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VLUK PREVENTING RADICALISATION AND EXTREMISM POLICY 2021-2022

1. Purpose

August 2021

Virtual Learning UK (VLUK) is committed to providing a secure environment for learners, where children feel safe and are kept safe. All adults at VLUK recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility irrespective of the role they undertake or whether their role has direct contact or responsibility for children or not.

In adhering to this policy, and the procedures therein, staff and visitors will contribute to VLUK's delivery of the outcomes to all learners, as set out in the Children Act 2004*. This Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy is one element within our overall organisation's arrangements to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of all Children in line with our statutory duties of the Education Act 2002.

VLUK's 'Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy' also draws upon the guidance contained in DfE Guidance "[Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2021](#)".

** the physical, mental health and emotional well-being of children; the protection of children from harm and neglect; the education, training and recreation of children; the contribution made by them to society; and their social and economic well-being.*

2. VLUK Ethos and Practice

When operating this policy VLUK uses the following accepted Governmental definition of extremism which is:

'Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs; and/or calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas'.

There is no place for extremist views of any kind on our VLUK campuses, whether from internal sources — learners, staff, or external sources - external agencies or individuals. Our learners see our Campuses as a safe place where they can explore controversial issues safely and where our teachers encourage and facilitate this — we have a duty to ensure this happens.

At VLUK we recognise that extremism and exposure to extremist materials and influences can lead to poor outcomes for learners and so should be addressed as a safeguarding concern as set out in this policy. We also recognise that if we fail to challenge extremist views we are failing to protect our learners.

Extremists of all persuasions aim to develop destructive relationships between different communities by promoting division, fear and mistrust of others based on ignorance or prejudice and thereby limiting the life chances of young people. Education is a powerful weapon against this; equipping young people with the knowledge, skills and critical thinking, to challenge and debate in an informed way.

Therefore, at VLUK we will provide a curriculum, delivered by skilled professionals, so that our learners are enriched, understand and become tolerant of difference and diversity and also to ensure that they thrive, feel valued and not marginalized.

Furthermore, we at VLUK are aware that young people can be exposed to extremist influences or prejudiced views from an early age which emanate from a variety of sources

and media, including via the internet, and at times learners may themselves reflect or display views that may be discriminatory, prejudiced or extremist, including using derogatory language.

Any prejudice, discrimination or extremist views, including derogatory language, displayed by learners or staff will always be challenged and where appropriate dealt with in line with our Behaviour Policy for learners and Disciplinary Procedures as outlined in our Employee Handbook for staff.

As part of wider safeguarding responsibilities VLUK staff will be alert to:

- Disclosures by learners of their exposure to the extremist actions, views or materials of others outside of our Campuses, such as in their homes or community groups, especially where learners have not actively sought these out;
- Graffiti symbols, writing or art work promoting extremist messages or images;
- learners accessing extremist material online, including through social networking sites;
- Parental reports of changes in behaviour, friendship or actions and requests for assistance;
- Partner schools, local authority services, police reports of issues affecting learners in other school, colleges or settings;
- learners voicing opinions drawn from extremist ideologies and narratives;
- Use of extremist or 'hate' terms to exclude others or incite violence;
- Intolerance of difference, whether secular or religious or, in line with our equalities policy, views based on, but not exclusive to, gender, disability, homophobia, race, colour or culture;
- Attempts to impose extremist views or practices on others;
- Anti-western or Anti-British views.

VLUK Campuses and education programmes will closely follow any agreed procedure in relation to processes and criteria for safeguarding individuals vulnerable to extremism and radicalisation.

At VLUK, we have determined "British Values" to be:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect
- Tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs

As a Training Provider, VLUK aim to develop and nurture these by:

- Planning a vibrant, engaging tutorial programme with core ethical values and beliefs at its heart
- Integrating curriculum topic areas with the five key areas as stated above.
- Having a clearly communicated and consistently applied Behaviour Policy so that learners understand what is expected of them and the consequences of both meeting and failing to meet these expectations
- Learner agreements which are regularly referred to and agreed with learners, reiterating that they are part of a community built on mutual respect and understanding

- Adopting restorative approaches, where possible, to resolve any difficulties between members of their community.
- Having a rigorous commitment to learner safety (for example: trips and visits policy and procedures, Safeguarding procedures, Attendance procedures and Health and Safety procedures)

3. VLUK Teaching Approaches

We will all strive to eradicate the myths and assumptions that can lead to some young people becoming alienated and disempowered, especially where the narrow approaches learners may experience elsewhere may make it harder for them to challenge or question these radical influences. VLUK will achieve this by good teaching, primarily via the Tutorial programme.

We will ensure that all of our teaching approaches help our learners build resilience to extremism and give learners a positive sense of identity through the development of critical thinking skills. We will ensure that all of our staff are equipped to recognise extremism and are skilled and confident enough to challenge it.

We will be flexible enough to adapt our teaching approaches, as appropriate, so as to address specific issues so as to become even more relevant to the current issues of extremism and radicalisation. In doing so we will ensure all staff take the online PREVENT training course which is part of VLUK's safeguarding training package.

Therefore, VLUK will aim to raise awareness of the Prevent Strategy through Online Staff Training at the start of the academic year. The knowledge taken, will then be directly implemented into teaching practice where possible and appropriate. This will work in conjunction with our approach to the **personal development** of learners as defined in [OFSTED's Further education & skills inspection Handbook](#) published in September 2021 and will include the use of tutorials to help further promote rounded development of our learners.

Our goal is to build mutual respect and understanding and to promote the use of dialogue not violence as a form of conflict resolution. We will achieve this by using a curriculum that includes:

- Tutorial programmes;
- Open discussion and debate;
- Work on anti-violence and a restorative approach addressed throughout curriculum and the behaviour policy;
- A curriculum that integrates the Prevent agenda.

We will also work with partner organisations, families and communities in our efforts to ensure VLUK understands and embraces local context and values in challenging extremist views and to assist in the broadening of our learners' experiences and horizons.

We will help support learners who may be vulnerable to such influences as part of our wider safeguarding responsibilities and where we believe a learner is being directly affected by extremist materials or influences we will ensure that that learner is offered mentoring. Additionally in such instances VLUK will seek external support from the relevant Local Authority and/or local partnership structures working to prevent extremism.

At VLUK we will promote the values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs. We will teach and encourage learners to respect one another and to respect and tolerate differences, especially those of a different faith or no faith. It is indeed our most fundamental responsibility to keep our learners safe and prepare them for life in modern multicultural Britain and globally.

4. Use of External Agencies and Speakers

At VLUK we encourage the use of external agencies or speakers to enrich the experiences of our learners, however we will positively vet those external agencies, individuals or speakers who we engage to provide such learning opportunities or experiences for our learners.

These external agencies will be vetted to ensure that we do not unwittingly use agencies that contradict each other with their messages or that are inconsistent with, or are in complete opposition to, VLUK values and ethos. We must be aware that in some instances the work of external agencies may not directly be connected with the rest of the school curriculum so we need to ensure that this work is of benefit to learners.

VLUK will assess the suitability and effectiveness of input from external agencies or individuals to ensure that:

- Any messages communicated to learners are consistent with the ethos of VLUK Campuses and do not marginalise any communities, groups or individuals;
- Any messages do not seek to glorify criminal activity or violent extremism or seek to radicalise learners through extreme or narrow views of faith, religion or culture or other ideologies;
- Activities are properly embedded in the curriculum and clearly mapped to schemes of work to avoid contradictory messages or duplication;
- Activities are matched to the needs of learners;
- Activities are carefully evaluated by schools to ensure that they are effective.

We recognise, however, that the ethos of our education programmes is to encourage learners to understand opposing views and ideologies, appropriate to their age, understanding and abilities, and to be able to actively engage with them in informed debate, and we may use external agencies or speakers to facilitate and support this.

Therefore by delivering an applied curriculum in relation to the learner's area of study and a tutorial programme augmented by the use of external sources where appropriate, we will strive to ensure our learners recognise risk and build resilience to manage any such risk themselves where appropriate to their age and ability but also to help learners develop the critical thinking skills needed to engage in informed debate.

5. Whistle Blowing

Where there are concerns of extremism or radicalisation learners, Staff and Managing Directors will be encouraged to make use of our internal systems to Whistle Blow or raise any issue in confidence.

They must inform the Chief Operations Officer straight away (or if it relates to the Chief Operations Officer inform the Board of Governors).

6. Safeguarding

Please refer to our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for the full procedural framework on our Safeguarding and Child Protection duties.

Staff at VLUK will be alert to the fact that whilst Extremism and Radicalisation is broadly a safeguarding issue there may be some instances where a learner or learner s may be at direct risk of harm or neglect. For example; this could be due to a learner displaying risky behaviours in terms of the activities they are involved in or the groups they are associated with or staff may be aware of information about a learner 's family that may equally place a learner at risk of harm. (These examples are for illustration and are not definitive or exhaustive).

Therefore, all adults working as part of VLUK (including visiting staff, volunteers' contractors, and learners on placement) are required to report instances where they believe a learner may be at risk of harm or neglect to the Designated Safeguarding Leads or Chief Operations Officer. Our Safeguarding reporting arrangements are set out fully in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is: Jenny Butcher, and she is assisted by two further VLUK Designated Safeguarding Leads. The Designated Safeguarding Leads works in line with the responsibilities as set out at Annex B of the DfE Guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' which is detailed in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.