**Child Safeguarding Statement Template**

1. **Name of service being provided:**

UL Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service

1. **Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm**

This service provides a primary mental health care to students of the University of Limerick. The essential aim of UL Counselling and Wellbeing Service is to support student learning and development and thus maximise students’ potential to benefit from their university experience. The main objective of the service is to provide a high-quality professional counselling service to students who experience emotional or psychological problems that inhibit their personal development and academic performance. It achieves this by providing a one-to-one drop-in service, one-to-one cognitive behavioural supports, group workshops, and one-to-one counselling sessions to students on campus and online. Students also can access the counselling service website to download psycho-education based leaflets or link to online podcasts, talks, and websites on topics of mental wellbeing. Any student enrolled at UL can avail of our services. Whilst most students are aged 18 or over, a minority commence university life at the age of 17 and are thus classed as ‘children’. Our guiding principle is that nothing we do should harm service users in any way and everything we do should support their mental wellbeing. Furthermore, in line with the ethos of primary care, this service works to link students with community and specialist services when their needs are more appropriate to those services and empowers them to seek supports within and outside of the university where that is their wish.

The purpose of this statement is to promote the welfare of children and keep them safe from harm whilst engaged with UL Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service.

The safety and welfare of children is a key priority as required under Children’s First Act (2015), Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017). This service specific Child Safeguarding Statement should be considered in the context of the overarching University Child Safeguarding Statement ( <https://www.ul.ie/hr/current-staff/health-safety-ul/child-safeguarding> ) and related Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures as well as the Policies and Procedures of the UL Counselling Service.

3. **Risk assessment**

We have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

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|  | **Risk identified** | **Procedure in place to manage risk identified***Note that UL relevant policies, procedures, and related documents are underlined in text below for easy identification without a number whilst internal UL Student Counselling and Wellbeing policies and procedures are underlined and followed by numerical reference, e.g., (1.2).* |
| 1 | **Psychological harm as a result of inappropriate or inexpert services**, such as counselling, Assistant Psychology support, other support provision, and/or referrals | **Low Risk:** The following procedures are in place to address this risk: (1) We make sure that we recruit and select only the most suitable candidates for the roles of Psychology Assistant, Student Counsellor, and Deputy/ Head of Counselling, in accordance with UL HR Garda Vetting\*\* and UL Recruitment/Employment Policies; (2) We ensure that all our counsellors are members of IACP/ IAHIP/ICP/ PsSI., with qualifications as required for membership.(3) We expect attendance at ongoing supervision and CPD training for these counsellors, which they must attend in line with the rules of their accrediting body. Such attendance is specified in the Guidelines Manual of the counselling service under Supervision (7.1) and Professional Development (7.2). (4) We expect employed staff to attend mandatory regular team meetings to discuss cases and receive support from the team, as referred to in the Guidelines Manual of the service under Staff Meetings (7.4).(5) Support is provided from line-management for all employees, assistant psychologists, and trainee psychotherapists involved with the service. (6) All referrals are made in accordance with our Guidelines on Referrals (2.1 and 2.2) to ensure that they are made in timely and appropriate manner.(7) A UL Student Complaints procedure is in place for undergraduate and postgraduate students should a student feel the need to have a situation formally resolved.  |
|   | **Psychological harm and in extreme cases, increased risk of suicide, as a result of undue delay** in accessing counselling and other specialist services **in crisis situations** especially | **Medium Risk:** Crisis situations in which counselling or other urgent assistance is sought are not an everyday occurrence. However, some guidelines exist to manage such circumstances:(1). The counselling service has guidelines for dealing with Suicidal Emergencies (5.2). Where assessment reveals that crisis appointments are necessary, these can be provided by the service for a holding period. Where necessary, Referral from the Counselling Service (2.2) can be made to the HSE Child or Adult Mental Health Services.Non-crisis requests for counselling will be placed on a waiting list and people will be allocated counselling hours as soon as these become available, having regard to current resources.  |
| 3 | **Sexual exploitation and violence** arising via inappropriate and un-boundaried counselling experiences with unsuitable individuals | **Low Risk:** (1). This risk is addressed primarily through: meticulous and careful recruitment and selection as set out in in accordance with UL HR Garda Vetting\* and UL Recruitment/Employment Policies; registration with a professional body, such as IACP/ IAHIP/ ICP/ PsSI; and attendance at personal Supervision (7.1) and staff-meetings (7.4).(2). Psychotherapy trainees and interns are required to attend meetings with counselling staff for Internal Supervision (8.4).(3) We ensure that all clients, and especially those under 18, are made aware that if they have any concern about our staff’s behaviour, they can report it under the UL Student Complaints Procedure and the Counselling Service Feedback Link (6.3). The manager will take action to ensure that anyone accused of sexually inappropriate behaviour/or sexual abuse will be dealt with according to the UL Child Protection Policy and Guidelines.(4) ‘SpeakOut’, an online tool for the anonymous reporting and provision of support information for abuse, assault, rape, bullying, sexual exploitation and violence is in place at UL. This is available on the UL counselling website <https://ulsites.ul.ie/studentaffairs/counselling-service> as well as the Equality and Diversity website <https://www.ul.ie/equality-diversity-inclusion/speak-out-tool>. |
| 4 | **Failure to have due regard to young people’s rights to privacy and confidentiality,** subject to Children First Act and other legal obligations | **Low Risk:** (1)Apart from the usual exceptions such as Children First reporting requirements, Court Orders or other Legal Implications regarding Confidentiality (3.1; 3.2) (e.g., those arising out of Withholding of Information legislation) all staff and trainees at the service maintain the strictest confidentiality in relation to sensitive and other personal information disclosed to us by our clients, in line with our Principles on Confidentiality (3.1).(2) We comply with Data Protection legislation (UL Student Data Protection Privacy Notice) and UL Data Protection Policy;  |
| 5 | **Failure to have comply with Children’s First (CF) Legislation:**Reporting of child abuse concerns | **Low Risk:** The priorities of the Children First Act (2015) is recognised by UL management and the service in conjunction with the UL Child Protection Guidelines and the Child Protection Guidelines of UL Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service (5.3; 5.4). Non-mandated persons will first consult with the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in relation to any child protection concerns or disclosures in order to establish if reasonable grounds for concern exist. Reporting to Tusla occurs via the DLP.Mandated persons will consult with the DLP and if the relevant threshold is reached will report to Tusla jointly. Mandated persons in the context of their personal legal responsibilities may also report directly to Tusla and will inform the DLP of any such report.The Designated Liaison Person for UL is Rob Hickey (Rob.Hickey@ul.ie); tel. 061 202429) at the University of Limerick.(1). All staff are made aware of the legislation and protocols of reporting as per the UL Child Protection Guidelines and UL Counselling and Wellbeing Child Protection Guidelines (5.3; 5.4). (2). All team members have either attended or are instructed to attend Children’s First training to keep them informed of the legislation. Briefings and training on the CF Act, 2015, takes place on a regular basis.(3). Potential reporting needs are discussed with line management via Supervision (7.1) and Staff Meetings (7.4).(3). Where disclosure is necessary, pertaining to the Children’s First (CF) Act, 2015, or other reason, we explain these reasons in detail to all clients and take special care with those under 18 to reassure them that we will support them as much as possible throughout potentially challenging reporting and disclosure procedures, again in line with our own Confidentiality Guidelines at the service (3.1; 3.2).  |

\*\*All policies and procedures of the University of Limerick are available on the [UL Policy Hub](https://www.ul.ie/policy-hub).

UL Counselling and Wellbeing documents are available at the service.

4. **Procedures**

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, the Children First: National Guidance, and Tusla’s Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures and policies support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

➪ Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of UL Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service: UL Student Complaints Procedure and the Counselling Service Feedback Link (6.3).

➪ Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of staff: UL HR Garda Vetting and UL Recruitment/Employment Policies

➪ Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm: UL Child Protection Guidelines and UL Student Counselling and Wellbeing Child Protection Guidelines (5.3; 5.4).

➪ Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla: UL Child Protection Guidelines and UL Student Counselling and Wellbeing Child Protection Guidelines (5.3; 5.4).

➪ Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons in the relevant service who are mandated persons: UL Child Protection Guidelines

➪ Procedure for appointing a relevant person: UL Child Protection Guidelines

5. **Implementation**

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service.

This Child Safeguarding Statement was last in July 2023 and will be reviewed again in July 2023, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

**Signed: **

(Head of Counselling; UL Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service; lucy.smith@ul.ie; 061 202327)

**For queries, please contact: Rob Hickey**

(Health & Safety Officer; Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015; Rob.Hickey@ul.ie; tel. 061 202429).