

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD/VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY

RETURN TO LEARNING LTD has a statutory and moral duty to ensure that it functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children/young people and vulnerable adults receiving education and training provided by and on behalf of RETURN TO LEARNING LTD. RETURN TO LEARNING LTD's statutory and moral duty also includes the view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children/young people and vulnerable adults engaging in any activity organised directly by or officially representing RETURN TO LEARNING LTD including those formally sub-contracted to be facilitated by any other individual or organisation.

Throughout these policies and procedures, reference is made to "children and young people". This term is used to mean "those under the age of 18".

It is also recognised that some adults are vulnerable to abuse. Accordingly, this policy document also applies to allegations of abuse and the protection of vulnerable adults. Guidance on who is a 'vulnerable adult' is taken from 'No Secrets' (Department of Health 2000), which defines vulnerable adults as: 'those adults who are or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness'.

1. DEFINING VULNERABLE ADULTS AND DEFINING ABUSE

1.1. The definition of vulnerable adults includes (but is not exclusive to) individuals with any of the following:

- Learning Difficulties
- Physical Impairments
- Sensory Impairments
- Mental Health Needs
- Age Related frailty
- Dementia
- Brain Injuries
- Drug or Alcohol Problems

1.2. RETURN TO LEARNING LTD will refer concerns that a child, young person or vulnerable adult might be at risk of significant harm to the City Council's Department of Children and Young People's Services, the City Council Adult Social Care Service, the police or in cases of radicalisation to the Channel Scheme as appropriate.

1.3. Given the distance learning provisions of RETURN TO LEARNING LTD, any referral will be to the local City Council of the at-risk individual as stipulated on their registration documentation.

1.4. The Director, and any staff employed by, or sub-contracted by RETURN TO LEARNING LTD and working with children/young people and vulnerable adults will receive training adequate to familiarise them with child/vulnerable adult protection issues and their responsibilities and RETURN TO LEARNING LTD's procedures and policies, with refresher training at least every three years.

1.5. The designated person with special responsibility for protection issues is the Centre Director.

1.6. RETURN TO LEARNING LTD recognises the following as definitions of abuse:

1.6.1. **Physical abuse** may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical injury may occur as a result of injury inflicted by a family member, including a brother or sister, or by another person, or an injury sustained accidentally but as a result of neglect. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as fabricated or induced illness by proxy, or Munchausen syndrome by proxy. Bullying can also be a form of physical and emotional abuse.

1.6.2. **Psychological/Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on him or her emotional development. It may involve conveying to that child or person that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on the child or person concerned. It may involve causing that child or person to feel frightened or in danger, or exploitation or corruption. Emotional and other forms of abuse may occur as a result of domestic violence. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment or abuse, though it may occur alone.

1.6.3. **Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activity such as involving children or vulnerable adults in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Sexual abuse may also take place through the inappropriate use of cameras and phone images.

1.6.4. **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child or vulnerable adult's basic physical and/or psychological need, likely to result in the serious impairment of his or her health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also involve the neglect of basic emotional needs.

1.7. In respect to vulnerable adults, the local City and County Council Guidelines identify seven forms of abuse. In addition to the four above they also identify:

1.7.1. **Financial abuse** is defined as the misappropriation of money or assets; transactions to which the person could not consent, or which were invalidated by intimidation or deception; or, the misuse of assets. Examples include misuse of benefits, denying access to money, not spending allowances on the individual, and unreasonable restriction on a person's right to control over their lives to the best of their ability.

- 1.7.2. **Discriminatory abuse** is defined as any form of abuse based on discrimination because of a person's race, culture, belief, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, etc.
- 1.7.3. **Institutional abuse** is defined as repeated incidents of poor professional practice or neglect, and inflexible services based on the needs of the providers rather than the person requiring the service.
- 1.8. In respect of safeguarding individuals from radicalisation, RETURN TO LEARNING LTD works to the Prevent element of the Government's Counter Terrorism Strategy, and where deemed appropriate seeks external support for learners through referrals to the Channel Programme. This programme aims to work with the individual to address their specific vulnerabilities, prevent them becoming further radicalised and possibly entering the criminal justice system because of their actions. It is recognised that radicalisation can occur to an individual from any section of society and is not particular to any racial, ethnic or social group. It is further recognised that in many instances the process of radicalisation is essentially one of grooming by others.

2. RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD PROTECTION/ VULNERABLE ADULTS

- 2.1. The designated person with responsibility for child/vulnerable adult protection issues is the Centre Director.
- 2.2. Their duty is to take lead responsibility for raising awareness relating to the welfare of children and young people, and the promotion of a safe environment for the children, young people and vulnerable adults working with, or learning through RETURN TO LEARNING LTD.
- 2.3. They have received training in child/vulnerable adult protection issues and inter-agency working, as required by the Local Safeguarding Children Board and will receive refresher training at least every two years.
- 2.4. The Centre Director is responsible for overseeing the operation of procedures. This involves:
- 2.4.1. Overseeing the referral of cases of suspected abuse/radicalisation or allegations to the City Council's Department of Children and Young People's Services, or other agencies (such as the police, Channel) as appropriate.
 - 2.4.2. Providing advice and support to future staff (including those directly employed and those employed as sub-contractors on behalf of RETURN TO LEARNING LTD) on issues relating to child/vulnerable adult protection
 - 2.4.3. Maintaining a proper record of any child/vulnerable adult protection referral, complaint or concern (even where that concern does not lead to a referral)
 - 2.4.4. Ensuring that parents/carers of children and young people/vulnerable adults who access provisions by/from RETURN TO LEARNING LTD are aware of the RETURN TO LEARNING LTD's Child/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

- 2.4.5. Liaising with the Children and Young People's Services Department of the Local Authority, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and other appropriate agencies if and/or when required
- 2.4.6. Liaising with secondary schools who engage with RETURN TO LEARNING LTD and any of RETURN TO LEARNING LTD's provisions to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for the pupils
- 2.4.7. Liaising with any organisation or individual who engage with RETURN TO LEARNING LTD to provide any sub-contracting services to ensure abidance with RETURN TO LEARNING LTD's Child/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
- 2.4.8. Ensuring that any staff receive basic training in child protection/vulnerable adult issues and are aware of RETURN TO LEARNING LTD's Child/Vulnerable Adult Protection Procedures
- 2.4.9. Convening and chairing meetings of the Designated Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult Protection Team as/when required

3. DEALING WITH DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE: RETURN TO LEARNING LTD PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CONCERNS

- 3.1. RETURN TO LEARNING LTD has published procedures for reporting cases of suspected abuse of young people or vulnerable adults. Please refer to Section 5 of this document.
- 3.2. Section 5 is also available as a separate document entitled 'REPORTING SAFEGUARDING' for ease of referral in the event of any safeguarding incident.
- 3.3. These procedures will be issues to all staff working directly with, or on behalf of RETURN TO LEARNING LTD, during their induction. Further (mandatory) training will be provided to all RETURN TO LEARNING LTD staff upon their recruitment and renewed every three years.

4. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCEDURES

- 4.1. RETURN TO LEARNING LTD has written recruitment and selection procedures which can be found on the website and can be provided via email within 24 hours from a request being made.
- 4.2. Requests can be made via email to samantha@returntolearningonline.com
- 4.3. The policy and procedures are designed with the aim of safely recruiting staff and providing a safe environment for children/young people and vulnerable adults to learn in. Key aspects of the procedures and processes are as follows;
 - 4.3.1. Job descriptions are available for all roles. All jobs contain explicit responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of learners having due regard to RETURN TO LEARNING LTD's Child & Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy

- 4.3.2. A person specification setting out the key selection criteria for all roles. The person specification includes demonstrating commitment to safeguarding policies and the suitability to work with children and young adults
- 4.3.3. A standard application form that provides for the collection of information on applicants that enables RETURN TO LEARNING LTD to recruit safely
- 4.3.4. Advertising of posts externally as appropriate
- 4.3.5. A requirement for those appointed to produce documentary evidence of academic/vocational qualifications
- 4.3.6. Standard interview questions for any staff appointments who are to work with children and young adults exploring their suitability in this respect. Interviewers are advised to follow up on any gaps or discrepancies in the employment history of applicants
- 4.3.7. Two satisfactory references are obtained for each successful applicant as a condition of their employment. The first reference should be the applicant's existing or most recent employer. The second reference should also be from an employer. Character references are only used where an applicant has little or no previous work experience e.g. young persons. Where appropriate referees are asked specific questions about an applicant and their role in safeguarding children
- 4.3.8. RETURN TO LEARNING LTD's policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders can be found online or by email request
- 4.3.9. A policy on obtaining a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosure and 'barred list' check for appropriate positions as a condition of employment at RETURN TO LEARNING LTD.

5. COMMUNICATION WITH LEARNERS

- 5.1. It is part of RETURN TO LEARNING LTD's service to provide distant communication to all clients. This may require communication via digital mediums including, but not exclusive to, the use of Microsoft Teams (formerly known as Skype for Business).
- 5.2. RETURN TO LEARNING LTD acknowledge that engagement with a client via video link such as Microsoft Teams, Skype or FaceTime, will present the client in an environment such as their home and as such, become a sensitive data point.
- 5.3. In order to maintain safety, security and data protection of any learner engaging with RETURN TO LEARNING LTD via any video medium, the following measures will be taken;
 - 5.3.1. Clients will be asked to provide ID documentation prior to any web engagement to confirm their identity
 - 5.3.2. Client's contact details will be stored safely and securely in line with RETURN TO LEARNING LTD's Data Protection and Data Security Policy

- 5.3.3. Clients will be informed of how the video communication methods work, how they will be used, and why, to ensure they are comfortable with the process and can engage effectively
- 5.3.4. Clients will opt in or out to video communication in which case a suitable alternative arrangement will be made
- 5.3.5. There is no obligation to participate with video communication and all clients have a right to withdraw their consent at any time
- 5.3.6. Clients will be requested to position their webcams in such a way to reduce, as far as reasonably practicable, identifying surroundings and personal belongings
- 5.3.7. There will be no digital recording of the client meeting unless requested in a reasonable circumstance, in which case this will be agreed between RETURN TO LEARNING LTD and the client, in writing, prior to the communication
- 5.3.8. There will be only the invited attendees' participants engaging in a video meeting
- 5.3.9. Communication will only take place between official RETURN TO LEARNING LTD email address accounts and the client's registered email address account
- 5.3.10. The PC on which the video meeting takes place will be password protected to maintain security

6. IN THE EVENT OF A SAFEGUARDING INCIDENT

- 6.1. In the event of safeguarding incident being observed by an employee of RETURN TO LEARNING LTD (this includes voluntary employees and sub-contractors) needs to report it to the Centre Director as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- 6.2. The incident should be communicated in whichever means most reasonable depending on the nature and severity of the incident.
 - 6.2.1. Any immediate threat or risk to life needs to be reported to the emergency services as priority, via calling '999'.
 - 6.2.2. Any less immediate threat or risk to life but high priority case should be communicated via telephone on 07875710049. This is an out-of-hours number and can be contacted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with no exclusions and irrespective of business opening hours.
 - 6.2.3. It is very important to record, as accurately as possible, what was said when the disclosure of abuse was received. All written records should be handled confidentially.
 - 6.2.4. All observations should be followed up with a written report via the form RSI01. RSI01 gives guidance for completing the document and ensures that the key information is recorded.

- 6.3. In the event of a safeguarding incident being reported, the procedure highlighted in section 5.1 and 5.2 should be followed, as well as abiding by the following requirements:
- 6.3.1. Show concern, always presume the person is telling a true account. Do not make any comments that could be interpreted as joking or insincere.
 - 6.3.2. Refer on any individual who needs support. A full list of organisations will be made accessible to staff as part of their induction.
 - 6.3.3. Not offer or promise confidentiality under any circumstances. This is paramount and should be articulated to an individual as soon as is reasonably practicable – including prior to the report being made, if possible, to ensure complete transparency.
 - 6.3.4. Record the facts without ‘leading’. Questions should be kept to a minimum and the person(s) making the report should lead the conversation. However, if questions are required to obtain further information, they must be open ended and must not make inferences or lead to any particular statement being made.
 - 6.3.5. Offer support and security. The person(s) making the report must feel safe when speaking to any RETURN TO LEARNING LTD representative and their safety is paramount. If their safety requires external provisions or referral to an outside agency, this must be followed up and supported in accordance to guidance in point 5.3.2.
 - 6.3.6. Not discuss concerns or disclosures with anyone including parents, guardians, support workers or any other individual known personally to the person(s) reporting the incident.
 - 6.3.7. Tell the person(s) reporting that the record will be made. This is a necessary step and reassurance must be given that any incident will be treated with respect, discretion and in line with policy and procedure to maximise the safety and security of any/everyone involved.
 - 6.3.8. Identify and signpost to organisations for support where characteristics of exploitation, extremism, bullying, abuse or grooming has been recognised
- 6.4. The safety and security of the person reporting the incident is paramount and RETURN TO LEARNING LTD offer training to ensure their actions in the event of any incident are in accordance with the recommendations.
- 6.5. Get personal confidential support if required. RETURN TO LEARNING LTD take mental health and well-being very seriously. Safeguarding incidents can be difficult to deal with and RETURN TO LEARNING LTD guarantee that access to the appropriate mental health and counselling provisions will be provided.
- 6.6. A confidential record will be kept of all cases where any safeguarding incident has been reported, including details of cases referred to the Local Authority or the police. These written records will be kept by RETURN TO LEARNING LTD securely and in line with RETURN TO LEARNING LTD’s Data Protection and Data Security Policy.

7. TRAINING

Last updated: September 2023

Version: 01

Status: Open

- 7.1. All staff working for, or on behalf of RETURN TO LEARNING LTD, including sub-contractor individuals or agencies, will be required to have safeguarding training. This will be provided by RETURN TO LEARNING LTD. However, in the case of sub-contracted agencies or individuals, they will share responsibility for the adequate training of staff.
- 7.2. Any staff sub-contracted by RETURN TO LEARNING LTD will be required to provide evidence of their safeguarding training. This can be via an employer's statement, a dated certificate from an approved provider, or a statement from a training provider.
- 7.3. Any staff sub-contracted by RETURN TO LEARNING LTD will be required to follow RETURN TO LEARNING LTD's guidelines on safeguarding.
- 7.4. All staff will be required to undertake refresher training at least once a year to ensure they are up to date with any developments or changes to the policy, or the national guidelines.