

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Introduction to the Policy:

Nine Dots Development (NDD) is fully committed to the safety and welfare of its staff, learners and stakeholders whether children, adults or vulnerable people. Therefore NDD is committed to providing a safe environment in all senses, free from harm or abuse of any kind, NDD staff are expected to share this commitment fully and that all learners have the right to protection against abuse or harm. This policy outlines NDD's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, vulnerable young people and vulnerable adults in line with current best practice and legislation. In line with the Education Act 2002, a child or vulnerable young person is, 'anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday ...'.

Definitions:

Safeguarding and protection are two linked but ultimately different interventions:

- Safeguarding – applies to all work an organisation does to provide a safe, positive and friendly environment for its learners. It means actively seeking to involve everyone in keeping learners safe and promoting their welfare. Safeguarding is preventative is the responsibility of everyone to carry out.
- Protection – Is the process of protecting individual learners identified as either suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm because of abuse or neglect. Protection refers to the procedures that are used when there is a particular incident or concern. Protection is a statutory responsibility, focussing on abuse or neglect.

Harm and Abuse are defined as follows:

- Abuse and Neglect – An individual may abuse a child/vulnerable adult by inflicting harm of failing to act in order to prevent harm. This abuse can come from an individual or a group, consisting of adults, other children or vulnerable adults. Abuse can occur in a family, social or institutional setting by people known or unknown to the victim
- Harm – Ill treatment[^] or impairment of an individual's health* and development. This can also include impairment from witnessing the mistreatment of others.
 - *Development – includes physical, emotional, intellectual, social or behavioural aspects to an individual's development

- Ill Treatment – includes physical, sexual and all other forms of ill treatment that are none physical
- Honour-based Violence – a violent incident or crime which may have been carried out to protect or defend the honour of a family or community
- Female Genital Mutilation – Safety from sexual exploitation, FGM and forced marriage
- Vulnerable young adult sexual exploitation – Children and vulnerable young adults in exploitative relationships and situations, receiving gifts, money or other rewards for performing sexual activities or having others perform sexual activities on them

Categories of Abuse:

NDD recognises the need to safeguard and protect our staff and learners from the following:

- Emotional Abuse – The ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult. This can involve deliberately trying to frighten or humiliate an individual or isolating or ignoring them. It may also include having age or developmentally inappropriate expectations imposed on them. It may also include witnessing the maltreatment or harm of others. This category of abuse may involve other forms of abuse or it may occur alone
- Physical Abuse – The deliberate hurting of a child or vulnerable adult causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts. This can involve hitting, shaking, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to the individual
- Sexual Abuse and Child/Vulnerable Young Adult Sexual Exploitation – A form of sexual abuse, including children and vulnerable young adults in exploitative relationships and situations, performing sexual activities or having others performing sexual activities on them, receiving gifts or money or affection in return. Children or vulnerable young adults may be tricked into believing that they are in a consensual relationship, given drugs or alcohol and be exploited online or even trafficked within the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation of children and vulnerable young adults can also occur within gangs. The viewing, creation, or showing of pornographic or explicit material as well as other non-contact ways such as encouraging individuals to behave in sexually inappropriate ways also constitute sexual exploitation.
- Neglect – the ongoing failure to meet a child or vulnerable young adult's basic needs. This may include the individual being left hungry or dirty, without shelter, adequate clothing, health care or supervision. Neglect can also occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse:

For the purposes of this document: the term 'Learners' includes children, vulnerable young adults, young people and adults within the broader definition of safeguarding. Additionally, the term 'staff' includes directors, employees, temporary staff and associates.

Purpose of the Safeguarding Policy

This policy exists to ultimately provide a framework for protecting any individual or group from abuse of any kind; this includes children, vulnerable young adults, and adults, staff, learners and external stakeholders.

It is also here to ensure that NDD:

- Ensures staff are appropriately recruited, trained and managed to understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Including ensuring that staff understand their individual responsibility for their own actions and behaviour, and to avoid any behaviour that might lead a reasonable person to question their intentions
- To take appropriate action to make safe any children or vulnerable young adults who are suffering or likely to suffer harm
- Ensure all procedures are up to date and comply with best practice and current legislation
- Define a process for dealing with allegations made against members of staff
- Ensure a safe, positive and effective learning environment for all learners and staff

Creating a Safe Environment:

NDD endeavours in all of its dealings to create and maintain a safe, supportive and effective environment for its learners and its staff.

NDD understands that some learners may be particularly at risk to abuse, particularly children and vulnerable young adults. Those individuals that are being or at significant risk of abuse may struggle in a learning environment and exhibit challenging behaviour as a result of their abuse or low sense of self. Children and vulnerable young adults may be victims and perpetrators of abuse and the two are not mutually exclusive.

NDD will support its learners through:

- Ensuring that they know who they can approach at NDD for support or to disclose information
- Liaising with other agencies that support the learner
- Ensure that all learners understand what is and what is not acceptable behaviour
- Ensure all learners feel valued and understand that some behaviour is unacceptable and not their fault
- Provide opportunities for learners to disclose concerns during the course of learning programmes
- Ensuring NDD staff are well trained and vigilant of safeguarding issues
- Ensure NDD Safeguarding Policies and Procedures are widely publicised

- Ensure that learners and staff are aware of acceptable behaviour in relation to the use of IT systems.
- Confidential storage of written and electronic records particularly in relation to safeguarding reports, disclosures, referrals and sensitive data
- Follow relevant procedure where an allegation is made against NDD staff
- Develop links with and notify relevant agencies of unexplained absences of more than 2 days where a child or vulnerable adult is subject to a protection plan, as well as attending case conference where necessary.
- Ensuring that safe staff recruitment processes are in place

Staff Behavioural Standards:

To protect the safety and well-being of learners, staff must:

- Be trained and capable of how to recognise and report safeguarding concerns. This includes keeping written records of concerns and keep these records securely and separate from main learner records
- Ensure that safeguarding concerns are dealt with appropriately in a timely fashion
- Be open and transparent in their working at all times, particularly in their work with learners
- Not engage in behaviour that would lead any reasonable person to question their intentions
- Follow safe staff recruitment practices
- Seek and take advice from the Designated Safeguarding Officer over any incident which may give rise for concern
- Understand information and data sharing policies
- Be aware that breaches of the law and professional conduct can lead to criminal or disciplinary action taken against them

Staff are strictly prohibited from the following actions / behaviours:

- Making sexually explicit or suggestive comments to or within earshot of any learner
- Allow or engage in inappropriate, indecent or unprofessional touching of any kind
- Engage in a personal relationship with a learner that would be appropriate for a normal trainer/learner relationship
- Take a child or vulnerable young adult or young person to the toilet unless another authorised adult is present or has been made aware
- Restrain a learner physically unless the restraint is to prevent physical injury of the learner or other individual. In all cases the restraint must be appropriate and reasonable, should it be deemed inappropriate, the action may be defined as assault
- Spend time alone with a child or vulnerable young adult on their own, outside of a normal classroom or tutorial environment. If this does occur, staff must ensure that they are clearly visible to others and remedy the situation immediately

- Have a child or vulnerable young person alone in their vehicle. In exceptional circumstances requiring the transportation of a child or vulnerable young adult, another member of staff must be in the vehicle and the matter should be reported to the DSO immediately. Staff must also ensure that they have adequate vehicle insurance to cover the transportation of a child or vulnerable young adult as part of their work.

Staff who fall short of the required behavioural standards may be subject to the provisions of the NDD Disciplinary procedures. Any allegations against members of staff will be investigated as per the process laid out in this document.

Allegations Against Staff

NDD recognises that the majority of staff who work with learners act professionally and aim to provide a safe environment, but that on occasions misunderstandings can occur which can lead to unfounded allegations. Allegations against staff can sometimes be misplaced or even malicious as a result of different interpretations of the same event. Nonetheless all allegations must be investigated fully and impartially.

On the other hand, some allegations will be genuine, and some people will deliberately seek to abuse children and vulnerable young people. It is therefore essential that NDD take all steps appropriate to safeguarding learners and staff regardless of their role within the company.

All allegations raised against members of staff are treated seriously and NDD investigates them immediately and involves all relevant agencies such as Social Services, the Local Authority Designated Officer and/or the police depending on the seriousness of the allegation.

NDD's first duty is to our learners and for the reason any allegation made against a member of staff or any concerns about inappropriate behaviour by our staff will result in a quick response and appropriate action if the allegation is upheld.

Staff Dealing with Disclosures:

Information could be received from a number of sources including parents, staff, members of the public or learners themselves. These disclosures will be handled sensitively to ensure the

safety and comfort of those coming forward and to ensure the nobody is discouraged from making a disclosure in the future.

Staff should not investigate themselves but instead pass the information on to the Designated Safeguarding Officer immediately. Staff will remain calm during a disclosure and listen carefully, staff will not show any emotion towards either the learner or the alleged perpetrator of the abuse. Staff will not trivialise or exaggerate, and will not interrupt, coach or lead the learner in any way.

Information gathering is critical but must be conducted carefully, staff will ask enough to clarify their understanding of the situation without making the learner repeat themselves or asking for unnecessary detail. Learners must be made aware that the issue cannot be held in secret and there are reporting procedures but must be assured that the issue will be taken seriously.

Staff will record and keep note of as much detail as possible and provide everything to the Designated Safeguarding Officer. Once reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer, it is then their responsibility to take the matter further, and the reporting member of staff will be made aware of who will be dealing with the referral. Decision on further action to take also reside with the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

In some instances, staff may have access to highly sensitive and private learner information. This information must never be used to any member of staff's advantage and only used and viewed in a strictly professional context and in line with legislation on data protection as well as internal NDD policies. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass a learner.

The degree of confidentiality of information will be decided by the Designated Safeguarding Officer and will be judged on a the basis of how to best protect learners from abuse and harm. NDD recognise the need for confidentiality but also the need to protect learners. This should be communicated to any learner or other party making a disclosure and under no circumstances should staff promise complete confidentiality.

NDD complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, but this does not prevent the sharing of information where this is necessary to protect the safety of a learner.

Learner Referrals:

NDD stipulate that if any member of staff suspects that a learner who is under 18 years old is at risk or is being abused, injured, marked or bruised in any way in which might raise doubt, they are obliged to report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer, this is also a legal obligation.

Even if the member of staff has only heard rumours and have no evidence of abuse, they are still required to report this to the Designated Safeguarding Officer, this includes when a child or vulnerable young person has given an explanation for certain warning signs but that explanation seems inconsistent or suspicious.

NDD is also stipulate that even if the learner is over the age of 18, these suspicions must still be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer, so that NDD can signpost to the appropriate supporting agencies. In the absence of the Designated Safeguarding Officer, staff should report their suspicions to a director.

Once a referral is made, the Designated Safeguarding Officer will follow NDD's detailed procedures on handling of Safeguarding referrals, especially in relation to confidentiality as below:

Safe Recruitment of Staff:

NDD's first priority when recruiting members of staff is that they are fit to work with learners, in particular children and vulnerable young people and NDD reserves the right to refuse employment to individuals it reasonably believes may pose a risk to its learners.

Some of the key measures in place at NDD to ensure safe recruitment are:

- Checking official documentation in relation to identity, nationality, right to work, residency and qualifications
- Minimum of 2 satisfactory references, one must be from most recent employer and the references should cover at least 5 years of employment
- An Enhanced Disclosure and Barring of Employment Service check will be carried out on all new employees with access to learners
- A check under Section 142 of the Education Act 2002 will be carried out on all new employees with no access to learners.

Key procedures for new and existing staff once recruited to ensure learner safety include:

- All staff receive a thorough briefing on the Safeguarding Policy as well as accompanying procedures during their induction, follow by a full safeguarding training session within 12 months
- New employees complete a 6 month probationary period where they are supervised closely both in relation to occupational competence as well as adherence to safeguarding policy and procedures. During or at the end of this 6 month probationary period NDD may:
 - Confirm the staff members employment
 - Extend the probationary period
 - Dismiss the individual with notice.

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