



<u>Policy Title</u>	<b>NCG Code of Conduct Policy</b>
<u>Policy Category</u>	Compliant
<u>Owner</u>	Director of People and Development
<u>Group Executive Lead</u>	Chief Executive Officer
<u>Date Written</u>	December 2020
<u>Considered By</u>	N/A
<u>Approved By</u>	Executive Board
<u>Date Approved</u>	January 2021
<u>Equality Impact Assessment</u>	The implementation of this policy is not considered to have a negative impact on protected characteristics and an assessment was carried out on December 2020 This policy is available in alternative formats, if required
<u>Freedom of Information</u>	This document will be publicly available through the Groups Publication Scheme.
<u>Review Date</u>	December 2022
<u>Policy Summary</u>	The purpose of this policy is to set out the values, principles and standards governing the professional behaviour of all colleagues.

<u>Applicability of Policy</u>	<u>Consultation Undertaken</u>	<u>Applicable To</u>
Carlisle College	Yes	Yes
Group Services	Yes	Yes
Kidderminster College	Yes	Yes
Lewisham College	Yes	Yes
Newcastle College	Yes	Yes
Newcastle Sixth Form College	Yes	Yes
Southwark College	Yes	Yes
West Lancashire College	Yes	Yes

<u>Changes to Earlier Versions</u>	
<u>Previous Approval Date</u>	<u>Summarise Changes Made Here</u>
	New NCG policy incorporating individual College policies into one Group policy, streamlining processes in line with current legislation.

<u>Linked Documents</u>	
<u>Document Title</u>	<u>Relevance</u>
NCG Disciplinary Policy, NCG Grievance Policy, NCG Probation Policy, NCG Performance Management Policy, NCG Probation policy, NCG Sickness Absence Policy	These policies and procedures set the framework on employee relation management.
NCG Alcohol and substance misuse Policy, NCG Smoke Free Environment Policy, IT	These policies and procedures set out NCG's expectations on the relevant areas.

## NCG Code of Conduct Policy



Acceptable Use Policy, NCG Data Policy	
NCG Whistleblowing and Disclosure Policy, NCG Malpractice Policy, NCG Financial Regulations	These policies and procedures lay out NCG's Governance standards.
Safeguarding Policy, De-escalation Policy	These policies and procedures, whether NCG or College specific, underpin our responsibilities to learners



### 1. Scope and Purpose of Policy

This policy does not form part of colleague's contract of employment and does not confer any contractual rights. It applies to all NCG colleagues, who are employed either on a permanent or temporary basis. The policy also applies to volunteers and agency workers.

The policy applies whilst travelling for work purposes or attending conferences, social gatherings or any other work-related function such as an after-work event.

### 2. Introduction

The reputation and success of NCG is built upon not just what we deliver, but how we deliver it. Colleagues of NCG are all accountable for working with integrity and in an honest, open and respectful way. NCG values describe who we are, what we do and how we do it. We value and empower people by;

- *Being both inclusive and diverse*
- *Taking ownership whilst working collaboratively*
- *Trusting and respecting our communities*
- *Inspiring excellence and curiosity*

NCG Values are underpinned by the NCG Code of Conduct to support the 'People Pillar' of the NCG Strategy Towards 2030 and our aim of being ambitious and responsible educators and leaders. The Code of Conduct sets out the standards that are expected of all colleagues and expresses the behaviours and ways of working which reinforce NCG values that are crucial to our success.

This policy is intended as an overview and cannot describe every situation that colleagues may face, or cover every law, policy or process that may apply. It sets the expectation that in all cases, colleagues are expected to make judgements that are reasonable, practical and safe. When colleagues are faced with a situation they cannot resolve, they should always ask for guidance from their line manager.

### 3. General Standards and Responsibilities

All NCG colleagues are expected to;

- Ensure that all aspects of their work are consistent with NCG Values as well as the standards set out in this policy.
- Work professionally in line with NCG and College policies and procedures. It is your responsibility to read and familiarise yourself with all policies, procedures and legislation that is applicable to your role.
- Uphold our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion by being respectful and impartial to all colleagues, learners and stakeholders.
- Help maintain NCG as a safe and secure learning and working environment by visibly wearing their NCG and/ or College identification badge and lanyard at all



times whilst on NCG premises and challenge anyone not wearing an ID/ lanyard.

- Use NCG funds, facilities, resources and computer systems responsibly and for work purposes only, they should not be used for any personal matters.

#### **4. Speaking Up**

Where a colleague notices behaviour at work which they feel may be a breach of our Code of Conduct or seems illegal or unethical, they should report it to management in a timely manner. Colleagues also have a duty to report any abuse of systems, processes or policies.

In the first instance, colleagues should speak directly to their line manager. Where the issue concerns the line manager, it should be reported to a more senior manager. Any concerns must be raised confidentially through the appropriate management channels or relevant department, such as health and safety or safeguarding. They should not be discussed with peers to enable them to be addressed appropriately.

#### **5. Criminal Offences and External Investigations**

Colleagues have a responsibility to inform their line manager and safeguarding team, where they are part of any safeguarding processes involving vulnerable adults or children or if they are under any police investigation.

#### **6. Dress and Appearance**

The appearance and professionalism of Colleagues has an impact on how employers, learners, parents/carers potential learners and visitors view NCG and its services. NCG expects all Colleagues to dress in a manner that ensures a professional image is portrayed at all times, whether in the office, classroom, external event or meetings. Clothing worn at work should be clean and suitable for the task in hand and without any form of political or potentially offensive slogans or motifs.

#### **7. Smoking, Vaping, Alcohol and Substance Misuse**

Colleagues should attend work in a fit state to carry out their duties and therefore must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substances (including legal highs) at work.

NCG operates a no smoking and vaping policy in all of our buildings. Should colleagues wish to smoke they should do so outside the boundaries of NCG premises or, where available, use a designated smoking area.



### 8. Working Outside of NCG

In line with the exclusivity of service clause in all contracts of employment, colleagues are required to devote their full attention and abilities to their duties during their working hours and to act in the best interests of NCG at all times.

Where a colleague wishes to undertake any (paid or unpaid) employment or engagement they must seek prior written consent from their Principal / Senior Leader to ensure that this does not interfere with the performance of their duties or conflict with the interests of NCG. This is also applicable for any work which commenced prior to a colleague's employment with NCG.

Where a Senior Post Holder wishes to undertake any work outside of NCG they must have approval from the Appraisal and Remuneration Committee.

### 9. IT Acceptable Use Policy and Social Media

When colleagues communicate through social media, whether in a professional or personal capacity, they should ensure it does not:

- Bring NCG into disrepute, by: criticising or arguing with learners, colleagues or other stakeholders; making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations; posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content.
- Breach confidentiality, by; sharing information owned by NCG; giving away confidential information about a learner, colleague or other stakeholder; discussing NCG's future business plans that have not been communicated to the public.
- Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual. This includes, making offensive or derogatory comments relating to any of the protected characteristics as identified in the Equality Act 2010.

When using social media in a personal capacity, colleagues should be aware that this can still damage NCG's reputation if they could be recognised as being an NCG colleague. Where a colleague chooses to discuss their work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism or the sector in which we operate), they must include the following statement on their profile "The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer."

### 10. Personal Relationships between Colleagues

Where a colleague has a personal relationship with another colleague they should declare this to their line manager so that any conflict of interest risk can be assessed and addressed. Where a relationship is with their line manager, colleagues should inform a more senior manager (e.g. line manager's manager). A personal relationship includes, partners, spouses, family members and close friends.

### 11. Professional Boundaries

Colleagues should demonstrate behaviours that are in line with NCG values and ways of working, towards other colleagues, learners and stakeholders.

Colleagues hold a unique position of influence, authority, trust and power in relation to learners and are expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of ethics and behaviour. Professional boundaries must be established, maintained and respected at all times.

Colleagues should consider the following if they are unsure about whether professional boundaries are being, or have been, breached;

- Would they change their behaviour if another colleague was present?
- How they would feel about explaining their actions?
- Are they sharing information for the learners benefit, or for their benefit?
- Are they dealing with this learner differently from others in similar circumstances?
- Is their language or demeanour different from normal when dealing with this particular learner?

There may be situations in which colleagues will have to make decisions or take action in the best interests and for the welfare of learners. The following guidelines are not exhaustive and, in these circumstances, colleagues should use their own sound judgment, think carefully of the implications and potential consequences of engaging in certain behaviours, and always err on the side of caution.

#### 11.1. Language and Communication

Colleagues should act with self-control, tolerance and use appropriate language and behaviour when dealing with each other and learners. All communications with learners should be professional in tone and refrain from engaging in overly personal or social conversations without a valid educational context.

#### 11.2. One to One Situations

It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential meetings must take place with learners. Colleagues should ensure that another colleague is aware that the meeting is taking place which should be on NCG premises, unless approval from the line manager has been given to hold it elsewhere.

#### 11.3. Educational Visits and Activities

Extra-curricular and learning enhancement activities are encouraged. Colleagues must ensure that all activities are risk assessed in line with the relevant off campus health and safety procedures and approved in advance by the Head of Service/ Curriculum / Departmental Director.

#### **11.4. Transporting Learners**

Colleagues should not transport learners in their own private vehicles or offer lifts to anyone under 18 years outside of their normal working duties. In an emergency situation where a learner is placed at risk, colleagues should always keep a record and report the incident to the Head of Service/ Curriculum / Departmental Director.

#### **11.5. Personal Relationships with Learners**

Colleagues should not initiate or develop a relationship with a learner that has a personal rather than professional element.

Colleagues should not meet or socialise with learners outside of College-organised events. However, it is recognised that there may be occasions where reasonable social contact may be unavoidable e.g. meeting learners at social venues that are open to the general public such as shops and bars. In such circumstances, colleagues should be mindful at all times of their professional relationship with the learner.

Where a colleagues' family member or friend subsequently becomes a learner, in the same area they are working, they should inform their line manager and alternative arrangements will be made where required.

#### **11.6. Intimate Relationships with Learners**

Colleagues should not initiate or develop a relationship with a learner that is romantic or sexual in any way, irrespective of the age of those involved. This is regardless of whether the relationship is consensual, non-consensual or condoned by parents or carers. Such relationships have a negative impact on the teaching and learning activity and may carry a serious reputational risk for the Colleges.

Where a colleague is in a relationship with an adult, who subsequently becomes a learner, they should inform their line manager prior to the learner commencing their course.

#### **11.7. Physical Contact with Learners**

Colleagues should avoid any unnecessary physical contact with learners. However, there may be some situations that require some physical contact with learners, such as sport, drama and dance. This should take place in a safe and open environment and at all times the learner should be made aware of why the contact is necessary and appropriate for the activity that is being undertaken.

It may also be appropriate to have physical contact with high needs learners, including the following situations;

- Mobility
- Sighted guidance
- Familiarisation in classroom environments and around campus
- Practical activities

- Personal care
- First aid/medical assistance

It is best practice to use a light tap on a learner's forearm if they are profoundly deaf to gain their attention.

### **11.8. Remote Learning, Mobile and Electronic Communications**

Colleagues should set and maintain clear professional boundaries when communicating digitally with learners, in line with the Safeguarding Practice for Online Learning guidance. Colleagues should ensure they;

- Use technology for educational purposes or for the organisation of curricular activities.
- Set clear expectations regarding online learner behaviour in the learning environment.
- Restrict communication to specific days and/or times within usual teaching hours, avoiding weekends.
- Maintain a professional tone and relationship in their communications and refrain from engaging in personal or social conversations without a valid educational context.
- Do not share their own personal mobile phone number with learners and use an NCG mobile phone/device, wherever possible during working hours for any communications with learners.
- Use the NCG email system for all email communication where possible.
- Respond to learners in TEAMs group chats and avoid private messaging where possible.
- Do not send personal photos and audio-video clips to learners, or vice versa.
- Do not accept or request learners as 'friends' on social media or otherwise use social media chat groups and forums to communicate.
- Maintain records of conversations and other online digital activities with learners to ensure transparency.

### **11.9. Financial Regulations Policy and Accepting Gifts from Learners**

Colleagues must ensure that they behave in a way that does not allow allegations of favouritism to be made against them. Colleagues should not accept gifts from learners that could be construed as a bribe or lead the learner to expect preferential treatment.