A GUIDE TO SAFEGUARDING FOR EMPLOYERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND APPRENTICES

What is safeguarding?

Quite simply, 'Safeguarding' is the term that is applied to the process of protecting children and adults and ensuring that they are safe. This includes identifying those who may need support, as well as more serious cases. It includes creating and maintaining safe workplace cultures and practices around recruitment and training. Often safeguarding may involve helping young people access support or contact with agencies such as social care and the police in order for action to be taken to protect them.

How is safeguarding relevant to my organisation?

There are a number of reasons why your company needs to be mindful of safeguarding. These include:

- **Duty of care:** Any work that you carry out should be done safely. If you are having contact with the vulnerable in society, you and your staff have a role to play in identifying and sharing any concerns to keep safe those who may be at risk, as well as adhering to conduct standards
- **Legal obligations:** This is particularly the case for children (under 18) and some young adults (for example, those considered 'looked after' when a duty of care extends until they are 25). It may include adults who are considered vulnerable (perhaps because of a disability) or at risk (those who cannot protect themselves from harm)
- **Stakeholder requirements and expectations:** This can include government bodies such as the DfE as well as other contractual circumstances. If your company is a registered charity, the Charity Commission also has specific expectations and requirements around your work with children and adults considered vulnerable or at risk
- **Insurance terms and conditions:** This may be the case if you are employing or having contact with children and adults considered vulnerable or at risk
- **Duty of care towards employees as well as apprentices:** Some of your staff or their children may be at risk (for example if they are living in a household where there is domestic abuse)
- **Brand reputation:** We've all read about those cases in the news where a company has missed something or neglected to take action. It may not be the most important consideration when thinking about safeguarding, but it is better for your company to be associated with best practice rather than the alternative (and suffer reputational damage)
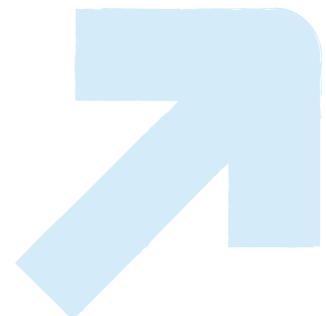
What kind of things might we encounter?

That depends on the kind of work that you do but could include:

- **Identifying concerns:** This could be regarding an apprentice, a member of staff or their family, or a member of the public who you have delivered a service to. This can include things such as acts of abuse or neglect, or evidence of specific safeguarding issues such as mental ill health, substance misuse, domestic abuse or self - neglect. You may also encounter warning signs of issues such as cuckooing (where a vulnerable person is exploited in the community), evidence of criminal activity (such as county lines), or signs of modern day slavery
- **Concern about someone in a position of trust:** Depending on the work that your company does, a concern may be raised about someone in a position of trust to a child or vulnerable adult. This can be someone in or independent to your organisation
- **Concerns about those seeking employment:** In your own recruitment, you may encounter those who seek employment to get them into positions of trust to the vulnerable and create opportunities to abuse them
- **Identifying potential crime:** Safeguarding is a complex and varied spectrum and often associated with different types of crime. Consequently, you may encounter evidence that a crime has been, or is going to be, committed – this could involve outside agencies such as the police
- **Concerns raised about issues in the workplace:** Every workplace should be inclusive and safe; free from discrimination, sexual harassment, and bullying
- **Staff support:** You may find yourself supporting staff who come to you with a concern, either about something at work, or that they have encountered in their personal lives

What should my organisation do to make sure it is compliant?

Again, this depends on the work that you do. However, the things that you should consider include:

1. Having relevant policies such as a Safeguarding, and a Safer Recruitment Policy
2. Depending on the size of your workforce; having at least one Designated Safeguarding Officer who is trained to give advice to staff, share concerns with outside agencies, and make decisions regarding safeguarding issues
3. Following safer recruitment guidance when employing staff. This will include things such as verifying someone's identity, seeing evidence that they have the right to work in the UK and obtaining references. Where they have contact with the vulnerable, this should also include things like taking a full employment history and obtaining a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate
4. Ensuing that staff have received good quality and appropriate training to enable them to identify concerns regarding safeguarding when at work and know what action to take. This should include whistleblowing when they have concerns about poor workplace practice or someone who is in a position of trust to the vulnerable
5. Addressing work culture, setting expectations and boundaries for apprentices and staff, and ensuring that workplaces are safe places. It's always a good idea to have a staff Code of Conduct to ensure that everyone understands what is expected of them
6. Arrangements with third parties such as colleges. This may include agreements over safeguarding arrangements
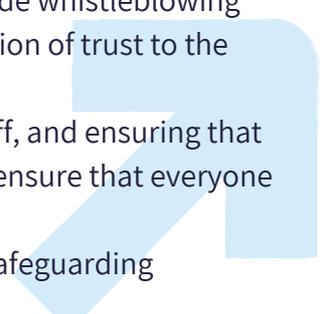
What should my organisation do to make sure it is compliant Cont'd?

7.   ICT Acceptable Use Policy. This is essential for safeguarding because it creates a safe, secure, and responsible digital environment. It protects children, young people, and adults at risk, as well as staff, by setting out what is and is not appropriate when accessing technology, systems, and online resources

Depending on the size of your organisation, it's also a good idea to consider:

1. **Engagement from senior management and board level:** Governance is important for companies. It identifies when things are not working as they should be. Governance also ensures legal compliance
2. **Way of monitoring and reviewing cases and identifying areas for improvement**: This will also help you assess the extent of safeguarding for your organisation and whether it is properly resourced. This can include considering whether you have enough designated staff; whether there are any patterns emerging that need to be addressed; and whether your staff training is having an impact
3. **Where your support in safeguarding will come from:** This can be from your local council and partners or from an independent person who can also assist you in things such as investigations if allegations are made against staff

What should everyone in my organisation know as a minimum?

- How to identify any concerns
- What their role is in safeguarding
- Where to go to for advice
- Where and how to report any concerns (internally or externally)
- Know what to expect and when to step away and let others investigate concerns
- How to access support and raise concerns about poor practice

A final word of advice

- This document is based on years of experience of supporting organisations like yours
- You may encounter safeguarding issues regularly or infrequently
- The key to good safeguarding practice is preparation, consultation, and review
- Safeguarding can seem intimidating and complex, so seek help and support when you need it!
- Being prepared is a good start to feeling confident that you have done the best that you can, including protecting your staff, apprentices and your organisation
- Support staff involved in safeguarding, especially if it is new to them. We are all human and safeguarding is often a difficult issue for staff to encounter. Supporting and reassuring staff means that the impact on them personally is minimised; and they are more prepared for the next safeguarding issue they identify. Staff who are supported can be reassured that they have taken the right action, which has probably helped someone in need