**Safeguarding Policy**

**Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility**

### The Safeguarding Policy, Procedure and Prevent Strategy have been developed in response to Government guidance about the Service’s role in working together to safeguard children, young people and adults accessing the Service. Internal guidance supports the process and is in accordance with; Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP), Designated Officer (DO) and the Education Safeguarding / CME Officer.

### The Children Act 1989 defines a child as anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education does not change his or her status or entitlement to services or protection under the Act. The Act gives every child the right to protection from all forms of abuse, maltreatment, exploitation and the right to have enquiries made to safeguard their welfare and wellbeing.

### Adults most at risk of abuse are those individuals aged 18 years and over, who may need extra support because they are elderly or have a learning disability, physical impairment, sensory impairment or a mental health problem and who are, or may be, unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against harm.

**Policy Statement**

### This policy applies to all staff, employers, volunteers and partners working in / with the Service and who come into contact with children, young people and adults. We all have a responsibility and a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action (KCSIE, Sept 2024). While it is not possible to ensure that learners would never come to harm, the adoption of this policy, procedure, code of conduct and related guidelines aim to facilitate the management of risk. We all have a duty of care and learners have a right to equal protection from harm.

**Learning & Skills Objectives:**

The Learning & Skills Service recognises that members of staff and learners have a part to play in safeguarding and providing the welfare of children, young people, adults at risk and preventing abuse and extremism. All complaints, allegations or suspicions will be taken seriously and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), in line with the Service’s Safeguarding Procedure. Allegations against staff will be dealt with through the Local Authority’s procedures and the Designated Officer (DO).

Any allegations, following discussions with the DO, will be referred to the Local Authority’s HR to whom allegations and suspicions will be referred. The Service operates safe recruitment procedures in relation to the recruitment of staff and volunteers in accordance with Government Guidelines and Local Authority procedures. The DSP offers guidance to staff on the way they should behave when working with learners and employers. The Service will comply with all Local Authority procedures in respect of updating this policy.

*“All staff should be able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting any form of abuse and/or neglect. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.” (KCSiE)*

The Service will:

* Ensure a Designated Safeguarding Lead / Deputy is on duty at all times to respond immediately to concerns
* Encourage and maintain an environment where children, young people and adults feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to
* Ensure learners know that there are staff whom they can approach if they are worried
* Ensure that all employers are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities, particularly in relation to apprentices in the workplace
* Provide vigilant and approachable staff who are trained to be aware of signs of abuse or extremism
* Ensure all concerns, discussions and decisions made are recorded in writing and retained for 6 years
* Ensure positive behaviour is promoted consistently
* Notify the parent/carer for children and young people with unexplainable and/or persistent absences and behaviour concerns
* Operate a zero tolerance to any form of bullying or harassment
* Ensure staff have the skills and knowledge necessary to support looked after children (LAC) and provide a safe place
* Include opportunities in the curriculum for learners to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse and extremism
* Ensure policies, procedures and strategies are reviewed annually, and updated in accordance with government changes
* Ensure all subcontractors are checked prior to entering all venues in line with Darlington Borough Council and Advance Learning Partnership procedures
* Ensure the Service operates safer recruitment in line with Darlington Borough Council procedures
* All staff will be required to undertake appropriate safeguarding training, including refresher training every 3 years
* All staff are subject to a DBS Enhanced check prior to working for the Service and renewals are conducted every 5 years, where appropriate
* During unforeseen disruption, lockdown or restrictions, ensure all online learning, teaching and assessment is compliant to safeguarding and safe working practice

**Multi-Agency Working**

The Service will contribute to effective partnership working between all those involved with providing services for children, young people and adults at risk.

The DSP is made up of representatives from key agencies including the local authority, a clinical commissioning group and the chief of police. The Service has close links with the local authority DO, the Education Safeguarding / CME Officer, social care, the police and health services to ensure we promote welfare and protect from harm. Building Stronger Families (BSF) formerly Early Help Service referral and relational practice is promoted as an intervention model for safeguarding. The DSL/D and relevant staff are trained in early intervention and experienced to assess and refer. The Service recognises the importance of multi-agency working and will ensure that staff are able to attend all relevant meetings including case conferences, core groups and strategy meetings.

**Linked Procedure**

The Safeguarding Procedure provides definitions of ‘child’, ‘adults at risk’ and categories of abuse. It outlines staff responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. The policy reflects its statutory duties and pastoral responsibilities and refers to the procedures to be followed. This Policy is considered alongside BSF (Building Stronger Families) and DSP’s vision: ‘Darlington is a place where children and adults live their lives safely’

**The Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead / Deputy**

All staff working with or on behalf of children, young people or adults at risk have a responsibility to protect them. There are, however, key people within the Service and the local authority who have specific responsibilities under safeguarding procedures. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) has specific responsibility to safeguard, protect and promote the welfare of all. Two Designated Safeguarding Deputies (DSD) support the DSL and deputise during the DSL absence. The DSL is responsible for arranging adequate and appropriate cover arrangements to ensure a DSD is available for staff and learners to discuss any safeguarding concerns.

The DSL and DSDs are trained to the same standard to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role, and training is updated every two years. In addition to training, further reading and guidance at local and national level must be current and relevant information disseminated to staff and learners.

The DSL is expected to:

* oversee this policy, champion protection issues, raise awareness and promote the welfare of staff and learners supported by DSDs
* respond, manage and discharge with autonomy, all safeguarding concerns including allegations
* act as a point of contact for the Service and support advice for all staff
* liaise with staff on matters of safety and safeguarding
* refer concerns to the Children’s / Adults Initial Advice Team / Channel programme
* support staff to make referrals to the Children’s / Adults Initial Advice Team / Channel programme
* understand the early help assessment process, statutory intervention, promote working together to safeguard children and instruct staff to adopt the relational practice
* alert staff to specific changes in legislation and regulations, especially information sharing (Data Protection Act and GDPR)
* maintain detailed, accurate and secure records of concerns
* understand and support staff with the requirements of the Prevent Duty and online safety
* ensure the Single Central Record is reviewed monthly, monitor DBS renewal and mandatory training including Prevent

**Department for Education guidance**

* Advice to schools and colleges on gangs and youth violence Home Office (2013)
* Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines (2023)
* Education Inspection Framework (2022)
* Female Genital Mutilation Protection Orders: factsheet Home Office (2016)
* Forced marriage Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Home Office (2023)
* Keeping Children Safe in Education: for schools and colleges (2024)
* Modern slavery Act statutory guidance Home Office (2024)
* Prevent duty guidance, update (2024)
* Preventing and tackling bullying (2017)
* Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools/colleges (2021)
* Tackling violence against women and girls (2021)
* Thinkuknow [Supporting children to stay safe online] National Crime Agency
* Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

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