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Safeguarding Policy & Guidelines

2020



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1. Policy Statement

The aim of these guidelines is to promote best practice in safeguarding and child protection to set out a procedural framework to ensure that the highest standards are upheld.

Safeguarding – The duty of care that MLI has to children (aged under 18) and vulnerable adults, ensuring that they are kept safe, and always appropriately looked after. This includes all pastoral care, supervision and child protection procedure policies being annually updated, and shared clearly to all stakeholders.

Child protection - The duty of Care that MLI has to children (aged under 18) to protect them against abuse.

- We protect all children regardless of; age, race, gender, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment or sexual orientation, that are under our care, at all times.
- MLI staff are equipped to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.
- MLI management are equipped to make appropriate decisions in the event of a specific child protection concern arising.

These guidelines apply to all employees, volunteers and third parties connected with the services offered by MLI, and who are expected to act to ensure MLI students are safe. The term "child" is defined as any individual who has not yet reached their 18th birthday, irrespective of the age of majority in their home country.

These guidelines were amended and adopted by MLI on 23rd March 2020. The guidelines are reviewed on an annual basis and updated in the event of any safeguarding incident or new legislation.

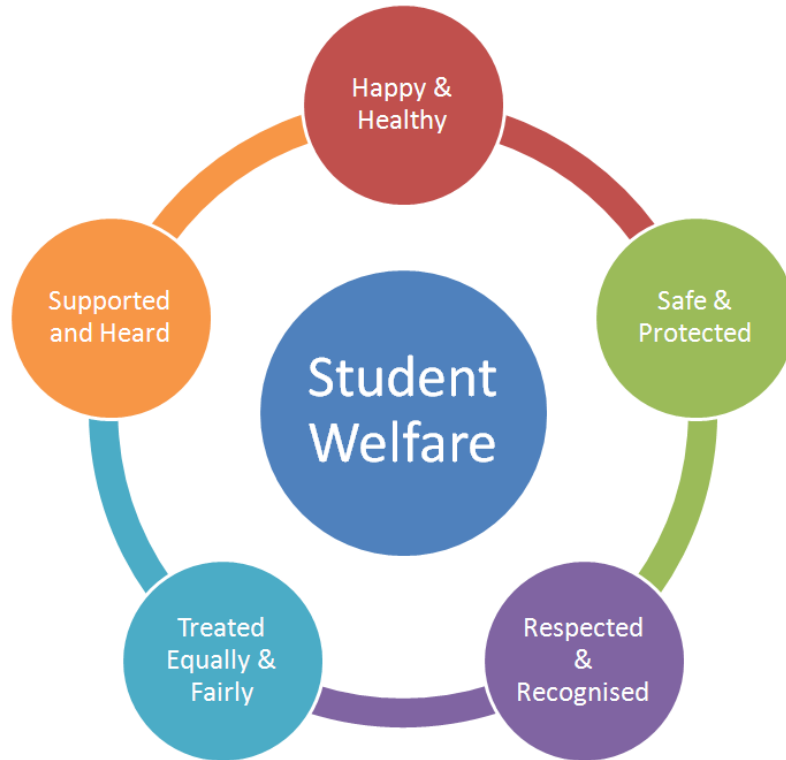
The DLP for MLI High Schools Ireland with responsibility for the implementation of these guidelines is Paula Fagan, Operations Manager. The deputy DLP is Hildur Georgsdottir.

2. Mission Statement

In our work with children/young people, MLI will be guided by the Principle of Paramourncy. This requires that the welfare of the child should be the paramount consideration.



Our safeguarding policy seeks to support the child's development in ways that will foster security, confidence and independence. It is central to the well-being of the individual and is therefore an intrinsic part of all aspects of MLI school programme and activities.





3. Code of Conduct

The MLI Schools Code of Conduct is in place for the protection of both students and the adults in charge of their care. By implementing this policy, MLI is ensuring that there are clear guidelines for the behaviour and interaction of staff, students and third parties.

All MLI Staff must

- Prioritise student safety and welfare at all times
- Remain professional at all times
- Act as excellent role models for all students
- Work hard to ensure all students leave with happy memories of their stay with MLI

3.1 Adult and U18 Interaction

- Contact with students must be appropriate and professional at all times. For example, use verbal praise to a student rather than physical encouragement.
- Physical contact between adults and U18s is usually not acceptable, except in some special cases. Examples of these could be an injury or during sports, this will also be explained in more detail at the staff induction.
- Staff should not favour any one student above other. They will treat all students equally.
- Do not mistreat, demean, ignore or make fun of any students.
- There should be no socialising between staff and students outside of the MLI programme.
- There should be no socialising between staff and group leaders outside of your professional capacity
- Staff members must not be alone with a student at any time. If a student wishes to talk to them in private, they must only do so in open view of others. Staff must never enter a student's bedroom without a colleague present.
- Staff must always use appropriate language with students. Do not swear or use inappropriate names to address students.
- Staff must not use a raised voice or threatening behaviour/language to discipline a student. If they are unable to deal with a situation, it must be passed on to senior management.
- Staff must not take photos or videos of our students unless permission has been given.
- Staff must not discuss matters of an inappropriate nature with students. For example, alcohol, drugs, personal matters, relationships, sex, violence, religious belief. This list is not definitive.
- Staff must always remember the position of trust that you hold over a student. Students will generally idolise staff and hold onto their every word. This position of trust must never be abused.
- Staff should not enforce specific beliefs or lifestyle choices onto students. Including political views, religious beliefs, dietary, lifestyle or sexual persuasions.
- Staff must remain professional at all times.



3.2 Appropriate Appearance

- Staff members must dress professionally at all times.
- Ensure high levels of personal hygiene are adhered too. This includes having clean clothes and looking professional.

3.3 Alcohol, Drugs

- Alcohol and drugs are prohibited. Any violation of this rule will lead to disciplinary procedures and possibly result in the termination of your employment with MLI
- Staff must not be under the influence of alcohol whilst on duty.

3.4 IT & Social Networks

- There shall be no sharing of email addresses and/or social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, etc.) contact details between staff and students at all.
- If a student tries to connect with staff on social media, they must decline and explain to the student that it is against the law. The same applies regarding email addresses. This then should be declared to their line manager.
- This includes gaming platforms. Staff should not play online games with students in any circumstance.
- It is understood that there is a designated chat group in place for effective communication, but this is initiated and monitored by an MLI staff member.

3.5 Host family and Boarding School Accommodation

- Unless in the event of a serious emergency, MLI staff members should not enter a student's bedroom alone. If they need to enter a bedroom while a student is present, they should be accompanied by another adult.
- Before entering a room, staff should always knock and wait for a response.

3.6 Transport

- MLI only works with coach and taxi companies with police checked drivers. Written confirmation of this is received from said companies.
- All coach and taxi drivers should adhere to the same code of conduct expected of MLI staff when interacting with students.



4. Child Protection

MLI meets its child protection responsibilities through the implementation of this safeguarding policy, safe recruitment, codes of conduct, risk assessments and other complementary policies and procedures.

4.1 Designated liaison Person (DLP)

Paula Fagan is the DLP and Hildur Georgsdottir is the deputy DLP

4.2 Responding to Concerns

Safeguarding concerns can be identified in a number of ways:

- Concern over a child's appearance, behaviour or physical condition.
- A child may volunteer information
- Another child may tell you about what has happened to a friend
- An adult may bring something to your attention

In an instance like this, staff must react in a professional manner:

- Listen to what is being said
- Take what is said seriously
- At the earliest opportunity make notes especially actual words used
- If you are not the DLP, you should report the concern to the DLP in your organisation straight away. Any information disclosed to you must be treated with the upmost confidentiality.
- Once this has been passed on you must complete a Concern (& Disclosure/Allegation) Form, which must be kept on file by the DLP.

4.3 Recognising Symptoms of Abuse

Detection of abuse is seldom straightforward and rarely clear cut. It is important therefore, to share concerns with the DLP as detailed in this policy document. Below are some of the physical and behavioural indicators of abuse.

However, it must be stressed that, none of these indicators either singly or in any combination prove conclusively that a child has been abused.

NEGLECT

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children.

Physical Indicators:



- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
- Constantly dirty or “smelly”
- Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight
- Inappropriate clothing for the conditions
- Lack of emotional awareness around others
- May display behaviours well above or below their age

Behavioural Indicators:

- Complaining of being tired all the time
- Not requesting medical assistance
- Having few friends
- Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Important indicators of physical abuse are bruises or injuries that are either unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given or visible on the “soft” parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, e.g. cheeks, abdomen, back and buttocks. A delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern, although this can be more complicated with burns, as these are often delayed in presentation due to blistering taking place sometime later.

Physical Indicators:

- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- Multiple bruises – in clusters, often on the upper arm, outside of the thigh
- Cigarette burns
- Human bite marks
- Broken bones
- Scalds, with upward splash marks
- Multiple burns with a clearly demarcated edge

Behavioural Indicators:

- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when approached or touched
- Reluctance to get changed, for example in hot weather
- Depression
- Withdrawn behaviour

SEXUAL ABUSE

Adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers. Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child’s behaviour that may cause you to become concerned, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children who tell you



about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that they are listened to and taken seriously.

Physical Indicators:

- Pain or itching in the genital area
- Bruising or bleeding near genital area
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Vaginal discharge or infection
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Pregnancy

Behavioural Indicators:

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- Having nightmares
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age, or developmental level
- Sexual drawings or language
- Bedwetting
- Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia
- Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- Substance or drug abuse
- Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, as there are often no outward physical signs. Even so, children who appear well-cared for may nevertheless be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may receive little or no love, affection or attention from their parents or carers. Emotional abuse can also take the form of children not being allowed to mix or play with other children.

Behavioural Indicators:

- Neurotic behaviour e.g. sucking, hair twisting, rocking
- Being unable to play
- Fear of making mistakes
- Sudden speech disorders
- Self-harm
- Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour
- Developmental delay in terms of emotional progress

PEER ON PEER BULLYING



Bullying is not always easy to recognise as it can take a number of forms. A child may encounter bullying attacks that are:

- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching and other forms of violence or threats
- Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing
- Emotional: excluding, tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating.
- Online: abuse or threats via social media. The sharing of private or intimate photos or videos on social media platforms or messenger apps.

Persistent bullying can result in:

- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Shyness
- Poor academic achievement
- Isolation
- Threatened or attempted suicide

Signs that a child may be being bullied can be:

- Torn clothes
- Asking for stolen possessions to be replaced
- Falling out with previously good friends
- Being moody and bad-tempered
- Sleep problems
- Anxiety
- Becoming quiet and withdrawn
- Reluctance to attend school or take part in activities

4.4 Discipline procedure for Bullying:

Any form of bullying, including cyber-bullying, is not tolerated at MLI .

If any form of bullying is brought to the attention of an MLI staff member , the relevant DLP will be contacted (ie the DLP in a school or the MLI DLP or both)

4.5 Awareness in specific areas

The DLP is fully versed in MLI specific Safeguarding Policy but will also be aware of other associated areas of child protection including the below;

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

The illegal practise of removing, either partially or fully, the external female genital organs. This will usually not be a medical procedure, but usually carried out by family members or relatives. It is also illegal for a UK resident to be taken out of the UK for the purpose of having this procedure done.



SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Overwhelming, this is experienced more by females. The terms Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment cover a comprehensive range of abuses. They include sexual abuse, as above. But also; Spying, stalking, unwanted physical contact i.e. grabbing chest etc, penetrative activity without consent, 'up skirting', posting of sex tapes of private photos.

TEENAGE RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

Children can also suffer the traits of domestic abuse. The abuse usually starts with a couple who are in a consensual relationship. One member of the relationship may become more invested or needy than the other and begin to dominate and manipulate the other person.

Physical Indicators:

- Forced sexual activity or public intimacy
- Physical abuse (as above)
- Verbal insults in private, but also in front of peers. This would include "put downs"

Behavioural Indicators:

- One partner is controlling the other i.e. what they wear, where they go, who they talk with
- Controlling their mobile phone or social network accounts
- One partner being very cautious not to cause the other upset over small matter

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The exploitation of under 18's for sexual activity in return for gifts, money, drugs, alcohol, clothes, computers, attention, to name some. The child is approached by an abuser who is in a position of power, usually in terms of age, gender, social economic status, physical attributes, intelligence. The abuser will use threatening or intimidating behaviour to trap the child into thinking they no longer have an option to say no.

Behavioural Indicators:

- Student starts to miss lessons or school
- They spend time with people a lot older than themselves.
- Student has unexplained and expensive gifts that they often show off to friends.



HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE

Honour based violence is a violent crime or incident which may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family or community. This can also include forced marriages.

Behavioural Indicators:

- Lack of interest in school or often absent
- Aggressive behaviour to a specific demographic of peers
- Controlling or intimidating behaviour from family members

RADICALISATION

Radicalisation is the process where someone is leading to adopt extreme political, social and religious ideals and aspirations. Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem or be victims of bullying or discrimination. Extremists might target them and tell them they can be part of something special, later brainwashing them into cutting themselves off from their friends and family

Behavioural Indicators:

- isolating themselves from family and friends
- talking as if from a scripted speech
- unwillingness or inability to discuss their views
- a sudden disrespectful attitude towards others
- increased levels of anger
- increased secretiveness, especially around internet use.

All staff will have basic prevent training to identify potential signs of radicalisation.

4.6 A Child Telling an Adult (disclosure of information)

If a child does approach you with an allegation or concern regarding abuse, the following guidelines should be followed:

ACT PROMPTLY! Listen to the child without interrupting or showing your surprise. Get the child to tell you what happened in his/her own words. Do not ask leading questions. Do not ask "why" or "how"



questions. Make the child aware that you know it is not his/her fault and that he/she has no reason to feel guilty. It is your job to listen.

Take the allegation seriously. Support the child for telling you.

Explain that you have an obligation to refer the matter to a colleague in order to seek help for the child.

Do not make promises that you cannot keep.

Do not give the child a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding the disclosure. This is not within your power - your obligation is to refer the matter to Designated liaison Person (DLP)

Do not investigate.

Do not dwell too much on the alleged perpetrator. Avoid a "whodunit" approach. The pursuit of evidence is the work of the GARDAI and welfare professionals.

Do not be judgmental about information supplied by the child. Do not pre-suppose that the experience was bad or painful.

At the earliest opportunity make a written record of what happened. Where possible write down the actual words used. Do not write as the child talks to you. Give your whole attention to the child.

Refer the matter to the Designated liaison Person (DLP) .

4.7 Keeping Records

Immediately after speaking with a child about a safeguarding allegation or concern, you must report to the DLP. You must use the student's exact words giving only facts and record time, date, place etc. If the student's language level is low, this should be noted in the report using the safeguarding incident log.

Once you have handed the matter over to the DLP and you know the student is being looked after (it may be appropriate to go and see the student again to make sure they are OK), make sure you look after yourself. Being told information about child abuse is often very upsetting.

The DLP will complete the **Concern (& Disclosure/Allegation) Form**

It is not for staff to decide if the allegations are true or not. Their role is only to listen, report as accurately as possible and allow the official procedure to then take over.

4.8 What to do if an allegation is made

This may be made directly to the DLP or to any other adult and passed to the DLP

- Make sure the child is safe and supported/reassured. Remain calm



- Inform the DLP immediately
- If/when safe and appropriate, try to return the child to their normal routine
- Ensure that a clear written record has been made (using the Concern Form), signed and dated by the DLP
- Any allegations made against staff must be brought to the immediate attention of the DLP. If for any reason this is not appropriate ie that the allegation concerns the DLP, please consult the deputy DLP.

4.9 What happens next?

Background – TUSLA role is to provide advice and guidance to schools dealing with allegations and, if necessary, to liaise with the Gardai and other agencies and to monitor the progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with quickly and consistently.

Employers have a duty of care to their employees; Therefore, they need to provide adequate support for anyone facing an allegation and provide the employee with a named contact if they are suspended.

If the person accused is under-18, MLI will support the student during each step of the process. In the absence of the student’s parents, the student will be assigned a DLP for support while the investigation takes place.

Initial discussion – There will be an initial discussion between the DLP and Deputy DLP and Tusla where necessary at which some actions will be agreed:

- Immediate action to protect the student
- When and what parents should be told
- What should be said to the adult/child facing the allegation and should s/he be suspended

Possible suspension – Suspension is not an automatic response and should only be considered where children are at risk of serious harm or the concern is so serious it would result in immediate dismissal. If the person is suspended, the reason must be communicated to them within one day.

Possible outcomes from initial discussion	What to tell / do with accused person, always agreed with LCSB
1) Strategy Meeting - usually held within 3 days	Tell person about allegation, using minimum detail. Inform of possible/likely courses of action. School appoint named person to support accused. Advise accused to contact professional organisation.
2) Referrals to Social Care and/or Gardai for investigation	As above



3) No Further Action	School decides what internal action to take, possibly disciplinary action and certainly an investigation by a senior manager.
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4.10 Confidentiality

The school must maintain confidentiality regarding the accused. Until any investigation, either internal or external has been completed; the identity of the accused must not be released. The senior manager and DLP need to manage the situation particularly thinking of gossip and leaks to the media. Staff should not discuss any part of the investigation with colleagues or friends and family.

Remember – Safeguarding trumps GDPR. If you genuinely have a concern or allegation about an individual, you need to report it to your designated person.

4.11 Terminology for possible outcomes to investigation.

Definition	Meaning
Substantiated	There is sufficient identifiable evidence to prove the allegation
False	There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
Malicious	There is clear evidence to prove there was a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is false.
Unfounded	There is no evidence which supports the allegation. It could be that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or did not know all the circumstances
Unsubstantiated	There is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation (it is not the same as 'false'). Accused could be guilty or innocent

4.12 Resolution of allegations and action by school

Resolution	Action by school
Allegation substantiated, leading to prosecution and dismissal	Inform NGVB & Tusla; record kept on file for 10 years or until retirement age, whichever is longer. This information should be kept separate to their staff file.



Allegation substantiated, leading to disciplinary action or dismissal	May need to inform NGVB; record kept on file for 10 years or until retirement age, whichever is longer. This information should be kept separate to their staff file.
Allegation unsubstantiated or unfounded	Summary report kept in staff file for future clarification and reduce need for reinvestigation; copy given to accused
Allegation malicious	Report removed from file. Disciplinary action required against perpetrators of malicious story.

* Malicious, unfounded or unsubstantiated allegations must not be referred to when writing references

* If allegation is unsubstantiated, unfounded or malicious, school must support the member of staff on return to work, especially if they have been suspended.

4.13 Whistle blowing

If you see or find out about something you think is wrong at MLI, you should report it. You should go first to your line-manager or any other senior person. If you cannot or do not wish to do this for any reason you should contact the Director Therese Dillion.

Raising concerns about wrongdoing can be one of the most difficult and challenging things to do in a work environment. MLI is committed to keeping high standard throughout all of its operations, therefore we will fully support an employee if they have concerns.

What types of concerns can be raised by whistle blowers?

The **Protected Disclosures** Act 2014 provides protection for workers who reasonably believe that they are acting in the public interest and where the disclosure falls into one of more of the following categories;

- A criminal offence that has, is being, or is likely to be committed
- Unauthorised or inappropriate disclosure, misuse or loss of confidential, personal and / or sensitive information
- A miscarriage of justice
- Risk or damage to the environment
- A danger to the health and safety of employees or others
- Attempts to suppress or hide information relating to wrongdoing.

The concern can be about an incident that happened in the past, is happening now or that you believe is likely in the future.

As long as you hold a reasonable belief that the information is true then you will be covered by The **Protected Disclosures** Act 2014 , regardless of whether you are mistaken, or the matter cannot be proved.



To contact the Whistleblowing Advice Line.

1800 844866

Whistleblowing does not cover concerns where there is no public interest element such as a concern about your own employment or related matters.

5. Training

MLI ensures that all staff complete the Level 1 basic awareness Safeguarding training before their employment term begins. A link is sent to all new members of staff.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DLP) & deputy safeguarding lead is certified by Barnardos.

All staff are given a copy of the MLI Safeguarding Policy at the time their contracts are issued and there is a further copy available in the Safeguarding Folder.

6. Safer Recruitment

6.1 Staff

During the recruitment process it is clearly stated that MLI is fully committed to safeguarding and the welfare of their students. This begins with the job advertisements where we state the following:

'MLI is fully committed to the safety of the children who take part in our programmes. All contracted staff are asked to complete Garda vetting MLI checks and all applicants are required to provide two references. Reference requests will ask specifically whether there is any reason that you should not be engaged in situations where you have responsibility for, or substantial access to, persons under 18. You will need to explain any gaps in your CV.'

Applicants who are invited to interview are further informed about the importance that MLI places on the care of under-18s and safeguarding.

All offers of employment are made on the basis of an acceptable Garda Vetting checks and two satisfactory references being received

6.3 Third Parties

MLI receives confirmation from all third parties that they have been Garda Vetted.

They are also required to adhere to the following Taxi/Coach Driver Code of Conduct: This code of conduct is sent to taxi/coach companies prior to services being provided.

- Contact with students must be appropriate and professional at all times. Avoid physical contact with the students unless formally requested or instructed to assist a less able-bodied student
- When transporting only one or two students, the student/s must always sit in the backseat, never in the front passenger seat
- Do not take photos or videos of or with our students



- Do not share email addresses and/or social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc) contact details with students
- Do not discuss matters of an inappropriate nature with students. For example, alcohol, drugs, personal matters, sex, violence. This list is not definitive
- Do not mistreat, demean, ignore or make fun of any students
- Think about the language that you use and avoid using any form of swear words
- Remember our students are non-native speakers of English and may have difficulty understanding you. Please speak clearly and slowly and be patient
- Do not consume alcohol, drugs or medication that may affect your driving, before or whilst transporting our students
- Do not smoke at any time whilst in the vehicle
- Be clean and presentable
- Remain professional at all times

Any other third parties involved in the MLI are asked to provide Garda Vetting.

7. Welfare/Implementing Safeguarding

7.1 Risk assessments

All staff members are aware of these risk assessments and are required to read them prior to conducting activities/excursions.

7.2 Emergency Policy – MLI has a specific emergency response and crisis management policy. This covers what to do in the case that a major incident occurs.

7.5 Welfare Provision

The Welfare Officer will play a primary role to ensure that all efforts are being made to provide excellent general care for under-18's.

The Welfare Officer will be made known to all students and there will be dedicated office hours in which students can talk to them if needed. Welfare Officers can also be approached out of office hours and via the MLI emergency number.

7.7 First Aid & Medical

Every centre will employ at least one member of staff who has undertaken a First Aid training course. This member of staff will be made known to all other staff and students at induction and through the Welfare Board at each centre.



On every excursion there will be at least one First Aid Kit available.

Each centre has the details of the nearest GP and/or hospital for cases where students may require professional medical help.

7.8 E Safety

MLI highlights the importance of internet safety to all students.

We encourage all students to adhere to the following internet safety code:



Click Clever, Click Safe!

7.9 Radicalisation & Extremism

MLI brings together a wide variety of students and staff from different countries, cultures and backgrounds.

We strive to educate students by example and through the Code of Conduct and core values about the acceptance and tolerance of a range of views, that people think differently and believe different



things – all of which is OK as long as it is reasonable, and belief doesn't extend to hurting/denigrating those with different beliefs.