ACTIVATE LEARNING

SAFEGUARDING GUIDANCE FOR WORK EXPERIENCE, INDUSTRY PLACEMENT PROVIDERS AND APPRENTICE EMPLOYERS

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SAFEGUARDING GUIDANCE

Introduction

This guidance sets out Activate Learning's safeguarding expectations for both work experience and industry placement providers hosting Activate Learning learners, and employer partners who directly employ apprentices where Activate Learning is the training provider.

It is intended to support safe, inclusive, and well-supported workplace experiences across both settings.

We recognise that both placement providers and employer partners will have their own internal policies. This guidance is not intended to replace those arrangements, but to complement them and ensure a shared understanding of safeguarding expectations when working with Activate Learning learners and apprentices.

For clarity within this document:

- Placement provider refers to organisations hosting a learner for work experience or an industry placement where the learner remains enrolled with Activate Learning.
- Apprentice employer partner refers to organisations that employ an apprentice directly under an apprenticeship agreement with Activate Learning as the training provider.

Our Commitment – Safe Students, Safe Staff, Safe Spaces

Activate Learning is committed to ensuring learners, apprentices, staff and placement partners are safe, supported and able to thrive.

Safeguarding (including the Prevent duty) means protecting children, young people and adults at risk from abuse, neglect, exploitation and harm, and promoting their welfare, safety and wellbeing.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Activate Learning retains overarching responsibility for its learners and apprentices, but placement providers and apprentice employer partners are expected to cooperate with our safeguarding arrangements and the expectations below. Both are responsible for day-to-day supervision, health, safety and welfare while the learner/apprentice is on placement or in employment.

Your Responsibilities

Placement providers and apprentice employer partners must ensure the following standards are met.

Professional conduct and boundaries:

- Take reasonable steps to avoid placing learners/apprentices in situations where they may be vulnerable.
- Maintain professional relationships at all times (appropriate behaviour, language and attitudes).
- Communication between staff and learners/apprentices must be appropriate, work-related, and via professional and approved systems. Personal contact details and social media connections should not be used, particularly for learners under 18.
- Avoid physical contact wherever possible. Where necessary (e.g., demonstrating equipment or safe practical support), it must be minimal, appropriate and clearly within a professional context.

Safe working practices:

- Have your own safeguarding policies and procedures in place or formally agree to operate in line with Activate Learning's Safeguarding and Prevent Policy.

- Protect learners from abuse, exploitation, bullying, harassment, emotional harm (including excessive workload or pressure), and unsafe working practices.
- Bullying, harassment, discrimination, and unsafe or inappropriate behaviour must not be tolerated.
- Avoid one-to-one working in isolated or unobserved settings. Where unavoidable, ensure a risk assessment and appropriate controls (e.g., visibility, check-ins, nearby staff).

Supervision and awareness:

- Provide appropriate supervision for the learner or apprentice's age, experience, needs, and the workplace or placement context.
- Consider additional risks in community settings, multi-site roles, public-facing work, lone-working, travel, or any overnight stays (where applicable).
- Ensure staff who supervise learners/apprentices (especially those under 18) understand how to respond to disclosures and report concerns.
- Ensure that all staff working with learners and apprentices are suitable for their role and understand expected standards of conduct and professional boundaries.

Additional Vulnerabilities

Learners and apprentices may need different levels of support. Some may be more vulnerable due to disability or learning difficulties, mental or physical health needs, trauma, caring responsibilities, financial hardship, social isolation, or being care experienced.

Placement providers and apprentice employer partners must take a supportive and inclusive approach and consider whether reasonable adjustments are required to

enable safe participation. Liaise with the learner/apprentice and your Activate Learning contact where support needs to be agreed.

Key Safeguarding Risks

Be alert to safeguarding risks including (but not limited to):

- Abuse (physical, emotional, sexual), including sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour
- Child-on-child abuse, including sexual violence, harmful attitudes, and youth-produced sexual imagery ('sexting')
- Bullying, harassment, discrimination, and prejudice-based bullying (including online)
- Neglect and self-neglect
- Harmful practices including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and 'honour-based' abuse
- Domestic abuse (including coercive control and exposure to domestic abuse in the home)
- Radicalisation and extremism
- Online safety risks, including grooming, misinformation, and AI-related harms (e.g., 'deepfakes')
- Substance misuse or addiction
- Homelessness or insecure / unsuitable living conditions
- Mental health concerns, including self-harm and suicidal ideation
- Exploitation (sexual/criminal), county lines activity, serious violence, modern slavery and trafficking

- Financial abuse or exploitation

Be aware that concerns may arise in the workplace, during travel to/from work, online, at home or in the community.

Activate Learning provides preventative education, enrichment, and personal development programmes to help learners and apprentices understand key risks and keep themselves safe. Placement providers and apprentice employer partners are asked to familiarise themselves with these areas to support early identification of concerns.

Responding to a Disclosure

If a learner or apprentice discloses a concern:

- Listen calmly and take them seriously
- Do not promise confidentiality (explain you may need to share to help keep them safe)
- Do not ask leading questions
- Record the disclosure as soon as possible, using their own words
- Report immediately to the Activate Learning Safeguarding Team

Learners/apprentices should be supported and encouraged to report concerns to Activate Learning at any time.

Signs of Possible Harm

Be alert to:

- Changes in behaviour (e.g., withdrawn, anxious, aggressive, unusually quiet, or emotional)

- Sudden or unexplained changes in mood, attendance, performance or engagement
- Unexplained absence, going missing, or repeated non-attendance
- Signs of neglect (e.g., persistent tiredness, hunger, poor hygiene)
- Unexplained injuries or indicators of self-harm
- Concerning or secretive behaviour, including in relationships, communication, or online activity

These indicators do not confirm abuse on their own but may indicate they need support.

Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation (Prevent Duty)

Remain alert to signs a learner/apprentice may be vulnerable to radicalisation (being influenced to adopt extreme views that may lead to harmful, illegal or violent behaviour).

If concerns arise:

- ***Notice*** changes in behaviour, language, attitudes, or online activity
- ***Check*** concerns with a manager, HR, or the Safeguarding Team
- ***Share*** promptly with Activate Learning's Safeguarding Team

Concerns about radicalisation or extremism should always be treated as safeguarding concerns.

Reporting Concerns

Report concerns without delay to your Activate Learning contact, or contact the Safeguarding Team directly:

- Email: safe@activatelearning.ac.uk
- Phone: 01865 550401

Immediate Risk

If a learner or apprentice is at immediate risk of harm, or you believe a crime is in progress, call 999.

For non-emergencies, report concerns promptly to Activate Learning. Outside of college operating hours, support and advice can also be sought from relevant services:

- Children's or Adult Social Care (where a child protection or adult safeguarding concern exists)
- NHS (111) for mental and physical health concerns
- Samaritans (116 123) for concerns regarding mental health, self-harm or suicide
- Act Early (0800 011 3764) for Prevent-related concerns

Confidentiality

Safeguarding takes priority over confidentiality. Learners and apprentices should understand that:

- Information may need to be shared if there is a safeguarding concern
- Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed
- Concerns will be shared with Activate Learning's Safeguarding Team and, where required, external agencies (e.g., Social Care or Police)

Activate Learning may also share relevant safeguarding information with placement providers and apprentice employer partners where necessary, proportionate and lawful to support the safety and welfare of the learner/apprentice or others.

Whistleblowing

Concerns about staff conduct (within your organisation or Activate Learning) that may impact learner or apprentice safety must be reported immediately to the Activate Learning Safeguarding Team, alongside your internal HR procedures.

Working in Partnership

Thank you for reading this guidance. By working together, we can ensure that learners and apprentices have a safe, supportive, and positive workplace experience.


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