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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This document has been prepared in order to inform the practice of members of staff employed by the Shrewsbury Colleges Group (SCG). The policy has been based on the statutory guidance up to and including September 2024
- 1.2. The primary aim is to enable all staff to meet their statutory duty to safeguard children who are enrolled at the college (those under 18) and promote their welfare. This means that as a student-centred organisation we should consider what is in the best interests of our students. As no single practitioner can have a full picture of needs and circumstances, everyone in the college has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

Safeguarding and promoting welfare is defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) which asks us as an organisation to play a key role in:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge (recognising that college staff are in a position to identify concerns early and help prevent concerns from escalating)
- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

However, we also recognise that some adults are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

This policy therefore applies not only to children but also to adults with care and support needs (see definition below, taken from Adult Safeguarding: Multi-agency policy & procedures for the protection of adults with care & support needs in the West Midlands: 2024).

Adult(s) with care and support needs.

The adult safeguarding duties under the Care Act 2014 apply to an adult, aged 18 or over, who:

- **has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;**
- **is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and**
- **as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.**

Care and support needs are the mixture of practical, financial and emotional support for adults who need extra help to manage their lives and be

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independent – including older people, people with a disability or long-term illness, people with mental health problems, and carers.

- 1.3. This policy will be reviewed annually, be made easily available to all staff and will be placed on the college website
- 1.4. In order to assemble these procedures and guidance, reference has been made to relevant legislation, Government Statutory Guidance and local child safeguarding procedures as outlined by Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership (SSCP) which are available to view at <http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/> as well as West Midlands local adults safeguarding procedures available to view at [WM Adult Docs \(safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk\)](http://safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk)
- 1.5. The College is committed to the provision of appropriate training and support to all staff in order to enable them to discharge their duties relating to safeguarding effectively.
- 1.6. These procedures should be read in conjunction with other safeguarding related policies in operation in the college. These include Safer Recruitment, Staff Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing, Looked After Young People (LAYP), Mental Health, Prevent, Student Conduct, Online Safety, Anti Bullying, Search and Confiscation and Substance Misuse.
- 1.7. The college is a 'relevant agency' as identified in local safeguarding arrangements by SSCP. The college works with the 3 partners (health, social care and police) to contribute to the safety of Shropshire's children.

2. AIMS

The primary aims of the policy/procedures are to:

- Enable staff to meet their statutory responsibility to safeguard children (those under 18) and adults with care and support needs in the College.
- Promote the welfare of children, young people and adults with care and support needs.
- Provide a safe environment for children, young people and adults with care and support needs.
- Identify children, young people and adults with care and support needs who would benefit from early intervention and help or are in need or suffering/likely to suffer significant harm and take appropriate action to make sure they are safe.
- Contribute to effective partnership working between all those involved with providing Services for Children and Young People and Adults with Care and Support Needs.

3. PRINCIPLES

The principles underpinning the work of the College with children and adults with care and support needs are set out below:

- 3.1. The welfare of the child or adult with care and support needs is of paramount consideration, and in any conflict of interest their well-being must be the focus of each action.
- 3.2. The safeguarding of children and adults with care and support needs is **everyone's** responsibility. Everyone who comes in contact with children and their families or adults with care and support needs has a role to play. This involves at all times taking a student-centred approach and acting in a way that is in their best interest. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a student's needs and circumstances. If they 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.
- 3.3. **All staff** should be aware that a student may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated or be being threatened. This should not prevent staff from showing professional curiosity and speaking to a member of the safeguarding team if they have concerns. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.
- 3.4. All staff working with children and adults with care and support needs should have access to and a clear understanding of the procedures set out in this document.
- 3.5. To enable staff to meet these commitments the College will provide appropriate training. This includes training in child protection for all staff working with children in line with SSCP guidance (refresher training will also be provided every three years minimum) and training in inter-agency procedures for the designated person and their deputies (with refresher training every 2 years).
- 3.6. All members of staff will receive guidance on college procedures on safeguarding during their induction and will be asked to read Part 1 and/or Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024). They will also be familiarised with the staff Code of Conduct. Staff will receive regular safeguarding updates via CPD and the 'In The Loop' college newsletter with reminders of aspects of these procedures and updates on contemporary safeguarding issues. Additional reminders will be provided through the weekly Staff Briefing and issue specific briefings as appropriate.
- 3.7. All staff employed by the college will be undergo pre-employment checks as stipulated in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024). For more detail see Safer Recruitment Policy
- 3.8. The College is committed to the maintenance of proper written records of any child protection or adult safeguarding matter dealt with under these procedures

and these will be recorded on the electronic safeguarding system following the stipulations set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024).

- 3.9. The College will work actively in partnership with SSCP. The College will keep a record of safeguarding CPD and staff training.

Though every attempt has been made to provide a comprehensive set of procedures it is impossible to cater for every eventuality. As such any concern over the welfare or safety of children should be reported to a designated person.

Where emergency medical help is needed Do Not Delay– contact a first aider in college or alternatively arrange for the person to be taken to hospital.

4. STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR SAFEGUARDING

- 4.1. Overall responsibility for child protection matters is held by Steve McAlinden (Vice Principal: Students) who is the 'designated senior person' in terms of child and adult safeguarding matters at Shrewsbury Colleges Group at Senior Management level. He also acts as the Senior Mental Health Lead for the organisation

This role entails the following responsibilities:

- Reviewing the Safeguarding Policy annually and that procedures and implementation are reviewed regularly
- Ensuring that the Safeguarding Policy is available publicly and that parents are aware of the responsibilities of the College
- Overseeing the referral of cases of suspected abuse or allegations to social care services.
- Supporting staff who make referrals to social care services
- Undertaking Prevent Awareness Training
- Referring cases to the Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern
- Supporting staff in making referrals to the Channel programme
- Working with others in college and LADO on cases where Child Protection concerns involve a staff member.
- Referring to the DBS when a person leaves the employment of the College or is dismissed due to risk/harm to a child.
- Referring to the police as appropriate in cases where a crime may have been committed
- Providing advice and support to other staff on issues relating to child protection and the protection of adults with care and support needs
- Informing Governors of safeguarding developments and overview of policy and cases.

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- Maintaining detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals (even where that concern does not lead to a referral). This includes details of any follow up and resolution as well as a rationale for any decisions taken.
- Liaising with, and acting as a point of contact for, the local authority and SSCP and other appropriate agencies in line with Working Together (2023).
- Understanding the nature of strategy meetings, core groups, case conferences and other inter-agency meetings and taking part in these meetings as appropriate.
- Liaising with secondary schools who send pupils to the college to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for the pupils, including the transfer of any child protection file
- Ensuring the transfer of the child protection file of a student, with such records, who leaves college to join another educational provider (within 5 days of their start date at the new provider).
- Ensuring up to date knowledge by attending additional training and meetings
- Attending Designated Lead Training at least every 2 years
- Ensuring that staff receive basic training in child protection issues and are aware of the College's safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Keeping the Principal updated on child protection issues (particularly Section 47 or police investigations).
- Understanding processes for early help and associated assessments.
- Being alert to the specific needs of children with SEN, children in need, young carers, children in care and care leavers.
- Ensuring that there are appropriate procedures and guidance to assist staff in identifying students vulnerable to radicalisation and following statutory guidance in this area (The Prevent Duty)
- Acting as the Senior Mental Health Lead where safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health
- Promoting supportive engagement with parents and/or carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Taking lead responsibility for promoting the educational outcomes for children in need. Specifically this involves being aware who the cohort of students with a social worker are, monitoring their progress and supporting staff in college so that these students can reach their potential. This includes ensuring that staff working with the student are informed of this status as appropriate.

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- Ensuring that the College has appropriate mechanisms for the identification and referral of cases of child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, female genital mutilation, self-harm, suicide and neglect.
 - Ensuring that safeguarding issues and education are promoted through awareness raising and sessions in the tutorial programme.
 - Ensuring that the College meets the requirements of SSCP with regard to auditing of child protection and safeguarding practice.
 - Encouraging a culture, among all staff, of listening to children/ adults with care and support needs and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures the college may put in place to protect them.
 - Understanding the importance of information sharing within college and to outside partners as well as relevant data protection legislation and regulations, especially the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation.
 - Understanding the risks associated with online safety and having the relevant knowledge and capability to keep children safe when online in college
 - Ensuring appropriate filtering and monitoring processes are in place and are reviewed annually
 - Recognising additional risks that SEND students face online (around bullying, grooming and radicalisation) and having the capability to support these children to stay safe online
- 4.2. The designated senior member of staff will provide an annual report to the governing body of the College setting out how the college has discharged its duties and is responsible for reporting deficiencies in procedure or policy identified by the SSCP (or others) to the governing body at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.3. The designated senior member of staff will be supported by:
- Stacey Dickson (Head of Safeguarding and Student Conduct) – Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
 - Sophie Charles (Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team Leader) – Deputy Safeguarding Officer
 - Helen Phillips (ALS Team Leader)– Deputy Safeguarding Officer

These individuals will ensure best safeguarding practice by:

- Reporting to the senior member of staff with lead responsibility.
- Making appropriate referrals.
- Being available to provide advice and support to other staff on issues relating to child protection.
- Having a particular responsibility to be available to listen to children and young people studying at the college.

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- Dealing with individual cases, including attending case conferences and review meetings as appropriate.
- Having received training in child protection issues and inter-agency working, as required by the SSCP, and receiving refresher training at least every 2 years

4.4. All concerns regarding child protection matters should be reported immediately to the designated person at the appropriate Campus.

- **Helen Phillips at English or Welsh Bridge Campus on 07970 168964**
- **Sophie Charles at London Road Campus 07792 147376**
- **If it is not possible to contact the appropriate lead person above then call Stacey Dickson on 07970 735208 or Steve McAlinden on 07970 168953.**

These Designated Safeguarding Leads will be responsible for determining such action as is necessary under the Safeguarding procedures contained within this document.

The wider Safeguarding Team details are on posters displayed around each Campus and the college website

<https://www.scq.ac.uk/students/safeguarding>

Students are made aware via the posters and other updates that they can report concerns to any member of staff or directly to the Safeguarding Team via the contact details on posters, in person at a safeguarding office, via reception or on the email pleasehelp@shrewsbury.ac.uk

4.5. There is also a designated member of the board of governors with responsibility for child protection and safeguarding issues. The designated member of the governing body with responsibility for child protection issues is Joycelin Hoyland

The designated governor is responsible for liaising with the Principal and designated senior person over matters regarding child protection, including:

- Ensuring that the College has procedures and policies which are consistent with the Local Safeguarding Community Partnership's procedures.
- Ensuring that the governing body considers the College policy on child protection and protection of adults with care and support needs each year.
- Ensuring that each year the governing body is informed of how the College and its staff have complied with the policy, including but not limited to a report on the training that staff have undertaken.

4.6. The Chair of Governors is responsible for overseeing the liaison between relevant agencies and the Local Authority in connection with allegations against the Principal/ CEO of the College. This will not involve undertaking any form of investigation, but will ensure good communication between the parties and provide information to assist enquiries.

To assist in these duties, the Chair of Governors will receive appropriate training.

- 4.7. The College Vice Principal: Students must make contact with the designated officer at the Local Authority if there is an allegation of abuse against a member of staff.

5. DEFINITIONS AND RECOGNITION OF CHILD ABUSE

- 5.1. It is commonly accepted that teachers and other staff in education spend so much time in contact with young people and adults with care and support needs that they are in a unique position to discern whether a student is a victim of abuse. However, it is important to know what this abuse is and how it can be picked up on.
- 5.2. The four principal categories of harm suffered by children are set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024. These are used to assist those responsible for the welfare and protection of children to understand and recognise the symptoms of abuse.
- 5.3. The diagnosis of abuse is difficult, even for experts. It is not the role of college staff to define or attempt to diagnose whether a child has suffered abuse within certain categories. An understanding of the categories is, however, important to enable staff to recognise symptoms of abuse.
- **Abuse:** a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.
 - **Physical abuse:** a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
 - **Emotional abuse:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child from

participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

- **Sexual abuse:** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education and is covered by specific guidance outlined later in this document.
- **Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

5.4. Other Specific Safeguarding Issues

- **Mental Health**

Mental health problems may be an indication that a child is at risk of or has been a victim of abuse, neglect or exploitation. Staff in college are in a good position to be able to share with the safeguarding team when a student's behaviour suggests that they may be suffering, or at risk of suffering, a mental health problem. When a student has suffered from trauma or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). This can impact on a person's mental health later in life. The college's CPD programme provides opportunities for staff to develop knowledge of indicators of poor mental health and the impact that ACEs can have on children's mental health, behaviour and education.

There is often a link between mental health and safeguarding concerns such as self-harm and suicidal thoughts. If a member of staff receives a

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disclosure of self-harm, suicidal thoughts or other issues that may lead to significant harm they must report to a designated safeguarding lead without delay. The designated lead will oversee that the SSCP care pathway is followed, that safety is assured and this will usually involve sharing information with parents/ carers as the person with parental responsibility when the student is under 18 years old. See

<http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/ykjN/suicide-prevention/?b=Shropshire> if you would like to refer to the Shropshire protocols.

The college operates an Emotional Health and Well-Being (EHWB) service, and underpinning strategy that seeks to support students of all ages with mental health concerns. The EHWB team works with the designated safeguarding leads to ensure that where there is a link between mental health and safeguarding, students are appropriately supported. Students can self-refer to the EHWB service via the college website <https://www.scg.ac.uk/students/emotional-health-wellbeing>

- **Child on child Abuse**

All staff should be aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child on child abuse. This can happen in and out of college and online and is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- **bullying**, including cyberbullying, prejudice based and discriminatory types (follow the Anti-Bullying policy in these cases)
- **relationship abuse** in intimate relationships between peers
- **physical abuse** such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (in most cases the Student Conduct Policy will be followed in the first instance where victim and perpetrator are both college students – this should not preclude use of safeguarding procedures as deemed appropriate)
- **sexual violence** such as rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- **sexual harassment** such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment
- **upskirting** which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their position, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to gain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm
- **consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude/ semi-nude images or videos** - also known as **youth produced sexual imagery or sexting**: and
- **initiation/ hazing** type violence and rituals (where a person is abused as a way of initiation into a group)

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All instances of suspected child on child abuse must be reported to a designated safeguarding lead. In a case of bullying this is in addition to following the anti-bullying policy. The college promotes a policy of zero tolerance toward child on child abuse (including sexual harassment) and takes all disclosures seriously.

Students are made aware via posters and other updates that they can report concerns to any member of staff or directly to the Safeguarding Team via the contact details on posters, in person at a safeguarding office, via reception or on the email pleasehelp@shrewsbury.ac.uk

- **Female Genital Mutilation**

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long lasting consequences. More detail on this form of abuse can be found in the [FGM Fact Sheet](#). There is a specific statutory reporting duty regarding FGM. Instructions for the reporting of FGM are found in section 6 of this guidance.

- **Serious violence and Gang Involvement**

The college has a responsibility to contribute to multi agency work to prevent serious youth violence and gang involvement. All staff should be aware of indicators, which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs. The College will work with the local Youth Offending Service and the SSCP to understand the local situation and risks. This will inform the work undertaken to educate and support students to reduce the risks, through measures such as Tutorial sessions. The search and confiscation policy will be used as appropriate where intelligence informs us that students may be in possession of items that may be linked to youth violence and gang involvement. Appropriate support and interventions will be put in place where a risk of involvement in gangs or youth violence is identified.

- **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)**

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse and both occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual or criminal activity. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources. In some cases, the

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abuse will be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or will be to the financial benefit or other advantage (such as increased status) of the perpetrator or facilitator. The abuse can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse. It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence. Victims can be exploited even when activity appears consensual and it should be noted exploitation as well as being physical can be facilitated and/or take place online. There are links between CCE/ CSE and Trafficking. Where it is thought that a child has been trafficked (including within the UK or even local area) to be criminally or sexually exploited a designated safeguarding lead should make a referral to the National Referral Mechanism for trafficking (NRM) as well as to social care locally.

The exploitation that takes place within the County Lines phenomenon also comes under the banner of CCE. County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs (primarily crack cocaine and heroin) into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”.

Exploitation is an integral part of the county lines offending model with children and vulnerable adults exploited to move [and store] drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons to ensure compliance of victims. Children can be targeted and recruited into county lines in a number of locations including schools, further and higher educational institutions, pupil referral units, special educational needs schools, children’s homes and care homes. Children are often recruited to move drugs and money between locations and are known to be exposed to techniques such as ‘plugging’, where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs create drug debts and can threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network. When it is suspected that a child of adult with care and support needs is involved in, or vulnerable to becoming involved in, county lines activity the designated safeguarding lead must be informed and a referral to social care made.

- **Preventing Radicalisation**

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism. The SCG has a specific Prevent policy, risk assessment and action plan surrounding this area of safeguarding and this should be referred to for guidance.

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- **Forced Marriage**

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England or Wales. This includes 'marriages' that are unofficial and non-binding. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one of the parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of free and full consent can be where a person does not consent (if they have learning difficulties, for example). Since February 2023 it has also been a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday.

- **Children Missing From Education**

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. Staff should inform the designated safeguarding lead if they are concerned that patterns of persistent and/or sustained absence may indicate issues such as child sexual exploitation, FGM or neglect.

Where a child has missed 3 consecutive weeks of lessons and/or attendance is below 50% and there is no known explanation contact will be made with parents or carers (those with parental responsibility) and reassurance of the child's safety will be sought. A safeguarding record under the nature 'Missing Education' will be established and a chronology maintained.

In the exceptional circumstances where 14-16 year old students are enrolled with the college they must work collaboratively with the Local Authority in order to share information about attendance and absences as deemed appropriate. The College should also inform the Local Authority immediately if that child aged 14-16 is removed from roll so that they can fulfil their duty of identifying students under 16 that are missing education.

- **Children at Greater Risk of Harm**

It is recognised that some children are at greater than average risk of harm and so additional mitigations may need to be in place to protect them. As such the college puts in place a personalised risk assessment for all students who are Looked After, Care Leavers or are subject to a Social Work Assessment, Child In Need Plan or Child Protection Plan. In addition a personalised risk assessment is in place for all students with a current Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) around their learning but this may also contain mitigations around safeguarding risk, including child on child abuse and online safety. Students with an EHCP are told that they can access support to report concerns around bullying or safeguarding through their allocated Transition and Review Officer.

- **Domestic Abuse**

The first ever statutory definition of Domestic Abuse (DA) was introduced in the Domestic Abuse Act (2021). This legislation also recognised the impact

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of DA on children, as victims in their own right or through seeing, hearing or experiencing the effects of the abuse.

In July 2022 the statutory guidance [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](https://publishing.service.gov.uk) (publishing.service.gov.uk) was published by the Home Office on how colleges, and other agencies, should approach DA.

The guidance provides a detailed definition of DA, the most important elements as they relate to colleges are summarised below.

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—

(a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are “personally connected” to each other,

and

(b) the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—

(a) physical or sexual abuse

(b) violent or threatening behaviour

(c) controlling or coercive behaviour

(d) economic abuse

(e) psychological, emotional or other abuse

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct

It is important therefore to understand what is meant by being ‘personally connected’

Two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies —

(a) they are, or have been, married to each other

(b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other

(c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)

(d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)

(e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other

(f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child

(g) they are relatives

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Children, defined as those under 18, can be seen as victims of DA if they see, hear, or experience the effect of abuse that is between others that meet the definitions above. They can also be victims or perpetrators of DA whilst they are 16 and 17 years of age.

If a disclosure is made that a student (child or vulnerable adult) is a perpetrator or victim of relationship abuse – or if a child is witnessing this type of abuse or its effects – this must be reported to a designated safeguarding lead.

The designated safeguarding lead must then report this abuse to the relevant local authority in order to assess the situation and inform next steps.

The college subscribes to Operation Encompass. Under this scheme where the police are called to a domestic abuse incident and there are children in the household who experienced the incident, the designated safeguarding lead will be informed before the child arrives in college the next day. Where there are these type of disclosures the college safeguarding procedures are followed to ensure the child is safe.

- **Online Safety**

There is a specific policy outlining the approach of the College to Online Safety as well as the responsibilities of the individuals and groups that make up the college community. This outlines the whole college approach to Online Safety covering the 4 categories of risk around Content, Contact, Conduct and Commerce as stipulated in KCSIE (2024) as well as the College approach to the sharing of nude/semi-nude image involving children (this can also be found in Appendix D of this policy) and the prevention of cyber-crime.

The college follows the standards around filtering and monitoring of online activity using college systems and devices as set out in the following government guidance. [Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges - Filtering and monitoring standards for schools and colleges - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Further detail on this important area can be found in the Online Safety policy.

The college approach to safeguarding around remote learning can also be found in the Online Safety policy.

- **Homelessness**

When a member of staff learns that a child's family is at risk of homelessness this should be referred to a designated safeguarding lead who will be able to ensure that the relevant team in the Local Authority is supporting the family. Where a 16 or 17 year old student who no longer lives with parents/ carers is at risk of homelessness this should be reported to a designated safeguarding lead who will be able to make a referral to

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social care who have a duty to ensure the child is accommodated safely, either with their parents or in alternative accommodation.

Also, but not exclusively, adults with care and support needs could be subject to additional forms of abuse. These include :-

- **Financial abuse/ material abuse –**

Includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with Wills or property, or the misappropriation of property or benefits. It also includes the withholding of money or the unauthorised or improper use of a person's money or property, usually to the disadvantage of the person to whom it belongs. Staff borrowing money or objects from a service user would also be considered abuse.

- **Discriminatory abuse –**

Includes racist, sexist, homophobic, ageist comments or jokes or comments and jokes based on a person's disability or any other form of harassment, any of the above forms of abuse with discrimination as a motive, not responding to the dietary needs or not providing appropriate spiritual support. Excluding a person from activities on the basis that they are 'not liked' is also discriminatory abuse.

6. GUIDANCE FOR STAFF

If you are concerned that a child or vulnerable adult within the College has suffered maltreatment you should follow these guidelines. It doesn't matter how insignificant the concerns may seem.

A general principle of 'it could happen here' should be followed.

Although child refers legally to people under 18, follow these steps with any student and we will decide who to refer the matter to later.

6.1. **What to do if you suspect, or are told, that a child or adult with care and support needs is being abused.**

- You should **not** investigate the concerns - this is the job of the relevant authorities.
- Do **not** ask questions (which may prejudice any subsequent enquiry) or examine the child for any sign of injury.
- **Listen carefully** to what you are being told and don't pass any kind of judgement on any of the information that you are being given.
- Carefully record **in writing** what the child has told you, or what has been observed, as soon as possible. Sign and date this disclosure and pass on to Helen Phillips at English or Welsh Bridge Campus on 07970 168964 , Sophie Charles at London Road Campus on 01743 342345 or 07792 147376. In their absence contact Stacey Dickson on 07970 735208 or Steve McAlinden on 07970 168953. **You can also contact any college**

reception who will support you to contact a designated safeguarding lead.

- **Do not promise confidentiality as this cannot be delivered.**
- Do **not** contact the child/ adult's parents or carers.
- **IMMEDIATELY CONSULT** – Helen Phillips at English or Welsh Bridge Campus or Sophie Charles at London Road Campus
- If there is any need for emergency medical treatment **do not delay** - contact a First Aider.
- If you cannot access a designated person do not delay. Any member of staff can make a referral to Children's Social Care including when the college is closed (as outlined in Appendix A)

This procedure also applies if the allegations of abuse are being made against other children.

6.2. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

The Serious Crime Act (2015) places a statutory duty on **teachers** to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18.

If a disclosure of FGM is made (or evidence seen, though this is unlikely as teachers should not look or investigate) and the girl is under 18 at the time of the disclosure –

- The disclosure should be recorded in the usual way
- The disclosures should be shared as soon as possible with the designated safeguarding lead
- The designated safeguarding lead will support the teacher in reporting the disclosure to the police – usually via 101 (**This reporting is the teacher's statutory duty and they will face disciplinary sanctions if it is found that a report to the police is not made following a disclosure**)

A report should be made to the designated safeguarding lead in the event that a safeguarding concern involving FGM comes to light where –

- Risk of FGM is identified, but it has not yet been carried out
- The disclosure does not come directly from the alleged victim
- The victim is no longer under 18 (even if they were when the FGM took place)
- The disclosure is made to a member of staff who is not a teacher

In these cases the designated safeguarding lead will follow local safeguarding procedures and the staff member will not have to contact the police.

6.3. Reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff

These procedures apply to all staff, whether teaching, administrative, management or support, as well as to volunteers, agency and supply staff and contractors. The word 'staff' is used for ease of description

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) makes a distinction between concerns or allegations that may meet the harm threshold and those that don't (low level concerns).

Where you have concerns, or a disclosure is made that indicates, that a member of staff poses a risk of harm (may meet the harm threshold) the process for reporting outlined below should be followed without delay.

An allegation may meet the harm threshold when a member of staff has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child and/or
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children (this includes behaviour that has occurred outside of college or online: known as transferable risk)

If you are concerned that the harm threshold may be met then follow this process:

- You should **not** investigate the concerns.
- Do **not** ask questions (which may prejudice any subsequent enquiry) or examine the child for any sign of injury.
- **Listen carefully** to what you are being told and don't pass any kind of judgement on any of the information that you are being given.
- Carefully record in writing what the child has told you, or what has been observed, as soon as possible. Sign and date this disclosure and pass on to a designated safeguarding lead or report the concern to pleasehelp@shrewsbury.ac.uk
- **Do not promise confidentiality as this cannot be delivered.**
- Do **not** contact the child's parents or carers if there is one involved.
- **Immediately consult** with a designated safeguarding lead
- If there is any need for emergency medical treatment **do not delay**, contact a First Aider.
- If the allegation is made against a designated safeguarding lead the Principal must be contacted immediately.

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- If you cannot access a designated safeguarding lead do not delay. Any member of staff can make a referral including when the college is closed (as outlined in Appendix A).

In cases of allegations of abuse being made against a member of staff, the Staff Disciplinary Procedure will be invoked.

The College Vice Principal: Students will work with other designated safeguarding leads as appropriate to follow the Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership Guidelines linked below and the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024). It is likely that, as part of this process, the Local Authority Designated Officer will be contacted.

<http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/ykpzy/statutory-child-protection-procedures/allegations-against-staff-or-volunteers>

Where a concern does not meet the harm threshold it is categorised as a low level concern. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) sets out that low level concerns must be taken seriously and acted upon promptly in order to minimise the risk of escalation and to ensure the safest possible educational environment.

A concern is low level when an adult working in or on behalf of the college may have acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with the college Safer Working Guidance, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and
- does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer

Low level concerns can come from a number of sources such as complaints, observations, references and vetting checks, a member of staff or members of the public. A member of staff may also self-refer if they feel that they have behaved in a way that could be misinterpreted or where they feel that they have behaved in a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards.

Low level concerns should be reported to a designated safeguarding lead or the pleasehelp@shrewsbury.ac.uk email.

Where the concern is about a contractor or agency member of staff their employer will be informed. Where a low level concern has been raised by a third party, such as a member of the public, the college will speak to them in order to get as full a picture as possible. Where there is a concern about a volunteer the same process should be followed as for a member of staff employed by the college.

Concerns will be recorded appropriately by the college and follow up actions taken if necessary. This could include a decision that the harm threshold has been met, that there is a need for support or training for an individual or that there needs to be a response across the organisation such as a revision of policies. Further detail on low level concerns can be found in the college approach to Safer Working Practice.

Safer recruitment is covered within the SCG's Safer Recruitment Policy

6.4. What staff should do if they have concerns about safeguarding practices in the College

All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the College's safeguarding regime and that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team.

- Staff can raise concerns by contacting the Principal or Vice Principal:Students or emailing safeguarding@shrewsbury.ac.uk
- Staff can also raise concerns via the Whistleblowing Policy
- Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with the College or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels may be open to them:
- General guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing>
- The NSPCC what you can do to report abuse dedicated helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and Email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

APPENDIX A -GUIDANCE FOR THE DESIGNATED PERSON IN CHARGE OF SAFEGUARDING WHO RECIEVES A DISCLOSURE

You must refer – You must not investigate – Do not delay

1. The aim of the designated person should be to establish as quickly as possible the nature of the injury or alleged abuse to facilitate an effective referral to Social Services without undue delay on 0345 678 9021
2. The designated person should have as much accurate information as possible available and have thought through the concerns to be expressed including:
 - Names and dates of birth of the child/ vulnerable adult and family members, including all other children.
 - Ethnicity
 - Home address
 - Names of those who hold parental responsibility
 - Whether the child and parents/carers are aware of the referral
 - Whether the concern is something that has been observed by the referrer or another member of staff or a third party.
 - Whether the concern is related to the child's behaviour, an injury or something that the child or vulnerable adult has said.
 - Whether the child or vulnerable adult has told anyone else.
 - Whether the concern has developed gradually or just today
 - What evidence there is for the concern
 - What is the **context** of the concern. Regard should be given to contextual safeguarding (ie) whether wider threats or factors may be having an impact on welfare. For example, the local community, potential gang links, online influences.
 - Who you think is responsible for the harm or potential harm to the child or vulnerable adult.
 - Whether you think that the child needs immediate protection.

Lack of availability of this information is not a reason to delay the referral to Social Services

3. The designated person should establish clarity with Social Services regarding the next course of action to be taken and by whom, and fully record the discussion and actions agreed.
4. The designated person should take no action without the agreement of Social Services
5. Where emergency medical help is required do not delay – contact a First Aider.

6. The designated person will ensure that updates are forthcoming from the authorities with regard to progress against reported cases, within the relevant timescales and follow up the concern/ escalate if the promised information or decision does not arrive in the timescale promised.
7. If, after a referral, the child's situation does not appear to be improving, the referrer should consider following the escalation procedures outlined in Appendix C to ensure that concerns have been addressed and that the child's situation improves.

AGENCIES IN SHROPSHIRE RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD PROTECTION

1. If you have concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or want to make a referral, call 0345 678 9021. Through this number you can be triaged by Shropshire Council's Customer Service Centre to the Initial Contact Team if a referral is appropriate or to another service.
2. You can also report concerns over the safety of a child at <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/>.
3. If an Early Help referral is appropriate then follow the process outlined at [Early help | Shropshire Council](#)
4. If you want to enquire about services for a child or young person call the Family Information Service on 01743 254400.
5. You can also speak to the 2 agencies below for advice:
 - NSPCC: 0808 800 5000 (or e-mail help@nspcc.org.uk)
 - Childline: 0800 1111
6. After 6pm or at the weekends please phone the Emergency Duty Team:
0345 678 9040 (option 1)

West Mercia Constabulary: Public Protection Unit

Police Station

Telephone: 0300 333 3000

Clive Road

Monkmoor

Shrewsbury

SY2 5RU

West Mercia Constabulary undertakes the investigation of crime, and as such does not have the lead role in the investigation of child protection matters.

It would not normally be necessary for any referral to be made to the police in the first instance. However, **where emergency police assistance is required, Do not delay.**

In the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff contact the Designated Officer on 03456 789021

**APPENDIX B – LEGAL CONTEXT OF SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND CHILD
PROTECTION AGENCIES’ CONTACT DETAILS**

The protection of children from harm is set out under the stipulations of Government legislation. In terms of the college the main legal responsibilities are outlined in The Children Act 1989. Here it is stated that the Local Authority has the lead responsibility to safeguard children and investigate concerns. Under Section 47 of the same act colleges are legally obliged to provide assistance to the Local Authority in the investigation of child abuse. As such we need agreed procedures to enable us to ‘work together’ with other statutory agencies in the task of safeguarding children. However, there is also other legislation that impinges on our duty to safeguard children. Examples of this include Section 175 of the 2002 Education Act which states that ‘Governing bodies of FE colleges have a statutory duty to have arrangements for ensuring that their functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children’. Also, the Protection of Children Act (1999) seeks to check that those working with children do not have criminal convictions of relevance to the safety and well-being of children. Finally the Children Act (2004) created the legal basis of the Safeguarding Children Board.

The procedures that follow are designed to meet the criteria necessary to fulfil our obligations in the light of the above, and other, legislation.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL GUIDANCE

A full range of guidance is provided which enables agencies at local level to understand and apply the Children Act (1989 and 2004).

These include, most importantly:

1. **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024).** Statutory guidance on what colleges should do and the legal duties with which colleges must comply. This includes information on recruitment of staff. **All staff must read at least part one or appendix a of this document (as appropriate).**
2. **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023).** This statutory guidance outlines how all professionals must act on how to safeguard children (in particular inter-agency working).
3. **What to Do If You Are Worried That A Child Is Being Abused (2015).** This document gives advice on how practitioners can work in partnership to look after the welfare of children.
4. **Safeguarding Children Procedures**

At the local level, the Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership work in consortium with their local equivalents to adopt a set of procedures for the West Midlands. These can be found, alongside Shropshire specific guidance at <http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/>

APPENDIX C – ESCALATION OF CONCERNS

This guidance is designed to support a Designated Safeguarding Lead where there are professional disputes or issues surrounding a specific case and to give a framework to follow. This section is written using guidance from the Shropshire specific section of the West Midlands Procedures <http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/4gjN/escalation-policy-resolution-of-professional-disagreements>

When practitioners are working together in the complex business of safeguarding children there will inevitably be occasions when there are professional differences of opinion or concerns about practice decisions, actions or lack of actions to a referral, assessment or the progress of child's plan. In these circumstances practitioners have a duty to take action to address professional disagreements as soon as they arise in a way that is appropriate and proportionate. If sufficiently serious, and when disagreements are not able to be resolved easily and quickly, it is important that they are escalated formally and recorded.

Examples of case-specific professional disagreements include:

- When there is disagreement about the response to a referral made by one agency to another agency or service (e.g. decision making).
- When there is disagreement about the outcome of an assessment.
- When there is serious concern about the implementation of a child's Plan and disagreement about how this should be addressed (e.g. agreed actions not being followed through).
- When there is serious concern about the effectiveness of a child's Plan in bringing about the necessary changes and disagreement about how this should be addressed (e.g. drift/delay).
- When there is disagreement over the sharing of information in a particular case.

It is important that practitioners and managers understand what action they need to take in order to address professional differences of opinion and the systems in place in their organisation to support this action.

Stage-by-stage process for resolution and escalation

Stage 1

The Designated Safeguarding Lead in question should raise matters with their fellow professionals, either verbally or in writing, within 1 working day of any disagreement or concern, with clear evidence and information. It should be made clear that the matter is being raised as part of these escalation procedures. Professionals may also discuss the matter with their line manager/ relevant persons. Every effort should be made to resolve any disagreements as quickly as possible, "in real time". The professionals involved should keep a record, on the child's file within their agency of any verbal or written communications, clearly signed and dated.

Stage 2

If the Designated Lead is unable to resolve the matter, then this should be escalated to line managers, who should ascertain the specific circumstances of the disagreement and make contact with each other within 1 working day of being advised of the issues (each agency is responsible for identifying who the appropriate manager/ person is in their organisation at each stage in this process). If the matter is resolved at this stage the responsible manager will advise the appropriate person in another agency within 1 working day, and confirm by letter/ email. All correspondence and discussions should be recorded/ placed on the child's/ families file, signed and dated.

Stage 3

If the process prior to this point does not achieve agreement between agencies, then the line managers should immediately refer the matter to their relevant senior manager. In the case of Shrewsbury Colleges Group this will be the College Vice Principal: Students (this will be Service Manager, DCI level equivalent for other agencies). At this point a Formal Escalation Form should be completed by the line manager raising the issue with their senior manager, outlining the issues/ action taken. This will prompt a review of the case and the issues of disagreement/ concern. Contact should be made between senior managers across the agencies within 1 working day, and if necessary a meeting, within 2 working days, to seek to resolve the issues. Any outcomes and decisions should be communicated to all relevant personnel in each agency, in writing. All written and verbal communications should be recorded on the child's file. The Formal Escalation form can be found here

<http://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/assets/clients/6/Shropshire%20Downloads/Formal%20Escalation%20Form.docx>

Stage 4

Where a resolution is still not achieved the matter should be referred to assistant director level or equivalent within the organisations (in the case of Shrewsbury Colleges Group this will be the Principal), who will plan to meet within 5 working days of notification of the unresolved issue. If it has not already occurred, this stage may include a review of the agencies files and records relating to the child and family. The respective agency member for Shropshire Safeguarding Children Partnership should also be advised, If not already aware, at this stage. The Formal Escalation Form should be completed and all written and verbal communications recorded on the child's/ families file.

Stage 5

If it has not been possible to resolve the professional differences at stage 4 the matter should be brought to the attention of the Director of Services for the relevant agencies (if not already done so) and also referred through the agency's SSP link member (in the case of Shrewsbury Colleges Group this is the Vice Principal: Students) to the Shropshire Community Safeguarding Partnership. A further Formal escalation form should be

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completed and forwarded to the SSCP business manager. As a matter of urgency the agencies senior managers, Independent Chair of SSCP and SSCP business manager should meet to review all information and actions to date, and reach a final decision.

The expectation is that, managed openly and effectively, the vast majority of any disagreements or concerns between professionals will be resolved at the earliest stages. Should any disagreements or issues reach stage 4 of this process the matter should be referred to the SSCP in order that the board can be assured that any concerns may be isolated and not systemic in nature that might require further consideration and learning.

Should any dispute or disagreement remain unresolved after all the above processes the matter should be referred for an independent review.

APPENDIX D – SHARING NUDES AND SEMI-NUDES

This guidance is based on the document Sharing nudes and semi-nudes [Advice for education settings working with children and young people. Responding to incidents and safeguarding children and young people produced by UKCCIS (2024)].

This guidance covers incidents where :

- A person under the age of 18 creates and shares nudes or semi-nudes of themselves with a peer under the age of 18
- A person under the age of 18 shares nudes or semi-nudes created by another person under the age of 18 with a peer under the age of 18
- A person under the age of 18 is in possession of nudes or semi-nudes created by another person under the age of 18

It does not cover the sharing of nudes or semi nudes of people under 18 by adults (this is sexual abuse and so covered in an earlier section) or the sharing by people under 18 of pornography or exchanging sexual texts with no imagery.

The Law

It is illegal to make, possess or distribute 'indecent' images of an under 18 year old (child) and this includes imagery of yourself if you are under 18.

The UKCCIS guidance (2024) states that 'indecent' is not defined in legislation. Where there is a prosecution it is decided upon on a case by case basis by the courts. It does not always include nudity and cases are likely to be defined as indecent if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Nude or semi-nude sexual posing (eg) displaying genitals and/ or breasts or overtly sexual images of young people in their underwear
- Someone nude or semi-nude touching themselves in a sexual way
- Any sexual activity involving a child
- Someone hurting someone else sexually
- Sexual activity that involves animals

The images can be still photographs, videos or live streams that can be posted on any online medium or offline through media such as air drop, SMS messaging or social media. They can be public, 1:1 or group chats and can take place in closed social media groups. Indecent images can also include pseudo imagery that are computer generate images that otherwise appear to be photographs or videos. These may be created using tools such as photo/video editing software, deepfake apps and generators (to combine and superimpose existing images or videos onto other images and videos), and AI text-to-image generators.

The making, possessing and distribution of the images are all illegal.

The above means that **young people who share sexual imagery of themselves, or peers, are breaking the law.**

The police, though, are keen not to unnecessarily criminalise young people due to the stigma and impact of this on them. The **police response** takes this factor into account.

The Police Response

Where there is evidence that an incident is 'experimental' and there is no evidence of abusive or aggravating elements then the college can deal with the incident in house without the involvement of the police. Such incidents are to be treated primarily as matters relating to safeguarding rather than crimes.

When the police are notified of nudes or semi- nudes being shared in the ways outlined above they are obliged to record it on their crime systems. The incident is listed as a crime and the young person involved may be listed in relation to it. This is not the same as having a criminal record.

If it is decided that there are abusive and/ or aggravating factors, the child or young person may receive a caution or conviction.

If it is decided that the incident is non-abusive and have no evidence of exploitation, grooming, profit motive, malicious intent or persistent behaviour an outcome 21 can be recorded (the young person broke the law, there is evidence to support this but further investigation is not in the public interest). The young person has a statement on their file but no criminal record. Their parents/ carers and educational setting are informed.

Handling incidents in college

This type of incident should be treated by staff in the same way as any other safeguarding incident listed in the main body of these procedures.

This means that in incidents of sharing of nudes or semi-nudes:

- A referral must be made to a designated safeguarding lead as soon as possible
- The designated lead should meet with appropriate staff to review the case as soon as possible and this meeting should consider the wider context of the incident (see below)
- If appropriate there should be an interview with the young people involved
- Parents should be involved at an early stage (unless this is not appropriate under the safeguarding procedures – eg it puts the young person at others at heightened risk)
- If there is a concern of harm or danger of harm to the young person/ people involved a Child Protection referral should be made
- It may be necessary to instigate a risk assessment immediately

Do's and Don'ts for all college staff

This link provides a one page guide on how to deal with an incident of this type as any member of college staff

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-how-to-respond-to-an-incident-overview>

Key advice includes:

- Never view, copy, print, share, store or save the imagery yourself, or ask a child to share or download – this is illegal.
- If you have already viewed the imagery by accident (e.g. if a young person has showed it to you before you could ask them not to), report this to the DSL (or equivalent) and seek support.
- Do not delete the imagery or ask the young person to delete it.
- Do not ask the child/children or young person(s) who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery. This is the responsibility of the DSL (or equivalent).
- Do not share information about the incident with other members of staff, the young person(s) it involves or their, or other, parents and/or carers.
- Do not say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved.
- Do explain to them that you need to report it and reassure them that they will receive support and help from the DSL (or equivalent).

Guidance for Designated Safeguarding Leads in college

1) Initial Review Meeting and Safeguarding Team Review

This meeting should consider the evidence and establish

- Whether a young person is at immediate risk of harm/ whether a child protection referral needs to be made immediately
- Whether it is necessary to view the imagery to safeguard the young person involved
- Any further information that is needed
- How widely the image has been shared
- Whether images need to be immediately deleted from devices or online
- Any relevant background on the young people involved
- Whether to contact parents at this stage
- Whether another educational setting needs to be contacted

At this stage a decision should be made as to whether a referral to Social Care/ the police needs to be made or the incident can be dealt with 'in house'

This decision will largely be informed by a judgement as to whether the incident was **aggravated** or **experimental**

Aggravated incidents include abusive or additional elements beyond the creation and/ or sending of the image. There may be an adult involved who is instigating a grooming process or similar, an attempt to harm (revenge, fights among friends, blackmail, threats, deception etc). There may also be reckless misuse, where images are taken or sent without permission of the subject and this recklessness may need to harm for the young person.

Experimental incidents occur with no adult involvement and with no intent to harm or recklessness. So this could include consensual 'romantic' sharing of images, sexual attention seeking where a person innocently shares an image perhaps with a potential partner, the child taking a picture just for their own use.

This information may be used alongside any other contextual factors [such as an assessment around Harmful Sexual Behaviours (HSB)] when deciding to refer or follow up 'in house'. **Typically, experimental incidents will be more likely to be followed up in house and aggravated will always require referral to Social Care and the police.**

See sections 2 and 3 below for more detail

2) Early referral to police and/ or child protection services

The incident must be immediately referred if :

- The incident involves an adult
- There is evidence of aggravation (see above)

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- There is concern around grooming or coercion (or it is felt that, due to issues such as an additional need, the young person does not have the capacity to consent)
- The imagery contains elements of violence or unusual sexual activity for their developmental stage (Harmful Sexual Behaviour Tools can be referred to here)
- The imagery involves a young person under 13
- The young person is at immediate risk of harm (eg, suicidal or self-harming) as a consequence of the imagery being shared

This decision must be made by a DSL and should be documented on the student(s) safeguarding record in college. This record should include a formal risk assessment.

3) Dealing with incidents in college (not making an immediate police/ child protection referral)

If none of the criteria in section 2 apply and the incident can be classified as experimental (see above) then it is possible to respond to the incident in house (though it may still be escalated at any time)

This decision should be made if a designated safeguarding lead is confident that the incident can be assessed and managed, in terms of risk, within the college and using existing internal frameworks and support.

If the decision is made to respond to the incident internally a further review should take place to establish the facts and assess the risks.

The following should be considered:

- Why was the image shared (was there any coercion or pressure to share?)
- Who shared the imagery, where and did the subject have awareness of the sharing?
- Were any adults involved in sharing?
- What impact is it having on the subject?
- Is there any history of this kind of activity?

This decision must be made by the Senior DSL who must be confident that they have enough information to assess risk and that this risk can be managed with the support available without a referral being made. This should be documented on the student(s) safeguarding record in college. This record should include a formal risk assessment.

Informing parents

Parents/ carers should be informed at an early stage unless informing the parent increases risk (if this is the case it is likely that we would involve other agencies)

We may work with the young person for them to inform their parent/ carer

Reporting incidents to police

If this becomes necessary report by dialling 101. Record any crime reference number given as part of the student safeguarding record

Securing and handing over devices to the police

If a device needs to be seized and passed to the police as it contains shared imagery it should be confiscated and kept under lock and key until the police are able to collect it. Data and wifi should be disabled to ensure that deletion cannot take place using cloud based services.

Viewing imagery

Staff should **not** view nudes or semi-nudes unless there is a clear reason to do so.

The images should not be viewed if it will cause significant distress or harm to the young person.

If the decision is made to view the imagery, the DSL would need to be satisfied that viewing:

- Is the only way to make a decision about whether to involve other agencies
- Is necessary in order to report the image in order to have it taken down or to support the young person in making a report
- Is unavoidable as the image has been presented directly by a student or has been found on a college network or device.

If it has been necessary to view an image the member of staff should:

- Never copy, print or share the image (This is illegal)
- Discuss the decision with the College Vice Principal: Students
- Ensure viewing takes place by a member of the safeguarding team under the delegated authority of the Vice Principal: Students
- Ensure that the viewing takes place with another member of staff (preferably a member of the Senior Leadership Team) in the room
- Ensure that the viewing takes place on the college premises (where possible in the office of a member of the Senior Leadership Team)
- Ensure that the images are viewed by a staff member of the same sex as the subject (where possible)
- **Record the viewing in the chronology of the subject on the college safeguarding system** (recording who was present, why the image was viewed and any subsequent actions)

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- If the device needs to be taken and passed to the police the device should be confiscated and the police should be called. WiFi and data should be disabled to avoid remote deletion of images. The device should then be locked in a secure place until it can be collected by the police.

Deletion of images

If the college has decided that other agencies do not need to be involved the Senior DSL should consider deleting the image from devices and/or online services to prevent any further sharing. This decision should be made with the support of The Principal.

In most cases this means that the child should be asked to delete the images and given a deadline to do so and confirm that they have carried out the deletion.

The college has the right under the Education Act 2011 to search students for devices, search the devices and to delete any youth produced sexual imagery **if the member of staff is authorised by the Principal (parental consent is not required)**.

If concerning data is found during a search a member of the safeguarding team may decide to delete the image or retain the device to report to the police or to be used in a College Conduct case.

This searching of devices (and possible deleting of imagery) should only be done if there is a good reason to do so.

Students should be reminded of the illegality of the act of such images. They should be told that if they refuse to, or it is later found that they did not, delete the image the police may be informed.

All decisions and actions need to be fully recorded (times, dates and reasons for decisions) on the college safeguarding system under the record of the student(s) involved. **When searching a student for potential devices the Search and Confiscation policy should be followed.**

Interviewing the young person/ people involved

Once established that a young person involved in nudes/ semi-nudes is not at risk they should be interviewed in college. Ideally this should be carried out by a member of the safeguarding team, though we should try and facilitate an interview with a different member of staff if this is the preference of the young person.

This conversation is designed to find out what the image involves (and if anyone else is involved) and to find out who has seen the image and how further distribution can be prevented.

In the conversation the young person should be supported and reassured but informed and educated on the risks associated with sharing nudes/ semi-nudes and the illegality of such acts. They should, where appropriate, be signposted to IWF and Childline's removal tools where images have already been posted or NCMECs Take it Down tool where an image has not yet been shared but might be. They may also be supported to contact individual websites to ask for images to be deleted.

There is specific guidance on how to deal with parents and children in different contexts in the UKCIS (2024) guidance and the link below should be used for reference.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>

Recording incidents

All incidents must be recorded on the college safeguarding system. They should show the details of the disclosure, how the situation has been managed, evidence of sound decision making and referrals (where appropriate) and the next steps (including any inter-agency working) that have brought the incident to a satisfactory conclusion.

Where an incident is not reported to the police or child protection agencies the reason for this should be part of the record and the agreement of an SLT member recorded.

Educating students on the topic of sharing nudes and semi-nudes

The college Tutorial programme covers specific learning on this topic to include:

- What it is
- How it is most likely to be encountered
- The consequences of requesting, forwarding or providing such images (including consensually)
- Matters of the law
- The risk of damage to feelings and reputation
- Strategies to manage pressure to share such images
- Strategies to manage the receipt of such images

The college will also provide relevant signposting to other sources of information and advice.

The college also promotes the use of the National Online Safety app and educational materials that refer to sharing of nudes and semi-nudes.

APPENDIX E – SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

This appendix refers to the detailed advice issued to schools and colleges in September 2024 in Keeping Children Safe in Education and specific guidance which is designed to help manage reports of child on child sexual violence and harassment. The guidance is available online via the link below:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66d7301b9084b18b95709f75/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2024.pdf

This area relates to incidents when the alleged victim and perpetrator are under 18 (if the perpetrator is over 18 the incident represents sexual abuse rather than a child on child incident). The perpetrator may be an individual or a group of children. The incidents can occur online or face to face and can take place in or out of college. Incidents can involve heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bi or trans (LGBT) children. **Irrespective of these factors any disclosure or sexual violence and/ or harassment must be followed up using this process.**

The college adopts an attitude of **'it could happen here'** to ensure a vigilant approach in this important area. We seek to record all incidents of this type on our college safeguarding record system so that we can recognise the scale of the issue and create a culture where inappropriate behaviour is always challenged. We also seek to educate our students as part of a whole college approach that contributes to challenging sexism in terms of stereotypes and language that reflect wider societal factors. We do this through our Tutorial programme and where possible in curriculum delivery.

The aim here is to offer general guidelines to staff on an approach to these issues. Designated Safeguarding Leads will follow more detailed guidance when investigating incidents.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up;
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; and
- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them
- recognising that children with SEND are more likely to be abused than their peers and so maintaining an especially vigilant approach to these children

Addressing inappropriate behaviour (even if it appears to be relatively innocuous) can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive and/ or violent behaviour in the future.

What is Sexual violence and sexual harassment?

Sexual violence

It is important that school and college staff are aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse their peers in this way. When referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 105 as described below:

Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. **We need to recognise that this can include a single act of kissing or touching someone sexually without consent.**

Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent: A person (A) commits an offence if : s/he intentionally causes another person (B) to engage in an activity, the activity is sexual, B does not consent to the activity, and A does not reasonable believe that B consents (This could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.)

What is consent?

Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g.to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom.

Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

Sexual harassment

When referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline, in or out of college. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child on child sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Sexual harassment can include:

- 'Upskirting'. This typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is now a criminal offence
- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names;
- sexual "jokes" or taunting;
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature;
- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

It may include:

- non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos;
- sexualised online bullying;
- unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media; and
- sexual exploitation; coercion and threats

The response to a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment

The initial response to a report from a child is important. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported **and kept safe**. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

Please be aware that children may find it difficult to talk directly about sexual violence or harassment and as such we should be aware that information overheard in conversation, from friends or that is discerned from changes in behaviour or demeanour may also lead to a record being made and reported to a designated safeguarding lead.

It is important for the member of staff receiving the disclosure to :

- Treat incidents that occur out of college or online as seriously as those that occur on campus
- Not promise confidentiality (as this information will need to be shared with a designated safeguarding lead who may need to involve other agencies)

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- Listen carefully and non-judgementally to the child and offer them reassurance without asking leading questions
- Make a record of the disclosure. It would be best practice to summarise after the disclosure has been made but it is acceptable to make notes during the discussion and check understanding as the discussion ends. **It is essential that a written record is made and that its accuracy is checked with the person making the report**
- Ensure, where there is an online element that the guidance in Appendix D is followed (in particular to not view or forward illegal images of a child)
If at all possible have 2 members of staff present when the disclosure is being made (This is not compulsory as it will not always be possible due to the wishes of the young person or availability of staff).
- Inform a designated safeguarding lead **immediately** of the report and to pass the information securely to them
The Student Conduct Policy will be applied as appropriate