

Cheshire college fined after student's fingers severed

A college in Nantwich that specialises in outdoor-based careers has been fined £40,000 after a student's fingers were severed when his hand came into contact with a mitre saw.

Aaron Maguire, from Crewe, was a second year Horticulture student at Reaseheath College when his hand came into contact with the blade of the saw on 20 September 2023. He had been using the saw to cut a piece of wood along its length when the wood twisted and pulled his hand into the cutting disc of the saw.

This resulted in the then 17-year old cutting through several fingers and the thumb on his left hand. Following an eight hour operation, surgeons managed to successfully re-attach Aaron's thumb and index finger, but the middle finger could not be saved.

Keen hockey player Aaron, who is now 19, said everyday tasks were now more difficult.

"Although my left hand is not my dominant hand, I have had to adjust to doing things that I would normally do with my left hand, such as cutting food and picking up everyday objects like glasses and cups," he said.

"I cannot grip things properly and it makes it difficult to do the hobbies I did.

"Prior to the incident, I was a keen hockey player. I still try to play hockey now, but it is nowhere near the level I was playing at before I had my injury."



Aaron Maguire was just 17 when the incident happened

More than 18 months on, Aaron has been told that he requires further surgery to his middle finger, which he hopes won't affect his plans to go to university in September.

"There are a number of reasons why an operation needs to take place.

"One of them is because the bone in my index finger is gradually sliding down and pushing into the skin on my hand.

"The operation is due to take place later this year. If the timing of the operation occurs around September when I am due to start my university course, this will have a significant impact on my studies."

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the college failed to adequately risk assess or produce a written safe system of work for using the mitre saw. The college did not record what training and instruction was given to students on the use of the saw.

There was no process to determine whether supervision was needed, nor was there any refresher training for using the saw following the students' return from their summer break.

On the day of the incident, Aaron had been seen by the tutor earlier that morning using the saw improperly. Despite this, he was allowed to use the saw again later that day without supervision.

HSE guidance states that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment should be carried out to identify measures that can be taken to overcome the risks that the hazard presents. It also states that young people warrant special consideration due to their judgement and lack of experience.

Employers need to satisfy themselves that in addition to being adequately trained, users can demonstrate competence, and the level of supervision should be directly related to the level of competence. (Further guidance can be found here: [Safe use of woodworking machinery. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 as applied to woodworking machinery. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L114.](#)

Reaseheath College in Nantwich, pleaded guilty to Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The college was fined £40,000 and ordered to pay £6,106 in costs at Chester Magistrates' Court on 4 June 2025.

HSE inspector Summer Foster said: "Places of education and workplaces must ensure that they have properly assessed the risks where young people are using dangerous machinery.

"If suitable training, an assessment of competence and appropriate supervision had been carried out then this accident would not have been able to happen.

"A young man has been left with life-changing injuries as a result."

The HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Edward Parton and

paralegal officer Jason Dix.

Further information:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. Relevant guidance can be found here [Safe use of woodworking machinery. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 as applied to woodworking machinery. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L114.](#)
5. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences can be found [here](#).