

# Child Protection Policy - Creating a Safe Environment for Student Activities

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Birmingham City University takes seriously its responsibilities to safeguard and to protect the welfare of children with whom its staff and students come into contact. The University has a legal and a moral duty of care to students under the age of 18 years, and to its staff in adopting procedures which will safeguard and protect their interests whilst undertaking work with children.

## 2. Rationale for the Policy

- 2.1 This policy is informed by the Children Act 1989, the Protection of Children Act 1999, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1999, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and any subsequent legislation aimed to improve the accountability and coordination of agencies responsible for the welfare of children.
- 2.2 Whilst HEI's are not specifically named in the legislation in their duty to safeguard and protect young people up to the age of 18 on campus, they do have a common law duty of care which includes safeguarding young people.
- 2.3 It is also an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 for anyone working with young people (teacher, student mentor, academic staff etc) who is over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with young people under the age of 18 who are in full time education. This applies even if the relationship is consensual and if the person does not teach the young people but works in the same institution where the activities are taking place.
- 2.4 The provision of educational and social activities at Birmingham City University enables students to explore areas of academic interest that fall outside the mainstream school curriculum, and to work alongside their peers, in a mutually supportive environment. However such opportunities also present unique challenges for the protection of children and young people.
- 2.5 It is the policy of Birmingham to safeguard its students from all forms of harm, including physical, sexual and emotional harm, while participating in its activities. Birmingham City University takes all reasonable steps to ensure that, through relevant procedures and training, participants in student programmes and services do so in a safe environment, for the following reasons:
  - (i) During these activities, Birmingham City University and its partners assume responsibility *in loco parentis* for all participating students. (This may involve operating systems which include a level of supervision beyond that normally exerted by the parent.)
  - (ii) Birmingham City University assumes a wider duty of care for all students who register.
  - (iii) Students who are concerned about their safety are unable to open themselves to the mental and emotional demands and opportunities of Birmingham City University's programmes and services.
  - (iv) The social maturity and life experience of children and young people may not equal their intellectual curiosity or sophistication.
- 2.6 To help members successfully utilise Birmingham City University's programmes and services, there are a number of rules and guidelines that are necessary to create a safe and happy environment. Birmingham City University recognises that a set of rules does not in itself necessarily foster a community and Birmingham City University staff, course tutors and

supervisors are therefore expected to strive to create a learning environment that provides a sense of physical and emotional security, fosters the spirit of enquiry, and protects the individuality and rights of all its members. Birmingham City University expects all staff, in conjunction with its students, to take a proactive stance towards building that community.

### **3. Activities within the Remit of this Policy**

3.1 Birmingham City University operates the following student activities and services:

- Residential Summer Schools;
- Residential and Non-Residential Outreach events;
- Residential and Non-Residential Student Conferences;
- Nurseries;
- Junior Departments (eg The Conservatoire);
- Open Days;
- Enrolled Students who are under 18 years old;
- Staff who are 16 or 17 years old (eg trainees); and
- School students who are on Work Experience placements.

### **4. Rules applicable to all Student Activities**

#### **Adult behaviour towards students**

4.1 Adults coming into contact with students through Birmingham City University activities **must**:

- (i) Respect everyone as an individual.
- (ii) Provide a good example of acceptable behaviour.
- (iii) Respect everyone's right to personal privacy.
- (iv) Be available as a listening ear and, if necessary, to refer for more appropriate help.
- (v) Be sensitive to other people's likes and dislikes.
- (vi) Try to ensure that their actions cannot be misunderstood or cause offence and are acceptable within a relationship of trust.
- (vii) Show understanding when dealing with sensitive issues.
- (viii) Have more than one adult present during activities.
- (ix) Adhere to the rules and recommendations outlined in the relevant Birmingham City University Handbooks.
- (x) Uphold Birmingham City University's Face-to-Face Contact Policy, E-Learning Policy and Disciplinary Policy.
- (xi) Remember that they are accountable to the students, their parents/carers and Birmingham City University.

4.2 Adults coming into contact with students through Birmingham City University activities **must never**:

- (i) Permit abusive behaviour, e.g. bullying, ridiculing, or taunting.
- (ii) Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with students.
- (iii) Jump to conclusions or make assumptions about others without checking facts.
- (iv) Encourage inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour such as “crushes”.
- (v) Show favouritism to anyone.
- (vi) Make suggestive remarks or actions, even in jest.
- (vii) Deliberately place themselves or others in a compromising situation.
- (viii) Believe “it could never happen to me”.

**Suspicion or allegation of abuse or neglect**

4.3 Adults coming into contact with students through Birmingham City University activities may suspect that a child is being abused physically, sexually or emotionally, or is subject to neglect. In these circumstances, the adult **must**:

- (i) Remain calm, without being shocked.
- (ii) Try to act normally.
- (iii) Refrain from investigating the concerns or from questioning the child.
- (iv) Refrain from challenging parents/carers about their concerns.
- (v) Inform the person in charge of the activity and Birmingham City University's Child Protection Officer who is the Director of Human Resources of their concerns without undue delay. (See end of this document for contact details.)
- (vi) Record all details which support their suspicions, and sign, date and keep these.
- (vii) **Never agree to keep a secret. They must inform others.**

4.4 Adults coming into contact with students through Birmingham City University activities may find that a student confides in them that they are being abused physically, sexually or emotionally, or is subject to neglect. In these circumstances, the adult **must**:

- (i) Listen carefully to what the child says, accepting what is said, and without interrupting.
- (ii) Offer immediate support, understanding and reassurance, explaining that they cannot keep it a secret. Tell them “I believe you” and “it’s not your fault”.
- (iii) Inform the person in charge of the activity and Birmingham City University’s Child Protection Officer of their concerns without undue delay. (See end of this document for contact details.)

- (iv) Record all details which support their suspicions, and sign, date and keep these.
- (v) If the situation merits immediate action, contact either the police or social services/social work department.
- (vi) **Never agree to keep a secret. They must inform others.**

4.5 Adults coming into contact with students through Birmingham City University may find that a student makes an allegation of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or of neglect against them or against another member of staff. In these circumstances, the adult **must**:

- (i) Inform the person in charge of the activity and Birmingham City University's Child Protection Officer of the allegation without undue delay.
- (ii) Record all details, as they know them, and sign, date and keep these.
- (iii) **Refer. They must not investigate.**

### **Bullying**

4.6 Birmingham City University seeks to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the prevention of all forms of bullying in its student programmes and services. To this end all Birmingham City University activities should have in place rigorous anti-bullying strategies.

4.7 It is the responsibility of all adults involved in Birmingham City University student activities to help develop a caring and supportive atmosphere, where bullying in any form is unacceptable.

4.8 Adults involved in Birmingham City University student activities should:

- (i) Be aware of the potential problems bullying may cause.
- (ii) Be alert to signs of bullying, harassment or discrimination.
- (iii) Take action to deal with such behaviour when it occurs, following Birmingham City University's Disciplinary Policy.
- (iv) Provide access for students to talk about any concerns they may have.
- (v) Encourage students and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like.

## **5. Responsibilities**

5.1 The **Vice Chancellor** will ensure that there is a satisfactory Child Protection Policy in place, and that suitable persons are appointed to carry out designated functions under the policy. He will also review the incidents of abuse reported and actions taken.

5.2 The **Designated Child Protection Officer** is the Director of Human Resources, who is appointed by Birmingham City University to be the focal point for all child protection issues, ensuring that:

- (i) Advice and information is provided to Birmingham City University staff on child protection procedures;
- (ii) The Child Protection Policy is regularly reviewed and the current version is available on the

Birmingham City University intranet site;

- (iii) Liaison and reporting links are set up with the child protection department at Birmingham City Council Social Care and Health Directorate;
- (iv) Incidents of child abuse are reported as soon as possible to the Birmingham City Council Social Care and Health Directorate;
- (v) Liaison links are set up with the Birmingham Area Child Protection Committee;
- (vi) Information requested by Agencies investigating child abuse is provided as soon as possible;
- (vii) The Vice Chancellor is informed immediately of incidents of child abuse affecting children in Birmingham City University care and of allegations of abuse made against Birmingham City University staff or students;
- (viii) Appropriate action is taken by line managers when allegations are made against a member of their staff.

5.3 A senior member of staff will be nominated to act as a **focal point for child protection** issues in each Faculty or Department which organises activities for children or which sends students on placements where they will work with children or which employs children. They will ensure that:

- (i) The appropriate procedures to be followed at Birmingham City University, is provided for such persons;
- (ii) Those in contact with children have undergone the relevant background checks (e.g. CRB) prior to being allowed unsupervised contact;
- (iii) An appropriate risk assessment will be carried out to ensure the safety of children on Birmingham City University premises;

5.3 All **Staff** are required:

- (i) To comply with the requirements of the policy, practices and procedures that are implemented to support the policy;
- (ii) To immediately report all instances of suspected child abuse;
- (iii) To report any changes in personal circumstances, which may impact on their suitability to work with groups covered by the policy to the Designated Child Protection Lead.

## 6. Reporting and Recording Child Abuse

6.1 When a member of staff has concerns about a child or about the behaviour of someone in the organisation it is important that these are listened to and taken seriously.

- (i) Any concerns should be reported to the senior member of staff with responsibility for child protection issues within the Faculty or department.
- (ii) The senior member of staff will make a written record of the observations or the information received, signed and dated, within 24 hours.
- (iii) The written record will be sent to the Birmingham City University designated Child Protection

Officer.

- (iv) The Birmingham City University designated Child Protection Officer will contact the Birmingham City Council Social Care and Health Department by telephone.

6.2 It is not the role of the Birmingham City University Designated Child Protection Officer to decide whether or not a child has been abused.

**The contact numbers are:**

**Birmingham City University: Designated Child Protection Officer, the Director of Human**

**Resources: 0121 331 5580**

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