

Annex to MidKent College Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

March 2020

Response to COVID-19

There have been significant changes within our setting and within the UK in response to the outbreak of COVID-19.

This annex sets out some of the adjustments MidKent College is making in line with the changed arrangements in the college and following advice from government and local agencies.

The current position is that, following the Government announcement, all college sites are closed to all but vulnerable students and those with an EHCP. Timetables have been postponed.

Despite the changes, the College's Safeguarding Policy is fundamentally the same: the welfare of children and young people always comes first, staff should respond robustly to safeguarding concerns and referrals should continue to be made in line with our established safeguarding procedure.

The pressures on children, young people and their families at this time are significant. There will be heightened awareness of family pressures for a variety of reasons including through having to stay within the household, through financial hardship or health anxiety. Staff may be aware of the mental health of both students and their parents or carers, and should refer to safeguarding about any emerging concerns.

We have undertaken a scoping exercise to identify the most vulnerable students and individual arrangements have been made with students who have an attached social worker and those with an EHCP.

For students subject to a Child Protection Plan and Child In Need Plan, and who have an allocated social worker: contact will be made by the safeguarding team with the usual frequency, in agreement with the young person, family and social worker. Where families have requested this to be once per week, this has been discussed and agreed with the allocated social worker.

For students who are Looked after Children and recent Care Leavers : contact will be made by the Welfare Officer LAC who will call weekly or twice weekly as agreed with the student, carer and social worker.

For students with an EHCP: Learning Support Practitioners and Learning Support Assistants will maintain regular contact as agreed with student and parents / carers. Support can be delivered through individual arrangements based on curriculum activity.

For students on the edge of social care involvement or pending allocation of a social worker, or identified as vulnerable: contact will be made by the safeguarding team or Transition Officers once per week for a welfare check. The PPT team will also be contacting students to ensure the necessary level of support is offered.

NB Contact will be made remotely through telephone calls/Skype or other appropriate methods.

Reporting arrangements:

The college arrangements continue in line with our Safeguarding Policy

Dedicated Safeguarding telephone number – 01634 383567

Designated Safeguarding Team

Ashley Ritchie 01634 383234 / Ashley.ritchie2@midkent.ac.uk DSL

Ben Beer 01634 383262 / ben.beer@midkent.ac.uk

Michelle McDonnell 01634 383700 / michelle.mcdonnell@midkent.ac.uk

Donna Thomas 01622 624924 / donna.thomas@midkent.ac.uk

Cherrie Bunch 01634 383002 / cherrie.bunch@midkent.ac.uk

Designated Safeguarding Governor

Pim Baxter pim.baxter@midkent.ac.uk

Out of Hours Contacts/Referral Contacts

Medway Council Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) – Telephone 01634 334466

Kent County Council Safeguarding - Telephone 03000 41 11 11

Kent and Medway Out of Hours Social Services – Telephone 03000 41 91 91

We will be operating during normal business hours, 8.30am – 5pm (Mon – Thurs) and 8.30am – 4.30pm (Friday).

We have confirmed the arrangements to contact the LADO at the local authority remain unchanged:

Staff will continue to follow the safeguarding procedures and advise the safeguarding leads immediately about concerns they have about any child, whether in college or not. COVID-19 means a need for increased vigilance due to the pressures on services, families and young people, rather than a reduction in our standards.

Staff will continue to log confidential comments on ProMonitor as they normally would. Staff who do not have access to ProMonitor will contact the Safeguarding team in the usual ways.

Normal safeguarding procedures apply for referrals to children's services. This contact will go through a member of the safeguarding team (listed above) who will follow appropriate measures in seeking the appropriate and necessary support. Out of hours guidance can be found in the Safeguarding Guidance 2019-20

Allegations or concerns about staff

With such different arrangements in place, young people could be at greater risk of on line abuse. We remind all staff to maintain the view that 'it could happen here' and to immediately report any concern, no matter how small, to the safeguarding team.

New staff or volunteers

All new starters must have an on line induction. They must read the college Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the Whistleblowing Policy and the staff Code of Conduct. The DSL or deputy will ensure new recruits know who to contact if worried about a child or young person and ensure the new starters are familiar with the child protection procedure. All new starters or volunteers need to confirm that they have read Part I and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education

Peer on peer abuse

We recognise the potential for abuse to go on between young people, especially in the context of a college closure or partial closure. Our staff will remain vigilant to the signs of peer-on-peer abuse, including those between young people who are not currently attending our provision. Extra care should be taken where groups have mixed age, developmental stages, are attending other education establishments as an interim measure and similar. When making contact with these families our staff may ask about relationships between learners.

Risk online

Young people will be using the internet more during this period. The College may also use online approaches to deliver training or support. Staff will be aware of the signs and signals of cyberbullying and other risks online and apply the same child-centred safeguarding practices as when students are learning at the College. The College continues to ensure appropriate filters and monitors are in place. The College has taken on board the guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning and guidance for safer working practice from the Safer Recruitment Consortium.

It is extremely important that professional boundaries do not slip during this exceptional period and protocols for on line working have been issued.

Staff can access further guidance here:

<https://www.tes.com/news/coronavirus-10-safeguarding-rules-teachers-home>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2020/march/undertaking-remote-teaching-safely/>

Students accessing remote learning will receive guidance on keeping safe online and know how to raise concerns with the college, Childline, the UK Safer Internet Centre and CEOP.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/internet-connected-devices/>

Mental Health

Restrictions to movement and contact with other people means pupils are more likely to be at risk of mental health problems. Individual academies should make pupils and their families

aware of where further support can be found. The Department for Education have produced guidance to support parents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

The following organisations can also provide support:

www.kooth.com – *Free online emotional wellbeing and counselling with self-help articles*

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else/>

Calm Harm App – A phone app providing help for those who use self-harm as a coping strategy; <https://calmharm.co.uk/>

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers will receive information about keeping students safe online with peers, the College, other education offers they may access and the wider internet community. We have set out the College's approach, including the sites students will be asked to access and set out who from the college (if anyone) their student is going to be interacting with online. Parents have been offered the following links:

- o Internet matters - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- o Net-aware - for support for parents and careers from the NSPCC
- o Parent info - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- o Thinkuknow - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
- o UK Safer Internet Centre - advice for parents and carers