

The Sherwood Psychotherapy Training Institute

SPTI Policy on Harassment & Sexual Misconduct

1. Policy Statement

Sherwood Psychotherapy Training Institute (SPTI) is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all students, staff, teaching teams and visitors. Harassment, sexual misconduct, and abuse of power are not tolerated under any circumstances. This policy outlines our approach to prevention, response, and support, in line with the Office for Students (OfS) Condition E6.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students, staff, teaching teams and visitors in all settings connected to the student experience, including placements, therapy, supervision, and online environments. It covers all forms of harassment and sexual misconduct, including stalking, coercion.

3. Definitions

Harassment: Unwanted behaviour that violates dignity or creates a hostile, degrading, or offensive environment.

Sexual Misconduct: Any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, including assault, coercion, or exploitation of power.

Power Dynamics: Recognising the influence of authority and relational roles in therapeutic and academic settings.

4. Principles

SPTI's approach is grounded in inclusivity, equity, respect for the individual, and reflective dialogue. We prioritise safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment.

5. Compliance with OfS Condition E6

SPTI maintains a single comprehensive source of information (CSI) outlining all relevant policies and procedures. The CSI is accessible, up-to-date, and version-controlled, with historical versions available.

Clear procedures are in place for reporting, support, and investigation of incidents. Mandatory training is provided for staff, teaching teams and students, and support is tailored to individual needs and protected characteristics.

6. Intimate Relationships

SPTI prohibits intimate personal relationships between:

- Staff, teaching teams and students
- Students and students

This policy is in place to protect the integrity of the learning environment, prevent conflicts of interest, and safeguard against the misuse of power or influence. All members of the SPTI community are expected to maintain professional boundaries and disclose any potential conflicts to the Director of Training. Breaches of this policy will be addressed through the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

7. Disclosure and Confidentiality

SPTI recognises that disclosures of harassment or sexual misconduct may be difficult and emotionally charged. While disclosures are treated with respect and sensitivity, they cannot be guaranteed as confidential. Information may be shared to protect safety, fulfil legal obligations, or initiate institutional responses.

Students will be informed before information is shared where possible, and the scope of disclosure will be minimised to what is necessary.

8. Developmental Context and Ethical Boundaries

SPTI recognises that psychotherapy training involves deep personal exploration, including the emergence of unresolved developmental material, unconscious processes, and complex relational dynamics. These may

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include repeating early attachment patterns, reacting strongly to others, and emotional vulnerability.

While such dynamics are integral to therapeutic learning, they do not justify or mitigate behaviours that cause harm. Any form of harassment or sexual misconduct is a serious breach of ethical and professional standards.

SPTI is committed to protecting the safety and dignity of all members of the learning community, upholding ethical boundaries, encouraging self-awareness and reflective practice, and minimising harm through early intervention, supervision, and support.

Students and Facilitators share responsibility for maintaining a respectful and safe environment. Where concerns arise, they are expected to raise concern appropriately, seek support, engage in supervision, and act in accordance with institutional policies and ethical frameworks.

9. Reporting and Complaints

Concerns can be raised with Link Facilitators, Programme Leaders, or the Safeguarding Lead (Julie Dearden Director of Training)

Formal complaints should follow the SPTI Student Disciplinary Procedure and be sent to the Director of Training (julie.dearden@spti.net).

Complaints will be handled in accordance with the SPTI Student Disciplinary Procedure v04 2025.

10. Support for Affected Students

SPTI offers pastoral and academic support regardless of complaint status. Students can be supported by their Link Facilitators and Programme Leader. They can draw upon the support of their therapist and supervisors.

11. Investigations and Outcomes

Investigations are undertaken by a member of staff or outside consultant who has little or no prior relationship with those involved. The process remains confidential to the parties involved and the members of staff supporting and investigating the complaint. Both parties are treated with dignity and offered support. There is a right to appeal in accordance with SPTI Student disciplinary policy. Outcomes of this process may include a requirement for additional supervision / therapy, a break in studies, disciplinary action, suspension, or expulsion. If the complaint is upheld this will be documented on the students file and the University of Staffordshire are informed.

12. Fitness to Practice and Study

Students must maintain emotional, cognitive, and relational capacity to practice safely. They must disclose any issues affecting professional suitability and engage in supervision, therapy, and reflective practice.

13. Training and Prevention

SPTI provides annual training for all staff and students, offers specialist training for those handling disclosures, and evaluates training effectiveness regularly.

14. Related Policies and Documents

- Fitness to Practice and Study Policy
- SPTI Student Disciplinary Procedure v04 2025

REVIEW JULY 2026 OR AS CHANGES TO POLICY ARISE.