

**Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults**

**Remote Education Guidance (September 2020)**

**Background**

This guidance has been produced in response to the Group’s move to a remote education delivery model following the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

The guidance should be considered alongside the following four documents:

* The Trafford College Group Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy (August 2020)
* The Trafford College Group Staff Safeguarding Code of Conduct (September 2020)
* Department of Education What FE colleges and providers will need to do from the start of the 2020 autumn term.
* Department for Education Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2020)

While the principles, responsibilities and requirements as set out in the TCG Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy still hold true for a remote educational model, and the specific circumstances of the current global pandemic. This guidance should be considered as an addendum to the existing policy as well as the TCG Staff Safeguarding Code of Conduct.

This guidance will be updated as required following any further information from the Department for Education.

**Liaison with the Local Authorities**

The Group is working very closely with the local authorities to ensure that children of critical workers and vulnerable children can attend a site in either Stockport or Trafford. The Group will continue to support local authorities’ crucial responsibilities in maintaining effective safeguarding and child protection arrangements, and will continuously update local authorities on students.

**Students Returning to College**

At the start of the academic year all learners will be expected to return to college. However, the Group will continue to provide a mixture of on-site and offsite education to all learners, in line with government guidance on such arrangements. Vulnerable learners’ attendance is expected, where it is appropriate for or following a risk assessment for children with an EHC plan, so that they can gain the educational and wellbeing benefits of attending. All vulnerable learners that have not been attending over the recent period are expected to return to college in September.

**Keeping Children Safe in Education**

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) is statutory safeguarding guidance that schools and colleges should continue to have regard to as per their legislative duty and/or funding agreement requirements.

Whilst acknowledging the pressure that colleges are currently under, it remains essential that as far as possible we continue to be safe places for young people and vulnerable adults. This guidance supports governing bodies, proprietors, senior leadership teams and designated safeguarding officers (DSOs) so they can continue to have appropriate regard to KCSIE and keep our students safe. It suggests where schools and colleges might consider safeguarding policy and process differently when compared to business as usual.

The way the Group is currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is different to business as usual, however, a number of important safeguarding principles remain the same:

* with regard to safeguarding, the best interests of young people and vulnerable adults must always continue to come first
* if anyone has a safeguarding concern about any student they should continue to act and act immediately
* a DSO will be available across all sites
* it is essential that unsuitable people are not allowed to enter the workforce and/or gain access to students
* students should continue to be protected when they are online

The Group will, as far as is reasonably possible, continue to take a whole institution approach to safeguarding. This will allow us to be satisfied that any new policies and processes in response to COVID-19 are not weakening our approach to safeguarding or undermining our policy.

**Reporting**

The current arrangements for reporting a safeguarding concern remain in place as outlined in the policy. This includes completion of the safeguarding report on CPOMs in the first instance for the attention of either Amy Singh (Stockport) or Margaret James (Trafford). The online form can be accessed on the CPOMs safeguarding platform, the link to which can be found on the Safeguarding Hub.

Any concerns about staff or volunteers should also be reported in the same way as outlined in the current policy.

**Bullying**

The current arrangements around remote learning still provides opportunities for students to engage in bullying and harassment, as well as peer on peer abuse. This could be through on-line platforms or social media for example. Where staff are aware of an instance of bullying they should continue to follow current guidelines which include escalation immediately to the Head of Studies (or appropriate middle manager) and copy in the relevant safeguarding lead (Amy Singh for Stockport, Margaret James for Altrincham and Shaun Deakin for Stretford). The bullying procedure and record log can be found on the Safeguarding Hub on Sharepoint. Further information on peer on peer abuse can be found in Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2020 – again on the Safeguarding Hub.

**Staff Training and Safer Recruitment**

During this period, the Group will still require all new staff to undertake the Safeguarding Induction Training, and all existing staff to undertake Safeguarding Refresher Training if they are at the three-year point since their last update. Training will be provided remotely. The Group will also continue to fully comply with safer recruitment guidance.

**On-line Safety**

It is now more important than ever that the Group provides a safe environment, including online. The Group will continue to ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to protect students when they are online on the Group’s IT systems or recommended resources.

The Group fully acknowledges the safety of their students. The starting point for online teaching applies the same principles as set out in the Group’s Behaviour Policy and Staff Safeguarding Code of Conduct.

The Group will apply the following principles to support on-line safety:

* Ensuring that staff only use appropriate and Group sanctioned e-learning platforms to provide remote education, including adequate privacy settings
* Ensuring staff do not use personal accounts on e-learning platforms, personal email addresses, or personal social media accounts
* Ensuring that as far as possible, staff do not use personal phone numbers to contact students, and if required to do so then ensure use of blocking numbers (141)
* Ensuring that staff only contact students in normal college working hours
* Ensuring that if staff provide recorded or live-streaming lessons, they are filmed in a neutral area where nothing personal or inappropriate can be visible
* Ensuring staff use teaching and learning opportunities to provide students with clear advice and guidance about how to stay safe on-line, including discussion of the benefits and risks of the on-line world
* Ensuring that staff are able to refer students to appropriate support if they have a concern or worry, including where necessary engaging the Pastoral Support Mentors (PSMs)
* Ensuring that staff report any safeguarding concern or bullying instances through the reporting mechanisms outlined above in this guidance document
* Ensuring that staff encourage students to take regular breaks from on-line activity to support mental health and wellbeing

Additional information in order to support college staff can be found in Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2020 Annex C. Further guidance can be found in the document *Teaching and Learning Effectively Online* by Agile CLS, which the Group recommends as a good practice guide for on-line education safety. A copy of this document will also be available on the Safeguarding Hub.

**Student Mental Health and Wellbeing**

The Group will continue to prioritise support for student mental health and wellbeing throughout this period. Pastoral and counselling support will continue through a mixture of onsite and offsite delivery by the Pastoral Support Mentors and the college Counsellor. Resilience training and support will be offered to learners as part of the induction process. It is recognised that this is going to be a difficult period for learners returning back onsite. PSMs will continue to work with identified students who are at risk due to pastoral and mental health related issues. Staff who are concerned about the mental health of their students should contact their department PSM. PSMs will also provide links to external agencies providing remote support.