**Adult Safeguarding Policy**

**Control of Document:**  Senior Leadership Team

# Policy Aims and Intention:

* To create an environment that promotes well-being and ensures personal safety and security for adults with care and support needs (previously referred to as ‘vulnerable’ learners)
* To ensure safeguarding by following agreed procedures, ensuring staff are trained to a high standard, follow correct guidance and are supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to concerns in response to current legislation and guidance.
* To actively engage with other partners including the police by complying with legislation and statutory duties around Prevent.
* To ensure that staff are trained in Prevent and recognising factors that can make people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

**Responsibility:** Vice Principle Quality and Compliance

**Original Date of Acceptance:** 19 December 2008

**Last Review date:**  August 2022

# Next Review date: August 2023

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**Audience**: All staff, volunteers, employers, partners, learners and other members of the public in contact with those working with adults.

**The Policy**

 For the purpose of this document the use of the term learner is inclusive of apprentices.

ACL is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people. ACL works with children and young people under the age of 18 and has separate **Children and Young people Safeguarding Policy** to support staff in putting into practice ACL’s commitment.

### This policy operates at all Adult Community Learning Centres across Essex and applies to all staff, volunteers, learners, partners, and visitors to ACL provision including subcontractors, whether on ACL premises or those of partner organisations.

This Policy outlines ACL’s procedures when responding to concerns regarding the safeguarding and protection of adults with care and support needs. It will be promoted at staff induction and this will be re-enforced during all safeguarding refresher training.

Adults are defined as people aged 18 years and above.

The Care Act refers to ‘people with care and support needs’ and we have used this term throughout to replace the term ‘vulnerable’. The use of the term ‘vulnerable’ may suggest that all people with care and support needs are vulnerable and attaches vulnerability to people rather than looking at the risks that face them.

All staff that come into contact with people with care and support needs, who may be vulnerable to abuse, and neglect should understand that safeguarding procedures apply to this group. ‘The level of needs is not relevant, and the adult does not need to have eligible needs for care and support or be receiving any particular service from the local authority, in order for the safeguarding duties to apply.’

Safeguarding means protecting an adult’s right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of mental or physical abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult’s wellbeing is promoted. This includes, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action. This must recognise that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances. *(Care and support statutory guidance – GOV.UK)*

Safeguarding is not limited to incidents that happen in our centres, harm can take a variety of forms within or outside of family groups and all staff need to take this into consideration.

 The statutory guidance for Schools and Colleges (including Adult Learning providers) ‘*Keeping Children safe in Education’ September 2022,* gives definitions and additional advice and guidance relating to specific wider areas of abuse including County Lines, Domestic abuse, Homelessness, so called ‘honour-based violence, FGM, Radicalisation, Child on child abuse. Please refer to the Children and Young People safeguarding policy for areas relevant only to children.

**Management of Safeguarding:**

The service has a Designated Safeguarding Lead with overall responsibility, and two Safeguarding Officers, there are also two staff who have Designated Safeguarding Officer training to ensure cover at all times. All staff have responsibilities for ensuring processes are implemented.

There is a Safeguarding Group which will support with developing and embedding practice and procedure throughout all areas of Adult Community Learning. This includes a Strategic Advisory Board member with specific responsibility for safeguarding and members of the Essex Safeguarding Boards.

**Method of Implementation**

The Service will:

* Establish and maintain an environment where all staff are committed to adhering to the policy, adults feel safe and secure, feel able to talk and are listened to
* Ensure a culture of zero tolerance of abuse and other harmful behaviours
* Ensure that wherever possible every effort will be made to establish effective working relationships with parents and/or carers and colleagues from partner or referral agencies.
* Follow ECC employment processes including a rigorous recruitment, interview, and appointment system to ensure that all staff and volunteers have appropriate, skills, qualifications and attitude to work in the educational sector, including working with adults with care and support needs
* Keep a single central record of checks. Undertake DBS checks and other appropriate checks on all academic staff regardless of the type of provision, all staff who have an enhanced or standard check will register for the DBS Update service. Basic checks will be repeated every 2 years.

Regulated Activity (Adults)

The original definition of vulnerable adults and groups was very broad under Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults 2006(SVA). Subsequent to the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (PoFA) this has been refined and the number of individuals requiring a DBS (CRB) check prior to employment reduced.

Under the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) there are fewer organisations that fall within ‘regulated activity’. The definition of regulated activity links directly to the services provided to an individual. You are in a regulated activity if you are:

• Providing health care

• Providing personal care

• Providing social work

• Providing assistance with cash, bills or shopping

• Providing assistance in the conduct of a person’s own affairs

• Driving a vehicle to convey an adult because of their age, illness or disability

While statutory education is automatically classed as a regulated activity because of the age of the children, adult learning is not, unless the programme is set up specifically for certain vulnerable groups such as Mental Health or the provision for adults with Learning Disabilities. However, ACL will carry out DBS checks at an appropriate level on all staff as there may at any time be a 16-18-year-old and/or an adult who is vulnerable enrol in a class or attend a centre.

* Carry out Risk Assessments to protect any identified adults with care and support needs where appropriate. All learners will be given the opportunity to complete a Welfare/Safeguarding Risk assessment at the start of their course. This information will be held securely and made available to relevant staff only when needed. Adults may become vulnerable at any time during their course, and staff will complete a welfare form with them immediately whenever this vulnerability is disclosed or becomes apparent. This may include learners in receipt of or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age, or illness and who are or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. When judging if a person is vulnerable the emphasis should always be on the person’s rights, dignity, and individuality; people should not be labelled unnecessarily. Staff will be trained and supported in recognising signs and levels of vulnerability and when a Risk assessment needs to be completed. This will include understanding the limits of the support they can give and where and when they may need to refer to specialist help. Where a learner has a RA and is felt to be vulnerable their attendance must be monitored in line with the Attendance Policy, and they must be contacted as soon as is possible in the case of non-attendance. Risk assessments will be monitored/ spot checked regularly by the Safeguarding Lead.
* To ensure implementation of the policy, train all staff (including members of the Strategic Advisory Board) at an appropriate level as soon as they commence employment, including Prevent training either Gov. on-line or the appropriate ETF prevent module. On-line Safety training is mandatory for teaching staff, and all staff can access this through the VLE. A workbook is available for volunteers to complete. All staff will be kept informed about safeguarding responsibilities and procedures through induction, briefings, ACL newsletters, awareness training and access to information and policy documents through the Staff Portal and VLE. All staff will be made aware of ACL’s duties and expectations around Prevent and radicalisation and have sufficient training to understand factors which make learners vulnerable to extremist ideas and know what action to take. Employers are made aware of safeguarding responsibilities, are given an information leaflet explaining Prevent and complete a training workbook. All staff will be made aware of their duty to raise concerns about the attitude or action of colleagues.
* Within the Employer workbook they are informed on how to report a safeguarding issue and who the Safeguarding team members are
* Provide regular review opportunities for apprentices to speak to tutors/assessors about safeguarding, including identifying support needs, asking for guidance or raising any concerns.
* Recognise that learners who have learning difficulties and disabilities can be vulnerable to abuse so that staff working in any capacity with such individuals will be particularly sensitive to signs of abuse. Staff must have an awareness that behaviour, mood and injury may relate to abuse not just disability.
* Provide a clear ACL charter on acceptable behaviour which is widely publicised throughout the service and drawn to the attention of all learners at induction.
* Ensure our approach to safeguarding is learner centred and staff consider at all times what is in the best interests of the learner.
* Provide Information on both Safeguarding and Prevent to learners both in the Centres and workplace via the ACL website, VLE, ACL videos, course introductions and posters, ensuring that all learners are able to recognise abusive actions and behaviours as such and understand procedures for reporting concerns. An information card is also given to all learners. Learners with learning disabilities on supported programmes will have appropriate safeguarding awareness built into induction of the courses they attend; an easy read information card is provided.
* Ensure that publicity and notice boards provide clear information for safer practices and learning, such as Prevent and Safeguarding posters around the centres in areas such as the reception area, classrooms, corridors and toilets
* Ensure quality assurance in safeguarding is embedded. It is vital that we establish and monitor quality; this is reflected in both our Observation of Teaching and Learning (OTL) processes and Self-Assessment Reports (SAR).
* Not allow its centres to be used by extremist groups nor allow the display or distribution of extremist leaflets or literature from its premises.
* Monitor Online safety through an internet filtering system on ACL Essex’s teaching and learning computers and laptops. Raise awareness of reporting procedures in place for staff should any learner report a site that appears to be offensive. (See Computer use policy)

**The Safeguarding Lead will ensure that either they or a Safeguarding Officer:**

* Investigate concerns and make appropriate referrals to Social Care Direct following the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Safeguarding Adults Guidelines and the SET Child Protection procedures, advise staff, and offer support when needed. Make appropriate referral to other organisations when needed including calling the police when necessary.
* Act as a single point of contact for Prevent. The Safeguarding Lead is aware of processes for referring to the channel programme where necessary. A service Prevent and Safeguarding Implementation plan will be regularly updated
* Ensure that sexual violence and sexual harassment is recognised and responded to and that learners can feel confident in reporting abuse, knowing that their concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon.
* Undertake and update training every two years and will maintain contact with the Local Authority Safeguarding Boards/partners, being aware of and following local arrangements.
* Keep and maintain a central concern log. Keep all records confidential, in line with statutory guidance and GDPR, ensuring due regard to principles which allow both sharing and withholding personal information.
* When working with partners or commissioning/sub-contracting learning, the bidders safeguarding policies and procedures will be checked before finalising contracts. Subcontractors will provide the Safeguarding Lead with an anonymised record of concerns on a monthly basis so that the effectiveness of their management of concerns can be monitored.
* Provide supervision for Designated Officers and ensure support is provided for staff distressed by any disclosure of abuse or safeguarding issues. Essex County Council counselling service may also be used.

**Abuse**

Abuse may be defined as exploitation of persons’ vulnerability, having a detrimental effect on their quality of life, health or welfare and removing their dignity.

The Care Act 2014 recognises types of abuse as:

**Physical** – including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.

Signs include unexplained burns, scratches, bruising or abrasions, drowsiness from misuse of medication and anxiety in the presence of abuser.

**Sexual** – may include rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adults has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts.

Signs include changes in behaviour, torn, stained or bloody underclothing, difficulties in walking or sitting and sexualised behaviour.

**Psychological/emotional** – threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation and unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Signs include fear, passivity, confusion, apathy, lack of eye contact, low self-esteem, disturbed sleep patterns and reluctance to talk openly.

**Financial or material** – including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits

Signs include loss of jewellery and personal property, lack of money to purchase basic items, inadequate clothing, loss of money from wallet or purse.

**Neglect and acts of omission** – including ignoring medical or physical care needs, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate heating and nutrition.

Signs include dehydration, infections, malnutrition, and hypothermia

 **Discriminatory** – including verbal and physical abuse, bullying and harassment based on the individual’s age, gender, disability, religion or belief, race or ethnicity or sexual orientation. Recognised signs may be very similar to psychological and emotional abuse.

**Domestic Violence -** Since December 2015 coercive or controlling behaviour has also been criminalised.

**Modern slavery** – encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude.Traffickers and slave masters using whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment

**Organisational** - Including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one’s own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

**Self-neglect -** This covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. It should be noted that self-neglect may not prompt a section 42 enquiry. An assessment should be made on a case by case basis. A decision on whether a response is required under safeguarding will depend on the adult’s ability to protect themselves by controlling their own behaviour. There may come a point when they are no longer able to do this, without external support.

Each type of abuse may produce tell-tale signs in the victim, although each individual may present in different ways. The most significant sign is a change in behaviour although this would only be recognisable in the case of learners or staff known to others.

“It must not be forgotten, however, that any adult could potentially be the victim of abuse. It should be the duty of providers in the learning and skills sector to ensure that they have taken proper steps to safeguard learners.”

(Safer Practice, Safer Learner 2007)

**Abuse Online –** Online abuse can take place via any form of online technology in daily life, this includes peer on peer abuse, bullying, harassing, or sharing of pornography to those who do not want to receive it.

Definitions and further information are provided below which will give a greater understanding of the terms used.

**Bullying including cyberbullying**

*Behaviour by groups or individuals repeated over time that intentionally hurts another. This can be physical or emotional and can take many forms from face-to-face to cyber-bullying via text, phone or the internet.*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/288444/preventing_and_tackling_bullying_march14.pdf>

**Domestic violence**

*Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 and over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.*

<https://www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse>

**Drugs**

*In statutory guidance drugs includes alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, medicines, new psychoactive substances (legal highs) and volatile substances.*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/270169/drug_advice_for_schools.pdf>

**Fabricated or induced illness**

*There are three main ways of the carer fabricating or inducing illness in a child. These include fabrication of signs and symptoms, falsification of hospital charts and medical history and induction of illness.*

**Faith abuse**

*The national action plan on faith abuse aims to address child abuse linked to faith or belief. This includes concepts of witchcraft and spirit possession.*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175437/Action_Plan_-_Abuse_linked_to_Faith_or_Belief.pdf>

**Honour based abuse**

*HBA is incidents or crimes committed to protect or defend the honour of the family or community, it includes FGM and forced marriage as well as practices such as breast ironing. It often involves a wider network of family and can have multiple perpetrators.*

**Forced marriage**

*A forced marriage is one in which one or both spouses do not (or cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved.*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/70188/forced-marriage-guidelines_English.pdf>

**Gangs and youth violence**

*This includes street gangs for whom crime and violence are a core part of their identity.*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-to-schools-and-colleges-on-gangs-and-youth-violence>

**Private Fostering**

*This is a fostering arrangement that is essentially made privately for the care of a child under 16 (18 if they are disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention it should last more than 28 days.*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/274414/Children_Act_1989_private_fostering.pdf>

**Female genital mutilation (FGM)**

*Female genital mutilation takes four forms all of which are prevalent in the UK – all of which are illegal. It involves partial or total removal of female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.*  ***If a disclosure is made that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18, this must be reported to the Police, this is a statutory duty for teachers and is mandatory.*** *This category includes honor based violence, forced marriage and practices such as breast ironing.*

**Gender-based violence/violence against women and girls (VAWG)**

*Refers to violence, physical, sexual or otherwise, stalking and harassment and female genital mutilation*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-uk>

**Radicalisation**

*Radicalisation is the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism. Terrorism is the use of threat of action designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause. Staff must make the Designated Officers aware of anyone they believe is at risk of radicalisation so they can make a Prevent referral if needed.*

**Sexting**

*Sexting is the exchange of self-generated sexually explicit images, through mobile picture messages or webcams over the internet.*

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/sexting/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=UK_GO_S_E_GEN_New_Grant_NSPCC_Sexting&utm_term=definition_of_sexting&gclid=CLPgs6a4_cYCFbQatAodY7AK3A&gclsrc=aw.ds>

**Trafficking**

*This refers to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion. Trafficking is about the exploitation of one person over another which includes slavery, forced labour, prostitution and the removal of organs.*

<https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/human-trafficking/>

**Mental health**

*Positive mental health is more than the absence or management of metal health problems; it is the foundation of wellbeing. Mental health problems can indicate possible other abuse is taking place or has taken place. Childhood abuse can have a lasting impact into adulthood. If staff are concerned that a mental health concern is also a safeguarding concern they should speak to the Designated safeguarding Lead or Officer.*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/213761/dh_124058.pdf>

**Hate**

*Hate incidents and hate crime are acts of violence or hostility directed at people because of whom they are or who someone thinks they are.*

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/hate-crime/what-are-hate-incidents-and-hate-crime/>

**Missing Children and Adults**

*A missing person is defined as: “Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.” When someone is categorised as missing, the police will investigate their disappearance and try to find and safeguard them.*

**County Lines**

*Criminal exploitation of children or people who are vulnerable is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity: drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns.*

 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines>

**Serious Violence**

*Staff must be aware of signs that vulnerable learners may have been approached by or are involved with people associated with criminal networks or gangs*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-to-schools-and-colleges-on-gangs-and-youth-violence>

**Homelessness**

*Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child’s welfare. The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should be aware of contact details and referral routes in to the Local Housing Authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity. Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property.*

<https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/>

**Upskirting**

*The Voyeurism (Offences) Act, which is commonly known as the Upskirting Act, came into force on 12 April 2019. ‘Upskirting’ is where someone takes a picture under a person’s clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim.*

**What to do if you have a concern.** (Please also see flowchart, page 14)

It is essential to recognise that the concept of safeguarding can apply to learners and staff in a range of situations, for example, the use of texting or telephone calls to harass others, personal information such as details of whether a person has attended a particular class (especially in situations of domestic abuse) being given to inappropriate people, for example, partners/ spouses or former partners/spouses.

Be aware that safeguarding includes behaviour/ incidents that occur outside of our centres. Adults/young people can be put at risk of harm through a variety of actions: inadequate observation of policies and procedures and failures to act, for example a reluctance to investigate allegations, whether proven or unsubstantiated and whether relating to incidences taking place within ACL provision (including outreach centres) or disclosure or abuse taking place at home, in residential accommodation, day centres, etc. For ACL this could translate as inadequate reporting and monitoring procedures.

**Child on child abuse (previously peer on peer abuse)** must be taken seriously and the ACL Charter referred to. Allegations made about this must be investigated and dealt with through the safeguarding procedures and both parties not just the victims supported. It must be understood that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as banter.

**Early help**. All staff should be aware of the possible need for early help, this means providing support as soon as a problem emerges. Any identified requirements for early help should be discussed with a Designated Officer and staff should be prepared to work with other professionals when an assessment is required.

Concerns can be discussed with your line manager in the first instance; if they are not available, please do not delay in passing the information on. Concerns and disclosures should be reported immediately via MyConcern. If you think the concern is urgent or if you are unsure, it is safeguarding or need to discuss, please contact the Safeguarding Lead/Officer or one of the Designated Officers.

If a disclosure is made to you, please observe the following:

* Respond calmly; listen to what is said without showing either disbelief or shock
* Don’t judge, accept what is said
* Jot down some notes, if this isn’t possible at the time as soon as you can, be as accurate as you can, use the persons own words
* Keep the original notes as they can sometimes be needed in court
* Do not promise confidentiality, tell the person you will need to talk to someone else and explain who, but also ask them what they would like to happen. Do not ask leading questions; ask questions which will encourage them to talk openly
* It is not your job to investigate; this can only be done by trained professionals
* Concerns about data protection must not prevent staff and other professionals sharing information and working together to obtain a full picture in order to support the child/adult concerned.

**Keeping Ourselves Safe**

The following guidelines aim to outline good practice, promote the personal safety of staff and volunteers, and protect them from potential allegations while helping to safeguard adults and young people:

* Always seek the person’s permission before touching them.
* Avoid being left alone in a room with an individual, if this does happen make sure the door is left open, and that another staff member knows what you are doing.
* Report concerns or worries about other staff members or volunteers to the appropriate person following the safeguarding procedures
* Record all incidents and accidents accurately on an incident report form and inform your line manager at the earliest opportunity.
* If a learner is accidentally injured as a result of a staff member or volunteers actions, seems distressed in any way, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, always report such incidents as soon as possible to your line manager and make a written report.
* If a learner appears to develop an infatuation with you don’t encourage this and report the situation to your line manager.
* Ensure consent forms are signed when taking photographs of all learners

**In order to keep yourself safe, do not:**

* Spend time alone with individual learners in closed classrooms – please leave doors open or use public spaces
* Give learners personal details such as home phone number, personal mobile number, private email address and home address – If you want to offer email contact please use your ECC e-mail address or communicate through the VLE
* Give learners lifts in your car, however short the journey or except lifts from learners
* Take learners to your home or visit their homes
* Arrange to meet learners outside an organised activity or service.
* Invite or accept invitations from learners as a friend on social networking sites such as Facebook

If these situations are unavoidable, they should only occur with the full prior knowledge and consent of your line manager and where applicable the persons support worker or key worker.

**Never:**

* Engage in sexually proactive activities with learners.
* Encourage or allow learners to become emotionally dependent on you.
* Enter areas designated only for the opposite sex.
* Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
* Allow learners to use inappropriate language unchallenged or use it yourself.
* Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a learner, even in fun.
* Let any allegation made be ignored or go unrecorded.
* Do things of a personal nature for learners that they can do themselves.
* Promise to keep information secret.

**Physical contact and learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties**

Touch can contribute to a multi-sensory approach and supports our learners to make sense of their environment. It is supportive and comforting and can help develop trust and build relationships between learner and staff. Touch offers meaningful communication to our learners and prevents periods of isolation and loneliness, which can manifest itself in difficult or self-stimulating behaviours.

It is acceptable to touch learners in order to:

* Function as the main form of communication or reinforce other communication, e.g. hand on shoulder while speaking.
* Give physical support and guidance.
* Give reassurance – communicate security and comfort
* Act to give protection in a potentially dangerous or hazardous situation
* Respond to learner’s use of physical contact for communication and making social connection

It is not acceptable to touch learners in order to:

* Exploit or coerce the learners
* Satisfy your own needs at the expense of the learner by forcing affection
* Use touch to correct a learner
* React in anger
* Have sexual contact

Be aware of the following:

* Physical contact being misunderstood and triggering sexual arousal – be tuned in to feedback signals from learners
* Learners may sometimes indulge in touches to intimate areas of a member of staff’s body when there is no sexual intent or understanding, if this happens withdraw from the learner or cease to touch, don’t give significant negative feedback at the time as this may reinforce the behaviour.
* Whenever possible give regard to the learner’s right to accept and withdraw from physical contact
* Know why you are doing it, and be able to explain
* Respect the learners rights to withdraw if they so wish
* If the use of physical contact is part of the learners’ objectives, then record this in their ILP
* Get to know your learners well, read signals, if you are not happy or comfortable with a situation, back away.
* Where possible have other staff present in the room

**Use of reasonable force**

If circumstances mean that force may need to be used to safeguarding a person, the decision is down to the professional judgement of the staff concerned and should always depend on individual circumstances. The term reasonable force covers a broad range of actions that require a degree of physical contact; it may be passive physical contact such as standing between learners or blocking their path or physical contact such as leading them by the arm. Reasonable means using no more force than is needed. All staff working in the Supported Learning area will be trained in managing challenging behaviour, de-escalation skills and physical breakaway skills.

**Allegations involving staff/volunteers**

For concerns about staff /volunteers including supply staff or if there is a suspicion or an allegation is made against a staff member contact your line manager immediately. If the concern is about your line manager or a Senior Manager contact the Safeguarding Lead who will liaise with the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer). If you do not feel able to share your concerns, please refer to the ECC Whistle Blowing Policy. If there is a concern raised and it is felt that it is not being acted on by the Safeguarding Lead, then it can be referred directly to Children’s services / Adult Social care. Concerns regarding allegations about staff must also be addressed.

**Monitoring and Evaluating the Policy**

All Line Managers will consult with and advise all staff on the implementation of this policy.

Incidents relating to this policy and its effectiveness will be evaluated by the safeguarding group and reported through the annual Self-Assessment cycle and quality improvement planning and the ACL Safeguarding Annual Report.

**Links to other ACL policies**:

Behavioural Policy

Children and Young people Safeguarding Policy

Online Safety Policy

Computer Use Policy

Disability Policy

Attendance Policy

Learning Support Policy

Equality and Diversity policy

Health and Safety Policy

Harassment and bullying policy

Visitor and External Speaker policy

ECC Safer Recruitment

ECC Code of Conduct

ECC Whistle Blowing policy

ACL Charter



See also pages 9-10 for reporting proces