Addendum to The Skill's Network's (TSN) Safeguarding Policy

Response to COVID-19

1.   Introduction

There have been changes within our organisation in response to the outbreak. Many young people and adults are now at home and staffing is likely to be significantly affected through illness and self-isolation and the lockdown.

Despite the changes, our Safeguarding and Prevent Policy is fundamentally the same: young people and vulnerable adults always come first. Staff should respond robustly to safeguarding concerns and continue to follow the established safeguarding procedure.

This document sets out some of the adjustments we are making in line with the changed arrangements in our organisation and the [advice from government](#) and local agencies.

2.   Responsibilities

2.1.   The Skills Network Board

The Board shall ensure that there is a robust policy in place to ensure the continued safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults whilst our organisation is implementing and following government advice in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak.

2.2.   Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) shall ensure that all safeguarding processes are fit for purpose during the period of time our organisation is responding to the COVID-19 outbreak and is unable to operate under normal conditions. The DSL shall ensure that staff are briefed and kept updated on any policy or process changes as they arise.

2.3.   Staff

All staff shall ensure that they have read the addendum to the policy and that they continue to follow our organisation's safeguarding processes as per the main policy, or in accordance with the addendum, where this is different. All staff should ensure they read the central communications being issued to ensure they are up to date with any changes to usual practices.

3.   The Skills Network's position and local advice

For our adult learners, our organisation will continue to operate as normal in supporting the delivery of our level 2 and level 3 distance learning qualifications. Staff are all working remotely, with our Selby office remaining open to provide a postal service and any critical IT or reprographics support.

For our Apprenticeships, our organisation has moved to remote learning for the vast majority of our Apprentices. Staff are all working remotely, with our Selby office remaining open to provide a postal service and any critical IT or reprographics support.

Local authority partners have advised that only the most critical safeguarding cases will be dealt with, with multi-agency meetings being held virtually.

Safeguarding referrals will be dealt with as usual in line with TSN's policy and procedure by our learners, staff and relevant partners.

4.   Reporting arrangements

Our organisation's arrangements continue in line with our Child Protection Policy.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is:
Stuart Allen, Stuart.Allen@TheSkillsNetwork.com, 07912 270 020.

The Deputy DSLs are:
Josh Hill, Josh.Hill@TheSkillsNetwork.com, 07860 850691 and
Ashleigh Penny, Ashleigh.Penny@TheSkillsNetwork.com, 01757606660.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer contact details are here.

Our organisation will ensure that the DSL/Deputy DSL or DSOs are contactable at all times our organisation is open. Any changes to this will be communicated via the daily COVID-19 communication each day.

Staff will continue to follow the safeguarding procedure as laid out in the main policy. The flowchart can be found here. COVID-19 means a need for increased vigilance due to the pressures on services, families and young people, rather than a reduction in our standards.

The DSOs will ensure that timely referrals to (young people and vulnerable adults) are made, though the threshold for children's services may be higher in the current circumstances. The DSO managing the case will advise on any further action that is required on the referrer's part should it be required.

5.   Identifying vulnerability

Vulnerable learners are defined by the government as those with a social worker, or with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Vulnerable adults are defined as someone who is aged 18 or over and:

- Has need for care and support (whether or not those needs are being met)

- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect

- As a result of those needs, is unable to protect him or herself against abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

The government require our organisation to offer provision to vulnerable learners. All identified vulnerable learners' emergency contacts have received information on how to access provision.

We have undertaken a scoping exercise to identify the most vulnerable children. Those learners with an EHCP, those with a social worker and those with a current live safeguarding case have been reviewed.

A risk assessment process is ongoing to risk-rate those learners where contact with the social worker/parents/carers is required, which will be coordinated through the Safeguarding Team.

We have put specific arrangements in place with respect to the following groups:

- Looked After Children – these will be risk assessed by our Training Team and tutor and liaison with their social worker will be instigated where necessary.

  - Care leavers

  - Learners with disabilities

  - Vulnerable adults

  - Learners with previous and live safeguarding referrals.

For these individuals, we continue to operate normal safeguarding policy and procedures but are providing increased communications and notifications to ensure they receive up-to-date advice and guidance during these challenging times.

In addition, the following groups have specific arrangements around contact and support from our organisation.

- Learners at home – learners are in contact with their Trainers/Tutors through remote learning activity, and Learner Support Advisors will be contacting learners periodically to ensure that they are safe and well. However, the vulnerable learners will be prioritised for this type of contact.

6. Sub-contracting arrangements

All policies and processes outlined within our organisation's safeguarding policy and the addendum shall apply to our partners. This includes regular communication updates to ensure processes are being accurately followed and that we report all safeguarding concerns to our relevant primes. Our Apprenticeship Employer Engagement Manager is responsible for the communication and monitoring of employer settings for our Apprentices to ensure employer responsibilities in line with our policy and procedures are being effectively carried out.

7. Attendance

Where an Apprentice is expected to attend work and does not arrive, the employer is to report absence to our Apprenticeship Employer Engagement Team. One of our Learning Support Advisors (LSAs) will then contact the family. If contact is not possible by 10am, the DSL, or DSO must be informed. The DSL will attempt a range of methods to contact the parent/guardian, and if the Apprentice is classed as vulnerable, they shall also liaise with the appropriate agencies. If no contact is received within 24 hours, then the DSL/DSO may deem it necessary to undertake a home visit by the organisation or another appropriate agency. The risk of COVID-19 does not override the duty on our organisation to ensure children and young people and vulnerable adults are safe.

8. Staff will be aware of increased risk

The pressures on children and their families at this time are significant. There will be a heightened awareness of family pressures through being contained in a small area, and possible financial and/or health anxieties. These areas should be considered in the setting of any work for learners to undertake at home (including recognising the impact of online learning – see below). Staff will be aware of the mental health of both children and their parents and carers, informing the DSL about any concerns. This is also the same for vulnerable adults.

9. Risk online

Young people and vulnerable adults will be using the internet more during this period. Staff should be aware of the signs and signals of cyber bullying and other risks online. Staff should be aware that learners using their own Wi-Fi will not be subject to our organisation's systems.

- Our organisation continues to have eSafe monitoring software in place which will monitor learners whilst they are using our organisation's systems.

- Our Board will review arrangements to ensure they remain appropriate.

- Learners have been issued with advice and guidance on staying safe during the period of remote working.

- Our organisation will be issuing, via the website, useful tools and resources for parents to keep their children safe online.

- Free additional support for staff in responding to online safety issues can be accessed from the Professionals Online Safety Helpline at the UK Safer Internet Centre.

10. Allegations or concerns about staff

With such different arrangements than usual, young people and vulnerable adults could be at a greater risk of abuse from staff or volunteers. We remind all staff to maintain the view that 'it could happen here' and to immediately report any concern, no matter how small, to the Safeguarding Team.

We have confirmed that the arrangements to contact the LADO at the local authority remain unchanged. Any concerns regarding a member of staff should be reported to the DSL immediately.

If necessary, the organisation will continue to follow the duty to refer to DBS any adult who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult.

11. New staff or volunteers

New starters must have an induction before starting or on their first morning with the DSL or a deputy. They must read our organisation's Safeguarding Policy, the Behaviour Policy, the Whistleblowing Policy and the Code of Conduct. The DSL or Deputy DSL will ensure new recruits know who to contact if worried about a learner and ensure the new starters are familiar with the child protection procedure.

If staff or volunteers are transferring in from other registered education or childcare settings for a temporary period to support the care of children, we will seek evidence from their setting that:

- The member of staff has completed relevant safeguarding training in line with other similar staff or volunteers,

- They have read Part I and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and

- Where the role involves regulated activity and the appropriate DBS check has been undertaken by that setting, we will undertake a written risk assessment to determine whether a new DBS would need to be undertaken. It may be in these exceptional times we can rely on the DBS undertaken by their setting.

Our safeguarding procedures hold strong:

- When undertaking ID checks on documents for the DBS, it is reasonable to initially check these documents online through a live video link and to accept scanned images of documents for the purpose of applying for the check. The actual documents will then be checked against the scanned images when the employee or volunteer arrives for their first day.

- Our organisation will update the Single Central Record of all staff and volunteers working in our organisation, including those from other settings. This will include the risk assessment around the DBS.

12. New learners/Apprentices at our organisation

Where learners join our organisation from other settings, we will require confirmation from the DSL whether they have a Safeguarding File or SEN statement/EHCP. This file must be provided securely before the learner begins at our organisation and a call made from our DSL or a deputy to the placing establishment's DSL to discuss how best to keep the learner safe. In some unusual circumstances, this may not be possible. Information provided must include contact details for any appointed social worker. Safeguarding information about learners placed in our organisation will be recorded on our safeguarding system, and any updates will be shared with the placing establishment when the learner returns to them.

The DSL will undertake a risk assessment in respect of any new information received, considering how risks will be managed and which staff need to know about the information. This will be recorded on our safeguarding recording system.

13. Approval

This policy has been remotely approved by the Board and is available on our organisation's website.