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NORTHERN IRELAND PRACTICE AND EDUCATION COUNCIL FOR NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

Code of Conduct for HSC Employees

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Any request for the document in another format or language will be considered

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This Code of Conduct is about the values for which we, as HSC staff, stand. The Code sets out the core standards of conduct expected of all HSC Staff. It has been written to complement existing professional codes of practice.

Professional staff are expected to follow the code of conduct for their own professions as well as this code.

The code aims to:

- guide staff, managers and employers in the work that they do and the decisions and choices they have to make;
- reassure the public that these important decisions are being made against a background of professional standards and accountability.

Adherence to the Code is mandatory for all employees, regardless of their status and breaches of the Code will be regarded as serious.

HSC staff are highly principled and value-driven people who will welcome this Code and exemplify the expected behaviours. All staff within HSC are responsible for, and have a duty of care, to ensure their conduct does not fall below the standards detailed in this Code and that no act or omission, within the sphere of their role, harms the safety and well-being of patients/clients and service users and their families. The Code is a set of values which should inform development programmes and training for all staff. It should make us all think exactly how we are going to work, how we make the care and safety of patients our first concern and how we respect the public, patients, clients, service users relatives and carers. If, however, the conduct and behaviours of staff falls short of the public's expectations this reflects poorly on the HSC as seriously as clinical failures.

Breaches of the Code must be investigated fairly and employers should adopt a proportionate approach. Just as the Code sets out how all staff should behave and their responsibilities, you also have rights. You have the right to be treated with respect, evaluated consistently and fairly, encouraged to maintain and improve your knowledge and skills and to be helped to balance your work and home lives properly. HSC Employers must provide and promote an organisational culture which values and supports staff and teams.

This Code of Conduct applies to **all** HSC Staff, across all HSC Trusts and HSC Arm's Length Bodies. This code incorporates the principles contained within the Code of Conduct for HPSS Managers 2003 and supersedes it.

This Code is also consistent with the 7 principles of public life, ('the Nolan Principles') which applies to everyone working as a public office-holder and therefore should govern the conduct of all health and social care staff.¹

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

1. INTRODUCTION

This Code of Conduct (the Code) sets out the standards of conduct expected of all staff in NIPEC. It presents the standards of conduct and behaviours required of all staff and informs employers, colleagues, service users and the public about these.

The Code refers to “employees”, however, for the purposes of this document, this definition also applies to all workers (e.g. Agency), volunteers and work placements.

Adherence to the Code is an integral part of employees’ contractual responsibilities during their employment with NIPEC.

- The behaviour of employees should reflect the organisation’s mission and values at all times.
- Employees must not use their privileged position to neglect, harm, abuse or exploit NIPEC stakeholders.
- Employees should familiarise themselves with the contents of the Code and should act in accordance with the principles set out in it.

1.1 Overall principles and undertakings

As an HSC employee, I will observe the following principles:

- make the **care and safety of stakeholders and colleagues** my first concern and act to protect them from risk, escalating concerns in a timely way;
- contribute to improving and protecting the health of the population as appropriate to my role;
- maintain **confidentiality**, respecting and protecting, at all times stakeholder information and their right to confidentiality and privacy;
- **communicate openly and honestly** to promote the health and well-being of stakeholders;
- **respect** our stakeholders, HSC employees and teams and partners in other agencies. I will also **show my commitment** to working constructively as a team member by working collaboratively with all my colleagues in the HSC and the wider community stakeholders;
- **be accountable** and accept **responsibility** for my own work and be **honest and act with integrity**;

- sharing **responsibility for my own learning and development** in order to improve the quality of my own work and the service we provide to our stakeholders.

Employers'/Managers' Responsibilities

I will endeavour to ensure that:

- NIPEC staff in my team are:
 - valued as individuals, colleagues and are treated with dignity and respect;
 - appropriately informed about the management of the HSC;
 - given appropriate opportunities to take part in continuous design, review and improvement of services;
 - have their ideas and realistic ambitions taken seriously;
 - given protection from discrimination, harassment and bullying;
 - provided with a safe working environment;
 - helped to maintain and improve their knowledge and skills and developed to achieve their potential; and
 - helped to achieve a reasonable balance between their working and personal lives.

These principles are described in more detail in Section 2 below.

2. DESCRIPTION OF PRINCIPLES

2.1 Confidentiality

I will:

- respect stakeholders and staff confidentiality;
- not, except in the performance my job role and duties with the organisation, divulge to any person in any manner whatsoever, any confidential information covering the business or transactions of the organisation and its activities and/or its stakeholders or employees², unless ordered to do so by a Court or Tribunal. I will make every effort to prevent disclosure of such information. I will not use social media to share information about the environment I work in or the stakeholders with whom I engage;

² Code on Protecting the Confidentiality of Service User Information (DoH 2012)

- comply with all relevant organisation policies in relation to the use of information associated with my role and in particular with reference to the personal use of social networking sites³
- comply with my obligations under the Data Protection Act (2018) and Freedom of Information Act (2000) through the Organisation's information governance training⁴.

2.2 Respect for others and working as a team

I will:

- respect and treat with dignity and fairness, stakeholders, HSC employees and partners in other agencies. I will not unlawfully discriminate against, victimise or harass against anyone on grounds of their gender, marital/civil partnership status, sexual orientation, community background, political opinion, religious belief, race, age disability, family status, whether or not they have dependents or are persons who have undergone, are undergoing or intend to undergo gender reassignment;
- seek to ensure that anyone with a genuine concern is treated reasonably and fairly;
- show my commitment to working as part of the department and Organisation team.

I will show my commitment to team working by working constructively with all my colleagues across the HSC and in the wider community, contributing to an environment in which:

- teams of staff are able to work together in the best interests of service users; and
- leadership is encouraged and developed at all levels and in all staff groups.

2.3 Accountability, Responsibility, Honesty and Integrity

I will:

- establish and maintain clear and appropriate boundaries at all times in my relationships with our stakeholders, and with colleagues, always behaving in a professional manner;

³ Social Media Guidance (NIPEC 2015)

⁴ Data Protection Policy (NIPEC 2017)

- accept responsibility for my own work and ensure that I am responsible for answering any questions and complaints in an open, honest way;
- be honest and act with integrity and probity at all times and ensure that HSC resources are protected from fraud, bribery and other forms of corruption⁵;
- not use my official position to receive, agree to accept or attempt to obtain any financial or other advantage for doing, or not doing, anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person⁶;
- not receive benefits of any kind from a third party which might reasonably be seen to compromise my personal judgment and integrity;
- not deceive or mislead my employer, or any other organisation it deals with, or the public during the course of my employment with the HSC;
- abide by the rules adopted by my employer in relation to private interest and possible conflict with public duty, the disclosure of official information and in any political activities;
- not misuse my official position or information acquired in my official duties to further my private interests or those of others.

I will ensure proper management of the performance of my team and I will seek to ensure that those I manage accept that they are responsible for their actions to both:

- the public and their representatives;
- stakeholders by answering questions and complaints in an open and honest manner.

I will also:

- accept responsibility for the management of the performance of the people I manage;
- seek to ensure that judgements about colleagues (including appraisals and references) are consistent, fair and unbiased and include all information which affects a colleague's performance, eligibility for advancement/reward and conduct; and

⁵ Fraud Response Policy and Plan (NIPEC 2016)

⁶ External Gifts, Hospitality and Awards (NIPEC 2015); Fraud Response Policy and Plan (NIPEC 2016)

- play my part in making sure that no-one is unlawfully discriminated against and that policies on equality, diversity and human rights are promoted and adhered to at all times.

2.4. Responsibility for my own learning and development

I will seek to:

- participate in training and personal development required by NIPEC and take responsibility for the achievement of the competence essential for my role, in line with KSF and organisational requirements;
- keep up to date with best practice and maintain an up-to-date record of my own learning and development;
- share my learning as appropriate and contribute to the learning and development of others.

3. EMPLOYEE CONCERNS ABOUT IMPROPER CONDUCT

If you believe you are being required to act in a way which:

- is illegal, improper, or unethical;
- is in breach of a professional code;
- may involve possible maladministration, fraud or misuse of public funds; or
- is otherwise inconsistent with this Code,

you should either raise the matter through your line management or alternatively, approach in confidence, a nominated officer under NIPEC's Framework and Policy on your right to Raising a Concern (Whistleblowing)⁷.

You should make yourself aware of the provisions of NIPEC's Framework and Policy on your right to Raising a Concern (Whistleblowing).

The Chief Executive, who is the designated accounting officer for NIPEC, has overall responsibility for propriety in a broad sense, including conduct and discipline.

I will:

- act to protect stakeholders from harm, injury or loss by identifying and reducing risk by putting into practice the appropriate support, supervisory and disciplinary procedures for staff;

⁷ Framework and Policy on your right to Raising a Concern (Whistleblowing) (NIPEC 2018)

- seek to ensure that anyone with a concern is taken seriously and treated fairly in accordance with relevant procedures; and
- contribute to the creation of an open and learning organisation where concerns about individuals perceived to be breaking the Code of Conduct can be raised without fear.

4. AFTER LEAVING EMPLOYMENT

You should continue to observe your duty of confidentiality after you have left the employment with the HSC.