

Wiltshire College and University Centre

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Kathryn Rudd, Her Majesty's Inspector

Inspection dates: 10–11 June 2021

Type of provider: General further education college

Address: Cocklebury Road
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This was an announced safeguarding monitoring visit, following concerns that had been reported to Ofsted and that remain under investigation by another agency. The purpose of the visit was to assess whether the safeguarding arrangements at the college are effective. Inspectors' judgements were informed by actions taken by the provider's leaders and managers in response to the concerns that had been reported to Ofsted, alongside any other evidence available at the time of the visit.

Wiltshire College and University Centre is a general further education college with campuses in Trowbridge, Chippenham, Salisbury and Lackham. Just over 40% of learners are under 18 years of age. Almost half of all learners study a level 2 programme. Approximately 70% of learners study part time at the college.

The college has 1,877 apprentices studying level 2 to level 5 courses. The college has 11 subcontractors, who all offer courses in the Wiltshire area. One subcontractor provides full-time courses to learners under 18 years of age.

Wiltshire College and University Centre had a short Ofsted inspection in June 2018 and the provider was judged to have remained good. Safeguarding was judged to be effective.

The impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgements below.

Themes

How well do governors, leaders and managers ensure that they comply with the relevant safeguarding requirements, and how effectively do they apply safeguarding policies and procedures?

Reasonable progress

Leaders comply with relevant safeguarding requirements for learners and apprentices studying on college premises.

Leaders have responded constructively to the safeguarding concerns raised by local agencies in relation to Wiltshire College and University Centre learners studying with one of their subcontractors. Leaders and managers have worked with this subcontractor to improve its safeguarding policies, procedures and practice. This has resulted in improvements to the subcontractor's understanding of, and approach to, learner safeguarding and welfare issues. For example, the subcontractor has appointed a full-time safeguarding lead, established new recording systems to clearly

monitor safeguarding concerns and provided additional support for subcontracted learners, such as counselling.

However, college leaders have not ensured that their own policies and procedures clearly articulate their safeguarding responsibilities for their learners who study with a subcontractor.

How effective and appropriate are arrangements for safeguarding for apprentices, and for learners studying at subcontracted provision? Insufficient progress

College leaders and managers have appropriate arrangements in place for safeguarding apprentices studying on college premises. However, leaders have not ensured that safeguarding arrangements for Wiltshire College and University Centre learners who study with the subcontractor are effective, particularly for those learners under 18 years of age and living away from home. Consequently, leaders are not able to assure themselves that these learners are safe.

College leaders and managers do not audit the subcontractors' safeguarding arrangements to the same standard as the safeguarding arrangements for their own college provision. For example, college managers are not expected to provide senior leaders with information about the subcontractor with sufficient depth, frequency or formality. As a result, senior leaders do not have accurate information about safeguarding issues at the subcontractor or the actions taken by the subcontractor managers. They are therefore unable to identify whether lessons can be learned when safeguarding issues at the subcontractor arise.

College managers do not systematically gather information from their learners who study with the subcontractor about whether they feel safe and are safe. College managers are overly reliant on information produced by the subcontractor to assure themselves that learners are safe, and that learners' concerns have been resolved appropriately. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, college managers had very little contact with their learners studying at the subcontractor, even with those who were self-isolating and living away from home.

College managers have not clearly defined the subcontractors' responsibilities to report lower-level safeguarding issues and welfare concerns. The thresholds for reporting these concerns are unclear.

Leaders have not ensured that the subcontractor is meeting its contractual safeguarding obligations. For example, the college's partnership agreement with the subcontractor specifies that the subcontractor must not provide or recommend accommodation for young learners living away from home. However, inspectors were told by learners that accommodation had been recommended by the subcontractor during their induction and parents believed that the accommodation was endorsed by the subcontractor.

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