

LEARNING AND SKILLS SERVICE

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. Definition

Safeguarding is a relatively new term which is broader than 'child protection' or 'adult protection' as it also includes prevention. Safeguarding has been defined as all agencies taking appropriate actions to address those concerns.

The Learning and Skills Service is aware that we have a duty to protect our learners, which may include adults and children at risk, from abuse and harm. Abuse can be defined as any behaviour which knowingly or unwittingly causes harm, endangers life, or violates rights.

Safeguarding action may be needed to protect learners from the following risks which include abuse perpetrated by both adult learners and children who attend training:

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Bullying – including online bullying and prejudice-based bullying
- Racist, disability and homophobic or transphobic abuse
- Gender based violence/violence against women and girls
- Peer on peer abuse- including sexual harassment, online sexual abuse, and sexual violence between learners. Online abuse can include sending abusive, harassing, and misogynistic message; sharing nude and semi-nude images and videos; and coercing others to make and share sexual imagery
([\(\(Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\)](http://www.gov.uk))
- Radicalisation and/or extremist behaviour
- Child sexual exploitation and trafficking
- Child criminal exploitation and county lines
([\(\(Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\)](http://www.gov.uk))
- Risks linked to using technology and social media, including online bullying; the risks of being groomed online for exploitation or radicalization; and risks accessing and generating inappropriate content, for example youth produced sexual imagery Teenage relationship abuse

- Up skirting (taking a picture of someone's genitals or buttocks under their clothing without them knowing, either for sexual gratification or in order to humiliate or distress the individual. It is a criminal offence)
- Substance misuse
 - Issues that may be specific to a local area or population, for example gang activity and youth violence
 - Domestic abuse
 - Female genital mutilation
 - Forced marriage
 - Fabricated or induced illness
 - Poor parenting
 - Homelessness
 - So-called honour-based violence
 - Other issues not listed here but that pose a risk to learners

Safeguarding is not just about protecting learners at risk from deliberate harm, neglect, and failure to act. It relates to broader aspects of care and education including:

- Learner's health and safety and well-being, including their mental health
- Meeting the needs of learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- The use of reasonable force
- Meeting the needs of learners with medical conditions
- Providing first aid
- Educational visits
- Intimate care and emotional well-being
- Online safety and associated issues
- Appropriate arrangements to ensure learners security, considering the local context.

It is possible that we will become aware of actual or potential abuse when we deliver our learning, and this Policy sets out our commitments to protecting these groups from harm.

2. Who do we need to safeguard?

Safeguarding duties and responsibilities apply to all learners who:

- have care and support needs
- are experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect and
- are unable to protect themselves because of their care and support needs.

3. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to:

All Learning and Skills Service personnel, training providers and their personnel, learners and partners carrying out activity on behalf of the Learning and Skills Service.

4. Six Principles of Adult Safeguarding

The Care Act 2014 sets out the following principles that should underpin the safeguarding of adults.

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| Empowerment | People are supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent. |
| Prevention | It is better to act before harm occurs. |
| Proportionality | The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented. |
| Protection | Support and representation for those in greatest need. |
| Partnership | Services offer local solutions through working closely with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse. |
| Accountability | Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding. |

5. Key aims

Learning and Skills Service believes that our learners have rights and that these should be respected and safeguarded. We are therefore committed to:

- Supporting and working in partnership with agencies tasked with protecting learners at risk from abuse or harm.
- Ensuring that all staff, subcontractors, and agencies we work with have been Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked and that no-one has contact with our learners or their families before a satisfactory DBS report has been received.
- Making responsibilities regarding these issues clear to staff and subcontractors we work with to deliver services, where there may be issues affecting these groups.
- Ensuring that all learners, irrespective of age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, nationality, or economic status have the right to be protected from abuse.

- Responding quickly and effectively to issues when they arise. The response will always involve recording the incident or concern on the Safeguarding Log and then, either supporting and advising our subcontractors, or dealing with the matter internally, following the local Safeguarding procedures.
- Monitoring and closing out each case which has been recorded on the Safeguarding Log.
- Sharing information with relevant and appropriate agencies, in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and local Safeguarding procedures.

6. Key principles

The following key principles apply to this Policy:

- The welfare of our learners is the key concern and, fundamentally, the need to protect them from abuse will override any other principles.
- It is the responsibility of everyone within Learning and Skills Service to promptly report any concerns they have to the correct agencies.
- Wherever possible, learner consent will be sought, prior to disclosing any information. We will defer to local procedures regarding seeking consent.
- For learners who live in Sunderland, we will follow the recommendations and processes as set by our local Safeguarding Boards. For learners who live outside of Sunderland, we will follow the safeguarding procedures, as set by their local authorities.

7. Who does this policy affect?

This Policy affects all personnel carrying out activity on behalf of Sunderland City Council Learning and Skills Service. It is an expectation that all subcontractors have their own Safeguarding Policy, broadly aligned to Sunderland City Council and Learning and Skills Service Safeguarding Policies and Procedures, in place and ensure it is effectively implemented, in order to protect those learners who are supported through our funded courses. This expectation is clearly set out in Terms and Conditions of Funding issued to subcontractors.

8. Implementation

To implement this Policy, Learning and Skills Service will:

- Brief staff, subcontractors and learners on this Policy and related procedures, so that they understand its purpose and how it should be used, to sit alongside their own Safeguarding Policy.
- Develop guidelines and procedures which will be available to staff and subcontractors.
- Provide training to staff on this Policy and related procedures, as required.

- Ensure all personnel involved in the delivery of training attend Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Training every 2 years
- Ensure all personnel involved in the delivery of training attend Prevent training every 2 years
- Ensure all personnel involved in the delivery of training attend Equality and Diversity training every 2 years.
- Provide annual updates to subcontractors on Learning and Skills Service's Safeguarding Policy and how it should be used, alongside their own.
- Work within the Sunderland Safeguarding Board's protocols (or the protocols of other local authorities), applying these protocols when sharing or receiving information regarding a person(s) safety.
- Promote the Policy to learners and other stakeholders.
- Ensure that subcontractors effectively promote their own safeguarding policy to those learners who are funded through our contract.
- Nominate a member of staff to act as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will oversee the management of individual cases.

The Learning and Skills Service Designated Safeguarding Lead is:

- Sarah Potts – Quality, Performance and Achievement Manager

The Learning and Skills Service Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are:

- Sarah Storer – Engagement Officer
 - Mike Law – Engagement Officer
- Ensure a representative of the senior leadership team has joint responsibility to support and oversee the successful implementation of the Safeguarding Policy.

9. Monitoring and Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Quality and Performance Forum to ensure it complies with legislative and regulatory requirements and best practice.

Performance against the Policy will be monitored through:

- Discussions of safeguarding issues as part of the induction, team meetings, contract review meetings, regular staff one to one sessions and learner interventions.
- Keeping statistical information regarding any issues and concerns that are reported and reporting these to the Head of Service and Portfolio Holder monthly.

10. Recent events which affect Safeguarding

Covid -19

The Learning and Skills Service acknowledge the changes in Safeguarding requirements during the Coronavirus Pandemic. People are now dealing with COVID-19 through different levels of restriction depending on where in the country they live.

Safeguarding adults with care and support needs from abuse and neglect remains a priority. People may be more vulnerable to abuse and neglect as others may seek to exploit disadvantages due to age, disability, mental or physical impairment or illness.

These groups may be targeted because of several factors. Generally speaking, they may need assistance with some tasks, be less up to speed with technology, more welcoming of new contacts, more trusting and – for many older people – wealthier. There is evidence that social isolation increases the likelihood of abuse. Many older and disabled people spend long periods at home alone under normal circumstances. People who are more vulnerable to COVID-19 may continue to shield and avoid going out or mixing with others.

At a time of international crisis, those who seek to exploit these vulnerabilities are quick to act. There have been multiple warnings of new scams offering help and advice on COVID-19 or with financial assistance. It is a concern as many vulnerable people fall prey to fraudsters. People with mental health problems, OCD, drug and alcohol dependencies may be in a state of heightened anxiety. People who are street homeless may have lost income from begging and be facing reduced access to drugs and alcohol on which they depend. Commentators have warned of increased incidence of depression and suicide risk as a result of fear and loss of freedoms, loved ones, income and hope. At this time, those who are particularly vulnerable may accept help from those who seek to exploit them.

There are numerous types and indicators of abuse that are paramount during the pandemic:

- physical abuse
- domestic violence or abuse
- sexual abuse
- psychological or emotional abuse
- financial or material abuse
- modern slavery
- discriminatory abuse
- organisational or institutional abuse
- neglect or acts of omission
- self-neglect.
- mental Health and general welfare
- radicalisation
- online safety

We can assume that the greatest opportunity for abuse during the COVID-19 crisis is financial. With additional pressures on services, normal service reductions, fear and isolation, the window is open to those who may seek to exploit those who may be

vulnerable. There were early reports of a 400 per cent increase in fraud reporting in March relating to the COVID-19 crisis. The Chartered Trading Standards Institute has warned the public not to open their doors to bogus healthcare workers claiming to be offering 'home-testing' for COVID-19. The BBC reported on:

- online sales of sanitation equipment that is never delivered
- links to a fake daily newsletter for COVID-19 updates
- fake insurance schemes and trading advice
- fake government emails offering tax refunds.

Domestic Abuse

Other types of abuse have escalated during this time – domestic abuse being a prominent example. Some living with an abusive partner or family member have seen an escalation in abuse due to the added tensions and frustration caused by the whole family having to stay indoors. The tensions can be further increased where families are living in cramped, temporary accommodation. The abuser may experience additional anxiety about, for example, supplies of food, alcohol, medication and illicit drugs. The consequences of this could be escalated abuse of those around them. People who are experiencing abuse may be less likely to ask for help as they know that emergency services are stretched. Fewer visitors to the household may mean that evidence of physical abuse goes unnoticed. Domestic violence can include many of the other types of abuse listed.

It is imperative to remain vigilant and provide advice to those who may be vulnerable to abuse on how to spot early signs.

The recent Domestic Abuse Act 2021 aims to address some of the issues by

- Raising Awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families
- Further improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic violence and bringing perpetrators to justice
- Strengthen the support for victims of abuse through statutory agencies

Sexual Abuse – Ofsted Report - Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges

Ofsted were asked by Government to carry out a rapid review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges in 2021 and a report published in June 2021. The link to full findings and the recommendations can be found in Section 1 of this policy.

In summary, the rapid review revealed how prevalent sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are for children and young people. It was concerning that for some children, incidents are so commonplace that they see no point in reporting them. The review found the issue so widespread that its needs addressing for all children and young people. It recommends that schools, colleges and multi-agency partners act

as though sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening, even when there are no specific reports.

At Learning and Skills Service, we acknowledge this review relates to children and young people, however, will endeavour to raise awareness of reports highlighting Safeguarding concerns to engender a culture where abuse of any kind to anyone is not tolerated.

Learning and Skills Service response to recent events that affect Safeguarding

We will strive to ensure learners are kept as safe from harm as possible. We will ensure

- Subcontracted services understand the requirements of the changing Safeguarding landscape by
 - Reviewing policies and arrangements through compliance visits and contract review meetings
 - Supporting with relevant and up to date resources
 - Offering training and support on Safeguarding and Prevent
 - Risk Assessments
- Learners are supported throughout the pandemic
 - Ensuring they know who/what/where support is available for them
 - How to keep themselves safe
 - Embedding Safeguarding Principles in all learning and assessment
 - Contacting learners and ensuring they feel safe

Safeguarding requirements throughout pandemic will be regularly reviewed.

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| Approval Body | Quality and Performance Forum |
| Original Policy date | 04.3.19 |
| Review Frequency | Annually – Biannually during COVID19 Pandemic |
| Date Reviewed | 20.01.22 |
| Next Review Date | 20.01.23 |
| Version Number | V5 |
| Author | Service Manager |