

NWSLC Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Appendix: Response to COVID-19

March 2020

There have been significant changes within our setting and within the UK in response to the outbreak of COVID-19.

Despite the changes, the College's Safeguarding Policy is fundamentally the same: the welfare of children and young people always comes first, staff should respond robustly to safeguarding concerns and referrals should continue to be made in line with our established safeguarding procedures.

Most importantly staff should be aware that the statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education* still applies in its entirety. All staff should have read and understood part one of this guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/836144/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_part_1_2019.pdf

This appendix sets out some of the adjustments the College is making in line with the changed arrangements and following advice from government and our local safeguarding partners. Warwickshire Safeguarding has laid out specific guidance:

[https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/images/downloads/Safeguarding Arrangements for schools - March 20th 2020.pdf](https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/images/downloads/Safeguarding_Arrangements_for_schools_-_March_20th_2020.pdf)

The current position is that, following the Government announcement, the College is mostly closed with only the NWSLC Engagement Project (NEP) for vulnerable learners and the Inspire provision continuing at our Nuneaton campus, and a welfare drop in service continuing at Nuneaton and Wigston

The pressures on children, young people and their families at this time are significant. There will be heightened awareness of family pressures for a variety of reasons including through having to stay within the household, financial hardship or health anxiety. These areas should be considered in terms of setting any work for students to undertake at home (including recognising the impact of online learning and ability to access on line resources). Staff may be aware of the mental health of both students and their parents or carers, and should refer to safeguarding about any emerging concerns.

We have undertaken a scoping exercise to identify the most vulnerable students and individual arrangements have been made with students who have an attached social worker and those with an EHCP.

For students subject to a Child Protection Plan and Child In Need Plan, or who have an allocated social worker: contact will be made by the safeguarding team at least weekly with these students in agreement with the family and social worker. We will continue to work with these students to ensure they can remain safe and progress into the next academic year.

For students who are Looked after Children and recent Care Leavers: contact will be made by the Student Experience and Support team who will call daily, weekly or twice weekly as agreed with the student, carer and social worker.

For students with an EHCP: additional support staff will maintain regular contact as agreed with student and parents / carers. Support can be delivered through individual arrangements based on curriculum activity.

For students on the edge of social care involvement or pending allocation of a social worker, or identified as high risk: contact will be made by the safeguarding team once per week for a welfare check.

For students who normally received free meals via bursary the college is paying an equivalent amount directly into their bank accounts

For student receiving counselling support from the college: this will continue uninterrupted using phone, email or remote access, based on the student's wish.

Reporting Arrangements

The normal college arrangements continue in line with our Safeguarding Policy

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is:

Chris Nixon 07595 911 691 christopher.nixon@nwslc.ac.uk

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are:

Andy Howarth 02476 243 125 andrew.howarth@nwslc.ac.uk
Lindsay Parker 02476 243 020 lindsay.parker@nwslc.ac.uk

Safeguarding issues can be reported by contacting one of the individuals above, via The Box (go to Apps / Safeguarding), via safe@nwslc.ac.uk or via the NWSLC Learning app.

Specific questions around the coronavirus outbreak can be directed to covd19@nwslc.ac.uk

Staff will continue to follow the safeguarding procedures and advise the safeguarding leads immediately about concerns they have about any child, whether in college or not. COVID-19 means a need for increased vigilance due to the pressures on services, families and young people, rather than a reduction in our standards.

Normal safeguarding procedures apply for referrals to children's services. This contact will go through a member of the safeguarding team (listed above) who will follow appropriate measures in seeking the appropriate and necessary support.

Should a child or young person be at risk of significant harm and local agencies are not able to respond, the college will immediately follow the safeguarding children partnership escalation procedure, available here:

<https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/report-it>

Safer Recruitment

College safer recruitment practices are unaffected by the changes to circumstances – the single central register will remain updated and checked each term; new staff will still be subject

to Disclosure and Barring Service checks in line with regulated work; the college will not use volunteers or staff from other schools / colleges with the normal suitability declaration being obtained.

All new starters must have an on line induction. They must read the college Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and the staff Code of Conduct. The DSL or deputy will ensure new recruits know who to contact if worried about a child or young person and ensure the new starters are familiar with the child protection procedure.

All new starters or volunteers need to confirm that they have read part one of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*

Hygiene

Social distancing measures are in place – staff and students should maintain 2 metres between them whenever on site

New guidance states *“it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any school or college is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the school or college.”* All staff should sign in at reception when visiting an open campus. They should use their own pen whenever possible.

Hand sanitisers are available at both open campuses

Any student or staff member displaying symptoms (fever, new continuous cough, shortness of breath) should go home immediately and self-isolate

Student Welfare

The college will continue to run a welfare drop-in service from our Nuneaton and Wigston sites. They are open 11am – 1pm each day and any student may attend if they are indeed of help or advice. The Wigston drop-in is operating from the Bobbin Factory next to the main building – this is clearly signposted.

Staff should refer any student they think is in need to attend the drop-in. Lunch vouchers, counselling referrals and a variety of support are available.

Allegations or Concerns about Staff

With such different arrangements in place, young people could be at greater risk of on line abuse. We remind all staff to maintain the view that ‘it could happen here’ and to immediately report any concern, no matter how small, to the safeguarding team.

Peer on Peer abuse

We recognise the potential for abuse to go on between young people, especially in the context of a college closure or partial closure. Our staff will remain vigilant to the signs of peer-on-peer abuse, including those between young people who are not currently attending our provision. Extra care should be taken where groups have mixed age, developmental stages, are attending other education establishments as an interim measure and similar. When making contact with these families our staff may ask about relationships between learners.

Risk Online, Remote Working and Video Calls

Young people will be using the internet more during this period. The College may also use online approaches to deliver training or support. Staff will be aware of the signs and signals of cyberbullying and other risks online and apply the same child-centred safeguarding practices as when students are learning at the College. The College continues to ensure appropriate filters and monitors are in place. The College has taken on board the guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning and guidance for safer working practice from the Safer Recruitment Consortium.

It is extremely important that professional boundaries do not slip during this exceptional period and protocols for on line working are followed:

- All instructions apply to students who are under and over 18
- Staff should never meet up with students offsite unless this is agreed with the safeguarding team in advance
- If staff are delivering work, food hampers etc. to students' houses this can be done on your own but do not enter the house
- Teams or Zoom can be used for student contact when interviewing etc. – but there can be no one to one live video feeds. Audio should be used only. The exception would be if several staff are present for a video presentation etc.
- No social media contact unless this is done via a clear college account and the safeguarding team are aware (same arrangements as normal)
- Do not use your own phone to contact students
- All emails to students must use BCC so students cannot see each other's email address
- If unclear at any time please contact Chris Nixon or Andy Howarth

Staff can access further guidance here:

<https://www.tes.com/news/coronavirus-10-safeguarding-rules-teachers-home>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2020/march/undertaking-remote-teaching-safely/>

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

Mental Health

Restrictions to movement and contact with other people means pupils are more likely to be at risk of mental health problems. The College will make students and their families aware of where further support can be found. The Department for Education have produced guidance to support parents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

The following organisations can also provide support:

www.kooth.com – *Free online emotional wellbeing and counselling with self-help articles*

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else/>

Calm Harm App – A phone app providing help for those who use self-harm as a coping strategy; <https://calmharm.co.uk/>