

# Best practice in safeguarding in colleges

A survey of best practice in safeguarding based on visits to 14 of the 15 colleges that received an outstanding grade for the leadership and management of their safeguarding arrangements in 2009/10.

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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## Executive summary

The framework for the inspection of further education and skills, which has been used for the inspection of colleges from September 2009, has a strong emphasis on keeping learners safe.<sup>1</sup> Two judgements are made: first about how safe learners feel as part of evaluating outcomes for learners; and second, the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, as part of the leadership and management judgement. This survey of best practice is based on visits to 14 of the 15 colleges that received an outstanding grade for the leadership and management of their safeguarding arrangements in 2009/10. In almost all of these colleges, the grade awarded to learners' feelings about safety was also outstanding. The colleges awarded outstanding grades included four general further education colleges, five sixth form colleges, five independent specialist colleges catering for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and one land-based further education college.

The key features that contributed to each college's outstanding provision were replicated in almost all the colleges visited. All the colleges had given the highest priority to ensuring that their safeguarding provision was of high quality and supported learning. Senior managers had taken a strong lead, with responsibility and accountability for safeguarding arrangements identified clearly and at a senior level. Managers' scrutiny of safeguarding practices was thorough, with frequent and purposeful monitoring and reporting. Good-quality training resulted in a workforce that was confident and well equipped to promote safeguarding in a sensible and proportionate way. Safeguarding expertise had been developed well in key managers, including through work with a wide range of external organisations.

Staff knew learners well and made effective use of risk assessments to keep learners safe. The curriculum was used well to promote safety, in part by exposing learners to the risks that they were likely to encounter in their working lives and educating them about how to deal with them, as well as increasing their knowledge of safety matters. Education about internet safety had been given high priority with recognition of the need to keep reviewing this aspect in the light of ever-changing technology. A 'zero tolerance' approach to lapses in safety precautions was reinforced effectively at all levels of management. Site security arrangements at all the colleges had received careful consideration and were effective while maintaining an open and friendly environment. Safe practices were promoted well in lessons and other learning settings. Arrangements for security checks on staff were robust and comprehensive. Managers used a range of information sources well to keep up to date with legislative changes.

Learners in all the colleges visited spoke highly of the commitment of staff to ensure their safety and of how much they valued this. Individual learners gave good examples of how staff had helped them to develop a better awareness of their own

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<sup>1</sup> *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2009* (090105), Ofsted, 2009; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090105](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090105).

safety. Learners generally had a good understanding of what constituted safeguarding in its broadest sense. They reinforced the view that safeguarding was promoted effectively in their colleges. However, it was noticeable that formal consultation of learners about safeguarding arrangements was a less strong feature than other aspects. Safeguarding provision was evaluated accurately and effectively through self-assessment, although there was a tendency for this to be based on compliance with legal requirements and records of the safeguarding provision that was in place, rather than a clear evaluation of the impact of actions taken to ensure learners' safety.

## Key findings

- The most notable feature of all the colleges visited was how each had developed, prioritised and embedded a culture of putting learners' safety first and developing responsibility in learners. By making the best use of every educational opportunity, learners took responsibility for their own and others' safety.
- The promotion of safeguarding was led well by principals and senior managers, with strong support from governors and trustees. Equally, the culture had permeated all parts of the college's workforce. A sound policy basis and good awareness of legislative requirements underpinned the culture.
- Thorough safeguarding training for all staff along with key managers' highly developed expert knowledge were key features of colleges' strategies to safeguard learners. Training coverage extended from support staff, such as cleaners and security guards, to governors and designated officers.
- Colleges also ensured that safeguarding arrangements were fully in place where learners worked on employers' premises as part of their courses.
- Managers and teachers had identified vulnerable groups of learners who needed extra care to ensure their safety, and made sure that providing this care was a priority. Recording systems were used effectively to hold important information about individual learners which, although bound by confidentiality in some cases, were easily accessible and kept current.
- Strong and extensive collaboration had taken place with a wide range of external agencies to support safeguarding. The range included many highly specialised organisations such as those with expertise in supporting learners with complex learning difficulties or in areas such as road safety.
- The curriculum was used highly effectively to make learners think and act more safely. High quality resources were available to teachers to lead lessons on safety topics and the coverage was relevant, topical, and often delivered by specialists.
- Colleges used a range of effective approaches to ensure that learners developed a sound knowledge of safe use of the internet, and monitored developments in this fast changing area.
- Safe working practices were promoted well in lessons and in other ways, for example through practical work in realistic work environments such as kitchens or

stable yards. Thorough risk assessments were an essential component of this best practice. In a number of cases, learners took an active part in undertaking risk assessments, which also served as a highly effective preparation for their future work.

- A 'zero-tolerance' approach to lapses in enforcing safe practices was widespread and reinforced through lesson observations and regular scrutiny of working practices by managers.
- Site security arrangements varied from college to college, but all were based on risk assessments of the potential harm related to each site. For several colleges, this included assessing the risks at a number of different sites. Adaptations to existing accommodation or design features in new buildings had been carefully planned to encompass safety features.
- Security staff were used in most colleges. In particular, their role had been carefully designed to provide friendly but firm safety advice and protection arrangements alongside high levels of customer service.
- Arrangements to undertake appropriate security checks on staff were rigorous and exemplary in their thoroughness. Managers responsible showed a high level of awareness of more recent legal requirements, such as making referrals to the Independent Safeguarding Authority. Single central records held in each college were accurate and comprehensive, and clear senior management overview and accountability had been identified. In many cases, records were linked to other data systems which held relevant additional information about staff, such as training records.
- Recruitment procedures included checks on potential employees' attitudes to children, young people and vulnerable adults. Job descriptions included essential characteristics of positive attitudes towards safeguarding.

## Recommendations

Colleges should:

- identify responsibility and accountability for safeguarding arrangements clearly and at a senior level
- ensure that quality training results in a workforce that is confident and well equipped to promote safeguarding in a sensible and proportionate way
- sharpen the focus of self-assessment to ensure that the impact of safeguarding provision is measured effectively
- keep abreast of changes to legal requirements and ensure that policies and procedures are revised accordingly.

## Promoting safeguarding

1. All the colleges surveyed prioritised safeguarding and made sure that it was an intrinsic part of each college's culture. Principals, governors, trustees and

managers cited this prioritisation and the development of a safeguarding culture as fundamental to ensuring their outstanding provision. In all cases, the principal or a senior manager championed safeguarding matters, leading strongly on ensuring that safeguarding points were discussed in a variety of forums and that relevant communications and promotions were a regular feature of college life.

At Wakefield College, the Principal provided a strong focus on safeguarding by chairing the safeguarding committee which comprised senior managers from across the college. The committee had a high profile and a specific remit to be a source of expert advice and guidance on safeguarding matters as well as auditing the single central record. The committee also ensured that the college's statutory responsibilities were met and produced an annual action plan which was monitored carefully and focused on ensuring the impact from actions to promote safeguarding. The Principal used staff team briefings, produced as regular newsletters, as a powerful way of promoting safeguarding, using her authority productively to generate discussion about safeguarding matters.

2. Safeguarding policies provided appropriate guidance on all the relevant aspects of each college's work, including the different age ranges and the various groups of learners who attended courses run by the college. They covered the approach to both college-based and employment-based settings and incorporated how employers should be guided in meeting safeguarding requirements. This was important, particularly where colleges worked with school pupils, specific groups of vulnerable adults and learners undertaking work placements. Policies were updated as part of a regular cycle, including when legislative changes were made. Staff at all levels were encouraged to have an input into policies, which ensured that all had ownership of them and that they served the colleges well. Responsibility for safeguarding arrangements was always part of a senior role. Scrutiny of and accountability for arrangements, including record-keeping and the effectiveness of actions to promote safeguarding, were rigorous.
3. Managers ensured that the whole of the college's workforce understood the scope of safeguarding. They communicated messages about safeguarding clearly and frequently to learners to make sure that all became familiar with the term and understood what it meant in the context of their daily lives. A variety of ways were used to do this, such as an intranet page, plasma screen announcements and student forums. A specific feature in a few colleges was the inclusion of learners on formal committees or working groups with a safeguarding theme; this feature was less widespread across others, which limited the involvement of learners in decision-making about safeguarding arrangements.
4. In most cases, safeguarding arrangements were evaluated accurately through self-assessment at college level and at department or subject level. This

ensured a high level of accountability for safeguarding across the colleges as well as raising awareness across course teams. However, formal monitoring of the arrangements put in place, particularly those that ensured that legal requirements were met, sometimes took precedence over more practical evaluation of the strengths and areas for improvement and their impact on safeguarding provision.

## Training to safeguard learners

5. Inclusion of safeguarding as a key element of staff training and development plans was not new to the colleges visited. Most had been providing regular training for some time and had refined their approach, including through the development of bespoke training packages, in some cases delivered online. Specific safeguarding training was a feature of new staff induction. The training provided was comprehensive and delivered flexibly to match staff availability. Checks that all staff had completed training were rigorous. Accordingly, managers had full confidence that all staff, including those in a non-teaching role, had at least a basic awareness of safeguarding, how to recognise the signs of neglect or abuse and what to do in the case of such concerns arising.
6. Over and above this basic awareness, relevant managers and other key workers had received considerable additional higher-level training relevant to their role, which enabled them to take a lead as a designated officer or to act as an adviser. Notable features of training materials included the use of case studies that had a high relevance to college settings and were illustrated appropriately with learners' experiences. Safeguarding information to reinforce training was available in a wide variety of formats, such as detailed guidance in staff handbooks and pocket-sized quick reference cards.

At the City of Sunderland College, thorough and comprehensive bespoke staff training had been introduced and took place regularly for all staff and governors. Training materials were developed in-house and contextualised to the college's setting, making use of college-based examples to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Rather than relying on contractors or franchise partners' training arrangements for their own staff, managers provided additional college-based training, thus ensuring that all were trained to an appropriate standard.

At Beaumont College, much attention had been paid to the content and the method of delivery of safeguarding training. It was recognised that for staff, particularly longstanding employees, refresher training needed to be interesting and relevant. The resources that were used were carefully selected with this in mind. Training took place in small groups led by specialists, and was highly interactive. As a result, staff were able to explore safeguarding issues in detail. Managers viewed this as very important in maintaining the open culture so that staff at all levels of the organisation could contribute ideas to improve safeguarding procedures.

As a result of this thorough training, staff were confident about recognising potential safeguarding issues and in raising concerns when necessary.

## Safeguarding of vulnerable groups

7. Recognition of the potential vulnerability of different groups of learners and taking particular actions to safeguard them were seen by managers as very important activities. Considerable time was devoted to ensuring that timely and constructive safeguards were in place. Managers used a wide range of information, which included that gleaned from promoting information-sharing across other providers and agencies. Indeed, through these activities, college managers had often been influential in extending and speeding up the passage of relevant and often essential information between agencies and other providers such as their partner schools. In addition, local and regional neighbourhood intelligence was used extensively to undertake thorough assessments of the safety of different groups of learners. This informed approaches taken to safeguarding different groups as well as the population of learners as a whole. It also allowed colleges to include any relevant information in risk assessments for groups of learners or for individuals.

At South Birmingham College, a particularly strong safeguarding feature was the college's arrangements to safeguard the larger than average groups of school pupils that attended the college either full time or on a day-release basis. A separate area for these pupils had been established within one of the campuses. Staff working with pupils received specific training. A safeguarding officer had specific responsibility to support the pupils. Pupils had a different coloured lanyard for their identity badges to make it clear that they were younger learners.

At the City of Sunderland College, strong and longstanding links had been established with a wide range of agencies external to the college. These included agencies such as those tackling issues of drug misuse, racial discrimination, alcohol misuse and forced marriage. The college had actively promoted information sharing between schools, agencies and providers, being at the forefront of developing effective ways of working, such as developing a specific and well-conceived form to share confidential information. One particular advantage of the collaborative work had been working in conjunction with agencies to inform risk assessments of specific situations. The links also proved highly useful in developing staff expertise in a wide range of different aspects of safeguarding and welfare. Collaborative work with community police officers proved highly beneficial in helping to make the college a safe environment and these officers had a presence at each of the five college sites.

8. The approach taken to safeguarding potentially vulnerable learners, such as those with complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities, was often exemplary. Notably in these circumstances, longstanding collaborative work with a wide range of specialist external agencies played a significant part in ensuring that when putting safeguards in place staff had the most expert advice and guidance available to them about the complex circumstances of some learners. Lists of contacts were extensive and covered a broad spectrum which included highly specialist support agencies. Managers kept records of learners' particular safety needs, such as medication needs, which proved very useful on the occasions when rapid action was required to provide treatment for a learner.

At Loreto College, information about learners' medical conditions was held by agreement in a section of the college's information portal that could only be accessed by the individual student and by college staff. Medical conditions were graded by the risk to life using a traffic light system. Staff could immediately identify learners within their course groups who had particular conditions. Information held included the immediate actions that should be taken for individual learners' conditions and was available remotely as well as on site. This had proved extremely effective where learners had become ill at college, for example, in the provision of detailed records of existing conditions and medication in the case of emergency treatment.

At Beaumont College, external links to support safeguarding were highly effective in terms of responding to the safeguarding needs of learners. Many of the learners had severe conditions that impacted on their health and safety. Some were subject to complex medication, numerous interventions from medical services and spells in hospital. The college has developed excellent links with local medical services to minimise the impact of this on learners' physical and mental well-being. For example, protocols drawn up with the local hospital ensured clarity in the role of college support staff during appointments or hospital stays. Medical and college staff undertook joint training, particularly on the best ways to communicate with learners.

## Promoting safeguarding through teaching and learning

9. The colleges visited believed in the fundamental importance of education about safeguarding and in enabling each person to take responsibility for their own and others' safety. There was a particular focus in several colleges, particularly independent specialist colleges, on ensuring good behaviour and promoting a culture of respect and harmony between different groups. In these colleges this had led to improvements for the students: occurrences of bullying had been reduced and learners were more confident to report these to managers.

At Ruskin Mill College, behaviour in lessons was very good. Learners spoke positively about lessons, about their learning through undertaking craft

activities and the value they placed on being given responsibility. Learners' forums were encouraged and supported; they took an active role in promoting safety, including through a 'Feeling Safe' group. A 'Feeling Safe Officer' worked effectively with learners to reduce incidents of bullying. Learners were taught about what cyber-bullying meant, including knowing that they must keep any texts which they found abusive and share them with staff. Challenging behaviour was addressed through using strategies of communication and explanation, conflict resolution, and discussions about the consequences relative to the personal circumstances of the learners. Staff were encouraged to be creative in finding solutions to behavioural concerns, such as by a member of staff travelling on the same bus as learners where behavioural issues had occurred in the past.

10. The tutorial curriculum provided an essential basis for ensuring that learners understood how to promote their own and others' safety. This approach provided valuable information which covered a wide range of safeguarding matters. The use of a mandatory tutorial scheme of work which was supported often by very effective learning resources and input from specialists meant that learners covered relevant and topical subjects. Tutorials were often supported by themed weeks or topical displays that incorporated important safety messages; these were often displayed in busy areas such as main entrance and reception areas. Tutorial topics were brought to life regularly by using interesting ways of delivering them or reinforcing several aspects through innovative ideas. Accompanying leaflets and other reminders, such as pocket-sized, fold-out 'Z' cards, were of good quality and provided effective sources of additional information and contacts.

At Wakefield College, the content of the tutorial curriculum was kept continually under review with new topics added regularly to reflect the risks that learners faced in their daily lives. Topics such as the safe use of taxi cabs, dealing with bogus callers and road safety were examples of useful and relevant topics. Tutors used competitions to raise interest and awareness of some topics, particularly those with less stimulating content. For example, a competition to design a tee shirt based on a 'safe maintenance' theme proved successful in promoting this topic.

At Christ the King Sixth Form College, the tutorial programme, which included a high level of pastoral support, was a high-quality feature which was applied consistently across the college. This covered a wide range of health and safety-related topics that were informed by learners' views. Tutorials were delivered interactively to encourage reflection, discussion and debate, incorporating prayer and a 'thought for the day'. High-quality resources were shared and some lessons were taught by external specialists, such as sexual health topics that were covered by staff from the local Primary Care Trust.

At St Brendan's College, the tutorial curriculum was based around compulsory elements of personal safety and preparation for life and work. In addition, all learners followed a religious education programme, 'Spiritual Journey', which supported learners emotionally and spiritually, and was seen as fundamental to safeguarding. In addition to these compulsory elements, safety was highlighted through the enrichment programme. One topic, 'Street Awareness', prepared learners for dealing with potentially harmful situations that they might encounter as part of their daily life in a busy city, following the occurrence of some very serious incidents.

11. Safety was reinforced well at induction and through subject lessons where teachers made the most of opportunities to promote safeguarding, often over and above where this occurred naturally. Lessons included a focus on developing learners' skills relevant to keeping themselves safe, such as helping learners with complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities to travel safely on their own, or supporting learners in developing their decision-making skills.
12. Although taking prominence in higher-risk activities such as practical lessons, health and safety matters also featured in other lessons, and were often highlighted by prompts in lesson-planning forms. Thorough and comprehensive risk assessments were used constructively at the start of lessons, so that learners were fully aware of hazards, risks and the control measures that needed to be in place. In a number of cases, learners undertook risk assessments themselves as part of their learning and assessment. There was an expectation that learners would become more responsible for safeguarding as their knowledge and skills increased.

At Freeman College, risk assessment was excellent. As part of the curriculum, learners worked in practical workshops where cutlery was manufactured. This involved working with hot metal and machinery. As well as the generic health and safety training that all learners undertook, risk assessment took into account the specific learning difficulty or disability of each learner and put in place appropriate control measures to ensure that each learner could participate actively in the workshops.

At Hadlow College, safe working practices were reinforced at every opportunity. Thorough analysis of accidents was used to inform risk management and to promote learning from incidents by all concerned. Risk assessments were used productively to ensure that all hazards had been identified and control measures put in place. In some cases, the control measures were rightly restrictive because of the high level of risk involved in some activities, such as working with certain animals or machinery. Risk assessments were displayed prominently in practical units and referred to frequently by teachers. Teachers ensured that they modelled good practice, and they adhered rigidly to the use of personal protective equipment and other control measures that were stipulated for

learners. Risk assessments were updated at least annually and often more frequently in line with any changes in the level of risk over time. For example, any new animal arriving at the animal care centre was judged to be a high risk until it had settled in. Any change to an animal's temperament triggered a review of risk level. Good use was made of initial assessment of skills, such as the swimming test for fish management learners. A 'zero tolerance' of breaches of safe working practices by staff was in place.

13. The range of risks associated with using the internet was recognised as a priority area. Colleges used standard precautions such as having filtering and monitoring software in place. In addition, there was often a high level of vigilance by staff concerning learners' use of the internet in computer rooms and in libraries and resource centres. Learners were kept well informed about the dangers associated with using the internet, but equally they were encouraged to take responsibility for their usage and to act sensibly and safely. Colleges varied in their approach to allowing the use of social networking sites during the college day. Several had a full ban in place, but others allowed some access at certain times. However, in all cases, the risks attached were made explicit and responsible usage was promoted strongly, while recognising that such technology was part of everyday life.

At ESPA College, very effective work took place in the curriculum to develop learners' awareness of their own health and safety, their rights and responsibilities and their understanding of appropriate behaviour to keep them safe. Particular attention was given to the use of the internet and social networking sites in the context of autistic learners, who might misunderstand how the concept 'friend' is applied on social networking sites. Work in the curriculum was particularly effective because of the thought given to the needs of individual learners, for example to address any compulsive behaviour that put them at risk. A visit to the fire station and talks with fire fighters were arranged to raise the awareness of a learner with a compulsion to set and put out fires.

At Telford College of Arts and Technology, a range of steps had been taken to minimise the risks associated with the internet. Extensive policies, procedures and guidance informed safe working practices. Internet safety was included in tutorials and in additional safety workshop programmes to support learners to use the internet safely both on and off site. The computer services manager was a member of the internal safeguarding group. Guidance on the safe use of the internet had been produced for staff, learners and parents and included videos displayed in recreation areas. The computer services team had developed bespoke software to identify and block technology misuse. Software links to personal tutors kept them well informed of concerns and allowed tutors to agree levels of access for individual learners. Learners displayed high levels of awareness of internet safety and understood why the controls were in place. The

computer services manager had developed strong external links locally within the county council and nationally with the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) so that best practice was adopted.<sup>2</sup>

## Keeping the college's environment safe

14. In the colleges visited, learners could be confident about being in a secure site and safe environment. Ensuring site security brought with it considerable challenges for several colleges, in particular those in inner-city environments, those with multiple sites and those in more remote areas. The use of security guards as part of site security was commonplace in most colleges. Where security guards were used, particular care was taken with the way in which their roles and responsibilities were organised. While their primary function was to ensure security, guards often contributed towards learners' confidence in the safety of their environment by their visible presence at entrance points and around the sites. Managers had taken particular care to ensure that such personnel, who were often from contracted organisations, were well trained in safeguarding matters and had received additional training in customer care.

South Birmingham College is a city centre college with a diverse population where learners said that they felt safe. Learners were clear about the college's rules and regulations regarding safety and behaviour. A 'zero tolerance' of violence across the college was strictly enforced. Learners were very positive about actions taken by the college to safeguard them, particularly the strict enforcement of identity badges, regular patrols by security guards and regular checks on their attendance.

15. In larger colleges, a common feature was identity badges worn by all persons. Managers considered that this had contributed considerably to the safe environment. In nearly all cases, these badges included photographic identity which had to be visible at all times or carried ready to be checked on request. Full compliance with this approach was enforced in the colleges visited, such that both learners and staff were encouraged to (and often did) challenge people who were not displaying badges. This engendered a feeling of transparency and reduced the likelihood of strangers gaining unauthorised access to sites. CCTV cameras were used appropriately to keep a check on parts of college estates.

At Hadlow College the significant risk factors had received careful consideration and appropriate safeguards had been put in place at the four dispersed sites. These factors included a large main campus with open access to most of the 1,000-acre site including through footpaths; residential accommodation on site for young learners; and the many high-risk land-based activities that took place at all four sites. Signage on

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<sup>2</sup> Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre: [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

buildings and routes through the campus was used well to give information and to control access at all sites. All members of the college population and visitors were expected to wear identity badges with colour-coded lanyards. Learners and staff were challenged for non-display and learners were trained and encouraged to challenge people not displaying identification. Strong emphasis was placed on security systems for residential learners, using unique personal electronic fobs for entry into residences. On-site wardens undertook night duties and checks on car parks. Learners were given personal alarms and an emergency out-of-hours contact number was available to all.

St John Rigby College is located in a semi-rural 42-acre site. Much of the site is open land with some woodland areas to which the public have access. The location presents considerable challenge to ensuring a safe and secure environment and in preventing unauthorised access to college premises. Good use had been made of discreet CCTV coverage of exposed and high risk areas. Risk assessments took into consideration the exposed college site, and learners and staff were given detailed advice about protecting their own safety on a large open site. A learner liaison officer made regular patrols of the area to ensure learners' safety and random checks to ensure safe procedures, such as the wearing of identity badges, were followed. Learners were clear about how to challenge strangers and the actions they should take in the circumstances.

16. Several colleges had incorporated safety features into the design and building of new accommodation. These included single entrance points and open-plan design to help ensure that areas of the college were safe. In the few cases where colleges had residential accommodation, safeguarding arrangements were also robust. Full-time wardens oversaw the safety and well-being of residential learners, including over a 24-hour period. Access to accommodation blocks was strictly controlled through the use of electronic identity passes.

At Hartlepool Sixth Form College, the incorporation of safeguarding features was a key aspect of the complex rebuilding of the existing site that included a linked new building. Specific controls were introduced during construction for access by builders, contractors and other external visitors. Procedures for allowing access to the college were tightened and senior management approval was required for regular visitor access. If visitors had not undergone security checks, they were accompanied at all times while on the site. A member of the community police force came into college each week and sat with the learners in the atrium. This broke down barriers and also opened up communications. The police kept the college fully informed of any local issues which might impact on students so that preventative action could be taken. For example, the police provided guidance to learners about the use of a short cut across nearby parkland while an incident remained unsolved.

17. Colleges visited as part of this survey took the analysis of accidents, incidents and 'near misses' very seriously. Clear categorisation and analysis of each type of concern took place, resulting in action to prevent reoccurrence or accidents of a more serious nature. As part of ensuring readiness and capability to deal with serious incidents that might compromise learners' safety, several colleges undertook incident management exercises from time to time. These worked effectively to test out and, if needed, improve arrangements to deal with potentially serious situations, such as a fire or the aftermath of a serious road accident.

## Safe recruitment of staff

18. In addition to meeting the legal requirements for keeping a single central record of the security checks undertaken on all staff in regulated activity, several colleges had developed these records to be highly sophisticated, containing additional useful, readily accessible information.<sup>3</sup> Responsibility for these aspects of safeguarding arrangements was always at a senior level.
19. The single central records were well ordered and updated regularly; they contained all the required fields and covered all the appropriate groups of people who worked at the college. In a few cases, the records held additional information over and above the minimum required, to allow quick access to checks on training undertaken or identity checks of categories of people who do not necessarily need police checks, such as contracted support staff undertaking controlled activities.<sup>4</sup> Where identity and police checks were the responsibility of a contractor for staff involved in regulated activity, such as in the case of supply teachers, arrangements were robust in verifying their identity, and ensuring that appropriate security checks had been undertaken and that they had received regular training. Staff involved in overseeing the record had a good understanding of safeguarding legislation, including consideration of the requirements of the Vetting and Barring scheme and the work of the Independent Safeguarding Authority.
20. Recruitment procedures included considerable attention to safeguarding priorities. In many cases, relevant staff had received specific safeguarding recruitment training to help them to consider attitudes and competences relevant to safeguarding as part of the selection process.

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<sup>3</sup> For a college, regulated activity includes teaching, training, assessing, mentoring, coaching, supervising or providing care, guidance, support or advice on a frequent (at least once a week) or intensive (at least four times in a 30-day period or involving an overnight stay) basis.

<sup>4</sup> Controlled activity is frequent (once a week or more) or intensive (at least three times in a 30-day period or involving overnight duty) support work in general health settings, the NHS and further education but which does not involve frequent or intensive contact with children or young people. Such work includes cleaners, care takers, shop workers, catering staff, car park attendants and receptionists. Individuals who have frequent access to sensitive records about children and vulnerable adults would also be classified as working in controlled activity.

At the City of Sunderland College, comprehensive and thorough procedures were in place for the selection and recruitment of staff. Related records were held centrally in a highly organised way. The single central record contained more than 1,500 records and included a range of linked records such as staff training records. It was categorised into sections which covered the full range of people involved with the college; some of these were required legally and others supported the risk assessment of people for whom security checks were not mandatory.

The records included: volunteers; contracted staff, including agency teachers; franchise partners; work placement providers; school teachers; governors; and support staff not in regulated activity. Managers had a good knowledge of the work of the Independent Safeguarding Authority, including the requirement for referrals. New staff only began work when appropriate clearance was received. Managers received specific training in selection and recruitment procedures related to safeguarding; this was one of the competencies used as part of short-listing and interviews to determine candidates' suitability for posts that involved work with young people and vulnerable adults.

## Notes

The sample of colleges was selected from those which received an outstanding grade for their safeguarding provision in 2009/10. Fourteen of the 15 colleges were visited. Of these, five were sixth form colleges, of which three were of Roman Catholic ethos, four were independent specialist colleges, four were general further education colleges and one was a land-based specialist college. Residential accommodation was a feature of all the independent specialist colleges and the land-based college. Visits by HMI took place in the autumn term of 2010/11. Inspectors used each college's inspection report and self-assessment to prepare for the visits. Colleges were invited to present the main features that had contributed to the outstanding provision and discuss these with inspectors. During visits, inspectors met with groups of learners and, in most cases, undertook a tour of parts of the campus.

## Further information

Relevant, current government requirements for safeguarding in educational settings are set out in two key documents:

*Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education*, Department for Education, 2006; [www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/dfes-04217-2006](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/dfes-04217-2006).

*Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, Department for Education, 2010; [www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00305-2010](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00305-2010).

## **Annex A: Colleges visited**

Beaumont College – A Scope College

Christ the King Sixth Form College

City of Sunderland College

ESPA College

Freeman College

Hadlow College

Hartlepool Sixth Form College

Loreto College, Manchester

Ruskin Mill College

St Brendan's Sixth Form College

St John Rigby RC Sixth Form College

South Birmingham College

Telford College of Arts and Technology

Wakefield College

## **Annex B: Profiles of the colleges visited**

### **Beaumont College**

Beaumont College in Lancaster is a small independent specialist college for mainly adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities run by the national charity Scope. It offers residential and non-residential programmes for young people with cerebral palsy and associated disabilities and/or learning difficulties. The main teaching and residential accommodation is located on one site.

### **Christ the King Sixth Form College**

Christ the King Sixth Form College is a Catholic sixth form college situated on two sites in Lewisham and Sidcup. Lewisham has a high level of economic and social disadvantage.

### **City of Sunderland College**

City of Sunderland College is a large general further education college with vocational skills centres at Shiney Row and Hylton, and sixth form centres at Usworth, St Peter's and Bede. Most learners come from Sunderland. Sunderland has a high level of economic and social disadvantage.

### **ESPA College**

ESPA College is part of Education and Services for People with Autism (ESPA), which provides a range of services for individuals with autism and associated conditions. ESPA is a small independent specialist college that provides for day and residential learners regionally and nationally. The college is based across three sites in Sunderland and Newcastle, two of which provide residential programmes. Academic and vocational skills are delivered within the college and through partner further education colleges and work experience providers.

### **Freeman College**

Freeman College is part of the Ruskin Mill Further Education Trust. It is a small college located in the centre of Sheffield. The college's guiding principles have been inspired by the work of Rudolf Steiner, William Morris and John Ruskin, which includes a holistic approach to all aspects of education including through arts, crafts, commerce, agriculture, nutrition, living skills and environment. Most learners attend on a daily basis but some are residential. The college caters for young people with complex needs, learning difficulties and/or disabilities associated with developmental delay and challenging behaviour, or behaviour which can make them extremely vulnerable.

### **Hadlow College**

Hadlow College is a specialist land-based college near Tonbridge in Kent. The main campus is on a 1,000-acre estate and has three smaller centres in other parts of Kent and south London. The college recently purchased a nearby farm of 60 acres and four acres of fishing lakes. It works in partnership with Kent County Council to farm 120 acres and has developed provision at a centre for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Residential accommodation is provided for 230

learners. The main campus is open plan and includes a number of commercial activities such as dog grooming, a commercial fishing complex, an equine competition centre, garden centre and tearoom which are open to the public.

### **Hartlepool Sixth Form College**

Hartlepool Sixth Form College is a small college situated close to the town centre. The college's site has recently been extensively altered by remodelling the existing college accommodation and adding a new one to form one building. The site is surrounded by parkland which is open access. Most learners come from the five local partner secondary schools in Hartlepool. The locality includes areas of high economic and social disadvantage.

### **Loreto College**

Loreto College is a large Catholic sixth form college situated between Hulme and Moss Side in Manchester. Learners are drawn from Manchester and surrounding local authorities, which include catchment areas with high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The college enrolls a small number of learners who have severe and complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities on an independent living course.

### **Ruskin Mill College**

Ruskin Mill College is part of the Ruskin Mill Educational Trust Limited (RMET). The College offers learning experiences to young people with a range of learning difficulties, including those who have challenging behaviour. Most students are residential. Ruskin Mill College is based on a large site in Horsley in Gloucestershire. It provides a curriculum primarily based on craft activities such as leather, iron and willow work and land-based activities which include organic horticulture and fish farming.

### **St Brendan's Sixth Form College**

St Brendan's Sixth Form College is a medium-sized Catholic sixth form college in Bristol. It is based on a single site. The college has undergone a major building programme, which was completed in 2009. The learner population has grown substantially in recent years and has become much more diverse. Learners come from a wide range of ethnic, religious, social and economic backgrounds.

### **St John Rigby Roman Catholic Sixth Form College**

The college is under the trusteeship of the Archbishop of Liverpool and situated on a single campus four miles west of Wigan on a semi-rural site. About half of the learners are drawn from six local Roman Catholic partner schools, with the remainder coming mainly from Wigan and West Lancashire. Wigan has some areas with high levels of social and economic disadvantage.

### **South Birmingham College**

South Birmingham College is a large general further education college located across four campuses within central and south Birmingham. A number of smaller centres are also based in the community. A large number of school pupils attend the college. Around three quarters of learners are from inner-city wards which have high levels of deprivation. The college caters for several specific groups within the locality, such as asylum seekers and the Roma community.

### **Telford College of Arts and Technology**

Telford College of Arts and Technology is a large general further education college. It is based on a single campus in Wellington in Telford. The college also offers provision in the community and extensively on employers' premises.

### **Wakefield College**

Wakefield College is a general further education college located in and serving the Wakefield Metropolitan District and adjacent communities. Wakefield College has three large campuses: two in Wakefield and one at Glasshoughton in Castleford in the north-east of the district. Wakefield is the second most deprived district in West Yorkshire.