**EDUCATION
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Addressing misogyny and violence against women and girls in further education and skills

Foreword

Further education (FE) and skills providers have a unique and vital role in shaping safe, inclusive and respectful learning communities.

Across the sector, there is a growing recognition that misogyny, online harm and violence against women and girls are not isolated problems - they are cultural challenges that organisations can and must address through leadership, compassion and collective action.

With national leadership from the Department for Education's (DfE) FE Student Support Champion; Polly Harrow (2023-2027), this work has brought together colleges, training providers and sector partners to explore how education can respond meaningfully to misogyny and violence against women and girls (VAWG).

The ETF webinar and roundtable, *"Addressing Misogyny and Violence Against Women and Girls,"* in October 2025, captured this shared ambition and provided a platform for sector voices to share insight, practice and hope.

This policy guidance builds on those conversations. It provides practical steps, examples and frameworks to help every organisation foster connection, belonging, allyship and community - both online and offline.

It recognises the deep influence of digital spaces on young people's wellbeing, relationships and worldviews, and supports staff to lead with confidence, empathy and care.

It supports the national priorities outlined in the [Post-16 education and skills white paper](#) and reflects Ofsted's overarching tenets of "Belong, Thrive and Achieve" within the new [Education Inspection Framework](#), emphasising that inclusion, respect and belonging are central to learner success and organisational culture.

It further recognises that many learners in FE and skills provision are adults, often balancing study, work and family life, and that approaches to belonging, safety and inclusion must reflect the experiences, maturity and responsibilities of adult learners as well as those aged 16–18.

Together, ETF, AoC and DfE are committed to supporting leaders, educators and governors to make equality and respect a lived part of everyday culture across FE and skills providers.

This is more than a safeguarding requirement - it is a shared responsibility to create a culture where respect is lived, belonging is felt, and everyone has a voice.

Executive summary

This guidance helps FE and skills provider staff, leaders and governors take practical, joined-up action to challenge misogyny and violence against women and girls.

It calls for a shift from reacting to incidents toward building positive cultures of respect, equality and belonging across further education and skills settings.

Today's digital world has a major impact on how young people see themselves and others. The rise of online misogyny, sexualised content and misinformation is increasing levels of anxiety, self-doubt and harm - especially among girls and young women.

Adult learners also encounter online and offline misogyny, harassment and gender-based bias in education, employment and community settings. This guidance therefore supports providers to create respectful and inclusive environments for all learners, regardless of age or life stage.

This guidance builds on insights from the ETF webinar *"Addressing Misogyny and Violence Against Women and Girls in FE and skills"* and brings together good practice and learning from DfE, FE and skills providers, and sector partners committed to embedding equality and respect across every aspect of FE and skills provider life.

It offers a clear framework to help every organisation create a community where learners and staff feel safe, valued and connected - online and offline.

This guide will help you:

- Build confident, connected staff teams

- Embed equality and respect across culture and curriculum

- Foster physically and psychologically safe learning environments that respond to staff and learner wellbeing needs

- Strengthen online safety and digital wellbeing

- Measure and sustain progress over time.

Purpose and context

This guidance sets out a practical and evidence-based approach for FE and skills providers to respond to the growing challenge of misogyny and violence against women and girls in both digital and physical learning environments.

It aims to:

- Strengthen professional confidence and capacity to recognise, respond to and prevent misogyny and violence against women and girls

- Embed equality, inclusion and belonging as core principles of leadership and curriculum

- Create environments where learners develop healthy relationships, empathy and digital responsibility.

Why this matters now

The FE and skills sector plays an important role in shaping communities and supporting young people as they become adults. Many learners are developing their identities, building relationships and spending time online in ways that influence how they see the world.

At the same time, a significant proportion of learners are adults returning to education. They may bring workplace experiences, family perspectives and personal histories that shape how they engage with topics of respect, equality and misogyny. Their voices are essential in creating a whole-community approach.

FE and skills providers are more than places of learning - they are at the heart of their communities. By challenging misogyny and promoting respect, they help create safer environments, improve wellbeing and support equality for everyone.

This policy aligns with:

Keeping children safe in education 2025 (KCSIE, 2025) - statutory safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges and training providers.

Further education and skills inspection toolkit– Ofsted inspection framework for FE and skills providers, covering safeguarding, inclusion, leadership, wellbeing, personal development and more.

Freedom from violence and abuse: a cross-government strategy - GOV.UK (Home Office, December 2025)

AoC's national work on equity, diversity and inclusion: Equity, diversity and inclusion | Association of Colleges AoC's Equity Exchange | Association of Colleges

AoC's mental health and wellbeing overview page: Mental health and wellbeing | Association of Colleges.

Background: the challenge and the change

Rising concerns – FE and skills providers across the UK are seeing more learners, both young people and adults, needing extra support with mental health, wellbeing and online pressures. National research shows:

Mental health problems have increased for all ages, with more people experiencing anxiety and depression. https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2023-wave-4-follow-up

Girls and women are seeing higher levels of self-harm, anxiety and depression, shown in NHS, Girlguiding and Children's Commissioner data.
https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/about-us/press-releases/girls-attitudes-survey-2023
https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/reports/mental-health/

Boys and men report loneliness, confusion about identity and more exposure to harmful online influencers, across both teenage and adult learners. In recent years there has been a rise of Incels, a sub-culture community of men who forge a sense of identity around their perceived inability to form sexual or romantic relationships. Incels typically display extremely poor mental health, with high incidences of depression and suicidal ideation.
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/media-use-and-attitudes/media-habits-children/childrens
Predicting harm among incels (involuntary celibates): the roles of mental health, ideological belief and social networking (accessible) - GOV.UK

Absence and lower engagement are increasing, often linked to online pressure, digital fatigue, misinformation and difficulty balancing study with life responsibilities.
https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-attendance-in-schools
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/childrens

The online impact
Research (UCL & University of Kent, 2024) found a fourfold increase in misogynistic content on TikTok over just five days. Algorithms are designed to maximise engagement - often amplifying anger, division, and harmful stereotypes.

The rapid spread of online misogyny, normalisation of coercive control and blurring of consent boundaries are changing how young people think, behave and relate to one another. These issues extend beyond safeguarding - they shape mental health, trust and belonging.

This is a generation-wide wellbeing and cultural challenge that demands further education and skills sector leadership.

The need for connection and belonging
Connection, belonging and compassion are protective factors in this changing landscape.

FE and skills settings must actively create communities where all learners, regardless of gender - feel safe, seen and supported.

Intersectionality and lived experience

Addressing misogyny and violence against women and girls requires an understanding of intersectionality, the way that factors such as race, sexuality, disability, age and faith can combine to shape individual experiences.

Learners and staff may experience misogyny differently depending on these overlapping identities. Recognising this helps organisations develop responses that are fair, inclusive and grounded in real lived experience.

Policies, training and support systems should reflect the diversity of the FE and skills community and be informed by the voices of those most affected. Embedding intersectionality in this way strengthens belonging, equality and respect for everyone.

Key insights from the roundtable webinar

In October 2025, ETF hosted a roundtable webinar for leaders titled *"Addressing misogyny and violence against women and girls in FE and skills"*. Leaders from the FE and skills sector were brought together to share insight, practice and hope.

- Staff expressed a strong desire to lead conversations about misogyny and respect, but lack confidence, time, or support structures.

- Confidence levels were very mixed, with some staff feeling highly confident and others less so. A wide range of experiences, showing that people across the sector are starting from different points.

- Common barriers included fear of saying the wrong thing, uncertainty about language and lack of senior leadership visibility.

- There is a clear appetite for affordable, accessible CPD, underpinned by consistent messaging from leadership.

- Participants highlighted the urgent need for alignment between safeguarding, curriculum, HR and community engagement.

Practical tools and support

The "Flag It" campaign
The DfE has launched "Flag It" at the AoC Conference in November 2025; this initiative promotes practical action across the FE and skills sector. It is part of the first [relationship sex education toolkit](#), designed to support educators in the post-16 sector.

It includes:

- Staff and learner toolkits on consent, coercive control and online harm

- Lesson plans, case studies and quizzes to help learners recognise harmful behaviours

- A behavioural recruitment framework for HR teams to ensure all new staff uphold anti-misogynistic values

- Printable posters and visual campaigns designed by learners, including introductory banners for FE and skills provider entrances affirming anti-sexist and anti-misogynistic values

- A draft strategy to embed this work within schemes of learning and tutorial programmes.

The core message: "If you see something, say something".

The UK Feminista whole-organisation model

[UK Feminista](#) has developed a whole-organisation approach designed specifically for education settings to embed gender equality and tackle misogyny and sexual harassment. This model emphasises strong leadership commitment, staff development and meaningful learner engagement.

Working with FE and skills providers across the country, UK Feminista supports providers to:

- Establish clear and accessible systems for reporting incidents of sexism and sexual harassment, ensuring that learners and staff feel heard and taken seriously

- Collect and analyse data consistently to track progress and identify areas for improvement

- Deliver tailored training so that all staff share a common understanding and deliver consistent messages

- Implement long-term strategies/action plan that recognise cultural change takes time and sustained effort.

An FE and skills specific activity plan helps address the influence of online misogyny and supports constructive conversations around respect, equality and healthy relationships. FE and skills providers can also take part in the UK Feminista Action Award, recognising organisations that demonstrate a whole-organisation commitment to gender equality and inclusion.

Learning from effective practice

This guide has a supporting ==case studies document==, with in-depth details about initiatives that FE and skills providers have worked to address misogyny and violence against women and girls. The case studies included are:

- Collaboration with UK Feminista to create a whole-organisation approach to address misogyny and violence against women and girls by Birmingham Metropolitan College.

- The creation of the Ally programme, to equip staff to engage male students with problematic attitudes through sensitive, constructive conversations at Truro and Penwith College

- An example of training delivered to provide a practical model for creating a culture shift around equality and respect by York College

- An overview of the support that Yorkshire Learning Provider provides for members from the FE and skills sector to address misogyny and violence against women and girls.

These case studies demonstrate how consistency, communication and cultural ownership drive change.

Building a whole-organisation approach

Leadership and culture

- Senior leaders must set the tone: equality, respect and belonging must feature in strategy, governance and communication

- Regularly update staff and learners on actions, pledges and outcomes

- Ensure HR, curriculum and safeguarding teams work collaboratively

- Model allyship and openness - leaders should *walk the talk.*

Staff confidence and capability

- Embed mandatory induction and refresher training on gender equality and bystander approaches

- Provide coaching and mentoring to help staff build confidence and share practice

- Build a whole-organisation approach to mental health, ensuring every member of staff is equipped to recognise early signs of poor mental health, respond with empathy and confidence and know how to connect learners with the right support

- Create time and space for reflection, supervision and discussion

- Recognise and reward visible allyship.

Curriculum and learner voice

- Integrate respect, consent and empathy across personal development and tutorial programmes

- Use real-world scenarios, digital literacy tasks and peer discussion to build critical thinking

- Empower learners as equality ambassadors, shaping campaigns and feedback loops.

Here are two youth social action project examples of using learner voice to address misogyny:

- Carshalton College: Building learner confidence and community connections through Empowering Young Women – Building Safer Communities Carshalton-College-YSA-case-study.pdf

- Hull College: Empowering Change - Sexual Assault Awareness and Support Hull-College-YSA-case-study.pdf

Community and family engagement

- Offer workshops for parents/carers on online harm and respectful relationships

- Build partnerships with local safeguarding boards, community groups and VAWG networks

- Share consistent messaging through newsletters, social media and events.

Local partnerships and collaboration

It is recommended that FE and skills providers collate a list of local partners and systems and work collaboratively. This should include:

- Safeguarding and wellbeing contacts
- Referral and reporting procedures
- Local VAWG partnerships and mental health services.

An example from Weston College shows how learners collaborated with Avon and Somerset Police to create a short film raising awareness about consent and online safety - a strong model of partnership working and learner-led community impact.
https://www.weston.ac.uk/news/students-create-short-film-avon-somerset-police

Measuring impact

Progress should be tracked and reviewed quarterly with senior oversight and learner input.

Key indicators include:

- Staff confidence levels and training participation rates

- Learner feedback on belonging, respect and safety

- Incident and reporting trends (quantitative and qualitative)

- Engagement with campaigns, pledges and events

- Broader wellbeing, attendance and retention outcomes.

Strengthening data and reporting consistency
FE and skills providers need clear, consistent ways to record mental health, welfare and safeguarding information to understand learners' experiences and provide timely support. Currently, varied terms and systems make it hard to see sector-wide trends. Shared definitions, simple data standards and supportive tools will help capture the information that matters most. This requires coordinated sector-wide leadership, not action by individual organisations alone. When data is joined up and meaningful, it becomes a powerful tool for early action, better decisions and ensuring every learner feels safe, seen and supported.

Policy commitments

Every FE and skills organisation should commit to:

- Zero tolerance for misogyny, harassment and violence against women and girls

- Ensuring that anyone affected by misogyny or violence is offered, or guided to, appropriate mental health and wellbeing support

- Embedding equality, respect and belonging within policy, practice and curriculum

- Providing accessible, ongoing training and clear reporting routes

- Partnering with trusted organisations to ensure expert input

- Reviewing progress annually and publishing a transparent summary of actions and outcomes.

Action plan example template

Goal/focus area	Actions to take	Who is responsible?	Timeline	Success measure
Build staff confidence	Deliver short bystander and allyship sessions; introduce coaching and mentoring for staff development	Safeguarding lead	Jan 2026 – April 2026	Confidence survey improvement
Strengthen learner voice	Establish equality ambassadors	Curriculum lead	Spring 2026	Increased participation
Improve online safety	Launch "Flag it" tutorials	Digital lead	Spring 2026	Fewer online incidents
Family engagement	Hold parent and carer sessions on respectful relationships	Designated safeguarding lead	Summer 2026	Positive feedback
Evaluate impact	Review and publish outcomes	SLT	Annually	Public report summary
Mental health and wellbeing	Embed whole-organisation trauma-informed approach with tailored support for learners affected by misogyny or harm	Senior Mental Health Lead	Summer 2026	Wellbeing metrics or survey

Conclusion

This policy guidance represents a sector-wide commitment to culture change. It is not a one-off initiative, but an ongoing process of education, reflection and leadership. Every conversation, every lesson and every act of allyship builds the community our learners deserve - one rooted in respect, belonging and shared responsibility.

If you see something, say something. If you hear silence, start the conversation.

Appendices and references

Appendix A: Example summary sheet: staff briefing
Policy guidance: Addressing misogyny and violence against women and girls (VAWG) in further education and skills
Focus: Connection | Belonging | Allyship | Online Impact | Community

Purpose
To equip FE and skills leaders, educators and support staff with practical tools and frameworks to:

- Tackle misogyny and violence against women and girls (online and offline)

- Strengthen equality, belonging, and respectful relationships

- Build confident, connected FE and skills communities.

Why it matters
Misogynistic content online has risen fourfold in just five days [(UCL & University of Kent, 2024)](). Young people's wellbeing is being shaped by online algorithms that amplify hate and division. FE and skills providers can counter this by fostering brave conversations, consistent action and visible leadership.

Key messages:

- This is a cultural challenge - not just a safeguarding issue

- Staff confidence is central: "If you see something, say something"

- Whole-organisation commitment is essential - from leadership to learners

- Digital culture must be addressed as part of wellbeing and curriculum.

Core actions

Focus area	Practical step	Impact
Leadership	Embed quality and safety in policy and communication	Clearer expectations and visibility
Staff confidence	Delivery short bystander and allyship sessions; introduce coaching and mentoring for staff development	Safer, more empowered staff teams
Curriculum	Integrate consent and respect themes	Normalise positive behaviour
Learner voice	Establish equality ambassadors or allies	Shared ownership and representation
Online safety	Launch 'Flag it' campaign	Reduced online harm and better awareness
Wider organisation strategies	Adding specific details on addressing violence against women and girls into: • Inclusion strategy to reduce the risk of misogynistic behaviour through a sense of belonging. • Mental health strategy to provide tailored support for those affected by misogyny and violence against women and girls	Increased awareness and understanding

Measuring progress

- Staff confidence surveys (termly)
- Learner feedback and participation rates
- Incident and reporting trends
- Campaign engagement and attendance data.

Partners and resources

Relationship sex education toolkit for the post-16 sector: Relationship Sex Education Toolkit for the… | Association of Colleges, including the Flag It Campaign (DfE) – tools for consent, coercive control, and online harm.

UK Feminista – whole-organisation equality model: UK Feminista – Working for a society in which women and girls live free from sexism and violence.

Commitment statement

"We commit to zero tolerance for misogyny and violence against women and girls, to embedding equality and belonging across our culture, and to empowering every learner and colleague to be an ally."

Appendix B: Frameworks and campaigns

Flag It Campaign (2025) – Consent, coercive control and online harm toolkit – [Relationship Sex Education Toolkit for the… | Association of Colleges](#)

UK Feminista (2022–2025) – Whole-organisation gender equality model - https://ukfeminista.org.uk/

Appendix C: Key research

UCL & University of Kent (2024) – Algorithms and misogyny amplification - https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2024/feb/social-media-algorithms-amplify-misogynistic-content-teens

Women and Equalities Committee (2024) – Misogyny: The Manosphere and Online Content - https://committees.parliament.uk/work/9089/misogyny-the-manosphere-and-online-content/

NASUWT (2024) – Teachers Warn of Surge in Racism and Misogyny - https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/far-right-movements-misogyny-and-racism.html

Thank you