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Good Practice Example

Title:	A structured approach to managing learners' welfare and safeguarding issues
Provider:	The Skills Partnership Ltd
Type of provision:	Independent Learning Provider
Region:	National
Remit area:	Learning and Skills
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Brief description:	Effective use of a log to record and manage issues which may act as barriers to learners' progress. Introducing the log has raised staff awareness of safeguarding and welfare issues, and has improved the support provided for learners.

Overview – the provider's message

"We used to have a traffic-light system, which would flag learners with issues. But it was mostly used negatively, such as tutors recording when they couldn't get in touch with a learner, or when progress had slowed. We wanted to get underneath the concern; to look at the causes, not the symptoms of slow progress, so we could do something about it. So we designed a new log for learners needing additional support, and for safeguarding issues. At the same time, we carried out an extensive programme of staff training; going far beyond safeguarding content, to change the culture of how we support learners. Now our staff and learners are more highly motivated, our timely success rates are consistently good, and at our staff forum last week, nobody wanted to go home at the end!"



Advice to others? "First get commitment from the senior team. Then have a clear vision of what you want to achieve, and do whatever you need to raise staff awareness – we used staff surveys. Set up a simple system at first – you can refine it later – and make sure issues are followed up, so that everyone can see that the log is being well used. And give learners an alternative, confidential route to report concerns."

Moyra Blake, Director of Quality

The good practice in detail

If your vision is to give learners a really good learning experience, and to ensure that they feel safe, cared for and valued, then safeguarding has to be a priority. The Skills Partnership (TSP) had already started to combine activities around health and safety, safeguarding, and equality and diversity, to provide systems to support learners. But managers recognised that their systems were mostly negative, indicating when things had gone wrong. The challenge was to recognise learners' needs earlier, and to respond appropriately. Inspectors said in the 2011

[report](#) that, "Managers and staff share information very well about learners who are deemed to be at risk of not completing their courses, and there are good systems to manage learners who are thought to be at risk of failing. Managers and staff use a web-based risk register very effectively to record all welfare issues for 'at risk' learners. . . . Senior managers monitor the register well to ensure appropriate support is provided and maintained. They provide clear guidance for tutors on what is expected of them in recording and supporting learners. Tutors initiate information in the register as soon as they become aware of learners' concerns."

How the log works

Whenever a staff member identifies that a learner may need support or is encountering difficulties, they log the details. Access to the log is quick and easy, on the home page of the company's intranet. An automated e mail is sent to the relevant manager every time an issue about a learner is logged for the first time. The same e mail is sent to another member of staff so that there is cover if the manager is absent. Moyra, as the safeguarding 'designated person' is automatically notified, as is her colleague who is responsible for learner support.

Managers are responsible for supporting the staff member to help the learner, or if appropriate, they deal directly with the learner. A record of activities to support the learner is added to the log. Managers monitor the progress of learners causing concern at least weekly. There is no rush to 'close' each case; support continues, and is recorded in the log, for as long as it is needed.

Senior managers have access to the whole database, but staff can only see information relating to their own learners, to maintain the security of information about learners.

Raising staff awareness and confidence



Moyra and her team recognised that staff use of the 'learners causing concern' log was not going to improve unless they had a clearer idea about why they should use it, and the difference it could make. So as well as providing training about safeguarding, managers used the staff forum to let tutors air their anxieties – particularly in difficult areas, such as when the employer is causing a problem for the learner. Other training materials that have been used include:

- case studies, for example where a learner was being bullied by their manager, sometimes supported by Youtube video clips
- a workshop on functional skills, for staff to develop skills in communication and presentation skills, using safeguarding as the context. One of the challenges for participants was to produce a brief but compelling summary of the company's approach to safeguarding, to go on a website.

Staff surveys are used to identify current levels of understanding; the last one indicated that, staff confidence had increased to the level where they have been asking for the 'answers' to be posted online, so that they can check that they have got them right.

Safe ways for learners to raise concerns

It was at a Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) 'Prepared for inspection' event that Moyra picked up the idea of a dedicated phone line for learners to ring if they had a safeguarding issue. Further investigation established that the idea could be easily implemented and that it would not cost much to run. A cheap mobile phone on 'pay as you go' is used, so

that learners can access it at any time to leave a message or send a text. The phone is checked at least daily, and all contacts are followed up.

Provider background

[The Skills Partnership](#) (TSP) is a private limited company established in 2005, which specialises in the leisure and fitness industry, facilities management and the media. The company holds a direct national contract with the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for apprenticeship and advanced



apprenticeship programmes in sport, leisure and recreation; media; and business, administration and law. TSP also has a contract for 'Train to Gain' programmes in cleaning, warehousing, hospitality, customer service, business administration and preparation for life and work.

The company provides training mainly at employers' premises – mostly private fitness clubs and gyms – throughout England. The head office is in Theale and an administrative and meeting centre is located in Goring-on-Thames.