



Safeguarding Policy

Overarching Approach To Safeguarding Within Skills And Employment

Most recent update: 02 September 2026

Scope

This Safeguarding Policy covers all provision delivered internally by Cheshire West and Chester Council's (CW&C) Skills and Employment (S&E) delivery teams and externally by our contracted adult education sub-contracted partners. It covers all learners and programme participants referred to in this policy as 'customers': 16-24 year olds on supported internships, adults aged 19 and over within adult education, children within our family learning provision and beneficiaries on our range of employment support projects. This policy seeks to provide information on our overarching approach to safeguarding and our associated policies, as well as covering referral procedures.

The Care Act 2014 (adults) and Working Together 2018 (children) set out our statutory responsibilities regarding safeguarding adults and children. We extend this requirement to all our customers. All our staff, in whatever setting and role, are on the front line in preventing harm or abuse occurring including alleviating distress and taking action. This approach covers both current abuse and historic abuse and covers both adults and children.

This Safeguarding Policy takes account of the government's update of Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025), particularly in reference to online safety, fake news, mis- and dis-information, and generative AI and imagery.

Purpose

The purpose of detailing our approach to safeguarding is to ensure our customers and staff - including volunteers - are safe when they are with us. Customers and staff have clear reporting mechanisms to alert us to actual or potential harm and distress in their lives with the knowledge that we will take appropriate and timely action to help them.

Roles And Responsibilities

The Skills and Employment management team will ensure that

- S&E has a contextualised Safeguarding Policy and appropriate procedures in place that are in accordance with guidance and legislation, is annually reviewed and is made available to all partners
- S&E operate safer recruitment procedures in line with local authority guidelines and requirements and ensures all checks are carried out as appropriate
- S&E has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff and customers and that all sub-contracted partners comply with these procedures
- there is a Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer and Designated Deputy Safeguarding Officers within the S&E team to whom staff and sub-contracted partner staff can report customer disclosures and concerns. See *Appendix A* for 'Quick Guide' to reporting safeguarding concerns.





- there are clear and publicised methods of reporting concerns and a 'just report' ethos for staff and sub-contracted partners
- staff undertake appropriate safeguarding training including themed topics to maintain breadth of awareness. A dated record of this training is held centrally.
- there is a comprehensive induction programme for customers detailing our approach to safeguarding and disclosure channels, with regular promotion
- we embed personal development themes within our service interactions with customers. Curriculum content to include, for example, developing healthy relationships.
- there is a central log of disclosures maintained and managed
- we provide support for dealing with distressing situations through the Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer and regular line management 'supervision' sessions. Supervision settings will provide an 'offloading' function and will not share identifying safeguarding information
- the Safeguarding Policy and associated policies cover our whole approach to safeguarding and that these are regularly reviewed to ensure they capture changes to national policy and procedures. Maximum review period of 1 year
- there is a regular external audit of our Safeguarding Policy and approach.

The Legal Framework

This policy reflects the principles contained within several legal frameworks including the Care Act 2014, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Mental Capacity Act 2005, the Children Schools and Families Act 2010, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. The policy and its associated procedures are also consistent with the Safeguarding Children Partnership's guidance in respect of the safeguarding of children and young people and the Local Safeguarding Adult Board guidance.

Further information is available from:

[CW&C Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

[CW&C Adult Safeguarding Board](#)

What Is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. Safeguarding is about making people aware of their rights, encouraging them to have a dialogue with us over matters of concern to them, protecting them, taking the necessary steps to support them and keep them from harm and supporting them in distress.

Within safeguarding there is a continuum of need ranging from 'happy, thriving and able to take steps to protect themselves' to people not having that capacity to protect themselves. We work to create an environment in which all customers feel comfortable talking to members of staff including sub-contracted partner staff about issues that are troubling them. Our safeguarding approach is explained to all customers at induction. Posters are displayed in all our venues highlighting key information and encouraging customers to talk to us. The S&E manager will act as the Designated





Lead Safeguarding Officer for the service for all disclosures reported by staff and sub-contracted partners. Staff are fully trained in safeguarding and know that from their initial disclosure the Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer will determine actions to be taken and will manage the disclosure until it is closed down. All disclosures are recorded and managed within a protected folder on our shared drive. Some disclosures may result in an official referral to our central council safeguarding referral portals; others may result in actions to alleviate the situation and will be managed within the S&E.

Our service works together with our sub-contracted partners to safeguard our customers. This includes:

- Protection from maltreatment, harassment and abuse including online abuse
- Preventing impairment to health or development
- Ensuring circumstances that are consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all our customers to have the best outcomes from their time with us. This will include taking action to address:
 - a. harm or distress at the hands of another including bullying, harassment, exploitation including peer to peer both face to face and digital
 - b. suicidal ideation (in children this will always generate a safeguarding report to I-ART)
 - c. addiction
 - d. homelessness
 - e. other issues not listed here but that pose a risk to our customers

What is Abuse?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It can take a variety of forms and can be either overt or covert. We recognise that many of these forms of abuse can be both face to face or within a digital environment. The table below describes the main types of abuse taken from the Care Act 2014:

Type of abuse	Definition
Physical abuse	Physical harm to an individual's body from, for example, hitting, restrictive practices and medication
Domestic abuse	Threats, violence and abuse between individuals that are family members or in an intimate relationship
Sexual abuse	Sexual relationships or activities that an individual does not or cannot consent to



Type of abuse	Definition
Emotional/psychological abuse	Threats, humiliation, controlling behaviour, blaming, verbal abuse, harassment, intimidation
Financial/material abuse	Use of an individual's money or possessions without permission. Includes theft, fraud, scamming, coercion, self-serving involvement in an individual's financial affairs
Discriminatory abuse	Individuals being treated differently due to personal traits such as age, gender, race, sexual orientation etc.
Institutional/organisational abuse	When an organisation's needs are put above an individual's needs e.g. telling an individual that they must go to bed at a certain time
Self-neglect	An individual being unable to see to their own basic needs, such as nutrition or hygiene
Neglect by others	People responsible for an individual not seeing to their basic needs such as nutrition or hygiene either deliberately or inadvertently.

Extremism and Radicalisation

Context: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism (2011). The strategy is based around 4 key workstreams:

1. Pursue: to stop terrorists
2. **Prevent:** to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism
3. Protect: to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack
4. Prepare: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack

Extremism

In accordance with the revised definition set out in [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025](#), extremism is now defined as vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, which include democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. It also encompasses calls for the death of members of the armed forces, whether in the



UK or overseas. Skills and Employment recognises that safeguarding against extremism is a critical part of our duty to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm. Staff will be trained to identify early signs of radicalisation and extremist influence, and to respond appropriately through established safeguarding procedure

We have a duty under the Prevent agenda to respond to and address the threat of radicalisation and this duty forms a core component of our safeguarding approach.

What is Prevent?

The Prevent work stream seeks to address the threat faced by the UK from domestic or international terrorism. Prevent aims to tackle the factors that can cause people to become drawn into violent extremism and empower individuals and communities to stand up to violent extremists.

Our responsibility in this is to protect our staff and customers from any forms of extremism or intent to cause harm or capability to cause harm by:

- being alert to situations that could pose potential threat
- challenging any extremist ideology
- taking action to prevent people from being drawn into extremist activity
- reporting all incidents and concerns immediately

Extremist ideology includes:

- Racially motivated extremism
- Religious extremism
- Animal rights extremism
- Other forms of extremism

Our Prevent Action Plan is reviewed annually.



What Action Will We Take:

1. Staff who are concerned about a customer or who receive a customer disclosure will submit a report to the Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer (DLSO) on our reporting template
2. On receipt of the report, the DLSO will decide whether a formal safeguarding report needs submitting to either the Council's Access team (for adults), iART (for children) or the Prevent team in the case of disclosures relating to relating to extremism or radicalisation
3. For disclosures and concerns that can be managed within the service (including signposting to other support services), the DLSO will liaise with the sender of the report regarding the initial actions taken and agree what other actions are necessary
4. The DLSO will set up a review date and manage the disclosure to a point where no further actions are required, and it can be closed
5. All records will be kept in a protected folder and tracked until completion
6. All cases will be moderated for consistency and quality assurance purposes by either the DLSO or the Designated Deputy Safeguarding Officer (depending on who handled the original disclosure).

See Appendix A for 'Quick Guide' to reporting safeguarding concerns

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 update

Online Safety

In line with the statutory guidance outlined in [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025](#) (KCSIE) Skills and Employment recognises the evolving nature of online risks and the importance of proactive digital safeguarding. Staff must be aware of the increasing threats posed by fake news, misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories, which can influence both children's and vulnerable adults' beliefs, behaviours, and wellbeing. We are committed to ensuring that all digital platforms used within our educational settings are subject to robust filtering and monitoring systems.

Staff will receive regular training to identify and respond to online safety concerns, including those related to AI-generated content, online grooming, cyber-bullying, and exposure to harmful material. We will also engage parents and carers in conversations about children's and vulnerable adults' online activity outside of the learning and support environment, promoting a shared responsibility for digital safety.

Misinformation, Disinformation and Fake News

In accordance with KCSIE Skills and Employment recognises that misinformation, disinformation, and fake news now constitute safeguarding harms. These forms of false or misleading content—whether shared unintentionally or deliberately—can distort children's or vulnerable adults' understanding of the world, promote harmful ideologies, and undermine trust in credible sources. Extremist groups may exploit such narratives to manipulate or radicalise children or vulnerable adults. As part of our safeguarding strategy, we will embed media literacy and critical thinking into the curriculum, equipping people with the skills to question online content, identify bias, and verify facts.



Staff will be trained to recognise the impact of digital misinformation and respond appropriately to concerns. We will also promote safe online behaviours and encourage open dialogue, ensuring people feel supported when navigating complex or distressing online material.

Generative AI and Imagery

In response to emerging digital risks outlined in KCSIE, Skills and Employment acknowledges the safeguarding implications of generative artificial intelligence (AI) and its capacity to produce realistic but misleading or harmful content. This includes AI-generated imagery that may be used to manipulate, deceive, or exploit children and vulnerable adults, such as deepfakes, synthetic media, or inappropriate visual material.

Staff must remain vigilant to the risks posed by such technologies, particularly in relation to online grooming, bullying, and identity misuse. Where AI tools are used in educational settings, appropriate filtering and monitoring systems must be in place, and their use must be subject to regular review and risk assessment. We will ensure that staff, learners and programme participants are educated on the ethical use of AI, the importance of verifying digital content, and the potential consequences of engaging with or sharing AI-generated material.

Healthy Relationships and Domestic Violence

In line with KCSIE our department is committed to promoting healthy, respectful relationships as a core component of safeguarding practice. We recognise that children and adults must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify the characteristics of positive relationships and to understand the signs of unhealthy or abusive behaviours, including those associated with domestic violence. Exposure to domestic abuse—whether as a direct victim or witness—can have profound and lasting effects on emotional wellbeing, development, and safety.

Staff receive training to recognise indicators of domestic violence, including coercive control, emotional manipulation, and physical harm, and respond appropriately in line with statutory safeguarding procedures. Through our curriculum and pastoral support, we will foster a culture of respect, consent, and emotional literacy, ensuring that learners and programme participants feel safe to disclose concerns and are supported in accessing help. We will also work in partnership with families and external agencies to address domestic abuse and promote recovery and resilience.

Mental Health Support

Skills and Employment recognises the vital role of mental health in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. In line with KCSIE, we are committed to identifying and supporting learners or programme participants who may be experiencing mental health difficulties. Staff will be trained to recognise early signs of emotional distress and refer concerns to appropriate support services. We will utilise resources such as the NHS's [Every Mind Matters](#) to promote resilience, wellbeing, and positive mental health across our settings. Where necessary, we will work in partnership with families and external agencies to ensure children receive timely and effective support.



Linked Skills And Employment Policies

Providing a Safe and Secure Environment for learners/customers and staff

1. Health and Safety Policy; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Due to the nature of the work carried out by the Skills and Employment service, we have developed our own specific approach to managing the health and safety of our learners and programme participants, additional to the CW&C Health and Safety Policy. The policy clarifies the specific duties and responsibilities for our staff and sub-contracted partners. Aligned to the Health and Safety Act 1974, there are certain duties placed upon workers. These include a responsibility towards each other and a duty to co-operate with their employer in the matter of safety. We detail these responsibilities in our approach. We are committed to the safety of our learners and programme participants and strive to ensure that - as far as reasonably practicable - learning takes place in safe, healthy and supportive environments which meet the needs of the learner.

Staff are trained in health and safety requirements and carry out risk assessments for all courses, venues, activities and visits. We vet all our sub-contracted partners and any external speakers attending our premises.

Equality of opportunity, inclusive practice and promoting the value of diversity are central to everything we do: from the way we commission, who we commission, the services and provision we provide and the support we give. Everyone is different and has something unique to offer. We respect and understand these differences and make the most of everyone's talents. Every learner and programme participant has the right to respect and personal dignity, alongside the responsibility to recognise this right of others and that people's beliefs and culture differ. Our staff work hard to develop an inclusive operating environment in which everyone feels safe. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that acceptable standards of behaviour and practice are adopted in all our delivery environments. This also includes working with our partners to encourage reporting of unacceptable behaviour and ensure that following a thorough investigation, an effective and appropriate response is swiftly expedited.

2. Online Safety Policy

As part of our overarching safeguarding approach, we ensure that our learners and programme participants are safe online. This includes use of the internet, electronic communication and use of mobile devices for learners and programme participants. The policy covers learners and programme participants within classroom and open access settings (for example Skills and Employment Hubs), within council venues and in sub-contracted partner venues. It is our responsibility to educate learners and programme participants about the benefits and risks of using new technology. We provide safeguards and raise awareness so users are able to control their online experiences. We recognise that technology is constantly evolving which includes the tools used to access information, so this approach covers all hardware currently authorised for use within our provision e.g. desktop computers, laptops, iPads, mobile phones, virtual learning environment etc.

3. Personal Harassment And Bullying Policy; Cyber-bullying Policy

We strive to create a culture where harassment and bullying is not tolerated and is viewed as abuse. The above named S&E policies contain full details. We live in a world where our lives are increasingly spent online with more channels available to potentially cause harm or distress. Of



particular concern is the rise in sexual harassment, often peer-to-peer that has proliferated across a range of digital platforms and we acknowledge that this may occur in our settings at any time. Peer-on-peer sexual abuse includes:

- Sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing
- Sexting (also known as 'youth-produced sexual imagery')

4. Modern Slavery Policy

As part of our overarching safeguarding approach, we need to ensure that our learners and service users are protected from the effects of modern slavery. Where we have suspicions, we take action immediately: our disclosure procedures provide a line of clear reporting and we take appropriate and timely action to help the individual.

Our approach to tackling modern slavery incorporates awareness raising about 'county lines' activity and the criminal exploitation of young children and vulnerable adults to supply drugs down a supply chain from major cities into distant towns and rural areas.

5. Data Protection and Information Security Policy

As part of our safeguarding duty and aligned to GDPR legislation 2018, it is vital that we manage and protect the data we hold relating to learners and programme participants. This requirement applies to all members of staff who have direct contact with data including:

- The sub-contracted provider - when returning data electronically by post or handing over in person. Full instructions are issued by the Skills and Employment's Quality Performance and Commissioning team and may be changed at short notice.
- Direct delivery teams - who must store personal records securely, either physically or electronically.
- Skills and Employment staff - receiving customer data, processing that data and disseminating reports to appropriate staff and contractors.

No data about learners or programme participants - unless explicitly specified - will be shared with a third party (refer to Learner Enrolment Form Data Protection statement). GDPR does not take precedence over safeguarding and we will take action which may involve sharing information as required.

We will only keep safeguarding records for as long as required and all records will be deleted at the end of each academic year or when the case has been closed, whichever is the later event.

Safer Recruitment And Selection

The local authority applies safe recruitment practices to all staff recruited to the council. This includes scrutinising applications, verifying right to work in the UK, checking previous employment history, verifying identity and qualifications, obtaining professional references, and ensuring that a



candidate has the health and physical capacity for the job. It also includes undertaking interviews and, where appropriate, undertaking criminal checks in line with statutory requirements.

Safe Working

All staff

- undertake a regular DBS check aligned to their Job Description. Tutors and other key staff are reviewed every 3 years
- receive a thorough induction and are managed within a performance management framework with regular one-to-one meetings and annual appraisals. Staff have access to ongoing CPD
- complete mandatory annual corporate CPD including additional service safeguarding topics
- work within a management hierarchy
- complete annual declarations of interest
- work in an open and transparent way
- adhere to safe working practices
- comply with data protection requirements
- discuss and take advice from managers over any incident which may give rise to concern
- follow appropriate procedures and record any incidents or decisions made
- are aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal and/or disciplinary action being taken against them

Allegations Against Staff

‘Staff’ refers to any paid employee or volunteer. Any allegations against staff will be dealt with in line with CW&C’s Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy. Allegations may be that a member of staff has:

- behaved in a way which has caused harm to another
- possibly committed an offence against or related to another
- behaved towards a child/children in a way that indicates that they are unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults

The management of any allegations against staff includes:

- Learners, programme participants and staff to be given clear information on reporting. Any concerns relating to members of staff should be reported to the service Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Lead with alternative points of contact provided
- The service DSL will consider any allegation against staff in relation to:
 - A police investigation of a possible criminal offence
 - Referral and assessment to CW&C adult/child Social Service teams about whether a child/adult is in need of protection or in need of services
 - Referral to CW&C HR in respect of disciplinary action against the individual which will consider immediate suspension pending investigation



Further information can be found on [our website](#) in the following related documents:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Equity Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Personal Harassment and Bullying Policy
- Cyber-bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Modern Slavery Policy
- Data Protection and Information Security Policy
- Safeguarding Report Form
- Incident Report Form
- Screening Checklist - External Speakers
- Risk Assessments and Venue Checklists
- Course Risk Assessment

Associated Local Authority Policies

Due to the nature of the work carried out by the Skills and Employment Service, we have developed our own approach to clarify the specific duties and responsibilities for our staff and sub-contracted partners. In addition to the contextualised policies listed above, CW&C has centrally maintained policies covering all aspects of our work as council employees. The following related documents and areas can be found on the council's intranet site:

- Safeguarding Adults
- Safeguarding Children
- Recruitment Procedure (including Safer Recruitment)
- Performance Management
- Code Of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Information Governance (including Data Protection and Information Security)



Appendix A

Quick Guide to Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

1 - RECOGNISE

Abuse comes in many forms and more than one type of abuse may be happening at the same time

You may suspect abuse because:

- You have general concerns about someone's well-being
- Someone tells you that something has happened or is happening to them, which could be abuse
- You may also have disclosures relating to personal distress including talk of self-harm and/or suicide. You still need to respond to these disclosures in the same way.

2 - RESPOND

- ✗ Remember, it is not your role to investigate any concerns you may have – just report it.
- ✓ Where you suspect abuse or risk of abuse including the potential to be drawn into extremism, it is your role to pass on any concerns you may have even if the person has asked you not to.

- Make sure the person is safe.
- **If there is an immediate danger/threat or urgent medical attention is required seek medical help eg call 999 immediately.**
- Speak to your local Safeguarding Reporting Officer/Line Manager immediately for first line advice which may involve calling the police.
- Preserve any evidence.
- Do not discuss with alleged perpetrator.
- Do stay calm and try not to show shock.
- Listen carefully rather than question directly.
- If the customer reports abuse/distress reassure them that they are doing the right thing in telling you.

3 - RECORD

- Write an account of what you have seen or heard as soon as possible using Skills & Employment Disclosure Report or available on our website under Safeguarding.
- Make sure the information is factual and accurate.
- Record what the person said, using their own words.
- Describe the circumstances and identify anyone else who was there at the time.
- Note any initial actions taken.
- Sign and date your report, noting the time and location.

**4 - REPORT**

- Step 1** Send the completed **Skills & Employment Disclosure Form** (available on the Skills and Employment webpages under Safeguarding) as soon as possible. This must be sent within 48 hours of the disclosure to the Skills & Employment Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer or the Designated Deputy Safeguarding Officer.
- Step 2** All Disclosures made by customers whether on internal provision or on our Adult Education commissioned provision must be reported to CW&C Skills and Employment Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer within 48 hours of the original disclosure.
- Step 3** Disclosure report actions are discussed between the report author and the CW&C Skills and Employment Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer. Further actions are agreed which may include a formal Safeguarding referral to the Council's Access team (for adults) or iART (for children). For other disclosures, a response will be agreed, recorded and monitored for completion by the Skills and Employment Designated Safeguarding Officers.

Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer

Matthew Smith Telephone 07790 532840 SETSafeguarding@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Amy Hill Telephone 07872 860309 SETSafeguarding@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Jodie Ronan Telephone 07768 558858 SETSafeguarding@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Ben Watts Telephone 07881 500226 SETSafeguarding@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

The CW&C Lead Safeguarding Officer will advise and support you on an appropriate course of action and sources of support, but if required, advice can be obtained directly:

For adults – advice can be sought from the Access team, 8.30am-5pm Mon-Thurs (4.30pm Fri)

Telephone 0300 123 7034 accesswest@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Out of hours, telephone the Emergency Duty team on 01244 977277

For children – advice can be sought from iART, 8.30am-5pm from Monday to Thursday (4.30pm Fri)

Telephone 0300 123 7047 i-Art@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Out of hours, telephone the Emergency Duty team on 01244 977277

Alternatively contact **Cheshire Police**

Telephone **0845 458 0000** or **01244 350000** or in an emergency, **999**

For advice on radicalisation, the Local Adult Safeguarding Board can be contacted via [their web page](#)