

## **Gateshead College Safeguarding Adults at Risk – Covid-19 Addendum**

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### **Introduction**

The manner in which Gateshead College operated during the first nationwide Coronavirus lockdown period was fundamentally different to business as usual, however, a number of important safeguarding principles remained the same:

- all adults at risk who undertake work-based learning or classroom-based learning directly or indirectly with Gateshead College are covered by the Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy
- if any member of college staff has a safeguarding concern about an adult at risk they should continue to act and act immediately
- a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) will be available
- it is essential that unsuitable people are not allowed to enter the workforce

During this third nationwide lockdown, College staff will continue to be vigilant about new and additional safeguarding concerns, they will remain aware of what they should do if they have any concerns about a learner. They will act immediately on any safeguarding concerns.

Gateshead College has an effective Safeguarding Adults at Risk policy, and procedure in place reflecting our normal practice:

- [STM-POL-005 - Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy](#)
- [STM-PRO-006 - Dealing with Allegations or Suspicion of Abuse of an Adult at Risk](#)

In addition, this addendum reflects the arrangements in place as a response to COVID-19. This addendum summarises the key COVID-19 related changes.

### **National lockdown**

The Government recently announced that FE Colleges will be closed to all but a few learners from 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021 until at least the February half term. We have updated this safeguarding addendum to detail the arrangements for learners who study at college or from home. Our absolute priority is the health, safety and wellbeing of our learners and staff.

The College has continued its strict approach to identifying and supporting individual learners and staff who may be at increased risk as a result of Coronavirus, this includes requesting details of any underlying health conditions that are known to be at moderate or high risk (clinically vulnerable or extremely vulnerable) of contracting Coronavirus. In addition, the college will ask if the learner has had a diagnosis of Coronavirus or has recently come into contact with a person who has the known symptoms of Coronavirus. Coronavirus (Covid-19) asymptomatic testing is in place to enable weekly testing for staff and learners who continue to attend college. This programme will allow the college to test learners and staff on the return to face-to-face education.

### **Vulnerable learners**

The College has produced a list of learners who are identified as 'vulnerable' for the following reasons:

- high need learners – SEND (special educational needs and disability) up to the age of 25 years,
- learners who have a social worker
- learners who have an EHCP (Education and Health Care Plan) up to the age of 25 years,
- previous or on-going safeguarding issue,
- medical, and mental health concerns.
- receive a Higher Rate Bursary up to the age 19,
- receives free college meals 16 to 18 years and up to the age of 25 for certain groups of learners.

This list is refreshed regularly throughout the academic year. College staff will continue with regular check-ins with these learners to ensure their continued engagement with their learning and care.

If staff have concerns relating to a learner who has not been identified as vulnerable, they should contact the DSLO (Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer) or deputy to share details of their concern. Support arrangements will be considered in the best interest of the learner.

Should a learner become unwell at College, the spouse, partner, other family member or carer will be advised and arrangements made for the learner to return to their care. Please note that staff must check if the learner has given permission for an emergency contact person to be contacted. Likewise, should a learner become unwell at home they must not access College. The spouse, partner, other family member or carer will be required to inform College staff to ensure both staff and other learners who have been in close proximity can take advice from medical professionals.

The College will continue to notify social workers where a learner (with a social worker) do not attend. Where appropriate, a follow up will be made with the spouse, partner, other family member or carer. To support the above, College staff will take the opportunity when communicating with spouse, partner, other family member or carer to confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available.

### **Definitions and aims of adult safeguarding**

The essence of safeguarding is to protect the rights of an adult to live in safety and to be free from abuse and neglect. Each and every case will present its own complexities and challenges, but crucially, the wishes of the adult at the centre of the process must be determined and considered when deciding how to tackle any issues of abuse or neglect. The primary aims of adult safeguarding are as follows:

- to stop abuse or neglect wherever possible;
- to promote wellbeing and dignity;
- to prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to adults with care and support needs;
- to safeguard adults in a way that supports them in making choices and having control about how they want to live by promoting an approach that concentrates on improving life for the adults concerned;
- to raise public awareness so that communities as a whole, as well as professionals, can contribute by preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect;

- to provide information and support that is accessible and helps people to understand the nature of abuse, how to stay safe and how to raise a concern regarding the safety or well-being of an adult; and
- to address the causes of any abuse or neglect.

### **Safeguarding adults at risk**

Gateshead College will, as far as is reasonably possible, take a whole institution approach to safeguarding. This will allow the College to satisfy itself that any new policies and processes in response to coronavirus are not weakening the approach to safeguarding or undermining the Safeguarding Adults at Risk policy. It will be especially important that Covid-19 risk assessments and related Health and Safety risk assessments are appropriately linked to the College approach to Safeguarding Adults at Risk policy.

It is the responsibility of all Gateshead College staff and those working on its behalf to be alert and report any allegation(s), suspicion or concern(s) of mistreatment and/or abuse of an adult at risk and to address any immediate protection issue.

This responsibility extends to all staff and volunteers not just those specifically working with adults at risk. Definition of Adult in Section 42 the Care Act 2014:

- an adult who may be vulnerable to abuse or maltreatment is deemed to be someone aged 18 or over, who is in an area and:
- has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs);
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it. Abuse is defined widely and includes domestic and financial abuse. The duties apply regardless of whether the adult lacks mental capacity.

It must be recognised that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances.

Just because a person is old or frail or has a disability does not mean they are inevitably 'at risk'. For example, a person with a disability who has the mental capacity to make decisions about their own safety could be perfectly able to make informed choices and protect themselves from harm. In the context of Safeguarding Adults, the vulnerability of the adult at risk is related to how able they are to make and exercise their own informed choices free from duress, pressure or undue influence of any sort, and to protect themselves from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

### **Capacity and Consent**

Mental capacity is a legal concept. It is the ability at that point in time to understand, retain and use the information required to make an informed decision on a specific issue and understand the consequences. It is also necessary to be able to communicate this decision. Adults are presumed to have capacity until it is professionally assessed they do not. It is important to recognise that people with mental capacity can also be vulnerable. For further details of Mental Capacity, please access [\*Dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse of an Adult at Risk \(3.5 – Capacity and Consent\) STM-PRO-006-019\*](#)

### **Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

Staff should ensure they discuss issues of confidentiality with the Director of Student Experience, especially if there is not the adult's informed consent. No single member of staff can have a full picture of an adult at risk needs and circumstances. If adults at risk are to

receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

### **Categories of Abuse**

Twelve categories of abuse are recognized by Gateshead's multi-agency Procedural Framework;

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- psychological and emotional abuse
- financial and material abuse
- neglect and acts of omission
- institutional abuse
- discriminatory abuse
- domestic abuse
- Female Genital Mutilation
- modern slavery
- radicalisation
- self-neglect

### **Duty of Care**

Staff and volunteers have a duty of care towards learners. This means they have a responsibility to take action whenever there is a concern of possible mistreatment or abuse to an adult at risk. A failure to report concerns may be seen as agreeing with the abuse, or as being negligent, which in some cases may lead to disciplinary or other action.

The adult at risk should be informed at the earliest possible stage of a disclosure that the information will be passed on. All conversation regarding and with an adult at risk should always be held in private even if this is not requested. The adult at risk should be given the opportunity to have another person with them for support. There should always be openness and honesty with the adult at risk if it is intended to take the case further. 'Taking the right action' will be a balance between responding to the adult's wishes and his/her best interests; judgement of their capacity; whether the alleged abuser was in a position of trust and the duty of care to protect other adults at risk or children who may be at risk. Public interest issues and duty of care may require us to overrule an adult's wishes for confidentiality.

Remember adults are presumed to have the right to make their own decisions, and be involved in decisions made on their behalf unless there are clear grounds to overrule this:

- as a result of their lack of mental capacity;
- a wider public interest issue is involved, e.g. the alleged abuser is in a position of trust
- there are concerns about the welfare or protection of other adults or children at risk.

Where staff have concerns that their safeguarding concerns are not being addressed correctly within the organisation or by other agencies these concerns can be raised with the Director of Student Experience who operates as the DSLO. If there are circumstances where the member of staff believes that the DSLO is not addressing these concerns correctly the Head of People and Organisational Development will respond to these concerns.

### **Designated safeguarding officers**

All staff should be particularly vigilant to new and additional safeguarding concerns. It is important that staff act immediately on any safeguarding concerns and make contact with a member of the safeguarding team – see contact details below. The College will have a trained DSO (Designated Safeguarding Officer) available to respond to any concerns. Contact can be made via telephone, video call or by email to ensure that advice and guidance is always available.

In the unlikely event that a trained DSO is not available, in addition to the above option, a member of the Executive Team or Senior Management Team will liaise with the DSLO (Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer) and will be asked to take responsibility for coordinating immediate safeguarding actions on site. This might include updating and managing access to safeguarding files, liaising with the offsite DSLO or deputy, and as required liaising with local authority adult services staff.

Where a safeguarding or welfare concern is raised, staff should check that the information held by the College is accurate. When making a new referral staff will be required to provide information pertinent to the individual and the concern or incident.

DSOs may require more time to support staff and learners with new safeguarding and welfare concerns. These staff will continue to work with and support:

- social workers
- the local authority
- any other relevant safeguarding and welfare partners

Every college will face unique challenges at this time, particularly as they welcome adults to study. Where reasonably possible and where relevant, the DSOs will consider these challenges in an adult protection context and reflect them in the Safeguarding Adults addendum as appropriate.

DSO staff will continue to do what they reasonably can to keep up to date with safeguarding developments, such as via safeguarding partners, newsletters and professional advice groups.

It is acknowledged that face to face Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer training is unlikely to take place during this period. However, DSO staff access online refresher training when necessary and if available.

### **Disclosure and raising a safeguarding referral**

In the event of a safeguarding concern about a learner (18 years or older), all staff, third party or volunteers must immediately contact the DSLO or one of the deputies – see contact details below. These learners may be known to the college as ‘vulnerable’ or previously, have not been identified as ‘vulnerable’.

The DSLO will consider the information that has been provided and may ask for more details or make an enquiry themselves. Should the DSLO conclude that there is enough evidence to warrant concern a referral will be made to the Local Authority Adult Protection services or when in immediate danger the Police and arrangements for safeguarding/supporting the learner will be agreed.

It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously, that they will be supported and the College will take all necessary steps to support them. Staff should note that due to the impact of Covid-19 on services, it is recognised that there may be some local variations in arrangements for the delivery of statutory safeguarding adult provision.

The learner should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse. The learner should never be made to feel ashamed for making a report. If an adult learner makes contact with you to disclose apparent abuse, you should listen carefully to him/her, and follow the guidelines below:

- do not promise to keep secrets or guarantee confidentiality. If an adult learner makes an allegation and asks that you keep it confidential, you should inform the adult learner that you will respect their right to confidentiality as far as you are able to, but that you are not able to keep the matter secret.
- try to remain calm, listen patiently, and treat the information seriously;
- reassure the adult learner who is telling you their concerns that they are doing the right thing;
- only clarify the bare facts of the reported abuse or grounds for suspicion, do not ask leading questions, e.g. suggesting names of who may have perpetrated the abuse if the adult learner does not disclose it;
- if you suspect a crime has been committed, then ask the adult learner to preserve evidence, if this is possible. Explain to the adult learner not touch or clean up, not to wash clothing, floor coverings or dispose of anything. Support the adult learner, but discourage them from getting washed until after they have been seen by an appropriate Police doctor or the Police have given alternative advice. NB: The first 72 hours are particularly important to the Police for collecting forensic evidence;
- remember your Duty of Care. Reporting suspicions of mistreatment or abuse is not telling tales;
- make a prompt legible record of what you were told using the adult learner's actual words. Read back to the adult learner what you have recorded to clarify or confirm what they have said. Note the names of any witnesses, accurate times and the reasons for the actions you took. Make sure you distinguish between fact and opinion; sometimes the use of body diagrams can be useful, however this may not be possible due to the means of communication. If you are using video conferencing, do not under any circumstances, ask the adult learner to expose an area of their body that is injured other than lower limbs, the head or neck.

### **Raising a safeguarding concern about another member of staff**

In the event of a member of staff having concerns about another staff member or volunteer who may pose a safeguarding risk to an adult at risk, this information should immediately be shared with the DSLO. The DSLO will consider the information that has been provided and may ask for more details or make an enquiry themselves. Should the DSLO conclude that there is enough evidence to warrant concern a referral will be made to the local authority Adult Social Care Team and arrangements for supporting the learner will be agreed.

If the adult learner discloses abuse within the home for example; sexual violence, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, peer on peer or domestic abuse/violence, it is important to remember that (if the disclosure is made via telephone or video link) the adult learner may be at risk of being overheard or watched by another person in the home and have to stop the disclosure. The member of staff should not wait and hope for the adult learner to make contact again. The member of staff should not try and make contact immediately using the same means of communication as this could place the adult learner in danger. Instead the member of staff should contact the DSLO or deputy who will provide advice and guidance. Where an adult at risk had been harmed, is at risk of harm or is in immediate danger the DSLO will make an immediate referral to local adult social care. In the unlikely event that the DSLO or deputy are not available, please seek support by contacting the Police using

the emergency services telephone number- 999. At this stage family members and/or carers should not be informed as this could place the adult at risk in immediate danger. A decision to inform the parents/carers will be taken in-conjunction with adult social care.

It is important to remember that the role of the College is to alert and not to investigate a safeguarding concern.

### **Online safety**

The College will continue to provide a safe online environment. Appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to protect learners when they are online on the college's networks or recommended resources. Online teaching adopts the same principles as set out in the college's Behavioural Framework, Social Media Policy, Informational Technology Communications Policy, and Safeguarding procedures and must be followed. These policies include acceptable use of technologies, staff/learner relationships and communication including the use of social media.

It is important to recognise that the college has no control over what learners can access when they are not on the college network. Advice for learners to Stay Safe Online can be found by clicking this link <https://www.gateshead.ac.uk/student-services/safeguarding>

The College will continue to ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection requirements.

### **Prevent**

The College complies with the specific duties outlined in Section 26 (1) of the Counter-Terrorism 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. Where concerns are raised regarding staff or learners who are at risk of radicalisation, contact will be made with both the local authority and the Police.

### **Mental health**

Many learners will be feeling uncertain and anxious at this time. It is important to support positive mental health and wellbeing, which is necessary to support adults to engage in learning. College staff will be required to identify adult learners that may need additional support and with the permission of the learner make a referral to the Student Health and Wellbeing Coordinator who is a trained mental health nurse. The College will continue to engage with local authorities and voluntary sector mental health organisations to ensure specialist support is in place

### **Safer recruitment**

It remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to gain access to children or adults at risk. **Regulated** refers to certain roles that involve working with children or vulnerable adults, such as teaching and providing care. Anyone who is on the Disclosure and Barring Service (**DBS**) barred lists cannot work in these roles. The College will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes.

In response to coronavirus, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has made temporary changes to its [guidance on standard and enhanced DBS ID checking](#) to minimise the need for face-to-face contact. The Home Office and Immigration Enforcement have also temporarily adjusted the [right to work checks](#) due to the coronavirus outbreak.

## **Safeguarding training**

All existing College staff are required to have undertaken safeguarding training at induction, and then on an annual basis. It is important that College staff remain up to date with their safeguarding knowledge and access refresher training on an annual basis. Staff will receive an alert when training is due to be refreshed via the alert section of the college digital dashboard home page.

## **External speakers**

We will continue to encourage external speakers to speak with our learners. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions, all visits will remain virtual. Staff will continue to use the guest speaker system to seek approval for their virtual guest speaker visit. It is important that staff are always in attendance during the time the external speaker works with our learners.

### **Contact details:**

#### **Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer**

John Gray - Email: [john.gray@gateshead.ac.uk](mailto:john.gray@gateshead.ac.uk) College mobile:07718155443

#### **Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer**

Darren Heathcote - Email: [darren.heathcote@gateshead.ac.uk](mailto:darren.heathcote@gateshead.ac.uk) College mobile: 07736364425

#### **Student Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator**

Helen Keene – Email: [helen.keene@gateshead.ac.uk](mailto:helen.keene@gateshead.ac.uk) College mobile: 07851388527

**Safeguarding Team** - Email: [safeguarding.team@gateshead.ac.uk](mailto:safeguarding.team@gateshead.ac.uk)