

Plymouth College of Art

Moving the safeguarding agenda forward



Plymouth College of Art is one of four independent colleges of art and design in the UK providing unrivalled specialist expertise across Fine Arts, Applied Arts, Spatial Design, 3d, Animation, Photography, Media and Entrepreneurship. From BTEC National Diploma, Foundation Levels and apprenticeships, through to a full spectrum of BA Honours Degrees and a Masters programme, the college offers courses to approximately 2,500 students. These are made up of 650 full-time Further Education and 1,000 part-time Further Education students ranging from 14 – 60+ years. In addition, the Higher Education cohort consists of 700 full-time and 80 part-time students. The college also offers Saturday Arts Club to children at the weekends. The students are supported by approximately 232 staff.

Safeguarding in the college context:

In 2009, the college expanded the number of designated people (DP) responsible for safeguarding, and set up a working group that included a member of the senior management team, Head of HR and the lead designated person. Although each of the designated people had undertaken child protection training with the Local Authority, the college was also keen to use training materials which were more relevant for colleges. To address this, the group used the LSIS safeguarding audit tool to identify areas for development across the whole organisation, including staff training. As a result of this, the designated people undertook the LSIS on-line training. This was then followed by the full senior management team and all HR staff. At the time of writing, Heads of Service and anyone responsible for sitting on recruitment panels are also undertaking the LSIS on line training. In addition, the lead designated person and two additional designated people attended the LSIS Safer Recruitment and Safeguarding Learners in the Learning and Skills Sector – Facilitators Workshop. This was to enable a rollout of safeguarding awareness to all staff in the college. Attendance at the facilitator workshop enabled the trainees to come back to the college and deliver safeguarding training to all staff.

Safeguarding CPD:

Prior to using the LSIS materials, all staff, including governors, had been trained in child protection by the Local Authority. Initially the safeguarding training was delivered to business support staff during the academic year. Then in July 2010, all academic staff undertook the LSIS awareness training. In addition to this, further training is planned for contract staff, student ambassadors and all new staff, from September 2010, as well as additional training for Governors.

As the college accessed the LSIS facilitator training, it now has access to LSIS safeguarding materials. As well as providing the resources for training, the LSIS materials have enhanced the college's knowledge and information necessary to write a College Safeguarding Awareness Pack, which goes out to all staff during training, and a staff briefing document, which is carried out during new staff inductions.

The training has provided staff and the college with the opportunity to further reflect on strengths and areas for development across the whole institution and within the full safeguarding agenda. Evaluations were carried out with staff during the training, using the LSIS evaluation form, and this

has provided the working group with clear indications of further guidance that staff would like, for example understanding mental health, as well as potential procedural and informational developments necessary. In addition, the LSIS form 'Towards Excellence' was completed by a sample of trainees which has helped to identify where staff feel the College stands in terms of its work towards excellence, and provided the working group with clear indications of additional strengths and development areas.

Looking to the future:

Further plans to develop safeguarding include looking at expanding partnership working and further training and development (not just in safeguarding but in awareness of issues which are central to it, such as mental health). In addition, a process is to be established which will enable peer supervision for staff who are dealing with particularly difficult situations and need support. This is in addition to the already available counselling service for staff. Student awareness is to be developed further through information provision and induction and safeguarding is to be addressed in course meetings through establishing it as a standing agenda item.