# Guidance for Safeguarding Students Aged Under 18 (U18)

## **General**

The Parental Agreement letter 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 U18, we put in place a range of personal and academic support and safeguards to ensure their safety and wellbeing. The University does not however act *in loco parentis*.

The 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 a U18 student’s whereabouts, wellbeing or behaviour. If this situation arises, it is vital that you contact your Local Safeguarding Lead (LSL), or the Designated Safeguarding Lead Jon Elsmore (safeguarding@contacts@bham.ac.uk) as soon as possible. The Safeguarding website provides more detail about making a referral.

A list of the University’s LSLs by area is available on the Safeguarding page.

### Weekly Wellbeing Checks

The University implements weekly wellbeing checks for U18 students. 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 U18s 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 have to contact their parents or other external services, such as the police.

1. U18s will be required to attend an initial meeting, in person, with their relevant College Wellbeing Team at the beginning of the academic year.
2. Wellbeing Teams will run weekly attendance and engagement monitoring checks on their U18 student cohorts, as well as regularly reviewing U18s progress throughout the Academic Year in partnership with the U18’s Personal Academic Tutor.
3. If a student’s attendance falls below 70% during that teaching week check, or a pattern of non-attendance emerges, the student will be invited to **and expected to attend** a Wellbeing Check-In meeting as soon as possible. At the Check-In, the reasons for the non-engagement will be explored and a plan put in place to recover the missed work, normally in conjunction with the student’s Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) to ensure holistic support is in place.
4. If the Student fails to acknowledge the invite or attend the Check-In, 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. If the concerns persist, the Local SL (or Deputy) and the Student Wellbeing & Partnerships Team (swp@contacts.bham.ac.uk) should be notified immediately, and the University’s Safeguarding Policy followed.
5. The Local SL should contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead Jon Elsmore (safeguarding@contacts@bham.ac.uk) as soon as possible to notify them of the concern as soon as possible.
6. If the concerns are of a serious or persistent nature, the Designated Safeguarding Lead Jon Elsmore and the Director of Legal Services will make an assessment as to whether the Student’s parent or guardian should be contacted or whether any other external agency should be informed, such as the Police or Local Authority Designated Officer.

# If at any time an urgent safeguarding concern is raised, then this should be reported to the Local SL immediately in accordance with the University’s Safeguarding Policy. Alternatively, you can contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead Jon Elsmore (safeguarding@contacts@bham.ac.uk) as soon as possible

### Staff DBS checks

1. Colleges need to make local plans, working with their Local SL 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) (opens in a new tab) 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 would be expected** 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 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**.
7. 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 **should be subject to a DBS check**.
8. For any residential activity (field trips etc) that is attended by an U18 student, any staff, or for example PG supporting members attending **must have a DBS check.**

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).

### Students in Hospital

If the student is in hospital due to an injury or incident, the Local SL and the Designated Safeguarding Lead Jon Elsmore (safeguarding@contacts@bham.ac.uk) should be contacted immediately, and University Safeguarding Policy followed. If an U18 student has to spend time in hospital, due to an unforeseen issue or ongoing medical condition, there is no need for a member of staff to remain throughout that period, although staff can visit the student if appropriate. Efforts should be made to facilitate contact between the parent or guardian and hospital as soon as possible. This will should be in consultation with the Director of Legal Services and Director of Student Services following the University’s Safeguarding Policy.

### Placements

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.