

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Appendix 1 – COVID-19 arrangements

COVID-19 Walsall College SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY UPDATE

During the current COVID-19 situation Walsall College continues to be passionate about safeguarding all students. We believe that not only do we have a statutory duty to ensure that we safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in our care, but also a moral duty.

This annex documents on how we implement the guidance from the Department of Education – Actions for Further Education and Alternative Providers during the Coronavirus lockdown – Further Education Guidance for Restricting attending during national lockdown, published 23rd March 2020 and updated 12th January 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision>

The college continues to apply Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 (KCSIE) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2> during this period as well as the statutory guidance on inter agency working to safeguarding and promote the welfare of children, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (updated December 2020) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>.

Whilst the way the college is operating in response to coronavirus is fundamentally different to face-to-face safeguarding support, there are several important safeguarding principles that remain the same:

- the best interests of students must always continue to come first.
- if anyone in the college has a safeguarding concern about any student, they should continue to act immediately.
- a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy (DDSL) should be available.
- it is essential that unsuitable people are not allowed to enter the college workforce and/or gain access to students.
- students should continue to be protected when they are online.

We will take a whole college approach to safeguarding which allow us to satisfy ourselves that any new policies and processes in response to COVID-19 do not weaken our approach to safeguarding or undermine our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Appendix 1 – COVID-19 arrangements

Arrangement for vulnerable learners accessing their education

Vulnerable young people are those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child.
- have an EHC plan.
- have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services) - this includes:
 - young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services.
 - adopted children.
 - those at risk of becoming 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET).
 - those living in temporary accommodation or those who are young carers.
 - those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
 - others at the provider and local authority's discretion, including students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health.

We know that the college is a protective factor for our students who receive support from statutory agencies. During the period of current national lockdown, the college will remain open to vulnerable students, including vulnerable adult students such as adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. We will offer an on-site place to allow vulnerable students to attend. Vulnerable students are strongly encouraged to attend on-site provision.

If vulnerable students do not attend, we will:

- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) to follow up with the parent or carer to explore the reason for absence, discussing their concerns using supporting guidance considering the student's circumstances and their best interests.
- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) and other relevant partners to encourage the student to attend educational provision, particularly where the social worker agrees that the student's attendance would be appropriate.

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Appendix 1 – COVID-19 arrangements

Vulnerable learners are those where there is a safeguarding open referral for students, where there is a significant mental health condition or diagnosis and where there is a degree of risk that requires regular monitoring from the safeguarding team. Looked after Children have also been identified as vulnerable and daily monitoring is undertaken by college staff with carers, students and allocated social workers. There is also regular contact with Virtual Head Teachers in Local Authorities and Kit Rennie, Safeguarding Officer is coordinating this to ensure that all college staff receive the relevant information for LAC (Looked after Child) students. All tutors have access to ePEPs (on-line personal education plans) and can update and complete information when required.

Currently there is daily contact for those students where there is a high degree of risk, twice weekly for those students where there is a medium degree of risk and weekly contact where there is a low degree of risk.

However, we know that all our student population will not have been seen by college staff daily and therefore it is essential that every member of staff is observant in their contact with students and that they listen to the voice of the student to identify any emerging concerns regarding safety or mental and emotional health as well as their well-being.

It is important to note that some students will not have been 'at risk' previously but they become more at risk in this new COVID-19 context; the expected rise in students finding themselves homeless has increased already and it is important that we liaise with local partners through the new LA (local authority) measures to ensure that they are supported quickly. We have a statutory duty with regards to 16 and 17 year olds to provide information to local authority services to enable them to track and maintain contact with these young people. This will help local authorities to identify those not participating so that they can provide those students with the support they need to reach their potential.

College staff are encouraged and reminded to be particularly vigilant about new and additional safeguarding concerns. Staff have and continue to be reminded about the safeguarding referral process and who they can contact in an emergency.

Procedures for managing student safeguarding and well-being concern

The safeguarding team is coordinating a rota during this time, monitoring the email inbox at safeguardingteam@walsallcollege.ac.uk from 9am until 5.30pm each day. This means that any concerns received, either by college staff, professionals, or the students themselves can be actioned immediately by a member of the safeguarding team. Staff are expected to send all student concerns to this email and not contact

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Appendix 1 – COVID-19 arrangements

individual members of the safeguarding team. There is also a designated email address for counselling referrals – counsellingteam@walsallcollege.ac.uk.

In addition to the rota monitoring the in-box the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Andrea Packer is available every day in addition to the rota of safeguarding staff via her email apacker@walsallcollege.ac.uk and by her mobile telephone 07917 628832.

All members of the safeguarding team have a work mobile to contact students directly each day who have been identified as vulnerable or at risk.

All contact and information regarding students continue to be recorded on the Safeguarding Casework area, and access continues to be only for safeguarding officers and volunteer safeguarding officers.

Potential Absence of Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy DSL

The Designated Safeguarding Lead have prepared an action plan in the event of different members of the safeguarding team being absent and how the service would be implemented. The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, Luki Poonia is available in the DSL's absence via her email lpoonia@walsallcollege.ac.uk and by mobile telephone if necessary 07920 084602.

In the event of other members of the team being absent the Safeguarding rota will continue with some officers having to cover more times if necessary, taking on additional safe and well checks to ensure that all vulnerable students are contacted. Risk assessment methods to ascertain risk levels and priorities would be put in place if needed using a prepared method should such situation arise.

Daily contact is made with all members of the safeguarding team so that the Designated Safeguarding Lead is aware of anyone who may be unwell or unable to work. This information is shared with Jayne Holt, Assistant Principal to ensure that Senior Management is made aware at the earliest opportunity.

Staff training and safeguarding induction

All existing college staff will have had safeguarding induction training and on-line training for Keeping Children Safe in Education. Mandatory training for all staff was delivered in September 2020 covering Mental Health Awareness, Safeguarding, Keeping Students Safe online. New revised PREVENT training is also being delivered monthly from January 2021 to support staff managing concerns about possible radicalisation. Any new members of staff who start during this period of lockdown will receive their induction and onboarding training on-line, so they are aware of their

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Appendix 1 – COVID-19 arrangements

responsibilities to ensure that students are safe, or what to do if they are worried about a student.

Safer recruitment/volunteers

It remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the workforce or gain access to our students. Walsall College will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes if they recruit new staff during this period. This will also include relevant sections in part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education. In response to COVID-19, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has made changes to its [guidance on standard and enhanced DBS ID checking](#) to minimise the need for face-to-face contact.

Where the college utilises volunteers, they will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020.

Regarding members of the college workforce already engaging in regulated activity and who already have the appropriate DBS check, the college does not envisage that any members of the workforce will temporarily move to another college to support students and therefore that a new DBS check should be obtained.

The college will continue to follow its legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult. Full details can be found in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

The college continues to maintain the Single Central Record outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020.

Mental and emotional well-being

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of students and Walsall College is committed to support students and staff. The college is aware of how this situation may impact upon students where there is poor mental and emotional wellbeing and that this could escalate.

The college safeguarding section on our website includes information for our students who may seek support for their mental health and keeping healthy, the site includes links to websites in Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Birmingham, Staffordshire, and Dudley mental health support networks. Information has also been posted onto Yammer, our college social media platform as well as GOAL for students to access. A weekly staff email includes information for staff to support their emotional well-being and how to adjust to remote working from home.

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Appendix 1 – COVID-19 arrangements

Other mental health resources include links for students on the www.walsallcollege.ac.uk website and:

- <https://www.minded.org.uk/> - MindEd, which includes e-learning modules about young people's mental health.
- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/every-mind-matters> - the Every Mind Matters platform, which has specific advice for adults and young people on maintaining good mental wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- <https://www.aoc.co.uk/home/coronavirus-resources-covid-19/resources-college-staff/mental-health> - the Association of College's (AoC) coronavirus (COVID-19) resource hub, which includes advice for students and staff.

Online safety in college

It is more important than ever that the college is providing a safe environment for students to access their learning from home. The college has set out clearly the platforms and methods for students to access their learning through a variety of mediums.

Appropriate filtering and monitoring systems continue to be in place to protect our students when they are online accessing work.

The [UK Council for Internet Safety provides information to help governing boards and proprietors assure themselves](#) that any new arrangements continue to effectively safeguard children online.

The [UK Safer Internet Centre's professional online safety helpline](#) also provides support for the children's workforce with any online safety issues they face.

It is important that all college staff who are interacting with students via the on-line learning platforms continue to look out for signs that a student may be at risk of that their wellbeing is declining, or that something has suddenly changed. Any such concerns will be dealt with via the safeguardingteam@walsallcollege.ac.uk email as detailed above, so that an appropriate response can be made and if necessary appropriate referrals made to the local authority partners.

The Department for Education has provided separate guidance on providing education remotely. It sets out 4 key areas to consider as part of any remote learning strategy. This includes the use of technology. Recently published [guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning](#) and from the [London Grid for Learning on the use of videos and livestreaming](#) could help plan online learning safely.

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Appendix 1 – COVID-19 arrangements

The college maintains that there is a starting point for online learning and teaching and that this must be the same principles as set out in the college Staff Code of Conduct and the E-communications Policy. These policies include amongst other things acceptable use of technologies, staff/student relationships and communication including the use of social media.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead continues to liaise with the Head of Human Resources Natalie Priest to ensure that college staff are regularly reminded about safe working practices with students at this time.

The college ensures that the use of any online platforms and systems are in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

Students understand the reporting routes in place to raise any concerns when they are working online, regularly information is sent out to students via email about how they can access learning safely and what to do if they are concerned.

The department encourages colleges to share this support with parents and carers, for example when self and well checks are made a reminder is given about the support available in college via the safeguarding team and the college counsellors. Pastoral Support Officers also speak with students and parents/carers to ensure that they are aware of the support available in college and how to report any concerns.

Peer on Peer Abuse

The college recognises that during the closure a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims. Where our college receives a report of peer-on-peer abuse, we will follow the principles as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education and of those outlined within our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The college will listen and work with the young person, parents/carers and any multi-agency partner required to ensure the safety and security of that young person. Concerns and actions will be recorded appropriate referrals made.

Domestic Abuse

Our college staff are aware and stay alert to domestic abuse, and that the potential for domestic abuse and violence to go unseen is high. We know that many victims will have reduced or limited opportunities to share what is happening to them. We are mindful that our students, whether returning to college, or remaining at home, will have suffered the impact of domestic abuse and we will be vigilant in our professional curiosity and ask those additional questions.

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Appendix 1 – COVID-19 arrangements

There are a range of resources available to support victims and those working with victims, Walsall Safeguarding Partnership website is being updated regularly and has lots of information on [domestic abuse](#).

Key Contacts for Safeguarding and Child Protection in the Local Authority

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): Tina Cooper

Contact email: lado@walsall.gov.uk

Telephone: 07432 422205

Local Authority Social Care Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):

Contact email: MASH@walsall.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 555 2866
0300 555 2836 (out of hours service)

Local Authority Safeguarding Adviser and Strategic Support – Seona Baker

Contact email: Seona.baker@walsall.gov.uk

Telephone: 07951 819648

Local Authority PREVENT Coordinator – Niall Markham

Contact email: Niall.markham@walsall.gov.uk

Telephone: 07766 160646

Virtual Head: Lorraine Thompson

Contact email: Lorraine.thompson@walsall.gov.uk

Telephone: 07825 860581

Links to DfE guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision>

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Appendix 1 – COVID-19 arrangements

Walsall College Safeguarding Staff Members:

Andrea Packer	Designated Safeguarding Lead and SPOC
Luki Poonia	Deputy Safeguarding Lead
Jayne Holt	Assistant Principal – Workforce Development and Learning Services – Safeguarding Officer
Melanie Jones	Counsellor - Safeguarding Officer
Lyndsey Shuker	Counsellor - Safeguarding Officer
Selina Harra	Safeguarding Officer
Kit Rennie	Safeguarding Officer