



# CASE STUDY: POINT BLANK MUSIC SCHOOL

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## Context

Point Blank Music School is an alternative provider specialising in electronic music. It offers degree level programmes validated by Middlesex University and a range of professionally focused courses, ranging from short courses to two-year programmes, leading to the school's own awards. Programmes may be taken face-to-face or online. In addition to its base in Hoxton, London, which is the home of the degree level provision, the school offers opportunities for study in Los Angeles and Ibiza.

Point Blank is a relatively small institution, with a core of full-time administrative, support and academic staff combined with a range of sessional teachers – practitioners in their specific domain – who teach on the different programmes.

## Risk analysis

Point Blank Music School has a high level of contact with its degree students who are intensively taught face-to-face in small groups, and who also use the school's studio facilities for practice and learning when they are not in formal sessions. In the school's professionally focused environment, student extra-curricular activity is visible, and relates to students' learning and creativity. The school assessed that its risk in relation to Prevent was relatively low.

Jules Brookes, managing director at Point Blank, identified the key issue. "We're focused on ensuring that our students succeed in their study and their careers in the music industry. We're doing all we can to track our students' progress, and support their learning. Students can be vulnerable and can struggle for a number of reasons, and if we spot this early, we can understand what the issue is, and work with the student to enable them to focus on their study. Our responsibilities under the Prevent duty sit well alongside our approach to students' wellbeing."

## Training

It was important for Point Blank to understand the issues and identify what support was available. Gordon Sweeney, Point Blank's head of education and Terri Merricks, programme manager, attended various events to learn more. A partnership conference organised by Middlesex University was helpful; Hefce emails also highlighted the training materials being prepared by the Leadership Foundation. A seminar organised by the Leadership Foundation enabled them to learn more.

As Gordon Sweeney commented: "We needed an approach to training which enabled our staff to understand quickly what they needed to know and do. Module 1 of the Leadership Foundation training materials was great for this: we used the PowerPoint version in our summer training day for teaching staff. It set out exactly what they needed to know; and meant that we didn't have to prepare materials ourselves."

The PowerPoint format enabled Point Blank to include local details of policies and key contacts within this training.

The training worked well for the staff concerned – a mixture of full-time and visiting staff. The material was found to be clear and straightforward, and included specific examples which made discussion richer and more valuable.

Point Blank used other modules as one-to-one training resources: the module on risk assessment helped inform the school's overall risk judgement; the module on student and staff wellbeing provides additional material for the course managers and student support staff.

As well as initial training, there's a need to provide ongoing support and resources. The school used the Module 1 material to provide summary guidance on the Prevent responsibilities, which is available for any member of staff. In this instance, the key points were distilled to a few short web pages on the school's intranet which set out the duty; some prompts about changed behaviours; advice about what to do if concerned; and the referral routes within Point Blank. This guidance is also available to students, and was discussed at the school's board of studies: the school considers that a transparent approach is consistent with its approach to student welfare and helps nurture its community.

## Lessons learned

What were the key points in Point Blank Music School's approach? Gordon Sweeney identified four lessons:

- Make sure that a senior member of staff takes ownership and leads on Prevent: this helps to ensure that the right things are done.
- Be proportionate: don't overdo the training; use language which makes sense to your staff; work the material into existing information so that the burden is minimised.
- If possible, face-to-face training works best: discussion of case studies and "what ifs" makes the learning easier and better for staff.
- The Leadership Foundation materials work well in enabling managers to fulfil their responsibilities; but use them thoughtfully, and use just those elements which are relevant to you.