



Online Safety and Associated Issues Policy

Swift Learning

Review Date: 01.09.2025

Next Review Due: 01.09.2026

Policy Owner: Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

1. Introduction

At Swift Learning, we recognise the vital role that technology plays in education and everyday life. Our learners, many of whom are vulnerable or at risk of harm, are likely to engage with digital technology both within and outside of our provision. While online environments offer opportunities for learning, creativity and communication, they also present a range of safeguarding risks which we must actively address.

This policy outlines Swift Learning's approach to online safety, including how we protect young people from harmful online material, how we monitor and manage digital activity within our provision, and how we educate both staff and learners to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

2. Aims and Principles

Our aim is to create a culture where staff and learners understand online risks and respond to them appropriately. We are committed to ensuring that all digital interactions within Swift Learning are safe, respectful, and responsible, and that learners are equipped to make informed choices about their digital lives. Online safety is considered an essential aspect of our safeguarding duty and is embedded into our policies, procedures and daily practice.

Although Swift Learning is not a registered school, we adopt relevant guidance from the Department for Education, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) and the *Use of Reasonable Force in Schools* (2013), and align our standards with those expected of alternative provision settings by commissioning schools, local authorities, and inspectors.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Paige Dutton, as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), is responsible for leading on online safety, ensuring that risks are understood, training is delivered, and incidents are responded to appropriately. All staff are expected to take shared responsibility for maintaining a safe digital environment. This includes modelling good practice, supervising learners appropriately when they are online, and reporting any concerns.

Learners are encouraged to engage positively with technology but are expected to follow agreed rules for safe and respectful use of devices and the internet while in our care. Where possible, families and carers will be involved in promoting consistent messages around online safety and digital responsibility.

4. Use of Technology Within Swift Learning

Learners at Swift Learning may use laptops, tablets, and other internet-enabled devices as part of their learning or support sessions. These devices are managed in a way that balances access to educational content with protection from harm.

To eliminate distractions, reduce safeguarding risks, and maintain a calm and focused learning environment, all learners are required to hand in their mobile phones at the start of each day upon arrival. Phones are securely stored and returned to learners when they leave at the end of the day. This procedure significantly reduces the likelihood of issues such as online bullying, inappropriate content access, or disruption during sessions.

Where mobile phones are needed for travel, safety, or agreed communication with carers, arrangements will be made for secure handover and appropriate use outside of session times.

All devices used by learners are subject to appropriate filtering to prevent access to illegal or harmful material, including pornography, violence, extremist content, and hate speech. Monitoring systems or staff supervision are in place to identify any inappropriate searches or usage. These systems are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain effective and proportionate.

5. Associated Risks and Safeguarding Concerns

We recognise that learners in alternative provision are often at higher risk of being exposed to or targeted by online harms. These include, but are not limited to, cyberbullying, online grooming and exploitation, exposure to inappropriate or illegal content, online radicalisation, identity fraud, and pressure to share explicit images or personal information. Some learners may also be vulnerable to compulsive use of social media, gaming, or content that negatively affects their mental health.

Staff are trained to recognise the signs that a young person may be at risk as a result of their online activity, and to act immediately if there are concerns. All such concerns are treated as safeguarding matters and referred to Paige Dutton without delay. Referrals may then be made to relevant external agencies such as the police, Prevent, social care, or CEOP.

6. Learner Education and Awareness

Online safety is addressed as part of our wider safeguarding and wellbeing approach. Learners are supported to understand the risks and responsibilities associated with using technology, including the importance of privacy, consent, digital reputation, and respectful communication. These discussions are tailored to the needs and maturity of individual learners and may be delivered through keywork sessions, group discussions, or informal learning opportunities.

Where appropriate, Swift Learning works with external agencies and families to reinforce online safety messages and to ensure a consistent response to emerging risks.

7. Staff Use of Technology and Digital Communication

Staff at Swift Learning must use all technology and communication tools in accordance with our safeguarding policies and the Staff Code of Conduct. Personal devices must not be used to communicate with learners or to store learner information. Professional accounts and secure systems are used for any communication or data handling involving learners.

Staff are strictly prohibited from engaging with learners through social media or personal messaging platforms. Any breach of this expectation may result in disciplinary action and referral to safeguarding authorities.

8. Responding to Online Incidents

Any online safety concern, whether it involves harmful content, inappropriate communication, or suspected exploitation, must be reported immediately to Paige Dutton, the DSL. All incidents are recorded securely and reviewed to identify any patterns or wider risks. Depending on the nature and severity of the incident, external agencies may be involved to support an appropriate response.

All learners involved in an online safety incident will be supported through follow-up conversations, emotional support, and, where necessary, changes to their risk management plans. The learner's voice will be central in any post-incident reflection.

9. Training and Oversight

Online safety is included in Swift Learning's mandatory safeguarding training for all staff. This includes training on identifying and responding to online risks, understanding how to use filtering and monitoring tools, and maintaining appropriate boundaries in digital communication. Refresher training is provided annually or in response to changes in guidance or practice.

The DSL and senior team monitor online safety incidents and review this policy annually to ensure it reflects current risks, best practice, and the needs of our learners. Feedback from staff, learners and commissioners is used to strengthen our approach and ensure accountability.

10. Related Policies and Documentation

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Swift Learning policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
 - Behaviour and Relationships Policy
 - Complaints Policy
 - Staff Code of Conduct
 - Prevent Duty Risk Assessment and Action Plan
 - Acceptable Use Agreements for Staff and Learners
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11. Review

This policy is reviewed annually or in response to a significant change in legislation, guidance, or incident. The DSL, is responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of this policy and that it is applied consistently in practice.

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