

Online face-to-face teaching / tutorials

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Increasingly, schools are looking to offer online teaching and/or tutorials for students in a fast-changing environment. This document is intended to help guide schools in best practice

This is potentially similar to staff working one-to-one in a closed room with students; therefore, sensible safety measures, including guidance on appropriate staff online behaviour, should be in place for any age students.

When working with students aged under 18 the safeguarding measures need to be carefully considered.

Some points to consider working with under 18s

- IT staff to be closely involved with safeguarding and academic staff in discussing range of options available to the school and the safest / most practical to try
- all staff involved in online work, e.g. teachers, technicians and welfare (see later section):
 - to be DBS checked
 - properly trained in safeguarding online and
 - to have signed agreement to following online section of safeguarding policy (see later section)
- location: will staff be working only from school's premises or more likely from their own homes in order to fit in with 'the world clock'? (see later safeguarding points if done from home)
- what network is being used to deliver the online sessions? Is it one which can be controlled or monitored / checked by the school, so that even if teacher is using his/her own laptop they need to log on via the school's network? This is the safest way.
- assuming this is possible, can online sessions be recorded and therefore randomly checked by others (technicians) to ensure online safeguarding guidelines are being followed? Need guidance on specifically:
 - who checks?
 - how often are random checks done (usually % of volume of online sessions)?
 - how long will each checking observation last (15 / 20 minutes or whole session?)
 - will the check happen at the beginning / end / middle / random times during session?
 - checks should be made automatically the first-time teachers deliver online lessons, or within their first 3 sessions
 - safeguarding checks should be kept separate to published online observations done by DoS to ensure online teaching is reaching required standard
- using a public contact network which cannot be monitored is not safe for online lessons with under 18s from a teacher's home; it puts both the teacher and student in too personal a position, which would not happen offline. Lessons done from a room in the school would be more acceptable as they could be more easily and regularly monitored by other staff.
- all sessions should be timetabled officially (as lessons are) by the school and not the teacher. If the student needs to change times, that is done via the school and not direct with the teacher.

Involving parents

- parents to be sent schedule of online lessons
- parents to be sent online behaviour points (for both teacher and student) and sign their agreement to their child following them (see below)
- parents to be sent any other online safeguarding guidelines (e.g. about lessons being checked)
- parents invited to 'meet the teacher' in first / early online lesson
- parents told who to contact (presumably DoS) and how to contact that person if they have any concerns about online lessons

Some safeguarding guidelines for online working

- sessions not to be held in bedroom of teacher, and ideally also not of student (although realise that may have some practical difficulties when student lives in small flat and there is no other quiet space, but this is to protect the teacher from the student feeling the teacher has entered their personal and intimate space)
- ideally school provides backdrop with school logo. Failing that, teacher to ensure that everything student will see in background is appropriate, e.g. no dirty underwear, nude pictures/sculptures. Teacher should think of the space for online work as the same as a classroom; it is a company / public area
- appropriate online behaviours should be similar to one-to-one working, and apply to both teacher and student, e.g.
 - switch off mobile phone
 - always have professional appearance, i.e. the same as if in a classroom; (no dressing gowns just because it is happening at home)
 - keep hands in view on table
 - stick to lesson content; there is a worry that students may feel their relationship with teacher is more 'personal' because the lesson is happening in the homes of both teacher and student, so better not to lead student further down that road discussing teacher's home or personal life (beyond the cursory)
 - should the student begin to display inappropriate behaviour, teacher to end tutorial quickly and inform line-manager what has happened and why

Once guidelines have been agreed, they are added to the organisation's Safeguarding Policy and staff sign their agreement to following the policy, including guidelines.

Online u18 student welfare support

Schools who provide extra welfare support for u18 students studying in school should logically provide something similar to students studying online. Consider the following:

- include welfare meetings in the original schedule of online contact sent to the student and their parents so that the welfare meetings are known about from the outset and not seen as happening because something is wrong
- ensure welfare staff taking online meetings are identified to students and parents
- what is an online welfare meeting checking? Not the course content, rather how the student is:
 1. coping with online study, e.g. additional work due to assignments or homework / additional work on top of regular study at school
 2. managing the way online study happens, via the screen; any difficulties there?
 3. feeling about their tutor; are they comfortable with the tutor?
- how a student responds to questions is almost as important as what they say, are there any visual signs that perhaps things are not fine?

The organisation's responsibility for student welfare during online courses is less than that of a student attending a course in UK as online students are not in the direct care of the organisation. Therefore, u18 welfare meetings may not be timetabled as frequently as for students in UK.

A useful additional safeguarding route would be a link for the u18 student to a short online survey with results going to the welfare officer. The student then has a clear and confidential way of passing information to welfare staff; if a parent is in the background during the welfare tutorial, the student may not feel able to talk about any serious issues. Survey should have:

- open questions: asking if anything the student wants to tell about online study, their tutor or anything else
- option for the student to respond in their own language if that is easier. Welfare staff can use Google translate or ask other language speakers amongst staff to help understand the student's message

What to do if a problem is noted, either via online survey response, or via the welfare staff noticing signals of a child in need of additional support, e.g. self-harm, not coping with heavy workload or parental expectations:

- timetable extra meetings, probably with another member of the organisation's welfare team present to get a second opinion and proceed accordingly if the problem is a safeguarding concern
- if there is a worry about potential abuse, follow the same procedure as if abuse were happening in UK, i.e. contact the LSCB (Safeguarding Partners from Sep 2019) / LADO or Police Child Protection Officer and ask for guidance.
- if the abuse were connected to inappropriate behaviour on the part of the tutor, these UK authorities should respond as the tutor is in UK
- if the abuse were happening from somebody in the student's own country (e.g. a parent) the UK authorities are unlikely to respond directly, but should have information on how to contact authorities in other countries.

The points made here are general guidance. Schools need to adapt this information to suit their situation.