Raising and escalating concerns within practice learning environments
All staff and pre-registration nursing, midwifery and physiotherapy students

All staff and students within the School of Health Sciences (SHS) have a professional responsibility to escalate all concerns relating to practice learning environments. The following guidelines enable staff and students to alert the appropriate individuals e.g. Safeguarding Lead and Director of Practice Learning to ensure that all concerns relating to practice learning are dealt with promptly and effectively. In all instances it is important that the process of escalating concerns is initiated as illustrated in the flow charts provided in this document. All concerns raised will be dealt with in partnership between the SHS and practice leads/organisations.

Throughout all investigations there will be a clear, transparent and confidential tracking process in place from initial concern to formal resolution. In addition to support within the School of Health Sciences the University counselling service and dignity advisors can also provide valuable support:

http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/StudentServices/index.aspx/

There are a number of instances where concerns relating to practice environments may arise, such as:

i. Alleged abuse of a vulnerable adult or child
ii. Unsafe or poor practice
iii. Quality of placement experience, for example students not allocated a mentor or mentor unavailable/unsupportive
iv. Quality concerns arising from educational audit, CQC or HEEM Quality Assurance visit for example, safety concerns or quality of learning environment

Issues relating to student concerns such as fitness to practice or student support are addressed separately.

http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/healthsciences/practice/safeguarding/raising-a-concern/concern-notification-form.aspx

Please note that student support requests would go to the personal tutor or programme lead in the first instance. A concern form should only be completed where there are genuine FTP concerns

Student Responsibilities

All students within the School of Health Sciences have a professional responsibility to report all concerns relating to patient care and safety, clinical practice or learning support.

In the first instance all students should discuss concerns with their mentor/clinical lead/manager/supervisor. During this process support is also available through the university link
tutor/clinical supervisor for the identified area. Support is also available through practice support tutors.
All concerns that relate to patient care or safety must be reported immediately to the person in charge of the clinical area. A tracking form, which is located at the end of this document, should also be completed.

In addition, you will need to inform the Director of Practice Learning/Lead for Practice Learning and the Academic Lead for Safeguarding within School of Health Sciences.

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**Lead for Practice Learning (Nursing) – Dawn Ritchie**
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**In all instances**
It is important to document your concerns in as much detail as possible, including dates and times of any events, the names of witnesses and how you have attempted to resolve the concerns.

The following pages in this document contain a series of flow charts which outline the processes that should be undertaken for specific events in relation to concerns regarding practice learning and/or safeguarding.
Student concerns regarding mentorship/supervision/support

While on placement when students identify a concern relating to their experience of mentorship/supervision or support processes they should where possible, attempt to discuss this with their mentor/clinical supervisor/manager in the first instance.

Where this is not possible, they should address their concerns with the placement manager or university link lecturer.

During this process students and tutors should ensure that they keep an accurate record of the concerns raised and the measures taken to resolve these.

Where concerns are resolved no further action may be required or action may involve additional university link lecturer support for the placement (local action plan)

Where concerns are not resolved they should be escalated to the School of Health Sciences Lead for Practice Learning for further action. Actions will be dependent upon the circumstances but may involve additional university link lecturer support or reallocation of a student to an alternative mentor/supervisor/clinical manager.
Student concern regarding practice and/or patient safety

While in practice, where a student identifies or raises a concern regarding practice and/or patient safety they should raise this **immediately** with their mentor/clinical supervisor/ward manager/team manager.

Where this is not possible, they should address their concerns **immediately** with the practice learning team in the organisation and the university link lecturer for their area. During this process students and tutors should ensure that they keep an accurate record (statement) of the concerns raised and the measures taken to resolve these. Concerns should be recorded on a tracking form [http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/healthsciences/practice/safeguarding/resources.aspx](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/healthsciences/practice/safeguarding/resources.aspx)

This should be forwarded to the Lead for Practice Learning and Lead for Safeguarding within the School of Health Sciences.

Students may also wish to contact their personal tutor and university services for additional support and should be signposted to these by the Practice/Safeguarding Lead or university link lecturer.

Depending on the nature of the concern either the Lead for Practice Learning or the Lead for Safeguarding within SHS will be responsible for escalating the concern (and completed documents/statement) to the appropriate practice/safeguarding mechanisms for the organisation in question.

Any student statement which needs to be distributed to personnel investigating the concern within the organisation should have the students name removed prior to circulation

Whenever possible support will be given to allow the student to remain in the practice area, depending on the nature of the concern.

Further actions will be dependent on the nature of the concern. They may include:

- i. Removal of students (or a student) from the placement area
- ii. Communication with other HEIs
- iii. Suspension of a clinical area (with re-audit plan)

In all cases feedback will be made available to the student following investigation. SHS tracking form to be updated and outcome recorded.
**Process for the removal of students from a placement area**

Where a serious concern about the student learning environment /safety of the students is raised this should be **immediately** raised with the appropriate Practice Learning Managers within the organisation and the University Leads for Practice Learning / Director of Health Care Education in Practice.

The Practice Learning Team within the organisation and the University Leads for Practice should **immediately** ascertain:

a) if a jointly agreed action plan can address and resolve the situation.

or

b) whether there is immediate removal of students from the placement.

If a jointly agreed action plan is employed, actions to be undertaken must be time limited and assigned to a named individual.

In the event of immediate removal of students:

i. The Education Lead/Director of Nursing for the Trust/Organisation to be informed to agree a joint action plan and timeframe for actions.

ii. The SHS Director of Health Care Education in Practice/Director of Quality Assurance/Head of Division to be informed.

iii. The clinical area should be immediately deactivated on the allocations and audit system (with re-audit plan).

iv. Communication with other HEIs as appropriate.

During this process accurate record of the concerns raised and measures taken to resolve should be maintained on the SHS tracking form.

i. HEEM normally notified at 3 monthly HMV Quality Monitoring

ii. Reported to professional regulators via annual monitoring report.

iii. Or exceptional reporting when appropriate to both HEEM & professional regulators
Process where a professional conduct or practice safety issue has been raised about a student via School of Health Sciences concerns process

Following receipt of a concern form, the Head of Studies will, within 10 working days, assess whether formal investigation is required. If a formal investigation is needed, an Investigating Officer is appointed. On the basis of the investigation, which is normally completed within 20 working days of the appointment, the Investigator will make recommendation which could include:

a) no action is warranted;
b) a warning should be given and/or appropriate support organised;
c) the issue is sufficiently serious to be referred to the Fitness to Practise Committee.

The Head of Studies will, on receipt of the concern and depending on the nature of the concern, liaise with the Practice Learning Lead about the implications for practice and decide on the following:

a) whether the student can remain in practice during the investigation;
b) a suspension from practice, pending the outcome of the investigation.

Further actions to be undertaken:
Placements team to be notified and to liaise with placement area/practice learning managers re student suspensions.

Action B
Following completion of the investigation if a warning is issued and depending on the nature of the allegation, and whether there have been previous expressions of concern the Fitness to Practice Lead will:

i. notify the Lead for Practice Learning.

ii. the Lead for Practice Learning will then work with Trust/Organisation Practice Placement Managers to agree an action plan and/or additional university link lecturer support.

Action C
If following completion of the investigation the case is referred to the Head of School and depending on the nature of the allegation, and whether there have been previous expressions of concern the Head of School will:

- notify the Director of Health Care Education in Practice/Lead for Practice Learning to be informed.
- the Education Lead/Director of Nursing for the Trust/Organisation to be informed to agree a joint action plan which may include suspension from practice.

i. HEEM normally notified at 3 monthly HMV Quality Monitoring
ii. Reported to professional regulators via annual monitoring report.
iii. Or exceptional reporting when appropriate to both HEEM & professional regulators
Process for School of Health Sciences to alert other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)/Approved Educations Institutions (AEIs) of concerns about placement area

Where a concern regarding practice and/or patient safety has been raised this should be immediately investigated by the placement manager and university link lecturer for the area.

During this process an accurate record (statement) of the concerns raised and the measures taken to resolve these should be kept.

This record should be forwarded to the Lead for Practice Learning and Lead for Safeguarding within the investigating HEI/AEI.

Depending on the nature of the concern either the Lead for Practice Learning or the Lead for Safeguarding will be responsible for escalating the concern to the appropriate practice/safeguarding mechanisms within other HEIs/AEIs.

Action requiring immediate escalation to other HEIs/AEIs includes:

i. Removal of students (or a student) from the placement area
ii. Suspension of a clinical area (with re-audit plan)

In the event of immediate removal of students and/or suspension of a clinical area:

i. The Education Lead/Director of Nursing for the Trust/Organisation to be informed to agree a joint action plan and timeframe for actions.
ii. This joint action plan to be shared with other HEIs/AEIs
iii. The clinical area should be immediately deactivated on the allocations and audit system (with re-audit plan). All students on placement area, irrespective of HEI/AEI, to be reallocated to alternative active placement areas.

All HEIs/AEIs will alert HEE and/or professional regulators:

i. HEEM normally notified via 3 monthly HMV Quality Monitoring
ii. Reported to professional regulators via annual monitoring report.
iii. Or exceptional reporting when appropriate to both HEEM & professional regulators
Related resources

A range of resources and information are available on the School of Health Sciences Practice Learning and Safeguarding Webpages which are available at:

http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/healthsciences/practice/index.aspx

http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/healthsciences/practice/safeguarding/index.aspx

Professional regulation information available at:


Health and Professions Council http://www.hcpc-uk.org.uk/