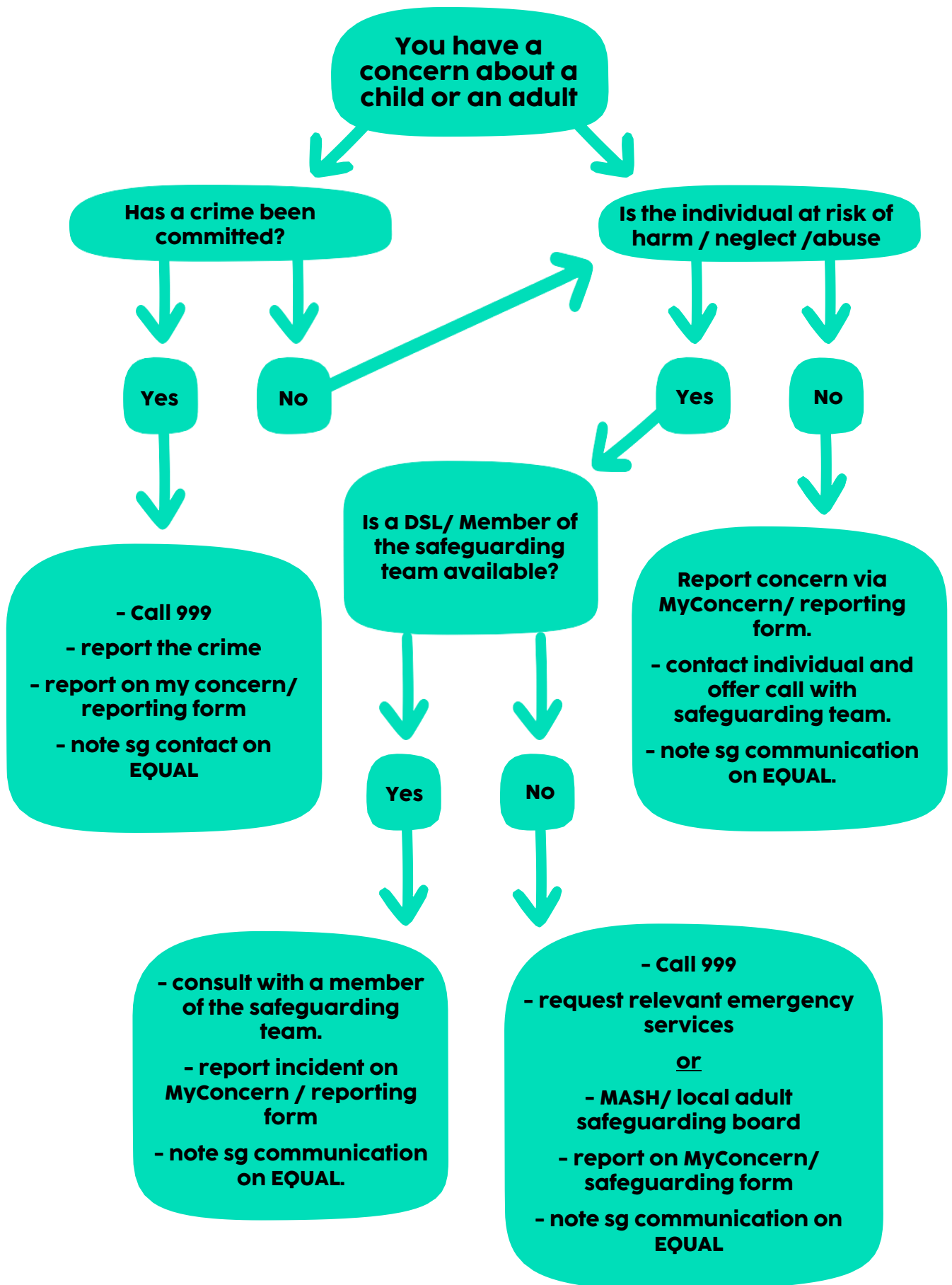


Learner Safeguarding Policy

Family:	Quality
Manager Responsible:	Anna Valentine-Marsh
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Introduction

All children, young people, and adults at risk, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, or sexual orientation or identity, have the right to protection from harassment, harm, or abuse.

In line with mandatory and statutory requirements, The Skills Network is committed to ensuring that it:

- Identifies individuals who are suffering, or likely to suffer, harm, abuse, or neglect.
- Take appropriate action to ensure that such individuals at risk of harm are kept safe.

This policy provides guidance to all staff (and relevant sub-contractor and employed staff) to ensure the safety and well-being of all our learners and staff.

This policy has been developed in accordance with but not exclusively by the following guidance and legislation:

- The Care Act 2014
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act
- Prevent Duty Guidance
- The Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025

A child is defined as someone under the age of 18 years. An adult at risk is aged 18 or over, and:

- Has a need for care and support (whether or not those needs are being met)
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect including self-abuse/ neglect.
- Is unable to protect themselves against abuse or neglect, or the risk of it, as a result of those needs.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Skills Network understands that to fulfil its responsibility to safeguard learners every member of staff at every level of the organisation must be safeguarding aware:

- The Skills Network safeguarding has oversight from a designated member of the board.
- The Skills Network has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who reports to, and provides strategic guidance to, the board.
- The Skills Network has a Safeguarding Manager. The purpose of this role is to keep our learners safe and lead on Safeguarding/Prevent for The Skills Network, attending external meetings, ensuring that all internal systems are robust, and ensuring that the Safeguarding Team are supported and trained.
- The Skills Network has a Safeguarding Team, who pick up safeguarding cases where the Safeguarding Manager and DSL need extra support and capacity.

- All staff are required to undertake mandatory training and appropriately share any concerns that are identified or disclosed within appropriate time frames (24 hours).
- The Skills Network has a safeguarding officer, the purpose of this role is to triage and lead on individual learner cases and to deputize for the safeguarding manager when needed

Training

- The DSL, Safeguarding Manager and the safeguarding team are trained to Level 4, last renewed August 2024
- All staff, including the Board, are required to undertake level 1 e-learning modules, and will be provided with face-to-face online level 2 safeguarding training within their probationary period.
- Safeguarding training for all learner facing staff every year. For non-learner facing staff training is mandatory every two years
- It is a statutory requirement that all staff read and understand at least Part 1 of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' compliance for this will be monitored by HR.

What to do in the event of a disclosure

The following '7R' process MUST be followed by all The Skills Network staff:

Recognise the signs of abuse.

Safeguarding disclosures come in many differing ways. Sometimes individuals will tell you all about the acts of abuse or neglect but there are many cases where victims of abuse say nothing and instead, we know that something is wrong by recognising and identifying signs of abuse.

Sometimes these are physical signs like cuts or bruises and sometimes they are emotional signs such as changes in behaviour. These are further described in appendix 1. There are also many different forms of abuse, the care act recognizes 10 types of adult abuse- these are outlined in appendix 2. There are also 4 types of child abuse as outlined by the Children's Act. These are described in appendix 3. Some concerns fall into multiple categories of abuse or are emerging areas of concern or abuse theses are described in appendix 4.

At The Skills Network much of our work is done remotely without physical contact with the learners, it is important therefore that we recognise signs of abuse in written work- a learners answer to a question may reference their own feelings or personal history for example. Disclosures may also come via emails or support calls or via online/ face to face sessions and it is important that we remain alert to changes in emotional and physical behaviour in these contexts.

Respond and react accordingly.

Ensuring the personal safety of yourself and our learners must always be the priority. If you or a learner is at immediate risk of serious harm, you should phone 999 immediately.

Responding to an incident of neglect or abuse can be challenging for everyone concerned. People are often reluctant to talk about abuse, and they may be scared of the possible consequences. They may be frightened that they won't be believed or worried for their safety or the safety of those around them.

Many perpetrators may tell people to keep the abuse a secret and some victims may have had negative experiences or perceptions of intervention. Adult learners in particular are often worried about what might happen if they disclose an act of abuse and may even ask you to keep whatever has been witnessed or reported secret. It is vital that you don't promise confidentiality, you should let the individual know that they have done the right thing by sharing their concerns and explain that you may have to share the information members of the safeguarding team.

You should:

- Stay calm.
- Allow the person to continue at his/her own pace – asking questions for clarification only; try to use phrases such as 'Tell me', 'Explain to me', 'Describe to me', and avoid leading questions.
- Explain what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
- Contact a member of the safeguarding team immediately.

You should not:

- Make promises you can't keep- such as saying 'everything will be okay now': sometimes things get worse before they get better.
- Attempt to investigate.
- Confront the alleged perpetrator.
- Discuss your concerns with anyone outside of the safeguarding team or members of the emergency services.

Record

It is important that you record what you have seen, heard, and been told as soon as possible after a disclosure. Sometimes it is not appropriate to take notes during a disclosure, but any notes taken must be kept securely until they can be safely passed to a member of the safeguarding team.

You MUST submit the safeguarding concern on The Skills Network's safeguarding system, MyConcern, or for Freelance Tutors via the safeguarding report form (see Appendix 5) within 24 hours.

Where you are unable to submit the concern on MyConcern immediately, please ensure that the following information is noted:

- Your details.
- Name and geographical location of those involved.
- Date of incident(s)/disclosure/suspicion.

- Details of incident(s)/disclosure/suspicion.
- Actions taken.

You should:

- Use the individuals' own words as much as possible.
- Include text from emails, or assessments in quotations.
- Stick to facts as much as possible but when using your own thoughts or opinions clearly state this.
- Include descriptions of physical appearance if relevant e.g.- 'I observed a' bruise on the right cheek'.

You should not:

- Embellish or significantly alter any notes taken.
- Discuss your concerns or reports with anyone outside the safeguarding team.
- Put full details of incidents on EQUAL.

Report

Any issues, concerns, allegations, or suspicions relating to safeguarding must be taken seriously and reported to the Safeguarding Manager, DSL (or Deputy/Safeguarding Officers).

If you have suspicions that there may be a safeguarding incident but have not received a disclosure you should report this to the safeguarding team.

Once a concern/ disclosure has been received by the safeguarding team it will be reviewed, and safeguarding actions will be undertaken. To some extent the action taken by the safeguarding team will depend on the type of learner involved, The Skills Network has a number of different types of contractual arrangements with learners and colleges, and these arrangements dictate the amount of involvement required by The Skills Network teams (see Appendix 10 and 11) in the case of an emergency or when a member of staff/ learner is at immediate risk The Skills Network will take all necessary actions.

Refer

After a disclosure has been made and a report submitted the safeguarding team will decide whether further action is required. Further actions may include:

- Referrals to social services (MASH, LASB).
- Referrals to emergency services.
- Requests for welfare checks.
- Signposting to GP services, mental health teams, local/ national charities and support groups.
- Where appropriate, we will refer safeguarding incidents to the relevant College Partner

Safeguarding Lead.

Some disclosures or reports aren't concerning enough to need referral to external agencies- these cases are often referred to as 'low level' or 'welfare' cases. The Skills Network recognises the importance of early intervention and action in response to such cases. These cases are recorded and confidentially stored in order to identify key presenting themes and to enable staff to offer pastoral support to learners.

Review

The Skills Network is committed to improving safeguarding practice across the network and to achieving the aim of becoming a 'safeguarding first' organisation. In order to achieve this aim, we recognise the importance of regularly reviewing our process, practice and procedure. In order to ensure high quality safeguarding practice, we:

- Ensure that each case is reviewed by a member of the safeguarding team.
- Track and monitor data to establish emerging patterns.
- Provide targeted training for learner facing staff based on lessons learnt and emerging patterns.
- Evaluate patterns, trends and key cases at regular safeguarding board meetings.

Reflect

At The Skills Network we recognise that receiving, supporting, or managing a safeguarding concern can have an impact on a member of staff. The impact of a case may be different for each individual involved and we recognise that there is no time limit for how or when a staff member may be affected. After a safeguarding incident members of staff can be supported in the following ways:

- Supported debrief with safeguarding team.
- HR Support.
- Access to EHCP scheme.
- Further, targeted training responsive to cases/incidents.

Supporting staff

At The Skills Network we understand that we have an obligation to safeguard staff as well as learners. If a member of staff has concerns about the safety of a member or staff this concern can be disclosed to either HR or the safeguarding team.

When there are safeguarding disclosures relating to a member of the staff team the HR and Safeguarding teams work together to ensure that the member of staff concerned is safeguarded and supported.

Managing allegations against staff

All employees should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child/ young person or adult at risk and be aware of, and adhere to, all aspects of appropriate professional conduct.

We may occasionally receive complaints or allegations against a member of staff. It is important that a fair and balanced approach is taken to ensure that both the complainant and the staff member are safeguarded.

- If such an allegation is made, the staff member should immediately inform their line manager, who will then immediately discuss the content of the allegation with the Safeguarding Manager/DSL (or Deputy/ Safeguarding Officers) and the HR Manager.
- It is important that no further action is taken in respect of gathering statements from other staff/learners or interviewing until directed by the Safeguarding Manager/DSL (or Deputy/Safeguarding Officers), or
- HR Manager.
- The management of allegations is outlined in greater detail in the 'Managing Allegations Against Staff' procedure (Appendix 8).

Safer recruitment

We have created a culture of safer recruitment and, as part of that, have adopted recruitment procedures that help deter, reject, or identify people who might abuse children, young people and adults at risk. We will act reasonably in making decisions about the suitability of the prospective employee/volunteer based on checks and evidence, including criminal record checks (DBS checks), barred list checks and prohibition checks, together with references and interview information.

The level of DBS required, and whether a prohibition check is required, will depend on the role and duties of an applicant to work for The Skills Network.

An individual will require an enhanced DBS if they:

- are responsible, on a regular basis, for teaching, training, instructing, or supervising children, young people and/or adults at risk; or
- Carry out paid, or unsupervised unpaid work regularly for The Skills Network where that work provides an opportunity for contact with children, young people and/or adults at risk.

We will encourage individuals to enrol in the rolling DBS program. All staff will be re checked after 3 years. More information can be found in the Safer Recruitment Policy.

Confidentiality

Staff may have access to confidential information about learners in order to undertake their everyday

responsibilities. In some circumstances, staff may be provided with highly sensitive or private information.

They should never use confidential or personal information about a learner or his/her family for their own or others' advantage. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass a learner.

- The safeguarding team will disclose personal information about a learner to other employees on a need-to-know basis only.
- All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children/young people and adults at risk, in consultation with the safeguarding team.
- All safeguarding records are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act. If there is any doubt as to the rights of any party to access information, The Skills Network may seek legal advice prior to releasing any information.
- The Skills Network complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. The Data Protection Act 2018 does not prevent staff from sharing information where this is necessary to protect the safety and well-being of the child or adult at risk.

Useful contacts

Name	Title	Email	Tel
Craig Tupling	Designated Safeguarding Lead	Craig.Tupling@theskillsnetwork.com	01757 600706
Anna Valentine-Marsh	Safeguarding Manager	Anna.Valentine-Marsh@theskillsnetwork.com	01757 600706
Shelly Ismail	Safeguarding Officer	Shelly.Ismail@theskillsnetwork.com	01757 600706
Katie Popplewell	Deputy Safeguarding Lead	Katie.Popplewell@theskillsnetwork.com	01757 600706
Gennine Monnahan	Deputy Safeguarding Lead	Gennine.Monnahan@theskillsnetwork.com	01757 600706
Jessie Humphry-Bell	Deputy Safeguarding Lead	Jessie.Humphry.Bell@theskillsnetwork.com	01757 600706
David MacGregor	Deputy Safeguarding Lead	David.MacGregor@theskillsnetwork.com	01757 600706
David Morley	Deputy Safeguarding Lead	David.Morley@theskillsnetwork.com	01757 600706
Jackie Cox	Governor Safeguarding Lead	Jackie.Cox@theskillsnetwork.com	01757 600706

Appendix

Appendix 1 - Signs of abuse

Signs of abuse can be recognised as differences to the individual's usual behaviour or observed from a change in their physical appearance as mentioned below:

- **Physical** – this could include a lack of personal hygiene, self-harm, substance or drug abuse, noticeable signs of bruising or flinching when being touched, and/or the development of a speech disorder or learning difficulty that cannot be attributed to a physical or psychological cause.
- **Behavioural** – this could include sudden changes in a person's character, including lack of confidence, low self-esteem, becoming withdrawn, aggressive, or angry for no reason, and/ or becoming anxious or tearful.

The information above is by no means exhaustive, and an individual may not wish to disclose something that they perceive as 'normal'.

Appendix 2 – Definitions and indicators of abuse in adults at risk

The Care Act recognises 10 categories of abuse- recent developments in safeguarding practice have added an 11th category- Mental health. It is rare that abuse only happens once- it is far more likely that we see a pattern of abuse and any single safeguarding case may have multiple abuse types associated with it.

1. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is the direct or indirect involvement of an adult at risk in sexual activity or relationships which they:

- Do not want, or have not consented to,
- Cannot understand and lack the mental capacity to be able to give consent to,
- Have been coerced into because the other person is in a position of trust, power, or authority (for example, a care worker).

Examples: rape, attempted rape, sexual assault, inappropriate touch, inappropriate looking, sexual teasing, innuendo or sexual harassment, sexual photography, non-consensual or forced viewing of pornography or witnessing of sexual acts, Indecent exposure.

Indicators

- Pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent to sexual intercourse,
- Changes in sexual behaviour/ attitude/ use of explicit sexual language,
- Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance,
- Unexplained difficulty in walking or sitting.

2. Physical Abuse

May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning or suffocating, or

otherwise causing physical harm.

Indicators

- Unexplained changes in behaviour,
- Depression/ difficulty sleeping,
- Fear of a person/ place,
- Injuries inconsistent with the person's lifestyle,
- Unexplained bruising, cuts welts or marks on the body.

3. Psychological/ Emotional abuse

Examples: threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation and/or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Indicators

- Withdrawal
- Insomnia
- Low self esteem
- Distress

4. Modern Slavery

Modern slavery is a growing problem in the UK. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive, and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude, and inhumane treatment. And individuals often do not self-identify.

Examples: slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude, and sexual exploitation.

Indicators

- Signs of physical/ emotional abuse
- Signs of malnourishment,
- Lack of self-care/ appearing unkempt,
- Isolation from the community,
- Cramped/ inappropriate living conditions,
- Lack of personal effects/ documents.

5. Financial or Material Abuse

Includes theft, fraud, internet scamming, exploitation, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Indicators

- Missing positions,
- Unexpected or sudden lack of money,
- Mistrust of the internet/ refusal to answer communications,
- Frequent appointments with contractors,
- Sudden loss of mobile/ internet/ electric.

6. Neglect and Acts of Omission

Example: ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, and/or the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition, and heating, preventing individuals making their own decisions or isolating/ ignoring individuals.

Indicators

- Poor physical condition/ personal hygiene,
- Sudden weight loss,
- Untreated injury/ medical condition,
- reluctance to connect with support / medical services.

7. Self-Neglect

Includes a person neglecting to care for their personal hygiene; health or surroundings; or an inability to provide essential food, clothing, shelter, or medical care necessary to maintain their physical and mental health, emotional well-being, and general safety. It includes behaviour such as hoarding.

Indicators

- Very poor personal hygiene,
- Hoarding,
- Malnutrition,
- Non-compliance with medical/ social services,
- Not taking prescribed medications,
- Neglecting household,
- Refusing to communicate with cameras on.

8. Discriminatory Abuse

Includes forms of harassment, bullying, slurs, isolation, neglect, denial of access to services or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, religion or because someone is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. This includes racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia or any other form of hate incident or crime.

Indicators

- The individual appears withdrawn or isolated,
- The individual appears frustrated, angry, anxious or scared.

9. Organisational or Institutional

Includes neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, or in relation to care provided in a person's own home. This may range from one-off incidents to ongoing ill treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Indicators

- Poor standards of care,
- Lack of personal possessions,
- Absence of visitors.

10. Domestic Abuse or Violence

Includes an incident or a pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behavior, violence or abuse, by someone who is, or has been, an intimate partner or family member, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. This includes psychological/emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse, so-called 'honor'-based violence, forced marriage or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Where we have a disclosure of domestic abuse that affects our staff our learners, we have a duty to safeguard any children who may be subject to or witness of the abuse.

Indicators

- Low self-esteem,
- Physical evidence of violence e.g.- cuts/bruises burns etc.
- Isolation,
- Fear of outside intervention,
- Evidence of controlling behavior.

11. Mental health

Includes acts of self-harm and abuse, cutting, poisoning, bingeing, and purging, extreme exercise, malnutrition, suicidal ideation, attempted suicide, substance abuse.

Indicators

- Physical evidence of self-harm,
- Isolation/ withdrawing socially,
- Sudden risk-taking activities.

Appendix 3 – Definitions and indicators of abuse in children and young people

The Childrens Act recognises 4 types of child abuse. It also recognises that children can be victims of domestic abuse, FGM, honor-based violence and poor mental health.

Emotional abuse

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment/ abuse of a child, though it may occur alone. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say and how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child’s developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction.

It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of others. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Indicators

- Extreme lack of self-confidence,
- Lack of emotional control,
- Withdrawal from contact.

Physical abuse

May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm.

Indicators

- Unexplained changes in behaviour,
- Depression/ difficulty sleeping
- Fear of a person / place,
- Injuries inconsistent with the person's lifestyle,
- Unexplained bruising, cuts, welts or marks on the body.

Bullying can be physical or emotional. All incidents of bullying are taken seriously, and staff should refer to the Preventing and Tackling Bullying Procedures (Appendix 5) for further guidance.

Child on Child Abuse

Child on child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to, bullying (including cyber bullying), gender-based violence/sexual assaults, up skirting, initiations and hazing, and sexting.

Child on child abuse is harassment and aggression in which a young person intentionally threatens, harms or causes distress to another young person. This behaviour is intentional, repeated and designed to hurt or threaten. Child on child abusers seek to abuse and terrorize defenceless others who may not have the ability or resources to help themselves. Thus, child on child abuse requires a power imbalance. Child on child abuse can be direct, in physical or verbal forms, or indirect, in such forms as exclusion, gossiping, and rumours.

Indicators

- Torn clothing,
- Physical injury such as bruises, cuts, scratches without a natural explanation,
- Loss of money or damaged property,
- Unwillingness to go to college,
- Change in eating habits,
- Moody outbursts or withdrawn behaviour.

Sexual

Forcing or enticing a child or young person, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, to take part in sexual activities, whether the child is aware of what is happening or not. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex), or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside the clothing. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males – women can also commit acts of sexual abuse,

as can other children.

Indicators

- Age-inappropriate sexual language or play,
- Mistrust,
- Pain when walking or sitting,
- Itching or bleeding in intimate areas.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Indicators

- Sudden focus on the internet,
- Withdrawal from family and friends,
- Sudden change in dress / style,
- Unexplained gifts.

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health and development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment.
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers) or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include the neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Indicators

- Unkempt, dirty appearance,
- Lack of appropriate equipment,
- Persistent absence or lateness,

- Theft of food,
- Excessive/ non-attendance at doctors' appointments.

Domestic violence

Children can be victims of domestic abuse, either directly or indirectly. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse at home, or suffer these effects in their own intimate relationships. Such effects can have detrimental and long-lasting impacts on health, wellbeing, development, and ability to learn. Where we have a disclosure of domestic abuse that affects our staff or learners, we have a duty to safeguard any children who may be subject to or witness of the abuse.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

At The Skills Network we have a statutory duty to report any incidents or suspicions of FGM as soon as we are aware of a risk and any concerns must be reported to the safeguarding team immediately. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM, or already having experienced FGM.

FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.

Victims of FGM are likely to come from a community that is known to practice FGM. Professionals should note that girls at risk of FGM may not yet be aware of the practice or that it may be conducted on them, so sensitivity should always be shown when approaching the subject.

Indicators

There is a range of potential indicators that an individual may be at risk of FGM. Individually, they may not indicate risk. However, if there are two or more indicators present, this could signal a risk to the child or young person.

- A special occasion or ceremony is going to take place where a girl 'becomes a woman' or is 'prepared for marriage',
- A relative or someone known as a 'cutter' is visiting from abroad,
- A female relative, like a mother, sister or aunt has undergone FGM,
- A family arranges a long holiday overseas or visits a family abroad during the summer holidays,
- A girl has an unexpected or long absence,
- A girl struggles to keep up in school,
- A girl runs away – or plans to run away – from home,
- Being between the ages of 5-8 (although FGM has been reported amongst babies and may also affect older children)
- If a girl's mother, sister, or member of the extended family has been subjected to FGM,

- If a girl's family are less well integrated into the local community or are experiencing poverty or disadvantage,
- Coming from areas with large populations of FGM practicing communities. FGM is prevalent in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Forced Marriage

At The Skills Network we have a statutory responsibility to report any incidents or suspicions of forced marriage and any concerns must be reported to the safeguarding team immediately.

A clear distinction must be made between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. In arranged marriages, the families of both spouses take a leading role in choosing the marriage partner but the choice whether to accept the arrangement remains with the young people.

In forced marriage, one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage or consent is extracted under duress. Duress includes both physical and emotional pressure.

Appendix 4 – Wider concerns

Although there are clear categories of abuse as described in the Care Act and the Children's Act there are also a number of areas of wider or emerging concern. Some of these issues fit into multiple categories of abuse others are terms used to describe new or emerging forms of abuse.

Mate Crime/ Cuckooing/ Chicken Shop Crime

Mate crime is an area of abuse in which perpetrators deliberately foster friendships with adults at risk or young people. These relationships quickly move from one where the victim is being 'love bombed' showered with gifts, compliments, and kindness into one where the victims are being exploited- used to commit crimes such as drug running or shoplifting. These relationships can be established digitally or in person and perpetrators often have links to gangs or organized crime. Recently fast-food venues have been used by gangs as a convenient location for recruiting victims- this has become known as chicken shop crime.

Another form of mate crime involves the fostering of relationships with the purpose of abusing or controlling the victim. In many cases the victim will believe that they are indebted to the perpetrator.

Adults at risk are particularly vulnerable to this type of crime. In some cases, criminal gangs and individuals make friends with an adult at risk with the intent of using their residence for crime- this is known as Cuckooing.

Indicators

- Increased absence from school/work,

- Change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups,
- A significant decline in educational or workplace performance,
- Signs of self-harm, or significant changes in well-being/signs of assault,
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions,
- Withdrawal from caring services or networks,
- Communications being controlled by new or unexplained friend or carer.

Sexual Harassment

Online sexual harassment and peer on peer online abuse can threaten a young person or vulnerable adult's self-esteem and mental health, and impact on their achievement and progression. Sexual harassment can take many forms including institutional sexual harassment and banter/ minimized sexual harassment.

Upskirting is a form of sexual harassment which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm.

Sexting is a form of harassment where individuals send unsolicited communications to a victim. These messages can be images, videos or text based. Often the perpetrator will try and coerce, threaten, or manipulate victims into sending back similar images/ text. It is against the law to send, make or distribute images of a person under 18 years of age- even if the image being sent is of an individual over 18 it is a crime to send this image to a child.

Deep fakes are a form of sexual harassment where images of individuals are manipulated typically to provide sexual gratification or to create material for extortion or harassment.

Radicalisation and Extremism

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act, which received Royal Assent on 12 February 2015, places a duty on specified authorities, including local authorities and childcare, education, and other children's services providers, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard for the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism ('the Prevent duty').

Extremism: The holding of extreme political or religious views e.g., animal welfare rights, environmentalists, EDL/ white supremacy groups, anti-gay groups, Islamic/Christian ideology.

All staff are required to undertake mandatory e-learning and face-to-face training; this provides employees with information on how to refer a concern using the Channel process. All employees will follow the Prevent Procedures (Appendix 6).

Staff are also required to look out for issues relating to witchcraft and religion and their implications for safeguarding.

Conspiracy theories and misinformation/ fake news

Context

In line with the 2025 updates to the Prevent Duty and KCSiE guidance, conspiracy theories are now formally recognised as a **safeguarding harm**. These narratives can be used to manipulate vulnerable individuals, foster extremist ideologies, and create permissive environments for radicalisation.

Definition

Conspiracy theories are belief systems that attribute significant events or societal changes to secret, often malevolent, groups or agendas. They often:

- Exploit fear, uncertainty, or mistrust.
- Target marginalised communities (e.g., antisemitic or anti-immigrant narratives).
- Undermine democratic institutions and public trust.
- Are weaponised by extremist groups to recruit or radicalise

Safeguarding Risks

- Psychological Harm: Exposure to conspiracy theories can cause distress, paranoia, and isolation.
- Radicalisation Pathways: These narratives may serve as gateways to extremist ideologies.
- Online Exposure: Social media platforms are key vectors for spreading misinformation and disinformation.
- AI-Generated Content: Generative AI is increasingly used to create convincing but false narratives, complicating detection and response

The skills Network will...

- Recognise signs of engagement with harmful conspiracy theories (e.g., sudden ideological shifts, distrust of authority, withdrawal).
- Use the Notice, Check, Share model to escalate concerns.
- Promote critical thinking and digital literacy among learners and colleagues.
- Challenge permissive environments that allow conspiracy theories to flourish.
- All colleagues receive training on identifying and responding to conspiracy theory-related safeguarding concerns.
- Use approved monitoring tools to detect harmful content in digital environments.

Appendix 5. Safeguarding and Prevent Notification Form (Strictly Confidential)

All staff are to submit any Safeguarding and Prevent concerns via MyConcern within 24 hours.

For Freelance Tutors, this form is to be used to record any Prevent issues and safeguarding incidents, disclosures or suspicions of abuse or potential risk of harm relating to a child (under 18 years), young person or adult at risk.

Once completed and checked, the form should be sent to safeguarding@theskillsnetwork.com within 24 hours. The DSL will notify the HR Manager, appropriate member of the SLT, and the Safeguarding Lead for Governors, as appropriate.

Note: This form is to be completed electronically.

Name(s) of Learner(s) and Learner Ref Number	<i>(As they appear on EQUAL)</i>
Course	<i>(As they appear on EQUAL)</i>
Concern Summary	<i>e.g. Andrew has exhibited signs of substance misuse.</i>
Concern Date/Time	<i>DD/MM/YYYY HH:MM</i>
Details of Concern	<i>There is no need to repeat the Concern Summary. Please give clear details.</i>
Location of Incident	<i>(College/Funding stream the learner is associated with, as on EQUAL)</i>
Action taken	

Name of staff member completing this form:

Date Completed:

Appendix 6. Prevent procedures

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Safeguarding and the Prevent duty
3. Definition of extremism
4. Definition of radicalisation
5. People responsible for safeguarding and prevent
6. Reporting concerns
7. Prevent Referral Flowchart

1. Introduction

Section 26 (1) of the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015 ('the Act') imposes a duty on 'specified authorities', when exercising their functions, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Further Education providers are 'specified authorities'.

It is a condition of funding that all Further Education and independent training providers must comply with relevant legislation and any statutory responsibilities associated with the delivery of education and safeguarding of learners.

'The aim of the Prevent duty is to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Terrorist groups often draw on extremist ideology, developed by extremist organisations. The government has defined extremism in the Prevent strategy as: vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces'.

2. Safeguarding and the Prevent duty

The document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025' identifies radicalisation as one of the additional safeguarding concerns. It is important that, as part of safeguarding, all learners are protected from radicalisation.

The Skills Network recognises that all staff and learners have a role to play in preventing radicalisation and keeping up to date with key themes within Prevent. These include, but are not limited to, County Lines, Animal Rights, Environmental, Knife Crime, Forced Marriage, FGM, Lone Actors, INCEL, Extreme Right-Wing, Political, and Islamic Extremists.

Conspiracy theories and misinformation/ fake news

Context

In line with the 2025 updates to the Prevent Duty and KCSiE guidance, conspiracy theories are now formally recognised as a **safeguarding harm**. These narratives can be used to manipulate vulnerable individuals, foster extremist ideologies, and create permissive environments for radicalisation.

Definition

Conspiracy theories are belief systems that attribute significant events or societal changes to secret, often malevolent, groups or agendas. They often:

- Exploit fear, uncertainty, or mistrust.
- Target marginalised communities (e.g., antisemitic or anti-immigrant narratives).
- Undermine democratic institutions and public trust.
- Are weaponised by extremist groups to recruit or radicalize

Safeguarding Risks

- Psychological Harm: Exposure to conspiracy theories can cause distress, paranoia, and isolation.
- Radicalisation Pathways: These narratives may serve as gateways to extremist ideologies.
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The skills Network will...

- Recognise signs of engagement with harmful conspiracy theories (e.g., sudden ideological shifts, distrust of authority, withdrawal).
- Use the Notice, Check, Share model to escalate concerns.
- Promote critical thinking and digital literacy among learners and colleagues.
- Challenge permissive environments that allow conspiracy theories to flourish.
- All colleagues receive training on identifying and responding to conspiracy theory-related safeguarding concerns.
- Use approved monitoring tools to detect harmful content in digital environments.

All complaints, allegations or suspicions relating to radicalisation must be taken seriously and communicated with the DSL.

3. Definition of Extremism

Extremism is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance, that aims to:

- negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; or
- undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights; or
- intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve the results in (1) or (2).

The types of behaviour below are indicative of the kind of promotion or advancement which may be relevant to the definition and are an important guide to its application. The further context below is also an essential part of the definition.

Behaviour that could constitute extremism

Aim 1 (negate or destroy fundamental rights and freedoms): Behaviour against a group, or members of it, that seeks to negate or destroy their rights to live equally under the law and free of fear, threat, violence, and discrimination. Including:

- Using, threatening, inciting, justifying, glorifying or excusing violence towards a group in order to dissuade them from using their legally defined rights and freedoms.

Aim 2 (undermine, overturn or replace liberal democracy): Attempts to undermine, overturn, or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights. Including:

- Advocating that the UK's parliamentary democracy and democratic values and rights are not compatible with their ideology, and seeking to challenge, overthrow, or change our political system outside of lawful means.
- Using, threatening, inciting, justifying, glorifying or excusing violence towards citizens, in order to dissuade them from participating freely in the democratic process.
- Subverting the way public or state institutions exercise their powers, in order to further ideological goals, for example through entryism, or by misusing powers or encouraging others to do so.
- Using, threatening, inciting, justifying, glorifying or excusing violence towards public officials including our armed forces, police forces and members of local, devolved or national legislatures, in order to dissuade them from conducting their obligations freely and fearlessly, without external interference.
- Establishing parallel governance structures which, whether or not they have formal legal underpinning, seek to supersede the lawful powers of existing institutions of state.

Aim 3 (enabling the spread of extremism): Intentionally creating a permissive environment for behaviour in aim 1 or aim 2. Including:

- Providing an uncritical platform for individuals or representatives of groups or organisations that have demonstrated behaviour in either aim 1 or aim 2.
- Facilitating activity of individuals or representatives of groups or organisations that have demonstrated behaviour in either aim 1 or aim 2, including through provision of endorsement, funding, or other forms of support.
- The dissemination of extremist propaganda and narratives that call for behaviour in either aim 1 or aim 2.
- Attempts to radicalise, indoctrinate and recruit others to an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance, including young people.
- Consistent association with individuals or representatives of groups or organisations that have demonstrated behaviour in either aim 1 or aim 2 without providing critical challenge to their ideology or behaviour.
- If any behaviour listed in aim 1 or aim 2 has occurred previously, a refusal by the individual, group or organisation that conducted the behaviour to rescind, repudiate or distance themselves from the behaviour.

4. Definition of radicalisation

Radicalisation is the process where someone has their vulnerabilities or susceptibilities exploited towards crime or terrorism – most often by a third party who have their own agenda.

Concerns related to radicalisation

Where there are concerns that a student is being radicalised or where there are concerns that a student is expressing extremist views, then, in line with the government Prevent duty guidance, these concerns must be raised in the same way that any other safeguarding concern would be raised.

5. People responsible for safeguarding and Prevent

The Skills Network recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. However, there are specific staff with responsibility for safeguarding within the organisation and they are referred to in this document as Designated Safeguarding Lead, Safeguarding Manager, Deputy Safeguarding Lead, Safeguarding Officers, HR Manager. A list of names, titles and contact details for these staff can be found in The Skills Network's Safeguarding Policy.

6. Reporting concerns

Staff who have a concern should discuss their concerns with an appropriate manager and then communicate the incident with the DSL or relevant safeguarding staff (using The Skills Network's Safeguarding Reporting Form).

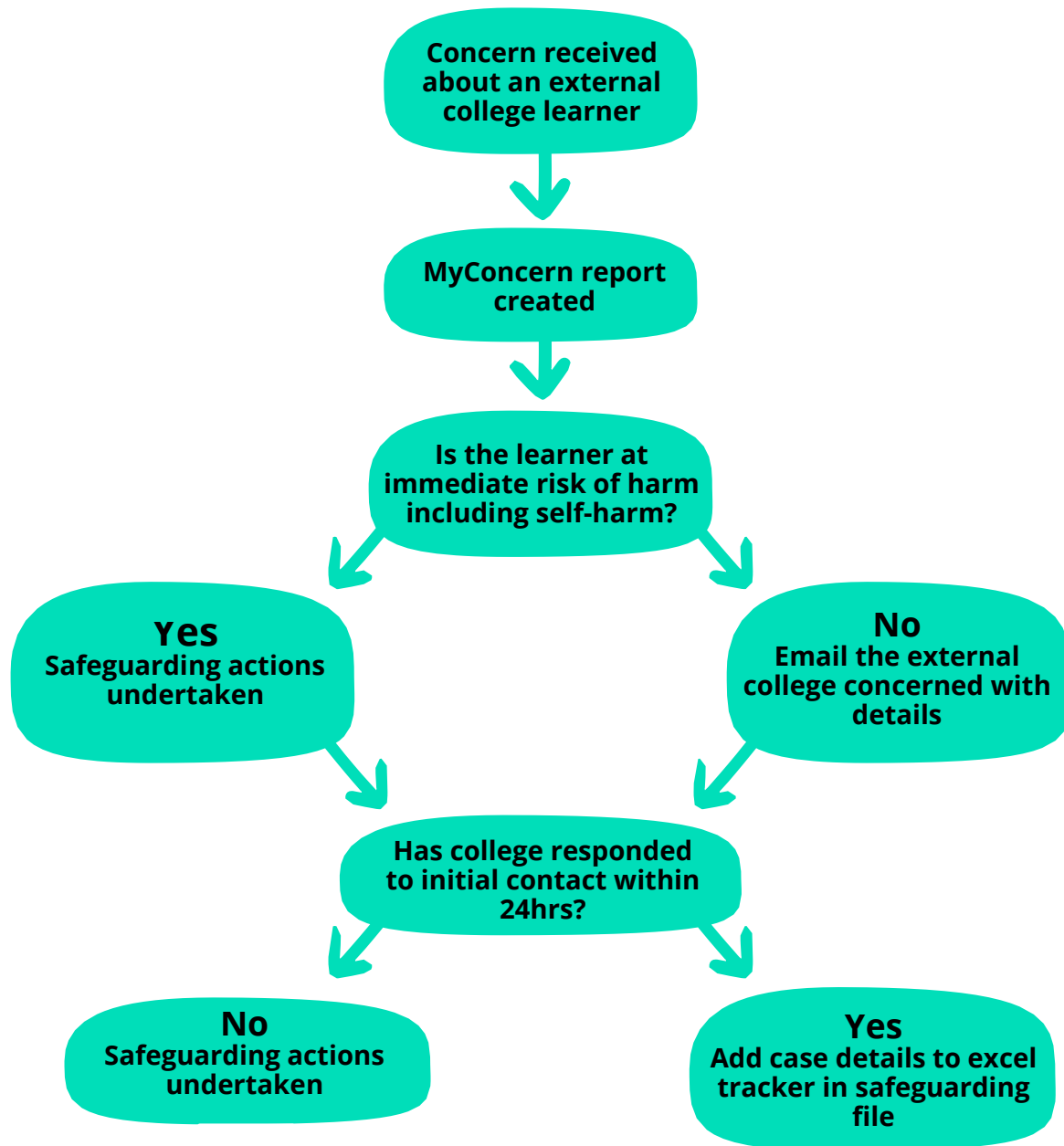
The DSL will then take the appropriate course of action. If the DSL considers that the learner may be at risk of radicalisation, they will make a referral in line with the Prevent duty guidelines.

Note: At no point should The Skills Network staff undertake any investigatory interviews.

If none of the above are available, contact the [HR Manager](#) or the police for further guidance.

If a student is in immediate danger or at risk of serious harm, for example, in a life-threatening situation, call the emergency services by dialling 999. You must then communicate the information to the DSL.

Prevent Referral Flowchart



ANYONE can make a referral to Channel.

Channel is an early intervention process which will gather information as to determine whether there is a specific risk of radicalisation and whether the threat is malicious.

The local authority Prevent Coordinator, and the police Channel Coordinator will identify the type of support required and refer to a Multi-Agency Channel Panel.

A Multi-Agency Channel Panel is made up of external agencies who will arrange for tailored support, which is approved through the Channel intervention.

The Department for Education (DfE) has launched a helpline for anyone concerned about a child who

may be at risk of extremism, or about extremism within an organisation working with children and young people.

Email: counter.extremism@education.gsi.gov.uk | Telephone: 020 7340 7264

Appendix 7 - The Regional HE/FE Prevent Coordinator Network

- 1. Northwest England**
Nigel Lund
nigel.lund@education.gov.uk
- 2. Northeast and Yorkshire**
Chris Sybenga
chris.sybenga@education.gov.uk
- 3. West Midlands**
Hifsa Haroon-Iqbai
hifsa.haroon-iqbai@education.gov.uk
- 4. East Midlands**
Sam Slack
sam.slack@education.gov.uk
- 5. Eastern England**
David Layton-Scott
david.layton-scott@education.gov.uk
- 6. Southeast England**
Alamgir Sheriyar
alamgir.sheriyar@education.gov.uk
- 7. London**
Chris Rowell:
chris.rowell@education.ac.uk
Jake Butterworth:
jake.butterworth@education.gov.uk
- 8. Southwest England**
Salam Katbi
Cheri Fayeres
Cheri.Fayeres@education.gov.uk



<https://www.safecampuscommunities.ac.uk/prevent/regional-coordinators>

Appendix 8 – Managing allegations against staff

Contents

- Introduction
- Context
- Dealing with allegations
 1. Referral
 2. Initial considerations
 3. Action following initial considerations
 4. Suspension
 5. Case subject to criminal investigation
 6. Referral to DBS
 7. Malicious or unsubstantiated allegations.

Introduction

The Skills Network believes that all members of the organisation, as well as our learners, are entitled to receive care and protection from harm. We will ensure that any concerns or allegations of impropriety are dealt with appropriately, fairly, and sensitively. Everyone within The Skills Network has a responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and for ensuring their safety and well-being.

We have a robust recruitment and selection procedure to ensure that all staff have been appropriately screened prior to appointment, in accordance with the organisation's safeguarding procedures.

Mandatory child protection and safeguarding training is undertaken by all staff through induction programmes and staff undertake regular and continuous professional development, in line with statutory requirements.

All staff have a duty to ensure that young people and learners are safe and protected. All staff must ensure that safeguarding procedures are appropriately followed if there are any concerns relating to the welfare or safety of a young person or learner.

In any conflict between the needs of a young person/learner and those of others, the needs of the young person/ learner must come first. Staff must report any allegation which may indicate that a staff member has behaved in a way that has:

- Harmed or may have harmed a young person/learner,
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against a young person/learner,
- Behaved in a way which indicates that she/he is unsuitable to work with young people/learners.
- These procedures should also be applied where there is evidence of any of the following:

- Abuse of trust – for example, a person over 18 involving a young person under that age in sexual activity, when she/he is in a specified position of trust in relation to the young person.
- Grooming – for example, developing a relationship with a young person with a view to sexually abusing them.
- Communication of a sexual nature to young people – for example, indecent or suggestive text messages, text images or emails.
- Offences suggesting that a person may be a risk to young people/adults at risk of harm – for example, accessing, making or distributing indecent images of children, serious assault on an adult, serious drug offences, and perpetrating domestic violence.

Note: These procedures are also distinct from complaints of poor practice and disciplinary issues where there are no child protection or safeguarding issues.

The fact that a member of staff tenders their resignation, or ceases to provide services, must not prevent an allegation being investigated under these procedures.

Context

Allegations may be made in various ways:

- Direct disclosure by young people/learners/adults at risk of harm
- Indirect disclosure, i.e., through written work or art.
- Complaints to The Skills Network from parents/carers.
- Complaints to social care by parents/carers/young people.
- Complaints to police by parents/carers.
- Reports by other colleagues or agencies.

The context in which an incident occurs is crucial to understanding the incident and the definition attached to it. Allegations need to be considered with reference to the following:

- The seriousness of the allegation.
- Date(s) when the alleged incidents occurred.
- The degree and extent of harm.
- The frequency of alleged abuse.
- The circumstances in which it allegedly took place.
- The age of the young person.
- The environment and setting.
- Expectations and standards applied to the member of staff/volunteer
- There are up to three strands in the consideration of an allegation:
- A police investigation into a possible criminal offence.

- Enquiries and assessment by social care about whether a child is in need of protection.
- Consideration by The Skills Network of possible disciplinary action.

Dealing with allegations

1. Referral

All allegations should be communicated immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the HR Director. Or the CEO if the allegation involves the DSL or HR Director, or the Chair of the Board if the allegation involves the CEO. In the event of the requirement of a Safeguarding Report being submitted on MyConcern, the staff member should then consult with the DSL, or HR Manager, and submit the form accordingly. It is

important that the staff member (or their Line Manager) does not conduct any investigations or take statements at this stage and awaits advice from the DSL or HR Director.

The seriousness of some incidents will require an immediate referral to social care, while others of a less serious nature will not warrant consideration by social care; however, it is important to ensure that all allegations are dealt with appropriately.

2. Initial consideration

The DSL will advise and consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the HR Director. The following outcomes may result from investigation:

- Substantiated: there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- Malicious: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate attempt to deceive
- False: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- Unsubstantiated: there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.

3. Action following initial consideration

Where initial consideration decides that the allegation does require a referral to police or social services, the referral will be followed by a strategy meeting to consider the information available and to make decisions about what action should be taken, both to safeguard the young person (and others), and to determine the appropriate course of action.

Where it is decided that the allegation does not warrant a possible criminal offence, then The Skills Network will consider dealing with the issue under its disciplinary procedures, as appropriate.

4. Suspension

Suspension of the staff member(s) should not be automatic, or the default option. The possible risk of harm to young people posed by an accused person needs to be carefully evaluated and managed. Suspension will be considered where there is cause to suspect the following:

- A young person is, or young people are, or might be at risk of, significant harm.
- The individual may impede any police or social care investigation.
- The nature of the allegation is such that there are grounds for dismissal.
- There is 'reasonable and just cause' to suspend.

5. Case subject to criminal investigation

If, following the police investigation, there is a decision to administer a caution or not to charge a person, the police should pass the information to The Skills Network without delay, to enable possible disciplinary proceedings to begin.

Should a person be convicted, the police will notify The Skills Network, so that appropriate action can be taken.

6. Referral to DBS

If, upon conclusion of the case, The Skills Network dismisses the person, or the person ceases to provide his/ her services, The Skills Network has a legal requirement to make a referral to the DBS where they think that an individual has engaged in conduct that harmed (or is likely to harm) a child or adult at risk, or if a person otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child or adult at risk.

7. Malicious and unsubstantiated allegations

- Malicious allegations must be removed from personnel records. Allegations found to have been malicious, unsubstantiated, and unfounded should not be referred to in employer references.
- Any young people/learners/staff found to have made demonstrably false allegations should be subject to disciplinary action.

Appendix 9 – Preventing and tackling bullying procedures

Contents

1. Introduction of Legal framework Safeguarding Criminal law
2. Definitions of types of abuse/harassment
3. Prevention
4. Procedures and consequences.

Introduction

The Skills Network has a duty to promote a secure and safe environment in which all learners are free from threats, bullying and associated behaviours and actions.

Bullying is deemed as 'behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms, including cyber bullying via text messages or the internet, and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example, on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or because a young person is adopted or has caring responsibilities.

It might be motivated by actual or perceived differences between young people (Preventing and Tackling Bullying, DfE 2017).

Stopping violence and ensuring learners' physical safety is the priority for all staff if they encounter any instances of physical bullying. However, emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical bullying, and it is the responsibility of all staff to prevent occurrences of bullying.

It is important that all learners feel confident that any incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

These procedures apply to all learners enrolled on The Skills Network learning programmes. The organisation is not directly responsible for bullying or harassment that takes place outside the learning environment and off the premises, but it will take appropriate action if activities have an impact on a learner's safety and well-being.

Legal framework

Education and Inspections Act 2006

Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act provides that The Skills Network must have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying. These measures should be part of The Skills Network's Behaviour Policy, which must be communicated to young people, learners, parents, and colleagues.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act replaces previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. A key provision is an Equality Duty which has three aims:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation or any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.

The Act also makes it unlawful to discriminate against, harass or victimise a young person or learner in relation to admissions or the way it provides education, the provision of access to any benefit, provision or service, or subjecting them to any other detriment.

Safeguarding

Under the Children Act 2004 a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a young person is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm'. Where this is the case, staff should follow the organisation's referral process in line with The Skills Network's safeguarding procedures.

Similarly, the same procedures will apply to any adults deemed at risk.

Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, staff may need to draw on a range of external services to support a learner who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a learner engaging in bullying.

Criminal law

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassment, threatening behaviour or communications, could be a criminal offence, for example, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003 and the Public Order Act 1986.

If staff feel that an offence may have been committed, they should consider contacting the police.

For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication or text with the intent to cause distress or anxiety; or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known to be false by the sender.

Definitions of types of abuse/harassment

This is not an exhaustive list.

Physical abuse

- Any use of violence e.g., hitting, pushing, pulling, kicking, spitting, biting, shoving, tripping up and 'accidentally' banging into someone.
- Damaging, stealing, taking, hiding belongings and/or throwing them around e.g. money (taxing), belongings or coursework.
- Forcing someone to take drugs.

Verbal abuse

- Name calling, teasing, threats and intimidation, taunting, mimicking, sarcasm, being generally 'unfriendly', making someone look silly and making things up to get someone in trouble.
- Ridiculing particular customs, music, accents or the dress of anyone from a different culture.
- Offensive or racist graffiti, making silent or abusive phone calls and unkind practical jokes.

Emotional abuse

- Ignoring, excluding, tormenting, insensitive jokes or pranks, damaging property belonging to another person and demanding money or property.

Silent bullying

- Ignoring someone/leaving them out, preventing someone from joining in, spreading rumours, making threatening gestures and following someone around.

Cyber bullying

- All areas of the internet, such as email, social media and internet chat room misuse e.g. posting insulting notices about someone.
- Sending abusive text messages or emails.
- Misuse of associated technology e.g. camera and video facilities.
- Happy slapping – the practice whereby a group of people assault a stranger at random while filming the incident on a mobile device to circulate the images or post them online.

Racist bullying

- Racial taunts, graffiti and gestures.
- Refusal to work with others because they are from a different culture.

Sexual bullying

- Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments including online and in person.

Homophobic bullying

- Bullying usually aimed at gay, lesbian or bisexual individuals or those with gay, lesbian or bisexual relatives/friends.
- The use of generic insults relating to homophobic terms.

Hate crime

- Hate crime is any offence against a person or property, which is motivated by the offender's hatred of people because they are seen as being different.
- People do not have to be a member of a minority community to be a victim of hate crime.
- Any incident where an individual or group of people are targeted because they are believed to be of a different race, religion/belief, sexual orientation, gender identity or have a disability can be reported as a hate crime.

Mate crime

- Mate crime is defined as the exploitation, abuse or theft from any vulnerable person by those they consider to be their friends.
- Those that commit such abuse or theft are often referred to as 'fake friends'.

Stalking

- Continued unwanted attention through personal contact (directly with you through your friends and family) telephone calls, letters, emails, text messages and internet chat rooms.

Prevention

Responding to bullying should not start at the point at which a young person has been bullied. Staff should be proactive in gathering intelligence about issues which may provoke conflict and try to prevent bullying happening in the first place. A variety of strategies should be considered, some of which are listed below.

a) Staff and managerial strategies:

- Ensuring that young people/learners are supervised at appropriate times, especially during break and lunch periods.
- Ensuring that all colleagues adhere to Safeguarding/Behaviour Policies and Procedures.

- Developing proactive approaches to safeguard learners from being bullied, or those deemed as at risk of bullying.
- Being alert to early signs of distress.
- Listening and acting upon what young people are saying.
- Making it easy for young people/learners to report bullying incidents.
- Ensuring that appreciation and respect for culture, religion and sexuality are promoted.
- Improving self-esteem.
- Helping young people/learners to develop strategies in the management of their own behaviour to encourage positive attitudes towards others.
- Encouraging young people/learners to reflect on their own attitudes in dealing with bullying.
- Regularly evaluating and updating approaches to anti-bullying.
- Providing regular staff training.
- Celebrating success and diversity.

b) Young people/learner strategies:

- Empowering young people/learners to take positive action against bullying behaviour.
- Devising systems to minimise the risks involved in young people informing staff about instances of bullying.
- Making confidential sources of advice and support widely available – for example, Childline.
- Providing specific sessions covering e-technology, including appropriate behaviour, online safety and conduct.
- Involving young people/learners in developing local behaviour policies.

Procedures and consequences

The emphasis should be a zero-tolerance attitude to bullying and harassment. It is imperative that a whole-organisational approach is taken to ensure that consistency is maintained.

- All learners should have confidence in The Skills Network's procedures to report all bullying incidents.
- All complaints of bullying and harassment should be investigated thoroughly.
- Staff should confront and take appropriate action relating to any bullying they observe or are informed of.
- All incidents should be fully recorded and communicated with the DSL.
- Parents/carers should be informed, where appropriate.
- Cases of persistent and serious bullying can lead to exclusion.

Appendix 10 – Social Media Policy

Social media has revolutionised how we engage with peers. Used effectively, it can enhance learning, research, experience and build credibility with future employers to unlock career prospects and collaboration opportunities. However, when used in a negative way, it can damage reputation, credibility, employability and could result in legal action. Therefore, the purpose of this Policy is to ensure all colleagues and learners can utilise and harness social media to its full potential, in a safe, legal and ethical way.

At skills network we recognise that learners use social media to celebrate their hard work and to connect with other students both via public forums and in private groups. Social media offers opportunities for developing a sense of connection and most people use it appropriately, finding benefit from it. However, it can come with risks. Unfortunately, some people take advantage of the distancing nature of the online space to behave in a way which would not be acceptable in a face-to-face encounter.

When using social media including chat groups, messaging services:

- Treat others with courtesy and respect
- Use respectful language and tone.
- Avoid using slang or inappropriate language
- Value diversity
- Be respectful of others' opinions, even if they differ from your own.
- Avoid making negative comments or attacking others
- Support the mental health and wellbeing of themselves and others.
- Only communicate with other learners via chat groups or in class/ breakout rooms

You should ensure that your use is responsible, within the terms and conditions of the platform you are using and doesn't break any UK laws. You should ensure that you are aware of and follow any codes of conduct and other policies of the social media platforms you use.

Types of unacceptable behaviour include (but are not limited to):

- Cyberbullying
- Trolling
- Harassment
- Hate speech
- Collusion or cheating on assignments
- Posting or re-posting abuse
- Posting or re-posting offensive or defamatory images or using offensive or defamatory language
- Posting or re-posting discriminatory material

Appendix 11 – Learners with spent/ unspent convictions policy

Introduction

The skills network believes in the right of all individuals to undertake learning or training regardless of their background. In this context, having a criminal record will not necessarily mean that an applicant cannot be admitted to their chosen course.

The Skills Network also has to take into account the demands of various professional bodies and requirements under the law to protect children and adults at risk of harm, abuse or extremism. Some of our courses that lead to professional careers are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. These courses may have particular requirements relating to the disclosure of warnings, reprimands, cautions and criminal convictions which are dealt with on a specific course basis and require applicants to agree to submit to criminal record checks by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

The skills network takes very seriously its commitment to safeguard potential and existing students, staff, contractors and visitors and the need to consider closely an individual's criminal convictions when deciding whether that individual may begin or continue with their studies with the skills network.

Laws and guidance

This policy and procedure is underpinned by the values enshrined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. It is also informed by:

- The equality act 2010
- The human rights act
- Keeping children safe in education 2024
- The children's act 1989
- The care act
- Working together to safeguard children
- The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012
- The Data Protection Act 2018

Definitions

- **Criminal record** - A 'criminal record' is 'a list of crimes of which someone has been convicted in a magistrate' court or the Crown Court.'
- **Cautions, conditional cautions, and youth cautions** - Cautions, conditional cautions, and youth cautions (formerly reprimands or final warnings issued to individuals aged under 18) are issued by the police when an individual accepts responsibility for an offence.

- **Relevant criminal convictions** - convictions which relate to any kind of violence including (but not limited to) threatening behaviour, offences concerning the intention to harm or offences which resulted in actual bodily harm; offences listed in the Sex Offences Act 2003; the unlawful supply of controlled drugs or substances where the conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking; offences involving weapons and firearms; offences involving arson; and offences listed in the Terrorism Act 2006.
- **Spent criminal convictions** - The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended in 2013) explains that any conviction for a criminal offence can be regarded as spent provided that; the conviction did not carry a sentence excluded from the Act, such as a custodial sentence of over two and a half years and no further convictions occurred within the rehabilitation period. Some convictions are never 'spent'
- Relevant course the term 'relevant course' refers to courses which require DBS checks to be conducted, for example those which will involve the learner coming into contact with children and vulnerable adults. For the purposes of safeguarding, all criminal convictions including those which are 'spent,' cautions, reprimands and binding-overs must be disclosed.

Managing disclosures of criminal convictions

Applicants to relevant courses are required to indicate on the enrolment form if they have an unspent or relevant conviction (or pending proceedings) and appropriate risk assessment is undertaken.

Learners do not begin courses where a previous criminal record is likely to disbar them from some mandatory aspect of the course (e.g., mandatory work experience in childcare courses; police visits in public service courses). Students are advised before undertaking a course if a criminal record is likely to significantly impact on their chances of gaining employment in their chosen field.

Those answering "Yes" to a criminal conviction question are asked to complete a supplementary form (Appendix xxx) giving details of the criminal convictions. If an applicant has disclosed a spent conviction (which is not relevant conviction), a designated staff member (Safeguarding staff) must review the enrolment form and confirm the applicant is cleared to enrol.

If an applicant has disclosed unspent or relevant convictions (or pending proceedings), the form will be referred to the safeguarding manager/ DSL team who will complete a risk assessment (see appendix). The applicant should not be enrolled but an explanation given that it will be necessary for the skills network to gather further information.

Risk Assessments

Addressing issues related to criminal convictions may require the skills network to work with other agencies involved with the learner to ensure a fair risk assessment and good support for the learner is in place before they undertake a course.

The Skills Network will use objective assessment to consider the risk of enrolling learners with criminal convictions. This assessment will:

- consider the nature of the conviction and its relevance to the course in question.
- identify the risk to staff, learners, and others.
- recognise that having a criminal conviction does not preclude ability to learn and succeed.
- examine the extent of contact with children or other vulnerable groups whilst on the course
- consider the level of supervision available to learners on the course they are planning to join.
- discuss any contact the learner will have with the public.
- highlight any opportunities within the course for the applicant to re-offend.
- consider the length of time that has elapsed since the offence occurred.
- take into account any information offered by the applicant about circumstances which led to the offence being committed e.g., mitigating circumstance, whether the offence was a one-off or part of a history of offending, whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offence was committed, making re-offending unlikely.
- consider any reasonable adjustments which could be made to course delivery to mitigate risk

Assessment of risk is undertaken in a sensitive, discrete and confidential manner, taking account of the needs of all concerned.

The Skills network reserves the right to verify any information that is provided.

Post enrolment Disclosures

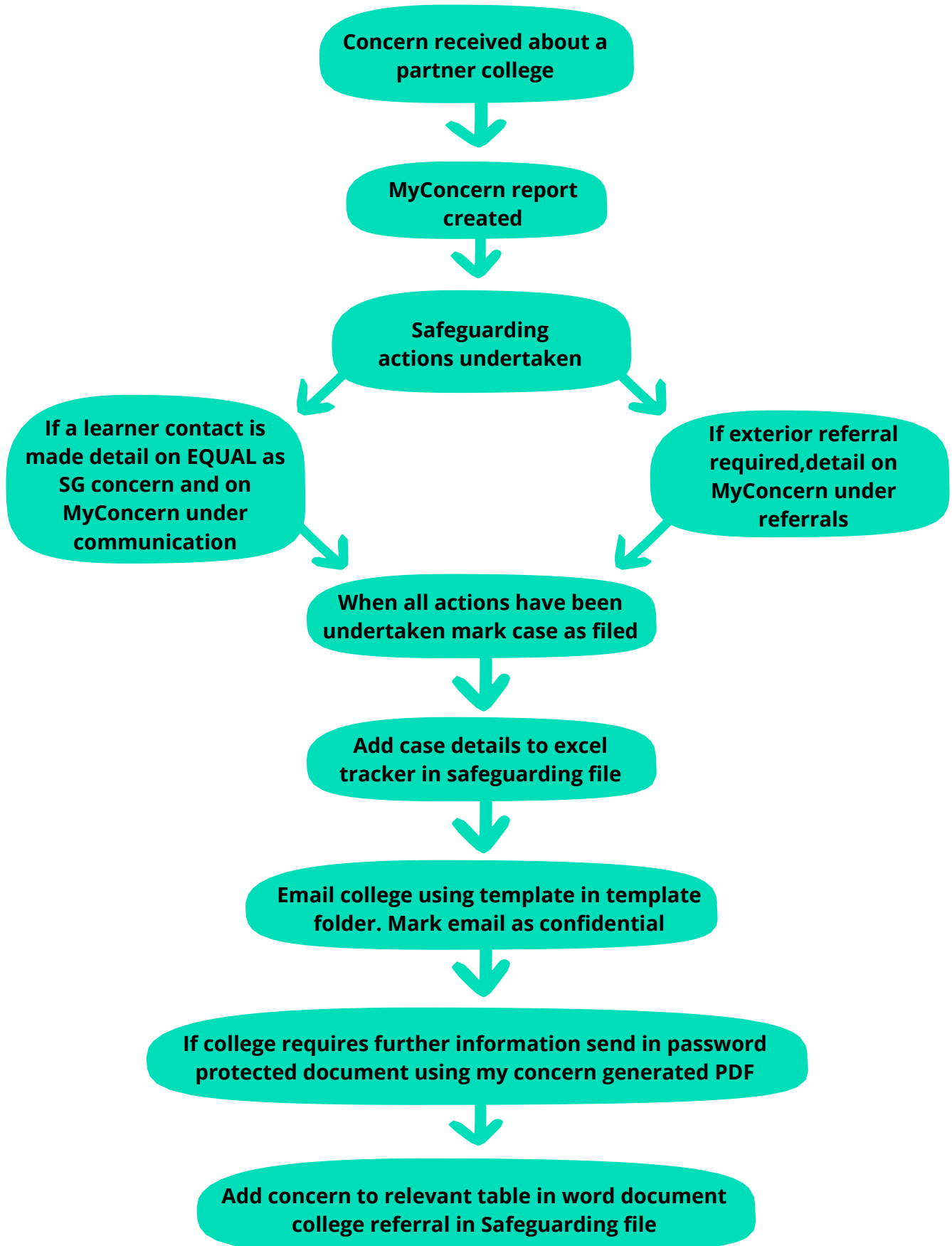
Where it is revealed during a course that a learner has not disclosed a criminal record, the Safeguarding team, will consider appropriate disciplinary action, depending on the severity and impact of the disclosure.

- Minor issue which does not pose any risk to the The Skills Network community or impact on the learner's ability to complete the course might attract a warning.
- Significant issues which might pose a risk to the community or impact on the learner's ability to complete the course might lead to the learner being withdrawn from the course. Where a criminal prosecution or conviction occurs during the course, the safeguarding team will make a judgement on appropriate action. tutors and support services will be alerted to any support needs of learners.

Final Decisions and Appeals

An applicant or learner who is dissatisfied with the outcome of a risk assessment may appeal against the decision. The appeal must be in writing and must be made within 14 days of the decision made. The senior manager shall respond in a writing within a further two weeks of receipt of the appeal

Partner college process



External college process

