

## Children and Adults at Risk Safeguarding Policy

### Purpose

- Safeguarding is at the foundation of AQA's work; therefore, we are committed to the welfare of everyone we work with and serve.
- Everyone who works for or on behalf of AQA, such as staff, associates, Trustees, or 3rd party contractors has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children and adults at risk from abuse and exploitation.
- AQA recognises that by employing staff and associates it is placing them in a position of trust, particularly when the post involves contact with children or adults, however infrequent.
- AQA is committed to reducing the risk of employing any person intent on abusing this position of trust and identifying/responding to any incident of alleged abuse from its employees or associates fairly and swiftly.
- AQA strives to develop a strong safeguarding centric culture, ensuring safeguarding is a priority at all levels of within the organisation, and in the many diverse areas of our work.
- AQA follows the [JCO \(Joint Council for Qualifications\) Principles of safeguarding for children and adults at risk](#).

### Identifying a safeguarding concern

People who work for or on behalf of AQA may identify abuse or neglect in a variety of ways, examples are outlined below, but this is not an exhaustive list:

- exam scripts, coursework, or social media messages that indicate a student may be at risk.
- correspondence from parents or directly from candidates in relation to post results matters (such as appeals) that indicate a student may be at risk or that a centre did not act appropriately in relation to a safeguarding matter.
- seeing or overhearing something when visiting a centre that causes you concern.
- witnessing behaviour that leads you to have a concern about someone who works for AQA.

### Raising a safeguarding concern

- If you are concerned about a child or adult at risk, you must act without delay.
- **If you believe a child or adult at risk is in immediate danger, then you must contact the emergency services immediately.**
- Safeguarding concerns arising from marking are escalated within the marking platforms – further training and guidance can be found on Learning Space or in the Associate Handbook.
- All other safeguarding concerns can be raised by emailing [safeguarding@aqa.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@aqa.org.uk) or contacting the Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Lead.
- You may wish to use the Safeguarding issue report form ([LINK](#)) to provide further detail in relation to your concern, however this is not a requirement.
- Unfortunately, the safeguarding team will not be able to provide you with feedback on referrals due to the sensitive and confidential nature of safeguarding work. All referrals received through the [safeguarding@aqa.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@aqa.org.uk) inbox will be acknowledged by confirmed receipt email.

### Training

- All staff, volunteers, and associates are trained in safeguarding, to ensure a strong understanding of AQA's safeguarding culture, values, and processes for raising concerns.
- Safeguarding training packages will be reviewed annually in accordance with the organic nature of the sector.
- All staff will complete refresher e-learning training at least every 3 years. Training will be available continually throughout the year, should staff wish to return to it earlier.
- Bespoke training will be provided to those who require it (i.e. those staff involved in identifying and raising safeguarding concerns during exam series peak).

## Associates visiting centres

- If you are ever unsure of what action to take you can contact the safeguarding team for a discussion but please be aware that these discussions may not be kept confidential, and action will be taken where necessary.
- Visiting moderators and examiners are not currently required to have a DBS certificate. They must carry photographic ID that can be shown upon entry at a school/college, but schools and colleges should not photocopy this.
- We do not give AQA badges to visiting moderators or examiners, but we send all visiting associates an email that confirms they are an associate with AQA, and you can request this from them when they enter your school/college.
- Centres must chaperone visiting moderators or examiners through their premises.
- If centres have any concerns about the conduct or behaviour of any associate (or AQA employee) they must contact [safeguarding@aqa.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@aqa.org.uk) to report this.

## Whistleblowing

In line with the AQA Whistleblowing policy any AQA employees or associates who have concerns about a member of staff or AQA practices must initially raise the issue with your line manager or senior departmental manager. There is no specific procedure for raising a concern, you can simply inform your manager, put it in writing and/or send an email to: [AQAWhistleblowing@aqa.org.uk](mailto:AQAWhistleblowing@aqa.org.uk)

If your concern is of a safeguarding nature, you can email [safeguarding@aqa.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@aqa.org.uk) and arrange a discussion with the Safeguarding Lead if required.

If you wish to raise an anonymous concern, you can report via: [AQA Whistleblowing Survey surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). Please note, as per paragraph 16 of the Whistleblowing policy, an anonymous allegation will be considered at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.

## Student Advisory Group

AQA has direct, regular contact with a small number of young people through our Student Advisory Group. Measures taken to ensure their safety and wellbeing include:

- AQA staff who undertake work with the SAG are subject to an Enhanced DBS with barred list check
- Parental consent for unaccompanied travel to and from AQA events / meetings.
- Clear emergency contact details both from their school and home.
- Parental consent for images and information to be shared on social media / AQA website etc.
- BCC used in emails so email addresses for students are not shared.
- No SAG members are alone with AQA staff – always at least two people in the room for meetings / events.
- Escalation policy where concerns raised, such as non-attendance / no contact.

## Safeguarding and Malpractice

It is the centres responsibility to ensure that work is checked early in the school year for suitability, to avoid changes at a later date. Centres should pay particular attention to subjects with student choice / NEA such as Performance subjects and Extended Project Qualifications.

Work submitted that contains offensive or inappropriate content could be referred to candidate malpractice. Where a member of centre staff has had sight of work before submission to us and has failed to act on offensive content or safeguarding concerns an investigation of centre staff malpractice may take place. Please see the updated JCQ document [“Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures - 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024”](#)

## Useful links/further reading:

- Safeguarding Code of Behaviour ([LINK](#))
- [Definitions and signs of abuse](#) (NSPCC link)
- Link to safeguarding reporting form ([LINK](#))

## Safer recruitment at AQA (Core staff only)

All roles at AQA have been assessed for eligibility and suitability for a DBS check. Where appropriate this has been built into their role profile and will be requested as part of the recruitment process. DBS checks are updated on a 3 yearly basis.

All staff members are required to notify their line manager if they are being investigated for a criminal offence or being assessed by social services for any reason, this is especially the case where they are in a role that requires a DBS check due to contact with children or because their role visits a school. Failure to notify their line manager of such a situation could result in a disciplinary process.

All staff, regardless of whether their role is subject to a DBS check will be asked as part of the recruitment process to complete a Child safeguarding declaration form. The Safeguarding Lead will conduct an assessment for suitable for appointment or continuity in their role.

Significant changes to job roles and newly created job roles will be assessed for eligibility / suitability for a DBS check. DBS checks should not be done for ad hoc pieces of work and should be considered as part of the role profile.

Safeguarding allegations made against a core member of AQA staff will be addressed using existing AQA procedures and will include input from the AQA Safeguarding Lead who may deem it appropriate to alert external agencies such as the Local Authority Designated Officer, Police or Social Services.

## Support for people affected by safeguarding issues:

AQA is committed to supporting the wellbeing of all staff for more details on the support available please visit The Hub [here](#).

## Safer recruitment (Associates)

AQA associates are not employees of AQA and are not subject to a DBS check. They may have a DBS check due to other (such as substantive) employment.

All associates are expected to complete a Child Safeguarding self-declaration form. Anyone who indicates on this declaration form that they have been subject of a previous safeguarding inquiry or has convictions in relation to children will be contacted by the AQA Safeguarding Lead. The Safeguarding Lead will conduct an assessment for suitable for appointment or continuity in their role.

### **It is AQA policy that no visiting associate is ever left unaccompanied with children or adults at risk.**

If a responsible adult, provided by the school or college, is not available, then the associate will remove themselves immediately from that situation, if necessary, rescheduling the visit to the school or college.

If an associate is ever left working alone where there is a potential for a child or adult at risk to enter the room, they must take appropriate action to prevent this, e.g., by placing 'do not enter' notices on the door or locking the room.

## Special category data

As an employer and provider of assessment products and services, AQA collects and processes special category data of employees, associates, contractors, trustees, and importantly students. We treat data with the extra protections required as set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018.

We have in place, as required by legislation, an appropriate policy document for the types of special category data processing conducted by AQA, the lawful basis, purposes, and the conditions to be able to process such data.

The main purposes AQA process special category data are for: equality, diversity, and inclusion; employment law; and the safeguarding of children and adults at risk. For further information / to review this policy, please contact the Data Protection Office. You can find contact details in our [contact us](#) section.