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Self Assessment of Health, Safety and Welfare: Guidance for organisations funded by the Skills Funding Agency

June 2011

This is of interest to Skills Funding Agency staff
and funded organisations

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Foreword

The Skills Funding Agency (the “Agency”) has adopted similar principles to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in self assessment reporting and has produced this guidance to support the publication “Self-assessment: Updated Guidance for the Further Education System”, which was published in September 2008 by the LSC and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), please click here www.lsis.org.uk for more information.

It is primarily aimed at those in leadership roles who have the ultimate responsibility and accountability for health, safety and welfare. However, it will be a useful tool for all people in the organisation with responsibilities for health, safety and welfare (including safeguarding vulnerable groups).

It is strongly recommended that this guidance is used by governing boards to develop effective practice in their organisation.

Introduction

Ofsted, the Agency and the LSIS have developed this particular guidance as a shared commitment to drive forward standards in self-assessment as it remains pivotal for quality improvement in the current landscape. LSIS have a wealth of general guidance to assist with self assessment; information can be found on <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/self-assessment-guide>.

There are a number of key provider performance issues for consideration and these include:

- ensuring excellence in provision
- actively tackling poor performance
- raising standards and skills
- increasing efficiency
- being closer to learners and employers.

The above issues translate readily to ensure health, safety and welfare are given the attention required, not only to meet legal and regulatory requirements but to create excellent practice. The self-assessment report should include an assessment of the extent to which arrangements for learner health, safety and welfare are suitable and sufficient. The safe learner concept and subsequent safe learner blueprint are key factors for consideration.

Effective and efficient systems of self-assessment now rests with the learning and skills sector as all funding agencies seek to allow the Sector to self report and regulate. This publication should be read in conjunction with the online self-assessment and Improvement Planning guide, launched by LSIS, to support providers to build their capacity to improve.

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Basic Principles

In line with the general characteristics of self assessment, providers are required to assess and evaluate their arrangements for health, safety and welfare to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Ofsted and the Agency will expect to see a judgement on the quality of arrangements for health, safety and welfare within a self assessment report.

The importance of making evaluative statements which focus on outcomes, rather than descriptive statements, also needs to be emphasised. The actions necessary to build on strengths and address the areas for improvement should then be captured and formulated into actions. Valid sources of evidence should be used to demonstrate any statements given in the self assessment report.

In general terms an evaluation of the health and safety management system and the Agency's contractual requirements for health, safety and welfare will be covered. The Agency uses the model management system of HSG65 within its contractual conditions however this is only a model and there are other comparative systems.

The specific aspects to be evaluated are summarised below:

- Health, safety and welfare policy.
- Organising for health, safety and welfare
- How the organisation plans, sets standards and implements them (based on risk assessment).
- Arrangements for producing safe learners/employees and promoting the safe learner blueprint.
- Arrangements for securing safe, healthy and supportive environments.
- Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- Processes for measuring health and safety performance.
- Audit and review procedures.

As many organisation's use subcontractors to deliver learning it is important to consider this element of managing, and include information on your arrangements if you do use subcontractors.

In addition, the requirements relating to learner health and safety within the Common Inspection Framework 'outcomes for learners' should be considered and addressed. These include the extent to which learners:

- develop relevant knowledge, understanding and skills which contribute to their economic and social well-being
- increase their employability
- progress to further learning and employment or gain promotion
- understand their rights and responsibilities at work
- use safe working practices in learning and at work
- say they feel safe
- have the knowledge and understanding to enable them to make informed choices about their health and well being

As noted in Self-assessment: Updated Guidance for the Further Education System (September 2008), the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults is of high importance. See also paragraph 3.7.

Further details and guidance on safeguarding can be found from: <http://www.education.gov.uk> and www.isa.gov.org.uk

Action points:

How thoroughly do you evaluate health, safety and welfare issues within your self-assessment report? How well do you meet the safeguarding requirements if you need to make provision for vulnerable groups? Does your organisation involve all relevant people in the self-assessment process? Can you show you adequately manage any subcontractors you use? Can you effectively demonstrate the relevant areas of the Common Inspection Framework relating to learner health, safety and welfare?

Specific aspects to be evaluated

3.1 Leadership, governance and policy

An organisation's health and safety policy is the responsibility of the leadership team. The policy should influence all of their activities and should include a high-level general statement demonstrating a commitment to health, safety and welfare.

The statement should be supplemented by arrangements for implementing and monitoring the policy. This will demonstrate to staff, learners and other partners that hazards have been identified and risks assessed, eliminated or controlled.

Action points:

How do you demonstrate commitment from the leadership team for health, safety and welfare? How do you know that your health and safety policy and procedures are current and effective? If the information is not readily available, what will you need to do to find out? How do you engage all members of staff, including new employees, with the requirements of the policy?

There are many benefits to be gained from top-level commitment and successful leadership in health and safety. The Health and Safety Executive and the Institute of Directors have published a useful guidance document on leadership in health and safety entitled 'Leading health and safety at work'. A wide range of excellent case studies on successful leadership can also be accessed from the HSE's leadership website, including examples from a college and an independent training provider. These studies highlight some key benefits including: an improved reputation within the local community resulting in high enrolments; a significant reduction in accidents; and financial gains as a result of improved leadership.

It is of note that the provider and college in the case studies achieved overall judgements of 'outstanding' and 'good' respectively as a result of their subsequent inspections. This suggests that the correlation between good leadership in health and safety and good leadership, governance and performance in general is not just a coincidence.

To download a copy of the guidance and for further details of the case studies, visit the website www.hse.gov.uk/leadership/index.htm

3.2 Organising for health, safety and welfare

The responsibilities and relationships which promote a positive and visible health and safety culture need to be clearly defined to secure the implementation and continued development of the health and safety policy. To achieve this and make the policy effective, all members of staff and learners need to become involved, committed to and comply with health, safety and welfare policies and procedures. This will result in a positive health and safety culture often referred to as “the 4Cs”: Competence, Control, Co-operation, and Communication.

Action points:

How do you know that all staff and learners fully understand and observe their health and safety responsibilities? How do you ensure health and safety is a visible part of your organisation’s culture? What will you need to do to evaluate: Competence (do recruitment processes consider the health and safety requirements of the role?); Control (are staff committed to health, safety and welfare?); Co-operation (the involvement of all staff in planning, reviewing performance and problem solving); Communication of key health and safety messages? Do you involve all relevant people in the process?

3.3 Planning, setting standards and ensuring they are achieved

Planning for continuous improvement in health and safety involves setting objectives, identifying hazards, assessing risks, developing risk control measures and implementing them. Activities should be monitored against these standards with corrective measures (based on good practice) implemented as necessary.

Action points:

How do you evaluate and demonstrate the effectiveness of your planning process? How do you ensure that learner health, safety and welfare are given due consideration before any new activities or programmes are started? Are risk assessments performed and risk control measures implemented? Do you set standards for partners for example: other providers delivering training, subcontractors, consortia partners, employers and placements? Are the responsibilities for planning and setting standards clear and recorded?

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3.4 The safe learner

The Safe Learner Blueprint is a template to assist funded organisations in developing safe learners. The Blueprint is the result of extensive research and consultation by the LSC to support the Safe Learner Concept and its principles have now been adopted by the Agency. Providers have found the Blueprint useful in developing a positive health and safety culture.

It is expected that all providers will promote the 'safe learner concept' and the 'safe learner blueprint'. The overall objectives are that learners will develop an awareness of hazard identification, risk assessment and risk control. This should result in a set of safe behaviours, to give learners the confidence to play an active part and acquire practical, transferable and value-added skills from their learning experience.

Action points:

Is health and safety an integral part of all learners' activity and is it linked to their success? Do learners and other employees actively contribute to the system for managing health and safety? Do these activities result in the key outputs highlighted in the 'safe learner blueprint'? How do you monitor achievement of these outputs? How do you measure the benefits of having safe learners and employees?

3.5 Learners and employees

Providers have found it useful to apply the above principles to all staff and learners, enabling ownership of health and safety to be embraced by all involved. By adopting this approach within self assessment it has the benefits of improving the health and safety culture, identifying previously hidden weaknesses and embedding continuous improvement.

The Safe Learner Blueprint, and other relevant guidance, can be found at www.safelearner.info

3.6 Safe, healthy and supportive environments

All learners and employees are entitled to learn and work in environments that are safe, healthy, supportive and productive. The environment and health and safety management arrangements should meet the requirements detailed under health and safety legislation. The Agency standards for health and safety can be found on the Safelearner website, they are aligned with the legal requirements and are of particular importance when learning is sub-contracted and work-related learning takes place.

Action points:

How do you know you have appropriate arrangements in place, that are risk-relevant and robust, to secure and maintain safe and healthy learning environments? Do these arrangements meet the legal requirements?

3.7 Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

There is a need to protect children and safeguard the welfare of vulnerable adults. The recent updates of the Ofsted Handbooks have also strengthened the sections on safeguarding www.Ofsted.gov.uk. See also section 4, below. Providers are recommended to check their own policies and procedures against the Ofsted Handbook in preparing to self-assess their safeguarding arrangements. As an example, the Handbook for inspecting Colleges notes that, under section 175 of the Education Act 2002:

“The governing body of an institution within the further education sector shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the institution are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children receiving education or training at the institution.”

The core features that can improve safeguarding practice should be included in the self-assessment of both leadership and management and of quality of provision. Consideration should also be given as to whether young people and vulnerable adults feel safe.

Providers should pay specific attention to the aims found in the Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework, for the outcome to “stay safe: the extent to which children, young people and adults are safe from a number of specified dangers”. The previous Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) published a programme of work to support protection in its Staying Safe: Action Plan. Details are available at: www.education.gov.uk/publications

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 lays the legislative foundation and processes for those working with children and vulnerable adults.

Action points:

Are your safeguarding and recruitment policies and practice fully consistent with the current government policies and safeguarding requirements? Do your self assessment processes pay sufficient regard to safeguarding practices at all levels of the organisation and with partners? Do you have a written policy for safeguarding vulnerable groups that is reviewed annually? Overall, how effective are you in evaluating your settings and services to ensure that young people and vulnerable adults are safe and feel safe? How do you ensure that learners are aware of policies and procedures designed to improve their safety? If you have identified that you don't have any vulnerable learners are you able to demonstrate this using some kind of assessment process?

3.8 Measuring health and safety performance

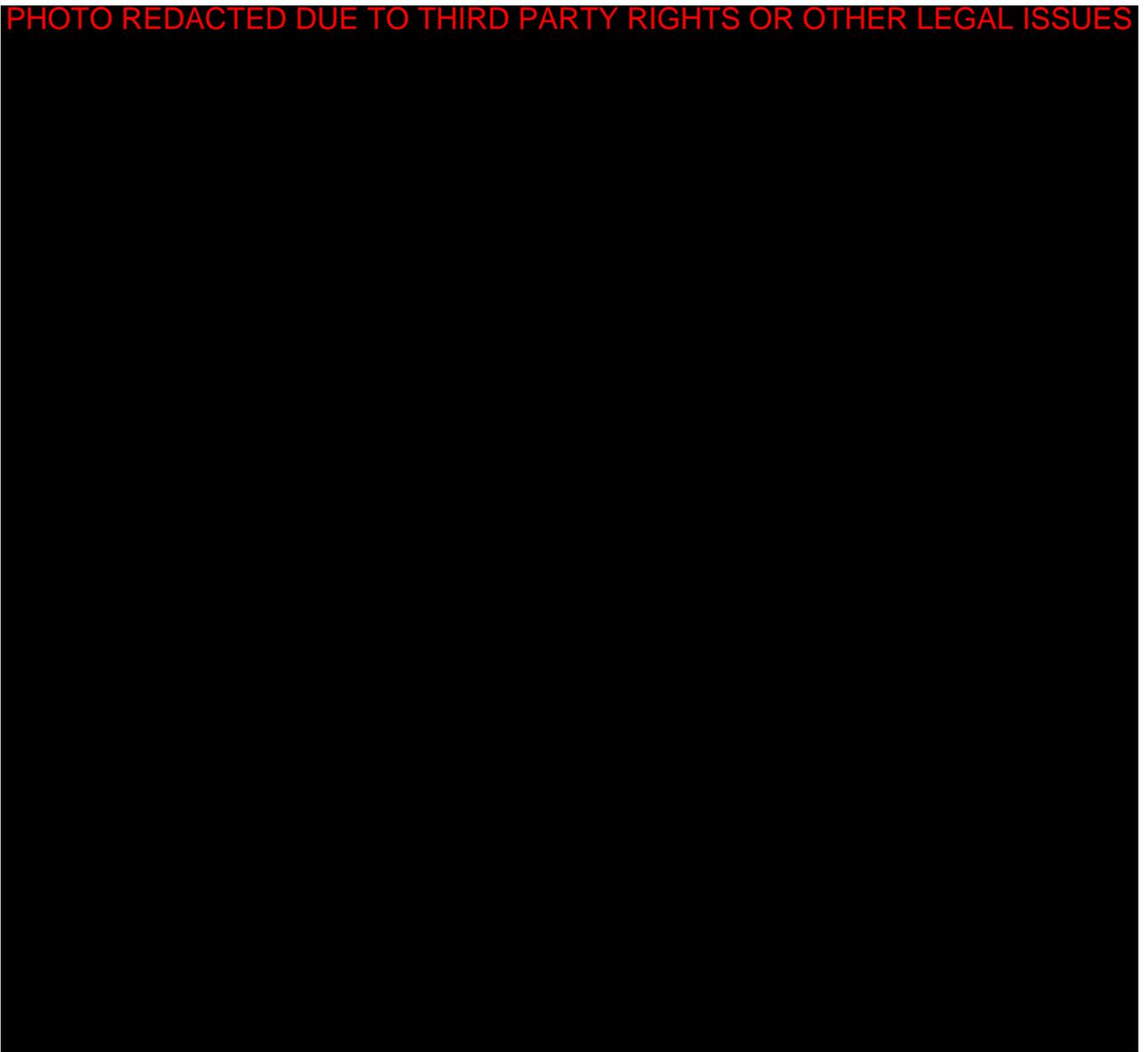
All organisations need to measure their health, safety and welfare performance to find out if management systems are being effective. Monitoring involves regular inspection, surveys, sampling, etc to ensure that the standards are being implemented and management controls are having the desired effect.

Reactive monitoring involves identifying why performance was substandard and learning the lessons from incidents that have resulted in injury, illness, property damage or near misses.

Action points:

Do you have systems in place for active and reactive monitoring? How do you know these are effective? Are there processes in place for setting targets and performance standards and monitoring their achievement? - are you able to demonstrate your assessment process for reaching this conclusion?

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3.9 Audit and review procedures

Audits complement other monitoring activities by collecting information on the efficiency of the health and safety management system to see if it is working in practice and achieving the right results. Reviewing is the process of making judgements, taking into account information from the activities used to measure performance, and from audits, about the adequacy of performance and deciding on the nature and timing of the actions necessary to achieve improvements. The general findings of your audit and review processes will feed into your self-assessment.

Action points:

Are audits of the health and safety management system sufficient to check compliance with health and safety standards and legislation? Do they involve the appropriate people? How do you ensure the actions introduced as a result of audits and reviews are effective?

Ofsted Inspection Requirements

Ofsted's recommendations on safeguarding have already been considered (3.7). In the wider context, the Common Inspection Framework sets out the principles applicable to the inspection of post-16 education and training carried out under the Adult Skills and Children's Learning Act. There are specific requirements within the framework relating to health and safety which need to be taken into account within the self-assessment process. Requirements with regard to safeguarding are now included in the current inspection framework. If there is an inadequate judgement on the effectiveness of an organisation's approach to ensuring learners are safe, and that they feel safe, this will directly affect the overall effectiveness judgment about a college or provider.

This includes, but is not limited to the:

- Extent to which learners adopt safe practices and a healthy lifestyle.
- Emotional development and behaviour of learners.
- Extent to which the provision contributes to the learners' capacity to stay safe. This includes learning how to keep safe from accidental injury, bullying, harassment, discrimination, crime, anti-social behaviour, neglect, sexual exploitation, exposure to violence and other dangers.
- Extent to which the provision contributes to a healthy lifestyle, including being physically, mentally, emotionally and sexually healthy, being well nourished and active, having self-esteem and choosing not to misuse drugs, alcohol and other substances.
- Care, advice, guidance and other support provided to safeguard welfare, promote personal development and achieve high standards.
- Adequacy and suitability of specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation.

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Ofsted inspectors may evaluate and make judgements on health and safety management arrangements during inspections. They will also review self-assessment reports. Some of the topics that inspectors may consider are detailed below:

- Health, safety and welfare policies and procedures including risk assessments and health and safety checks on learning venues.
- That there are systems in place to guide and support learners and ensure their health and safety.
- The safety and suitability of work environments and environments provided for practical activities, and compliance with health and safety legislation.
- Evidence that personal protective equipment is used and safe working practices are reinforced, followed and monitored.
- Learners' knowledge and understanding of employment rights, their own responsibility to work safely in respect of themselves and others, and their familiarity with health, safety and welfare arrangements.
- Compliance with legislation and procedures for protecting children and safeguarding vulnerable adults

Where inspectors observe unsafe or dangerous practice, they will use their professional judgement about the appropriate degree of intervention to take.

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Quality Improvement - demonstration

As a result of self-assessment, actions will be required to sustain strengths and address any other areas for improvement that have been identified to enhance the overall quality of provision.

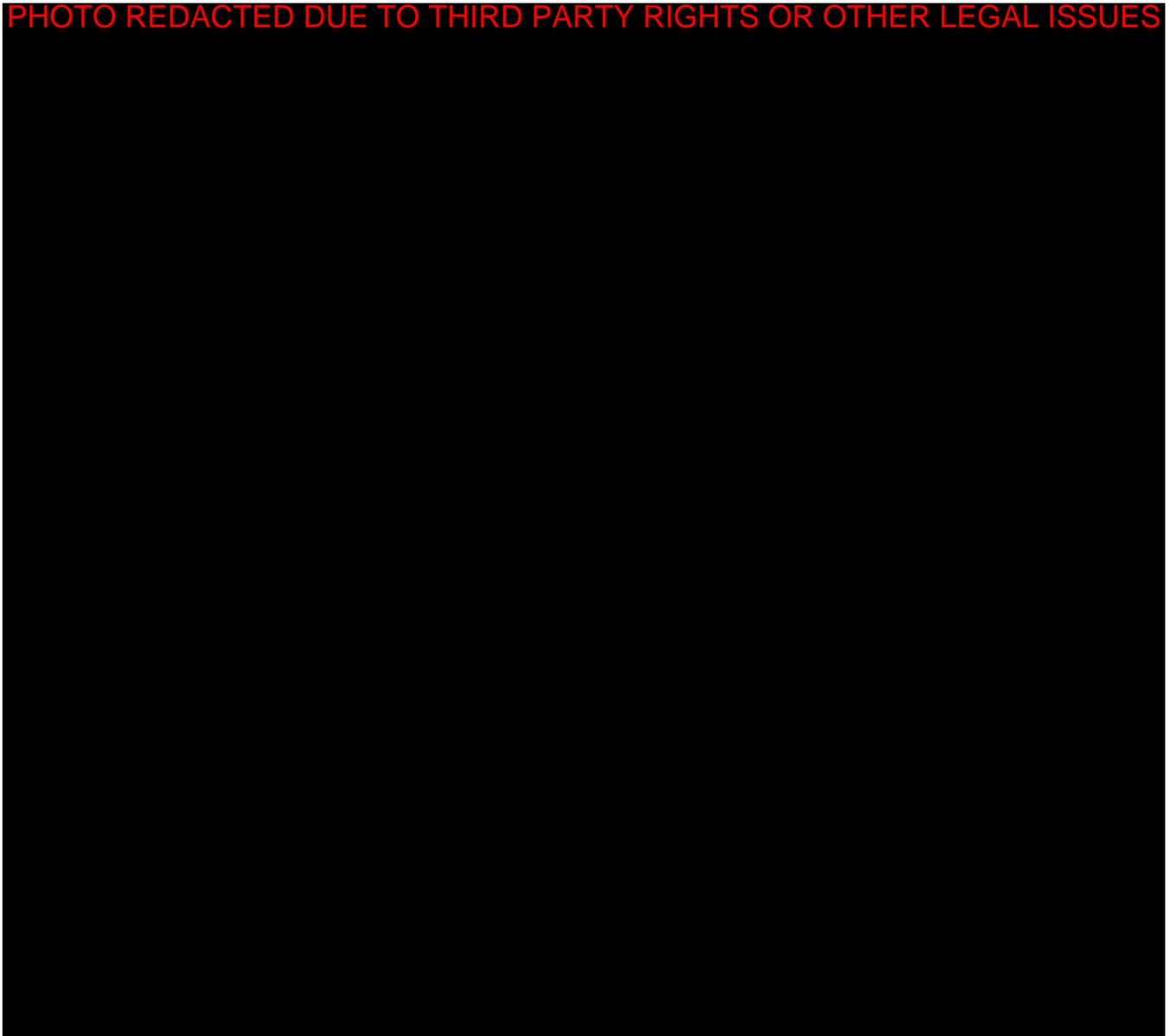
Colleges and providers are responsible for deciding what improvements are needed and how these will be implemented. Any quality improvement initiatives should demonstrate the actions to be taken, the expected outcomes, a clear timescale and the arrangements and responsibilities to monitor its progress.

The leadership team has overall responsibility for deciding what improvements are needed and how to implement these.

Action point:

Does the leadership team have a role in monitoring the implementation of quality improvements? Can the organisation demonstrate their plans for improvements if requested by Ofsted or other funding stakeholders?

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Further Information

Useful information on self-assessment and health and safety can be found on the following websites:

www.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk

www.safelearner.info

www.ofsted.gov.uk

www.excellence.qia.org.uk/goodpracticedatabase

www.hse.gov.uk



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