**Guidance for Colleges on Safeguarding Students Under 18 (U18)**

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| The University of Birmingham is committed to ensuring a safe and supportive environment exists for all staff, students, and visitors to the University. Creating a culture which supports student and staff wellbeing and appropriately embodies principles of safeguarding, are paramount for the University.  ​​  The University recognises that there are several circumstances in which children, young people, and Adults at Risk will come onto University premises or otherwise have contact with University staff, students or contractors, including where students are on placement or undertaking apprenticeships.​  ​Our approach to safeguarding, support and wellbeing also recognises our responsibilities under the PREVENT Duty: to help prevent the risk of people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.​ |
| **You can find our Safeguarding Policy and relevant contact information at our webpages here:** [**https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/safeguarding.aspx**](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/safeguarding.aspx) |

1. **Introduction** 
   1. The University of Birmingham has a commitment to ensure students under the age of 18 (U18) are appropriately supported and safeguarded. [The Parental Agreement letter](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/forms/admissions/parentconsent) signed by parents/guardians of U18s confirms that although the University is an adult environment where students are encouraged to be independent, the University recognises that for students who are aged under 18, we put in place a range of personal and academic support and safeguards to ensure their safety and wellbeing. It is important to note that whilst we implement additional safeguarding measures for our U18 students, the University does not act *in loco parentis*.
   2. The Parental Agreement Letter also confirms that while we cannot normally communicate with parents without the student’s consent, we may do so if we have concerns about an U18 student’s whereabouts, wellbeing or behaviour. If this situation arises, it is vital that you contact your [Local Safeguarding Lead,](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/safeguarding.aspx) or the universities [Designated/Deputy Safeguarding Lead](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/safeguarding.aspx) who are responsible for all safeguarding concerns for U18 students.
   3. Colleagues in Dubai should speak to their Local Safeguarding Lead for advice around concerns for U18 students. The United Arab Emirates has different reporting routes for U18 concerns. More information can be found on the [UAE Government](https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/children-safety) website.
   4. It is important to note that the University’s Senior Child Protection Officer (SCPO) and Director of Legal Services, Nicola Cardenas Blanco (**0121 414 3916 or** [legalservices@contacts@bham.ac.uk](mailto:legalservices@contacts@bham.ac.uk)) should be contacted for all Safeguarding concerns relating to children (non-students) on campus (nurseries, visitors, etc.)
   5. The University implements mandatory wellbeing checks, along with attendance and engagement monitoring, every two weeks for all U18 students. These checks are to ensure students under the age of 18 are appropriately supported and safeguarded throughout their time at university.
   6. These checks are part of that additional support, and a failure to engage with study may give rise to reasonable concerns about a student’s wellbeing or whereabouts. It is important to be clear with U18’s that they are ‘children under the law’ until they reach the age of 18, and that failure to engage with university safeguarding and wellbeing processes may mean that we must contact their parents or other external services, such as the police.
   7. The University’s Designated/Deputy Safeguarding Lead, Local Safeguarding Leads, and other appropriate staff will have access to a confidential record of all U18 students. This report will include a student’s term-time address, contact numbers and parental/guardian details. It will also highlight the completion of the Wellbeing Induction, fortnightly wellbeing check-ins, and attendance of each student to ensure a holistic approach in safeguarding U18s.
   8. This guidance document outlines the responsibility and subsequent actions of colleagues within the College Wellbeing Team. It may also involve other key teams (as list below) depending on a student’s programme of study.
2. **Urgent** **U18** **safeguarding concerns**

* 1. If at any time an urgent safeguarding concern is raised (for example, an U18 student references ongoing/current family abuse), then this should be reported to the [Local Safeguarding Lead (LSL)](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/safeguarding.aspx) immediately in accordance with the University’s Safeguarding Policy. Alternatively, you can contact the universities Designated Safeguarding Lead, or Deputy on [safeguarding@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:safeguarding@contacts.bham.ac.uk)
  2. The university’s Senior Child Protection Officer (SCPO) and Director of Legal Services, Nicola Cardenas Blanco via **0121 414 3916 or** [legalservices@contacts@bham.ac.uk](mailto:legalservices@contacts@bham.ac.uk) should be notified if the concerns involve children (non-students).

1. **Wellbeing Induction**
   1. All U18s will be required to attend a Wellbeing Induction, in person, with their Home College Wellbeing Team (or other relevant team authorised by the Designated Safeguarding Lead) at the beginning of the academic year. This meeting will be arranged by the College Wellbeing Team within the first **two weeks** of the students’ academic year (first two weeks of teaching). The purpose of this meeting is to;

* Explain the university has a duty of care for all U18 students.
* Provide an overview of expectations of the individual, and their specific requirements as an U18 student (wellbeing check every two weeks, attendance monitoring, etc.)
* Confirm the students term-time address and UK telephone number.
* Highlight the need to register with a local GP in Birmingham.
* Outline the main student support services such as UBHeard, Wellbeing Officers etc.
* Detail specific university processes/policies (Reasonable Diligence, Extenuating Circumstances etc.)
* Provide an overview of other key information, such as how to access financial support and/or report accommodation concerns etc.
* Provide for an initial check that the student is settling-in, has their timetable, and is safe and well.
  1. Further information on the purpose of this meeting can be found in the ‘U18 College Wellbeing induction check list’ document.
  2. College Wellbeing Teams may decide to cover parts of the Wellbeing Induction in a seminar/group session format (for example, an overview of wellbeing services), however teams should still invite each student to an individual Wellbeing Induction within the first two weeks of teaching.

1. **Wellbeing check-in**
   1. College Wellbeing Teams (or other relevant team authorised by the Designated Safeguarding Lead) will be required to arrange a wellbeing check-in, or touchpoint, for all U18 students every **two weeks** throughout the academic year (Term time only).
   2. These check-ins should be conducted in person wherever possible to ensure staff can assess and explore any personal issues (poor hygiene, unkempt appearance etc.) which are difficult to identify online or via email. If there is valid reason why this check cannot be conducted in person (for example, disability/access issues) then the meeting can take place virtually, via Teams or Zoom.
   3. The College Wellbeing Teams can use the Wellbeing Induction checklist for theme/discussion points throughout each meeting (bottom of page). These meetings should last no longer than 15 minutes, subject to any wellbeing concerns.
   4. If a student fails to attend a Wellbeing check-in, the College Wellbeing Team should follow guidance in section 6 of this document in trying to contact the individual.
2. **Attendance and engagement checks**
   1. As part of the wellbeing check-ins, College Wellbeing Teams (or other relevant/nominated team), will run attendance and engagement monitoring checks (during term/teaching time only) every **two weeks** on their U18 student cohorts. The attendance check should include year to date data, along with the attendance since the last check in (two-week period).
   2. If the attendance falls below the minimum attendance required for that programme, or that given two-week period then point 6 (below) should be followed).
   3. The College Wellbeing Team (or other relevant/nominated team) should also review the U18s progress throughout the Academic Year in partnership with the U18s Personal Academic Tutor (PAT). PAT can raise concerns with their local [College Wellbeing Team](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/your-wellbeing/wellbeing-officers.aspx) should they encounter wellbeing or safeguarding issues directly. The team responsible for completing these checks will ensure the College Wellbeing Team are continuously updated throughout the year with attendance and performance data.
   4. The attendance and engagement data should be discussed with the student during the Wellbeing check-ins which occurs every two weeks.
3. **Failure to engage/issues with attendance**
   1. If a student fails to attend the Wellbeing Induction, a Wellbeing Check-in, or their attendance falls below the minimum attendance required for that programme during that teaching period, or a pattern of non-attendance emerges, the student will be invited to **and required to attend** a meeting with their Wellbeing Team within **two working days**. This requirement is over and above any principles established for “Reasonable Diligence” for all other students, recognising that these students are U18.
   2. It is important to note that this should be separate from the regular Wellbeing check-in meetings. At this meeting, the College Wellbeing Team should explore the reasons for the non-engagement and/or lack of attendance at the wellbeing check-in and a plan put in place to recover the missed work. This would normally be in conjunction with the Student’s Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) to ensure holistic support is in place.
   3. The [Reasonable Diligence code of practice](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/academic-support/registry/legislation/codesofpractice/index.aspx) should be explored with the student, highlighting the potential impact should they fail to engage (if engagement is the issue). The student should also be reminded of the attendance threshold for their programme.
   4. If the Student fails to acknowledge the invite or attend the above meeting, urgent attempts should be made to contact them, including directly with Accommodation Services if they are in University Halls of Residence, to arrange an in person mandatory meeting.
   5. In this instance, College Wellbeing Teams should:

* Attempt to contact the student by telephone to mitigate any immediate safeguarding concerns. If the student responds, a follow up meeting should be arranged within **2 working days** to explore the attendance issue.
* If the student fails to acknowledge the phone call, an urgent wellbeing meeting should still be scheduled and the student informed of the meeting details. This information should be sent to both their registered personal email address as well as their UoB email. The email should also outline next steps if they do not attend. This meeting should take place within **two working days**. It is advisable that the College Wellbeing Team continue to make phone calls to the student up until the arranged meeting.
* If the student fails to acknowledge the phone calls, and/or does not attend the urgent Wellbeing Check-in then the [Local Safeguarding Lead](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/safeguarding.aspx) (or Deputy) should be notified of the concerns. The College Wellbeing Team should also notify the Student Wellbeing & Partnerships Team ([swp@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:swp@contacts.bham.ac.uk)) via the Student Escalation Process.
  1. The Local Safeguarding Lead (LSL) should assess the information provided, taking the necessary action and additional steps to contact the student. The LSL should also consider contacting the university’s Designated Safeguarding Lead, or Deputy ([safeguarding@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:safeguarding@contacts.bham.ac.uk)) should they be unable to obtain contact, or if concerns/risk has changed or escalated.
  2. If the concerns are of a serious or persistent nature, the University’s Designated Safeguarding Lead, or Deputy, should be informed, who will make an assessment as to whether the Student’s parent or guardian should be contacted and/or whether any other external agency should be informed, such as the Police or Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

1. **Staff DBS checks** 
   1. Colleges need to make local plans, working with their Local Safeguarding Leads and Professional Services staff (e.g. HR, Academic Services and Workplace Wellbeing) to determine where risks may lie (i.e. particular programmes, personal tutoring, seminars etc).
   2. Where colleagues believe that an area, programme, or a particular role may carry a risk, it is important to undertake a risk assessment in collaboration with Professional Services staff. This will identify the need for certain operational roles to undergo a DBS check, submitted at least 6 weeks prior to the new academic year.
   3. The wide nature of different roles and different levels and frequency of contact with U18s means that it is not possible to be prescriptive as to when a DBS check is required. Advice on eligibility is available from DBS here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-eligibility-guidance> - which includes a helpful eligibility tool. In addition, advice can be sought from the HR Operations & Recruitment team who administer DBS checks for the University.
   4. It is likely that many staff who have contact with U18s will not require a DBS check. For example, lecturers to large groups that may include under 18 students will not need a DBS check for that activity.
   5. However, by way of example, a **DBS check** **may be required** for colleagues who meet regularly (once a week or 4 times a month) with a small group (up to 10 students) that includes one or more U18 students.
   6. For colleagues who are Personal Academic Tutors to one or two U18s, on the basis that the Code of Practice on Personal Tutoring requires individual contact once a term, the frequency of contact means that a DBS check **would not generally be required**.
      1. Some Colleges have sought to group U18 students together under the tutorship of one or two staff, which is considered a pragmatic solution where at all possible. Such tutors **would require a DBS check**.
      2. For any residential activity (field trips etc) that is attended by a U18 student, all supervising staff members in attendance **must have a DBS check.**
   7. It is important that all colleagues, whether or not subject to a DBS check, should take appropriate precautions for themselves and the student when meeting with students on a 1:1 basis, which might include:

* Keeping the door open.
* Letting a colleague know that the meeting is being held.
* Asking a colleague to attend if there are particular concerns.
* Further examples are available in the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy (see below).

1. **Students in Hospital** 
   1. If an U18 student is in hospital due to an injury or incident, the Local Safeguarding Lead and Designated Safeguarding Lead ([safeguarding@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:safeguarding@contacts.bham.ac.uk)) should be notified immediately, and University Safeguarding Policy followed.
   2. The College Wellbeing Team should also refer this individual to the Student Wellbeing & Partnerships (SWP) team, via the Student Escalation Process, who will also liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy). SWP, along with the DSL/Deputy will co-ordinate the response, including contacting parent/guardian/emergency contact if required.
   3. If an U18 student must spend time in hospital, due to an unforeseen issue or ongoing medical condition, there is no requirement for a member of staff to accompany the individual, although staff can visit the student if appropriate.
2. **Placements** 
   1. Schools/Colleges should review and update their risk assessment for the placement of an U18 and consult as necessary with the placement provider as well as with relevant colleagues, e.g. Health & Safety Unit. Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure U18s are able to access their placements safely working in partnership with the provider, this should include having access to a copy of the Provider’s safeguarding policy.
3. **Training for Staff**

* Colleagues involved in working closely with U18s are strongly encouraged to complete the universities online safeguarding training.
* Recognise and Refer training is available for all staff: [Recognise and Refer](https://bham.sharepoint.com/sites/acadss/SitePages/rr.aspx?web=1)