Safeguarding policy

DHA is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all apprentices, staff and stakeholders. We recognise our legal and moral duty to protect learners from harm, abuse, exploitation and radicalisation and to create a learning environment where all individuals feel safe, respected and supported.

This policy outlines how DHA meets its statutory safeguarding responsibilities and ensures that safeguarding is fully embedded across all aspects of apprenticeship delivery.

This policy applies to:

- All learners
- All DHA staff
- All employers involved in delivering apprenticeship programmes

Safeguarding includes a wide range of responsibilities to protect individual's health, safety, and wellbeing.

DHA recognises that safeguarding concerns can arise from a range of vulnerabilities and circumstances. We are committed to a whole person approach, identifying concerns early and providing appropriate support through internal intervention, employer engagement and referral to external agencies where required.

At DHA, this includes protection from:

- Abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, sexual, financial)
- Domestic violence
- Mental Health needs
- Homelessness
- Caring responsibilities
- Family circumstances
- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination
- Exploitation (including sexual and criminal)
- Radicalisation and extremism
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, honour-based violence
- Substance misuse
- Self-harm or suicidal thoughts
- Unsafe working practices
- Financial exploitation
- Child-on-child abuse, including bullying, harassment, intimidation, prejudice-based behaviour, sexual harassment and sexual violence.
- Harmful behaviours that occur in person, online or through digital platforms.

Exploitation

DHA recognises that exploitation can affect learners of any age and may occur in person, online, within relationships, communities or the workplace. Exploitation may involve an individual being manipulated, coerced, deceived, threatened or controlled for another person's benefit.

Examples include:

- Criminal exploitation, including county lines activity
- Sexual exploitation
- Financial exploitation
- Modern slavery and human trafficking
- Online exploitation and grooming
- Coercive and controlling behaviour
- Labour exploitation within employment settings

Staff are trained to recognise potential indicators of exploitation and are required to report concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Apprentices will be supported to recognise risks, understand healthy relationships and seek help when concerns arise.

Neglect

DHA recognises that neglect can be difficult to identify and may present through poor physical or emotional wellbeing, unmet needs, persistent absence, self-neglect, poor personal care, homelessness or lack of appropriate support. Staff are trained to identify indicators of neglect and take appropriate action where concerns arise.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

DHA recognises that mental health difficulties may be both a safeguarding concern and an indicator of other risks. Staff are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions but are trained to recognise signs that a learner may require support and to refer concerns appropriately.

Learners will be signposted to internal and external wellbeing services where required.

DHA will ensure that:

- All learners and staff are treated with dignity, respect, and equality
- The learning environment (online and physical) is safe, inclusive, and free from harassment
- All staff understand and take ownership of their safeguarding responsibilities
- All safeguarding concerns and disclosures are dealt with promptly, sensitively, and in line with statutory guidance

- Learners are supported in developing the knowledge and confidence to keep themselves safe
- Staff recruitment follows safer recruitment practices, including DBS checks and safeguarding training

Early Identification and Support

DHA is committed to identifying safeguarding concerns at the earliest opportunity. Where a learner may be experiencing challenges that impact their safety, wellbeing, learning or employment, staff will work with the learner, employer and relevant agencies to provide appropriate support. Early intervention can prevent concerns from escalating and improve outcomes for learners.

Safeguarding responsibilities

All Staff

- Must complete safeguarding and Prevent training
- Must read and understand *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*
- Must report any safeguarding concerns or disclosures immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy
- Must uphold safe working practices and maintain professional boundaries at all times

Staff Training and Safe Recruitment

- All staff undergo enhanced DBS checks prior to employment
- Recruitment processes include verification of identity, qualifications, employment history and references
- DHA will assess the ongoing suitability of staff and volunteers to work with learners.
- At least one member of every recruitment panel will have completed safer recruitment training.
- All new starters receive induction training on safeguarding, Prevent, wellbeing, and safe working practices
- Staff complete mandatory safeguarding and Prevent training (renewed annually)
- Staff are trained in how to respond appropriately to disclosures and concerns
- Safe working practices are outlined in the Staff Code of Conduct and Health & Safety Policy

DHA will treat all learners with dignity and respect and will work sensitively with learners who may be questioning their gender identity. Individual circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis, ensuring safeguarding, wellbeing and privacy remain central to all decisions.

DHA apprentices are entitled to:

- A safe learning environment, free from bullying, harassment or abuse
- Access to confidential guidance and support
- Knowledge of how to report concerns or make disclosures
- Resources to build resilience and awareness of personal safety
- Training and discussions on key hot topics (e.g. mental health, e-safety, Prevent, relationships)
- Signposting to external specialist support services where needed

Employer Responsibilities

DHA expects employers to work in partnership to safeguard apprentices by:

- Providing a safe working environment
- Reporting safeguarding concerns promptly
- Supporting attendance at safeguarding related meetings and reviews
- Following their own safeguarding procedures
- Cooperating with DHA and external agencies where appropriate
- Ensuring apprentices know how to report concerns in the workplace

Young carers

DHA recognises that some learners may have caring responsibilities for family members or dependants. Young carers and adult carers may face additional challenges that impact attendance, progress, wellbeing and achievement. Appropriate support and reasonable adjustments will be considered where required.

Online Safety and Artificial Intelligence

DHA recognises that technology presents both opportunities and safeguarding risks. Online safety training includes awareness of cyberbullying, online abuse, grooming, radicalisation, misinformation, disinformation, image sharing and emerging risks associated with artificial intelligence (AI).

Learners are encouraged to use digital tools safely, critically evaluate online information, protect personal data and report any concerns regarding online conduct or content.

As part of DHA's hybrid and remote delivery model:

- Online sessions are delivered only via approved DHA platforms
- Personal email addresses or accounts are never used to communicate with learners
- Staff are expected to deliver from neutral, professional backgrounds
- Apprentices receive regular advice on online safety risks and how to protect themselves digitally
- All digital activity must comply with the IT Acceptable Use Policy

Prevent Duty

DHA complies fully with the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and has a duty to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism or extremist ideologies.

We do this by:

- Training staff to identify the signs of radicalisation
- Embedding British Values across the curriculum
- Creating a safe space for discussion of sensitive topics
- Implementing a robust Prevent Policy, risk assessment, and action plan
- Referring serious concerns to the Channel Programme or local Prevent teams where necessary

Multi agency working

DHA recognises that effective safeguarding relies upon timely information sharing and collaborative working. Staff will share information with safeguarding partners, employers, local authorities, health professionals, Prevent teams and other relevant agencies where it is lawful, necessary and proportionate to do so in order to protect learners from harm.

DHA works in partnership with:

- Local safeguarding boards and authorities
- Police and Prevent teams
- Mental health and wellbeing services
- Social care
- Awarding bodies and government funders

DHA recognises that timely information sharing is essential for effective safeguarding. Information will be shared with relevant agencies, employers and professionals where there is a legitimate safeguarding concern and where it is lawful, necessary and proportionate to do so. Staff should never allow concerns about data protection to prevent appropriate safeguarding action.

Apprentices can report concerns to any member of staff. Staff are trained to:

- Listen non-judgmentally
- Avoid making assumptions
- Report the concern to the DSL/Deputy DSL immediately
- Record details factually and securely

Reporting concerns and disclosures

All disclosures are handled in line with safeguarding procedures. No apprentice will ever be penalised for making a disclosure.

Safeguarding Team

- **Kate Day – Director of Operations (DSL)**
  07580 864473 | kate.day@dhassociates.co.uk
- **Claire Oakes – Deputy DSL**
  07825 637622 | claire.oakes@dhassociates.co.uk
- **Kirstie Battams – Deputy DSL**
  07776528093 | kirstie.battams@dhassociates.co.uk

General Safeguarding Enquiries: safeguarding@dhassociates.co.uk

The DSL is responsible for ensuring that all safeguarding procedures are up to date, effective, and reviewed regularly. The DSL leads on responding to disclosures, liaising with external agencies, and ensuring compliance with legal requirements.

All safeguarding policies are reviewed and updated annually in **October** unless legislative, statutory or operational changes require an earlier review during the year.