

Community of Practice for Modern Apprenticeship Providers

Safeguarding (Including PREVENT) in Modern Apprenticeships

Introduction

The purpose of this Community of Practice (CoP) was to highlight and raise awareness of the obligations on providers and associated employers to have in place robust Safeguarding Policies and PREVENT procedures for modern apprentices and further develop and strengthen partnerships between SDS, Education Scotland and NSPCC.

The objectives were for providers to have:

- A greater awareness and understanding of Safeguarding including PREVENT.
- Benefitted from the opportunity to share good practice, tips and discuss any challenges.
- Reflected on the insights gained and considered actions or improvements they may wish to take forward .

The events were targeted at provider representatives where Safeguarding is their designated role or they have an interest in this subject matter. 69 delegates attended the in-person CoP with a further 104 delegates attending the online CoP representing employers, colleges and independent learning providers delivering apprenticeships across a range of sectors.

Following [presentations](#) from SDS, Education Scotland, NSPCC and L&G Learning Scotland Ltd, providers at the in person event took part in table workshop discussions with those attending the online event contributing to a single facilitated discussion using Menti. Both discussions covered case studies- 2 case studies on PREVENT and 2 case studies on Safeguarding as well as 3 questions:

- How do you embed Safeguarding into your MA Programme for your staff?
- How do you support your apprentices on Safeguarding?
- What are the challenges you face with Safeguarding within your organisation and specific to your sector and frameworks?

A summary of the in person workshop feedback and the Menti feedback from the online event is provided below. We have identified some areas of good practice, and the challenges providers are facing with safeguarding.

- Good practice
 - Having safeguarding as a standing item on meeting agendas
 - Safeguarding given priority at staff inductions and in staff manuals
 - Making Safeguarding part of mandatory training modules for all staff
 - Having a dedicated Teams channel, or similar, for Safeguarding
 - Dedicated staff sign up for NSPCC and other agencies newsletters.
- Challenges
 - Cross border delivery - challenging having to adhere to two separate Safeguarding policies & procedures
 - Having access to confidential and safe spaces in employers premises
 - Financial restrictions for smaller providers who don't have the resources or staff to embed this fully
 - Different language / terminology used can be confusing for apprentices
 - Changes to PVG and the potential impact on small providers and employers

Providers also gave us useful feedback on both events. 43 Providers from the in person event shared their feedback. The mean score for rating the usefulness of the event was 9.4 from a possible maximum score of 10 and we have included a summary of the in person event feedback at the end of the report.

Safeguarding workshop discussion – summary of feedback

QUESTION 1 - How do you embed Safeguarding into your MA Programme for your staff?

Prompts:

- Do you have policies / SOPs (Standard operating Procedures) in place for all staff?
- Can you give examples of the types of training your staff have undertaken?
- Are all staff aware of your policies and procedures and how do you do this- for example staff training days etc?

Provider Feedback - approaches	Provider Feedback - challenges
• Safeguarding committees - meet monthly to discuss legislation updates, best practices, scenarios, and training opportunities, with representatives from various sectors. • Safeguarding is a regular agenda item in team meetings to maintain awareness and share best practices. • Staff induction includes dedicated safeguarding training; all providers have policies and reporting mechanisms in place. • Safeguarding information is included in staff handbooks and quality manuals. • Mandatory safeguarding training modules and CPD requirements (e.g., PREVENT Training). • Dedicated safeguarding teams in large providers deliver CPD through training days, bulletins, and newsletters. • Training is conducted annually with learnings shared in team meetings. • Use of process maps and ICT systems to facilitate quick access to safeguarding information and reporting. • Staff subscribe to safeguarding newsletters (NSPCC) and participate in monthly safeguarding discussions • Safeguarding Teams Channels are used to support and share experiences. • High-profile media cases are used to emphasise the importance of reporting concerns as part of Staff CPD. • Public sector organisations use mandatory online training tailored to roles; others plan to extend training to all staff.	• Standard operating policies on Safeguarding (SOPs) may not be useful or accessible for staff constantly on-site • Limited staff time to access training – small providers • Freelance assessors can make mandatory training difficult • MA Specification needs reviewed to make it more accessible with relevant guidance embed • Cross-border delivery requires adherence to different safeguarding procedures in Scotland and England and can be a lot of work. • Lack of confidential space for sensitive safeguarding conversations in some settings and employers' premises • Freelance assessors may not engage in safeguarding learning beyond minimum expectations. • Cultural challenges in ensuring assessors understand and act on safeguarding responsibilities. • Need to keep safeguarding learning visible and provide in-depth learning as needed. Ensuring regular and effective communication. • Different sectors face unique challenges, e.g., residential MAs. • Financial constraints for smaller providers and resource availability impact safeguarding implementation. • Terminology differences/ use of different language - (Safeguarding/Wellbeing/Duty of Care) can cause confusion for apprentices and employers

- Safeguarding knowledge is embedded via SSSC registration for relevant qualifications, with access to tools and resources. - Training resources are sourced from SDS, SQA, Awarding Bodies, NHS, and NSPCC.	
QUESTION 2 - How do you support your Apprentices on Safeguarding? Prompts: - Please give examples of how and when you introduce safeguarding to your apprentice? For example, at induction or at progress reviews? - Are they actively aware of your safeguarding policy and reporting procedures and can they access this easily and how do you check this? - Are they aware of a dedicated team/ member of staff that has the responsibility for Safeguarding in your organisation? When is this introduced?	
Provider feedback - approaches	Provider feedback - challenges
- Safeguarding is introduced during induction through 1:1 or group sessions, with policies and named contacts shared via handouts or e-portfolios. - Regular follow-ups occur during progress reviews, often framed as wellbeing check-ins to encourage open dialogue. - Apprentices are made aware of safeguarding policies and reporting procedures, with visibility ensured via e-portfolio landing pages and social media. - Named safeguarding contacts are introduced early, and some providers use models like SHANARRI to guide discussions. - Employers also receive safeguarding induction, which is shared with trainees. - Creative methods such as vlogs, blogs, podcasts, and online platforms (e.g., Flickr) are used to reinforce safeguarding understanding. - Some providers embed safeguarding in early training activities like “Learning Journals” or dedicated exercises contextualised to the apprentice’s role. - Mentorship is provided to offer independent support, and wellbeing resources like mood charts or kit bags are used to aid communication. - Face-to-face interactions are preferred for sensitive conversations, and initiatives like ‘Call Adele’ offer discreet support channels.	- Safeguarding is often perceived as ‘wellbeing’, and terminology may not resonate with young apprentices. - Virtual delivery models limit the ability to detect safeguarding concerns, prompting calls for more balanced approaches. - Apprentices may forget who the safeguarding lead is, especially in care or site-based roles. - Online training modules are not always effective apprentices may rush through content without retaining key messages. - Safeguarding awareness tends to decline post-induction unless actively reinforced. - Employers, particularly smaller ones, may lack clear safeguarding policies or understanding of their responsibilities. - Language used in safeguarding discussions needs to be adapted for younger audiences, which can be challenging. - Encouraging apprentices to speak up remains difficult; newsletters and spotlight features (e.g. Line of Sight) are used to raise awareness. - Despite existing procedures, more effort is needed to embed safeguarding into everyday practice and ensure apprentices feel safe to disclose concerns.

Quarterly reviews and regular support sessions help build trust and identify issues early.	
QUESTION 3 – What are the challenges you face with Safeguarding within your organisation and specific to your sector and frameworks? Prompts: - Are there issues on accessing support on how to develop a policy and staff training? - Are there any issues with employers and their role and responsibilities with Safeguarding? - Are there any asks from SDS and Education Scotland on this agenda that have not been covered in today's session?	
Provider feedback - approaches	Provider feedback - challenges
- Tailored Communication for Employers: Providers are adapting safeguarding materials using simpler language to better suit employer understanding, especially in sectors like land-based apprenticeships. - Mentor Engagement: Mentor workshops and employer inductions are used to introduce safeguarding early and create space for discussion. - Sector-Specific Integration: In sectors like Health & Social Care and Early Years, safeguarding is already embedded in frameworks, making it easier to address.	- Employer Awareness & Understanding - Micro employers (e.g. small farms) often lack familiarity with safeguarding. - SDS resources sometimes use language that is not accessible to all employers. - Organisational Culture & Responsibility, - in larger organisations, safeguarding is often seen as the responsibility of a few rather than a shared duty. - Designated safeguarding leads are not always taken seriously. - Staff Confidence & Reporting - some staff may hesitate to report safeguarding concerns due to fear of damaging customer relationships. There is a general lack of confidence in navigating safeguarding responsibilities. - Resource & Capacity Constraints - when there are high apprentice caseloads this limits the ability to provide pastoral support. - Keeping up with legislative changes is a challenge. - Access to Support & Information - providers can struggle to know what support is available and where to access it. - There are inconsistencies in access to statutory information between colleges and training providers. - Framework Gaps & Expectations - some providers feel expectations from SDS and Education Scotland are unclear on safeguarding and PREVENT.

	• Questions were raised about the equivalent of Ofsted's "British Values" in the Scottish context. • Providers would like a safeguarding forum for sharing good practice and more examples and guidance from Police on PREVENT cases would be helpful. • Continued support through Communities of Practice events is welcomed. • Understanding of vulnerable adults - improve safeguarding awareness for all apprentices as there is a misconception that safeguarding only applies to children.
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Event Survey Feedback

Providers highlighted the positive aspects of the event.

★ Overall Event Rating

- The event received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with most participants rating it 9 or 10 out of 10.
- Attendees described it as "excellent," "very informative," "engaging," and "thought-provoking."
- Many appreciated the structure, timing, and quality of speakers, noting that the event was well organised and professionally delivered.

📌 Presentations (Education Scotland, NSPCC and L&G Learning Scotland Ltd)

- NSPCC was widely praised for providing practical, actionable resources, including -helplines, training materials, and support tools.
- Education Scotland was appreciated for insights into inspection expectations and PREVENT.
- Presentations helped clarify reporting procedures, PREVENT strategies, and adultification issues.
- L&G presentation was highly praised for showcasing good practice and effective techniques in addressing safeguarding issues, offering valuable inspiration and guidance for others.
- Many attendees noted they would implement or share the resources with their teams.

Challenged thinking

- The event prompted many to re-evaluate their current safeguarding and PREVENT practices.
- Several attendees mentioned it helped them recognise gaps in their understanding or procedures, especially around:
 - The developmental needs of 16–18-year-olds
 - Adulthood and its impact on safeguarding
 - New perspectives on what constitutes a safeguarding concern.
 - Some noted the event was a timely complement to ongoing internal reviews of their internal policies and procedures
 - Information presented will now help shape / enhance partnership agreements and policies.

Understanding responsibilities

- Attendees reported a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities as learning providers.
- Many planned to:
 - Update safeguarding policies and procedures.
 - Incorporate PREVENT training into staff development.
 - Enhance induction materials for apprentices.
 - Add this new information to the responsibilities of the Assessor/IV role.
 - Some highlighted the need for simplified MA Programme Specification and clarity on expectations of Education Scotland and how this links with the MA Programme Specification.

Support & resources needed

- Participants requested:
 - A central bank of safeguarding resources
 - Local authority contacts for ongoing support
 - Slide decks and links from the event.
 - Templates for best practice, including review forms and checklists
 - Online training modules for apprentices and employers
 - Some suggested embedding safeguarding into regular reviews and providing refresher materials.

Confidence in accessing further information on PREVENT and Safeguarding

- Most attendees felt confident accessing further information and resources, especially with the materials shared during the event.
- A few expressed uncertainties, particularly around PREVENT, but were reassured that the presentation slide deck and links would help bridge the gap.

Suggestions for additional CPD

- There was strong interest in ongoing CPD opportunities, with suggestions including:
 - Mental health awareness
 - Self-harm and Suicide awareness
 - Neurodiversity Training
 - Trauma informed Practice
 - Gambling, debt, and financial literacy
 - Case study-based training for real-world application
 - 1:1 coaching, small group sessions, and online formats
 - Regular updates on legislation, policy changes, and best practices
 - Training tailored to different staff levels, especially for those new to safeguarding or working with apprentices.
 - Many emphasised the importance of keeping training current to reflect societal changes and evolving risks.