



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. <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/healthsciences/raise-a-practice-concern/>

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:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentsservices/services/counselling.aspx>

Further resources can be accessed at: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentsservices/healthwelfare/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 practice assessor/practice supervisor/clinical supervisor or are unavailable/unsupportive;
- iv. Quality concerns arising from: Educational Audit, Care Quality Commission (CQC) or Health Education England (HEE), 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.

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/healthsciences/practice/safeguarding/raising-a-concern/index.aspx>

Please note that student support requests would go to the academic assessor/clinical link tutor in the first instance. A concern form should only be completed where there are genuine Fitness to Practise concerns.

Student Responsibilities

All students within the School of Health Sciences have a professional responsibility to raise concerns when patients may be at risk of harm or where there is any unsafe or unethical conduct. Concerns may include poor practice or malpractice, patient safety issues, safeguarding issues or any other serious issues. In the first instance all students are strongly recommended to discuss concerns with their practice assessor/practice supervisor/ clinical supervisor/ clinical lead/manager. During this process support is also available through the academic assessor/clinical supervisor for the identified area. Support is also available through practice support and personal tutors.

All concerns that relate to patient care or safety must be reported immediately to the person in charge of the clinical area. Concerns are reported using the on-line electronic reporting system

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/healthsciences/practice/safeguarding/raising-a-concern/raising-a-concern-about-a-practice-placement.aspx>

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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The following pages in this document contain a series of documents outlining information and the processes that should be undertaken for specific events in relation to concerns regarding practice learning and/or safeguarding.

1. Student concerns regarding a practice assessor/practice supervisor/clinical supervisor support
2. Student concern regarding practice and/or patient safety
3. Process for the removal of students from a placement area
4. Process where a professional conduct or practice safety issue has been raised about a student via School of Health Sciences concerns process
5. Process for School of Health Sciences to alert other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)/Approved Education Institutions (AEIs) of concerns about placement area

1. Student concerns regarding supervision and support

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

Where this is not possible, they should address their concerns with the placement manager, university link lecturer and personal tutor as appropriate.

During this process students and personal 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 each division regarding further action. Actions will be dependent upon the circumstances but may involve additional academic assessor/ university link lecturer support or reallocation of a student to an alternative practice assessor/practice supervisor/ clinical supervisor

2. 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 practice assessor/practice supervisor/ 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 their academic assessor/clinical link tutor for the 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 <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/healthsciences/raise-a-practice-concern/>

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

Students may also wish to contact their academic assessor/clinical link tutor and university services <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/student-services/healthwelfare/index.aspx> <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/counselling/> for additional support and should be signposted to these by the Practice/Safeguarding Lead



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.

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 a student(s) from the placement area
- ii. Communication with other HEIs/AEIs
- iii. Suspension of a clinical area (with re-audit plan)



In all cases feedback will be made available to the student following investigation.

3. Process for the removal of a student(s) from a placement area

Where there is a serious concern about the student learning environment /safety of the student 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. Health Education England normally notified at Quality Monitoring meetings as required.
- ii. Reported to professional regulators via annual monitoring report.
- iii. Or exceptional reporting when appropriate to both HEE & professional regulators

4. 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 School Lead for Fitness to Practice 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 School Lead for Fitness to Practice 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:

- I. notify the Director of Health Care Education in Practice/Lead for Practice Learning.
- II. 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. HEE normally notified Quality Monitoring meetings, as required.
- ii. Reported to professional regulators via annual monitoring report.
- iii. Or exceptional reporting when appropriate to both HEEM & professional regulators

5. 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 Director of Healthcare Education in Practice 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. HEE 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 HEE & 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 is available at:

Nursing and Midwifery Council

<http://www.nmc.org.uk/>

Health and Professions Council

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/>