to engage with students are appropriate; and
- Procedures are put in place to update them regularly and to assess students’ understanding of the structures and processes in place i.e. confirmation that they have read and understood the policy/support structures.

It is further recommended that research is undertaken to examine ‘what works’ for students in terms of the dissemination of information – it is vital that information is shared throughout the College network on new developments, sources of information and student feedback.

The responsibility of adequate awareness throughout the staff and student body lies with the FE Colleges themselves, however it is vital that DEL monitor level of awareness, through the ETI, to ensure high standards throughout the Sector.

6.4 Standardised Training Policy and Framework

In the majority of cases, CPOs consulted during the drafting of this study had completed training relevant to their role within the last two years. This training covered a range of subject areas and had been provided by a range of agents, including representatives from the Colleges themselves. While the majority of the respondents reported that the training had been beneficial in helping them in their role as CPO, feedback also highlighted a number of key areas of need:

- The need for more intensive, regular and ongoing refresher training (provided as a minimum every two years);
- The need for training to cover practical issues associated with procedures, reporting, recording and referral; and
- The need for training to cover scenario testing and role play situations to build confidence and expertise.

Respondents also highlighted a range of wider support (in addition to training) that would assist them in their role as CPO:

- The provision of up-to-date legislation and guidance from a central source;
- The standardisation of guidance and practice throughout the Sector;
- The opportunity to discuss issues/developments with peers;
- An agreed structure and approach to training and competencies for CPOs;
- Development of a support network for CPOs to reduce the reliance on informal structures; and
- Centralised and regularly updated information on support services and referral agencies.

It is recommended that consideration be given to the development of a training policy for FE. The current ad-hoc approach to training adopted throughout the Sector leads to inconsistencies in training delivered (with staff, CPOs and senior management undertaking training in a range of subject areas, delivered by a range of providers). As demonstrated in Sections 3 and 4 of this report, this has led to gaps in training and awareness amongst the body of staff in FE. This could potentially weaken the level of protection available to the student body. It is essential that this training policy takes cognisance of best practice and includes as a minimum:

- A model that reflects the level of expertise and knowledge required by staff to ensure the protection of children and vulnerable adults in the FE setting i.e.:
 - Training for Governors/Senior Managers;

- Overall managers of the system e.g., SGV/ PCYPVA¹¹ System managers
 - Training for CPO/DCPO;
 - Training for HR staff;
 - Training for staff - both full-time and part-time (lecturers, student support/liaison, support and back office staff); and
 - Training for contract and voluntary staff.
- Minimum standards should be set for each staff level to ensure consistency across the Sector;
 - Guidelines on the level and frequency of training required at each level i.e. initial, refresher, renewal etc; and
 - Processes in place to assess the extent to which the training policy is adhered, its effectiveness and need for revision.

It is further recommended that this training occurs at a local level and is delivered in partnership with other stakeholders. Not only will this ensure a standardised approach to training across sectors but it will also support the development of relationships at a local level that will strengthen the service and response to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. This joint approach to training could potentially result in resource savings for the Colleges, who will be able to maximise economies of scale in both the development and purchase of relevant training.

In recognition of the timescale required to develop this policy, its associated training framework and the sourcing and recruitment of appropriate training providers, it is recommended that the FE Sector ensures that all FE staff are aware of and understand the policies and procedures in place for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. This should include, as a minimum, the names of Designated and Deputy Child Protection officers, recognition of the symptoms of abuse and the reporting and recording protocols both within and outside of FE.

It is recommended that DEL, through the ETI, monitor the extent to which both Designated and Deputy Designated officers receive appropriate training that supports them in their post.

6.5 Annual review and evaluation

Following the development of Sector-specific policy and guidance, a procedure for evaluation and review should be developed for the Sector. The current system of assessment used by ETI and informed by DE guidance, while comprehensive, should be tailored to FE. The outcomes of this process should support the updating and renewal of policies, procedures and practices on an ongoing basis.

The annual review and inspection process should be completed by ETI.

¹¹ Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (SVG) / Protection of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults (PCYPVA).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I STUDENT AWARENESS – NWRC & BMC

APPENDIX II PROTOCOL FOR MANAGING SEX OFFENDERS IN COLLEGE

1.0 Introduction

As the treatment and management of sex offenders within the community becomes more effective and common place, the interaction with Further Education Colleges is becoming more frequent. Psychologists treating offenders have had substantial success with using education to provide goals and purpose as part of the management of offenders.

The managed integration of offenders into the community also results in them being required to participate on employment schemes such as Training for Success, New Deal, Job Skills etc. Changes in the regulations regarding the management of sex offenders in the community, now means that Colleges must be informed before a sex offender is permitted to attend a programme of any kind.

The purpose of this protocol is to provide a framework through which informed decisions can be made regarding sex offender participation on programmes. It is no longer acceptable for Colleges simply to refuse admission on the grounds that sex offenders represent an unacceptable risk. Research has conclusively established that the vast majority of sex offenders that are caught, prosecuted and treated within the system, never reoffend. It is also likely that the benefits, allowances etc. of the offender could be detrimentally affected if they do not participate on the employment schemes listed above. This means that Colleges need to be able to make informed decisions that can be justified and are non discriminatory yet still offer appropriate protection to the children and vulnerable adults attending the college.

2.0 The Purpose of the Protocol

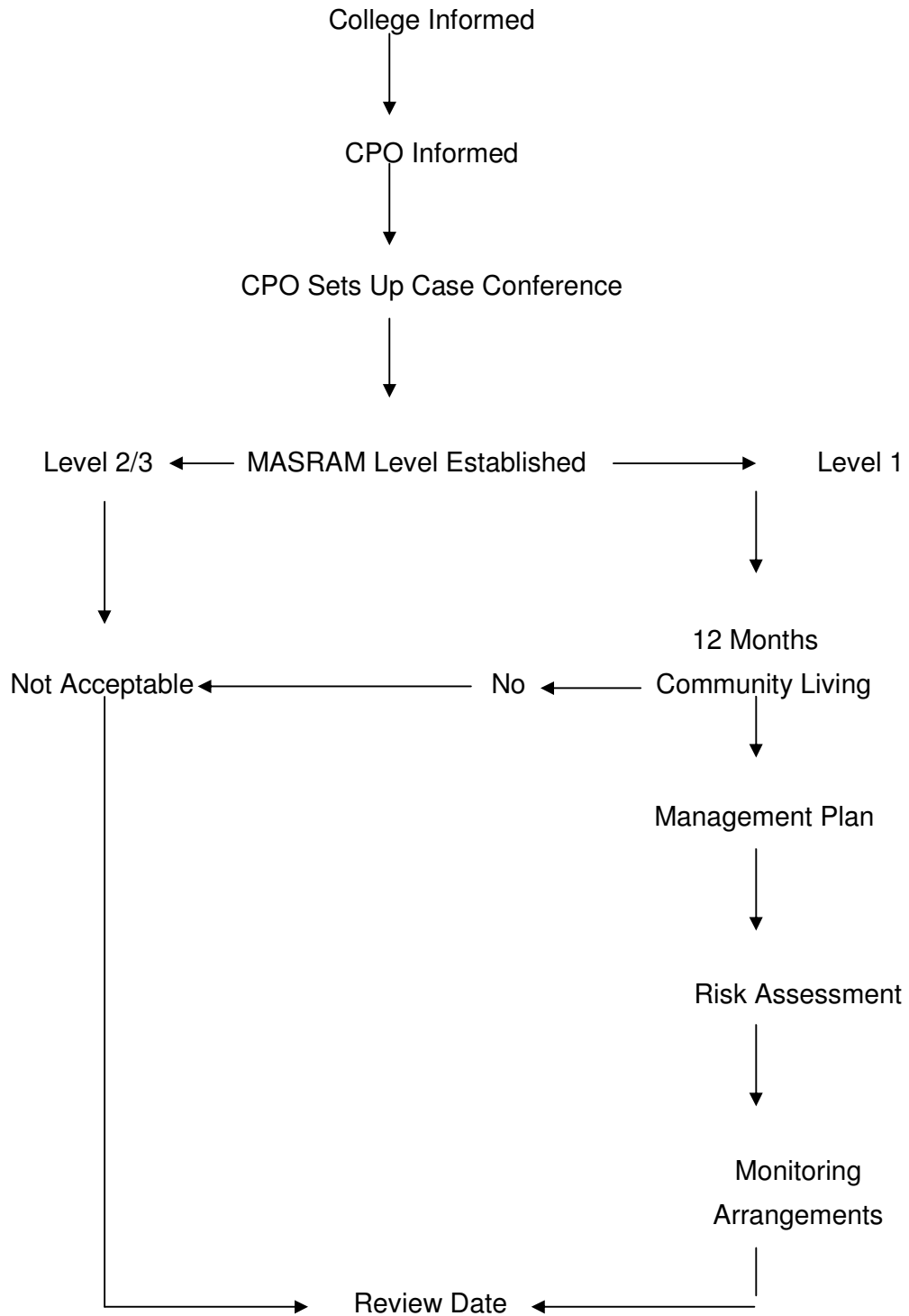
The protocol aims to establish open and effective communication between the specific representatives of the organisations and agencies involved in the management of the offender within the community.

The protocol seeks to establish:

1. Is the offender suitable for participation on a college programme;
2. Will the general population of the college be safe from the offender; and
3. Will the offender be safe from the general population of the college.

Where the answer to any of these elements is no, the protocol will provide the means to explore appropriate interventions that can be reasonable be implemented to address the identified problem/s.

3.0 The Process



4.0 Case Conference

The main focus of the protocol is the case conference. It is at this meeting that all the organisations and agencies involved in the management of the specific offender are given the opportunity to participate in the decision making process.

The following personnel should be in attendance at the case conference:

- Probation Officer;
- PSNI Liaison Officer;
- College Child Protection Officer;
- Functional Area Manager; and
- College Senior Manager.

4.1 Probation Officer

Their role is to represent the offender and provide details regarding the MASRAM assessments and how they are being managed in the community. The Probation Officer should have an established professional relationship with the offender

4.2 The PSNI Liaison Officer

The role of the PSNI Liaison Officer is to provide information on the offence and the risks identified by the PSNI in the management of the offender. They will also advise on any issues relating to the management of the offender within the community. They will also provide advice on relevant PSNI risk assessments.

4.3 College Child Protection Officer

The Child Protection Officer will provide information on college policies and procedures and advise on the interventions that can be used in the management of the offender within the college and the education system.

4.4 The Head of School/Unit

Information regarding the programme the offender is enrolling on will be provided by the manager with responsibility for the team that provides the course. They will have a sound understanding of the practical issues involved with the course and how the offender will mix within the college.

4.5 College Senior Manager

The role of the Senior Manager is to represent the Principal/CEO and will be able to make decisions regarding the interventions being proposed.

5.0 Applying the Protocol

5.1 Step One

The first objective is to establish if the offender is suitable for participation on a college programme. The main decision making information is provided by the MASRAM assessment which will be provided by the Probation Officer or the PSNI Liaison Officer. The offender will have been categorised by MASRAM as Level 1, 2 or 3. The definitions of these levels are:

1. The offenders behaviour is such that they are unlikely to reoffend;
2. The offenders behaviour is such that they are likely to reoffend; or
3. The offenders behaviour is such that they will reoffend.

The protocol identifies offenders at levels 2 and 3 as being unsuitable for participation on college programmes on the grounds that the likelihood of reoffending breaches the duty of care to the general population of the college. It is also recognised that the college would not have sufficient trained personnel to facilitate the interventions required to manage the offender. The level one offender must also have a proven track record of 12 months successful management within the community. Where there have been incidents or issues involving the offender the Case Conference will judge when the 12 month period begins.

5.2 Step Two

The second step in the protocol is to look at how the offender can be managed within the college in order to ensure that the college meets its responsibilities with regard to the duty of care. There is no definitive list of interventions that can be used to manage the offender within the college but there are many adjustments that can be made. These range from using a different campus for the programme to adjusting class breaks to minimise contact with the general population. All participants in the conference will have essential input into this process.

5.3 Step Three

The safety and welfare of the offender while they are at the college is a significant issue for the Case Conference. It is quite likely that if the offender is recognised or identified they could be subjected to harassment or, at worst, physical violence. As with step two there is no definitive list of interventions that can be used but the offender's safety is as important as the safety of the staff and students.

6.0 The Management Plan

Following the Case Conference the CPO will write up the Management Plan for the offender. This will be circulated to all participants in the Case Conference for agreement. Once the plan is agreed the Senior Manager from the college will then present the plan to the Principal/CEO who will have the final decision to allow the offender to attend the programme.

Where the outcome of the Case Conference is to deny access to the college the CPO will prepare a summary of the information taking into account the rationale for the decision. The college Senior Manager will present this to the Principal/CEO who will either approve the outcome or refer the

decision back to the Case Conference for reconsideration. If the outcome is referred back to the Case Conference the Principal/CEO will detail their reason for the referral.

7.0 Risk Assessment

Once the Management Plan has been agreed a full and detailed risk assessment must be undertaken. The CPO will undertake the risk assessment which should take account of the following issues:

1. The risks to the students and staff using the college;
2. The risks to the college (Board of Governors);
3. The risks to the offender;
4. The areas of the college that the offender will have access to;
5. The profile of the students that will make up the class that the offender will attend;
and
6. Details of how the risks will be managed.

Consultation with the Probation Officer and PSNI Liaison Officer can be useful in producing the risk assessment.

Once the assessment is completed and it has confirmed that the intervention proposed will reduce or control the risks sufficiently the complete risk assessment should be forward to the CEO/Director for approval and then copied to the Head of School/Unit.

8.0 Monitoring

The final task of the Case Conference is to establish monitoring arrangements for the programme. A series of dates will be agreed which represent the key stages of the programme and the necessary performance indicators agreed. The Case Conference will reconvene to review the performance indicators and overall progress.

9.0 Reviews

It is recommended that the participants on the Case Conferences should meet 2-3 times during the academic year to review the overall management of offenders within the college. This should also provide a forum where the circumstances of offenders who were previously found not suitable for attendance at the college, can be reviewed and reassessed.

10.0 Confidentiality

The successful application of the Protocol is dependant on confidentiality. Normally only those attending the Case Conference will have knowledge of the offender and their offence. The security and safety of the offender is dependant on confidentiality, however, it may be necessary to inform some members of staff who will be directly involved with the offender during their time at the college. The Functional Area Manager and the CPO will judge which members of staff should be informed and what information should be disclosed. Any member of staff who is informed is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality.

11.0 Summary

The management of offenders within the Further Education system is fraught with potential risks. These risks must be dealt with in a professional manner which demonstrates the Colleges concern for staff and students along with its acceptance of the duty to facilitate offenders with educational opportunities. The Protocol provides the college with a framework through which it can make informed decisions and manage offenders who attend courses and programmes. It also provides the college with the means to justify denying a college place to an offender. The management of Sex Offenders within FE is not an exact science however it does need to be approached in a professional manner.

APPENDIX III BROAD AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY OF DESIGNATED SENIOR PERSONS

Table III.1

Broad Areas of Responsibility Proposed for the Designated Senior Person for Child Protection ^A

Referrals	Training	Raising Awareness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer cases of suspected abuse or allegations to the relevant investigating agencies. • Act as a source of support, advice and expertise within the educational establishment when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies. • Liaise with head teacher or principal (where role not carried out by the head teacher) to inform him or her of any issues and ongoing investigations and ensure there is always cover for this role. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recognise how to identify signs of abuse and when it is appropriate to make a referral. • Have a working knowledge of how LSCBs operate, the conduct of a child protection Case Conference and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so. • Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the school's child protection policy especially new or part time staff who may work with different educational establishments. • Ensure all staff have induction training covering child protection and are able to recognise and report any concerns immediately when they arise. • Be able to keep detailed accurate secure written records of referrals and/or concerns. • Obtain access to resources and attend any relevant or refresher training courses, at least, every two years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the establishment's child protection policy is updated and reviewed annually and work with the governing body or proprietor regarding this. • Ensure parents see copies of the child protection policy which alerts them to the fact that referrals may be made and the role of the establishment in this to avoid conflict later. • Where children leave the establishment, ensure their child protection file is copied for the new establishment as soon as possible but transferred separately from the main pupil file.

^A Although not explicit in the DfES guidance, HR support functions may also have a role to play here.

Source: *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education, published by the Department for Education and Skills.*

APPENDIX IV GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Table IV.1

Glossary of Terms

Abbreviation	Definition
ADSS	Association of Directors for Social Services
ANIC	Association of Northern Ireland Colleges
AoC	Association of Colleges
BMC	Belfast Metropolitan College
CAFRE	College of Agriculture Food and Rural Enterprise
CE	Chief Executive
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEOP	Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CPO	Child Protection Officer
CPSSS	Child Protection Support Service for Schools
CPWG	Child Protection Working Group
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
DCPO	Designated Child Protection Officer
DDCPO	Deputy Designated Child Protection Officer
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DENI	Department of Education Northern Ireland
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (UK government; formerly DFEE)
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
DSM	Designated Safeguarding Manager
DSO	Designated Safeguarding Officer
EGSA	Educational Guidance Service for Adults
EHSS	East Health & Social Services Trust
ELB	Education and Library Board
ETI	Education and Trading Inspectorate
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education

Table IV.1

Glossary of Terms

Abbreviation	Definition
HR	Human Resources
IBB	Independent Barring Board
ISA	Independent Safeguarding Authority
LCC	Lisburn City Council
LCPC	London Child Protection Committee
LGCPN	Local Government Child Protection Network
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency
MASRAM	Multi-Agency Sex Offender Risk Assessment & Management
NEELB	North Eastern Education and Library Board
NHS	National Health Service
NIACE	National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education
NICCY	Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
NRC	Northern Regional College
NSF	National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
NWRC	North West Regional College
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PID	Project Initiation Document
PIM	Project Initiation Meeting
PIPS	Public Initiative for the Prevention of Suicide and Self-Harm
POCA	Protection of Children Act
POCVA	Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults
POVA	Protection of Vulnerable Adults
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
RSE	Relationships and Sexual Education
SELB	Southern Education and Library Board Website
SEN	Special Educational Needs

Table IV.1

Glossary of Terms

Abbreviation	Definition
SENDO	Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order
SERC	South Eastern Regional College
SRC	Southern Regional College
SVG	Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups
SWC	South West College
TfS	Training for Success
UNOCINI	Understanding the Needs of Children In Northern Ireland
UU	Ulster University
VBS	Vetting and Barring Scheme
VDA	Volunteer Development Agency
VEP	Vocational Enhancement Programme
WELB	Western Education & Library Board