

Children and Adults Missing from Education

1. Purpose and content

The purpose of this appendix of the College Safeguarding Policy is to provide a clear set of guidelines to staff regarding the actions they must take if a child stops attending College during their course without a legitimate reason; or a vulnerable adult goes missing and the circumstances give cause for concern.

The College Safeguarding Policy has been developed in line with statutory guidance and the locally agreed inter-agency procedures put in place by the Stockton Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board. The policy applies to all learners and all staff (including agency and hourly paid staff) irrespective of anyone's position or role in the College, together with Governors and any workers who are at the College on a voluntary/placement/other professional basis.

Please note that the term 'College' is used throughout this appendix, as a generic term that encompasses all organisations within the wider College group; namely Stockton Riverside College, Redcar & Cleveland College, NETA, Bede Sixth Form College, The Skills Academy and Tees Valley Catering. The term 'staff' is also used as a generic term that encompasses all groups of workers as outlined in the paragraph above.

2. Definitions

The key terms in this document are defined as:

- **Child:** Those under the age of eighteen
- **Vulnerable Adults:** For the purpose of safeguarding, and the College duty of care, a vulnerable adult is defined as any adult considered to be at risk
- **Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP):** From September 2014 EHCPs began to replace Statements of special educational needs and Learning Difficulty Assessments from those under the age of 25. An EHCP outlines information about the person including how they communicate, what support they need and what they would like to achieve
- **CME:** Child missing education

3. Relevant external guidance

Department for Education (DfE; January 2015) guidance identifies that children missing education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later on in life.

Particular concerns are noted in the guidance regarding children who go missing or run away from home or care as they may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction. This could include travelling to conflict zones and forced marriage.

The College is committed to the protection of the most vulnerable and all staff must ensure action is taken when a learner's attendance record is poor and urgent action must be taken if a learner under the age of 18 or a learner under the age of 25 who is in receipt of an EHCP stops attending College during their course without a legitimate reason. Action must also be taken if a vulnerable adult goes missing and the circumstances give cause for concern.

The risks are significantly higher for children who go missing on repeat occasions and all staff must act to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of learners going missing in the future.

4. Legitimate reasons for non-attendance

For the purpose of this guidance legitimate reasons include:

- Authorised absences where there are no reasons to suspect abuse or neglect may be a contributory factor; and the parent/carer and any professionals/schools involved with the learner are fully aware of the absence
- Withdrawals due to:
 - Progression to employment; or alternative education or training provision
 - Moving out of the area or ill health where there are no reasons to suspect abuse or neglect may be a contributory factor; and the parent/carer and any professionals/schools involved with the learner are fully aware of the withdrawal
 - Stage 3 & 4 disciplinary issues; although note the Welfare and Retention Officer must be informed for a learner under the age of 18 so they can alert Youth Directions and other agencies as appropriate, the Skills Academy Manager must be informed (and involved) for a learner who is under the age of 16 at the start of the academic year and the Head of Foundation Skills must also be informed (and involved) for a learner under the age of 25 who is in receipt of an EHCP and/or in receipt of high needs funding so they can liaise with the local authority
 - The outcome of a safeguarding risk assessment panel
 - A custodial sentence where the College does not reasonably believe the learner will return to College at the end of the sentence

5. Actions to be taken in response to non-legitimate absences

- All curriculum staff must monitor attendance and address it at the earliest opportunity with the learner, and their parent/carer or any professionals/schools involved, if it starts to decline
- Ongoing concerns about a learner's attendance must be referred by curriculum staff to department managers. In addition the Skills Academy Manager must be informed if the learner is of Y10/Y11 school age and the Head of Foundation Skills if the learner is under the age of 25 and in receipt of an EHCP and/or high needs funding
- Heads of department must ensure significant concerns (e.g. unable to contact a learner who is under the age of 18) are referred to the Welfare and Retention Officer
- The Welfare and Retention Officer will use all reasonable means to contact a learner under the age of 18, and their parent carer or any professional/s involved, to determine the reason/s behind the lack of attendance and agree a plan of action to improve the learner's attendance or to get a child missing education (CME) back into education. Means of contact will include home visits where appropriate or where other methods have failed
- The Welfare and Retention Officer will alert Youth Directions (or the appropriate organisation in other local authorities) if they are unable to make contact and will also immediately refer any information that indicates the child is at significant risk of abuse or neglect to a Designated Person for safeguarding following the referral routes outlined in Appendix A (child and adult protection) of the Safeguarding Policy
- Significant concerns about vulnerable adults should be referred to a Designated Person for safeguarding. An urgent referral is required if there is any suspicion the absence is connected to radicalisation or terrorism (also see Appendix G on Prevent)
- The Skills Academy Manager will undertake similar actions to those outlined in bullets 4 & 5 (above) for an Y10/Y11 learner, liaising closely with the appropriate school for learners on roll with the school and the Local Authority for directly enrolled learners. The Skills Academy Manager will inform the Local Authority immediately if an Y10/Y11 directly enrolled learner is withdrawn or missing from College for 10 consecutive days
- The Head of Foundation Skills will undertake similar actions to those outlined in bullets 4 & 5 (above) for a learner aged under 25 who is in receipt of an EHCP and/or high needs funding, liaising closely with the Local Authority and other professionals as appropriate