



**Safeguarding for parents:  
information booklet**

## Introductory page

'Our college recognises our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of students. We will endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We will be alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and will follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.'

We have put together this booklet to give you some information about how we meet our safeguarding and child protection responsibilities. We have also included some tips to help you to keep your child safe.

### **Our Headteacher is Mrs Sally Cryer**

Telephone: 01282 683010

Email: head@unity-college.com

### **Our designated person for child protection is Mrs Alison Hodgson**

Telephone: 01282 683010

Email: a.hodgson@unity-college.com

### **Our deputy designated person is Mrs Diane Taylor**

Telephone: 01282 683010

Email: d.taylor@unity-college.com

If you have any questions about this booklet, or if you would like to see our child protection policy please contact: **Mrs Alison Hodgson or visit the colleges website.**

**IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SAFETY OR WELFARE OF YOUR CHILD,  
OR A CHILD YOU KNOW, YOU SHOULD ACT WITHOUT DELAY.**

YOU CAN ASK FOR ADVICE, OR REPORT YOUR CONCERN TO:

#### **Children's Social Care**

Telephone: 01282 425961

#### **Police**

Telephone: 01282 425001

#### **NSPCC child protection helpline**

Telephone: 0800 800 5000

Many people worry that their suspicions might be wrong, or that they will be interfering unnecessarily. If you wish, you can telephone for advice without identifying the child. If the conversation confirms that you are right to be concerned you can then give the child's details. You will be asked for your name and address too, but the agencies will take anonymous calls, so if you really do not want to say who you are, you do not have to. Remember, it is always better to be safe than sorry.

We help to keep students safe by:

- having an up to date child protection policy
- having other safeguarding policies, such as anti-bullying and internet safety
- checking the suitability of all our staff to work with children
- encouraging students to tell us if something is wrong
- adhering to health and safety regulations
- training all our staff to recognise and respond to child welfare concerns
- appointing a designated person who has additional training in child protection
- working in partnership with parents and carers
- sharing information with appropriate agencies if we have concerns
- managing and supporting our staff team

## Complaints procedure

There may be an occasion when you need to tell us that something has gone wrong.

If you have a serious concern about the safety or welfare of your child or another student it may be dealt with under our child protection procedures. All other complaints, including those that may point to poor practice by a member of staff, will be dealt with firstly through the complaints procedure.

You should take any **serious concerns** about the behaviour of a staff member directly to the headteacher. Examples of serious concerns include those involving violence, anything of a sexual nature or persistent bullying or humiliation.

Otherwise, the complaints procedure has three stages.

### Stage one

You may firstly speak to the member of staff concerned in your complaint. For example, your child may have told you that she has been upset by Mrs X shouting at her. If you are able to telephone, or come into college (preferably at the end of the day) and speak to Mrs X, you may be able to resolve your worries. If speaking to the staff member does not resolve the issue, or if you do not want to speak to the staff member directly, you should then move to stage two.

### Stage two

You should now discuss your complaint with Mrs A Hodgson or Mrs P Sutcliffe (Associate Deputy Headteachers). You can do this by telephone, letter, or arrange to meet at college. Mrs A Hodgson or Mrs P Sutcliffe may need to make enquiries into your concern, including speaking with any people involved. They may also ask you to record your complaint on the college's complaints form. You will want Mrs A Hodgson or Mrs P Sutcliffe to find out what has happened, and the time this takes will depend on a number of things. Mrs A Hodgson or Mrs P Sutcliffe will agree with you the date by which they will contact you again. At this second contact, they will either tell you that enquiries are continuing, or report that enquiries are complete and offer a suggested resolution. Possible resolutions include:

- there was no evidence to support the complaint
- the complaint is upheld and:
  - an explanation will be offered
  - an apology will be offered
  - the staff member will undertake some training to rectify any deficit
  - college procedures will be amended.

### Stage three

If you feel that the resolution offered in stage two is inadequate, you may forward your complaint to the chair of governors. Provided the complaint is within the remit of the governing body, a complaints panel will meet and you will be invited to attend. The panel will listen to your complaint and your reasons for rejecting the previous resolutions. The panel can then either dismiss the complaint, or uphold the complaint, in full or in part, and offer some resolutions. You will be given a date by which a decision will be taken and you will be notified in writing. The letter should be in your preferred language.

This is the final stage of the college-based complaints procedure.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling or the outcome of your complaint you have the right to contact the local authority or an external agency.

Relevant contact details:

**Mrs A Hodgson or Mrs P Sutcliffe – Associates Deputy Headteachers**  
**Both may be contacted on 01282 683010**

## Internet and mobile phone safety

Mobile phones and computers are a part of everyday life for many children and young people. Used correctly, they are an exciting source of communication, fun and education but used incorrectly, or in the wrong hands they can be threatening and dangerous.

### The risks include:

- cyber-bullying, where hurtful texts or emails are sent to children
- children accidentally or deliberately accessing violent or sexually explicit websites, either on a computer or a mobile phone
- paedophiles talking to children by mobile phone or online and enticing them to engage in sexual conversations, photographs, video or actual meetings.

It probably is not practical to simply ban your child from using mobiles and computers as they may well try to find a way of using them, perhaps at a friend's house or in an internet café. They also need to learn how to manage the risks. Younger children will be much easier to supervise and you will decide if and when they should begin to use these technologies.

### Here are some tips to help you to manage the risks.

- Try to put the computer in a family room where it will be easier for you to supervise your child's online activity.
- Ensure that your child knows they should never give their full name, address and contact details to people they chat to on the internet.
- Gently explain that some people they talk to on the internet may not be who they say they are and might say or do unpleasant or hurtful things.
- Investigate whether the 'parental controls' available from some internet service providers will be helpful.
- Consider installing software that can filter out inappropriate material.
- Talk to your child about their internet use. Ask them which sites they enjoy most, and why. Show you are interested, while understanding their need for some privacy.
- Impress on your child that they can talk to you if they are worried about something that has happened during their internet use.
- Make it very clear that your child must never arrange to meet someone they have chatted to online without your permission. Their new 'friend' might well be a local young person of similar age, but they might not.

### For further advice and information visit:

Internet Watch Foundation: [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre: [www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)

Stop It Now! [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)

### You may be alerted to question your child's online activity if they are:

- spending more and more time on the internet
- being secretive – reluctant to talk about their internet activity, closing the screen page when you are close by
- spending less time with the family, or giving up previous hobbies and interests
- losing interest in their college work, regularly failing to complete homework
- starting to talk about 'new friends' that you have not met and who do not visit your home
- overly possessive of their mobile phone or computer – perhaps overreacting if someone picks it up or asks to borrow it
- showing fear or discomfort when their phone rings, or quickly turning it off without answering
- undergoing a change in personality that you cannot attribute to any obvious cause.

Remember that none of these signs prove that your child is at risk in any way, but if you notice anything that confuses or worries you try talking things over with them. They may well tell you to stop fussing. They may be laid back.

In any case, think about their demeanour and attitude as well as what they say.

If you are still concerned contact one of the helping agencies listed in this booklet.

## Ten tips for keeping your temper

Children and young people can be infuriating sometimes. They need to be taught the right way to behave and sometimes they test parents to the limit. The trouble is, if we lose our temper too often they may become frightened – or they may realise they have found just how to wind us up.

When you feel you are losing your temper or are ready to shout or lash out, try these tips to calm down. They may defuse the situation and give you time to consider how best to handle it.

- take some deep breaths
- count to 10
- close your eyes for a moment, to decide what to say
- depending on the age of your child, tell them calmly but firmly to go to their room
- also, depending on the age of your child, leave the room and get some fresh air
- turn on some music – nothing too loud
- sit down
- hug a pillow!
- if another adult is present, hand over to them
- phone a friend

## Child abuse and what to look for

No parent wants to think about the possibility of their child becoming a victim of abuse, and most children are never abused. Even so, it is important for parents to be aware of the possibility and to know that help is available if the unthinkable does happen.

Although there is always a lot of media focus on 'stranger danger', the abduction of children is rare and the threat from strangers is quite small. You should still ensure that your child knows the rules about keeping safe when they are out alone.

Most children know their abusers. They may be family members or friends of family, someone who works with the child or someone who lives in the community.

There are four types of abuse: physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

There are many signs, or indicators that a child might be suffering abuse. There may be injuries, but it is more likely that you will notice some change in your child's behaviour.

If you notice anything that concerns you, talk to your child to see if you can find out what is happening. Remember that, if your child is being harmed, she or he may be too frightened to tell you. If your child becomes distressed or you are not happy with the explanations, you could talk to an adult you trust or call a helpline or children's social care services. Our designated person at college will also try to help.

Some signs to look for are:

- bruises or other injuries
- a change in behaviour – from quiet to loud, or from happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- pain or discomfort
- fear of a particular person, or a reluctance to be alone with them
- secrecy around a relationship with a particular person
- reluctance to discuss where they go, or who they are with
- sexual talk or knowledge beyond their years
- being watchful, or always on edge
- losing interest in their appearance, hobbies or family life
- alcohol or drug taking
- having money and refusing to say where it has come from
- wetting the bed
- becoming clingy

Contact details of people who may offer support are on the 'Sources of support' page of this booklet.

## **If your child is being bullied**

We define bullying as behaviour that is deliberate, repeated more than once and is designed to be hurtful. Bullies tend to pick on children who they think are unable to defend themselves. Bullying is not only about hitting or fighting. It also includes name calling, threats, taking belongings, intimidating and making unkind or abusive remarks. Children may try to hide the fact they are being bullied because they are afraid or ashamed but you might notice some signs, for example your child might:

- change their behaviour
- come home with torn clothing
- 'lose' their dinner money, or ask for extra money
- try to avoid going to college
- complain regularly of headaches or stomach aches
- have unexplained cuts and bruises
- play truant.

We have anti-bullying procedures that help us to identify and deal with any case of bullying in college, but bullying does not only take place in college, it can also happen in the home or in the community.

Bullying can be serious and cause a lot of distress. If your child tells you that they are being bullied in college, ask for their permission for you to tell us. They may not have told us themselves because they are afraid that the bully will find out and the bullying will get worse. Try to help them to understand that the bullying will not stop while it is kept secret. As soon as we know it is happening we will follow our anti-bullying procedures to try to stop it.

It is also distressing to suspect that your child might be bullying other children. Our anti-bullying procedures include trying to support children who bully to change their behaviour, so please talk to us if you think your child needs some help.

You will find some useful sources of information and support at the end of this booklet.

## **What we will do if we have a concern about your child**

If we are concerned that your child may be at risk of abuse or neglect we must follow the procedures in our child protection policy. You can look at the policy in college, on the college website or receive a copy to take home. Please just ask the college and a copy will be sent to you.

The procedures have been written to protect all students. They comply with our statutory responsibilities and are designed to support students, families and staff. The procedures are based on the principle that the welfare of the child is the most important consideration.

In almost all circumstances, we will talk to you about our concerns and we will also tell you if we feel we must refer our concerns to children's social care. We will ask your consent to make a referral, but in some circumstances we may need to make the referral against your wishes. We will only do this if we genuinely believe that this is the best way to protect your child, and the fact that you did not consent to the referral will be recorded.

If we think that talking to you first might in some way increase the risk to your child, we will report our concerns to children's social care and take advice from them. We will normally tell you that a referral is being made and we will record the reasons why we decided to follow this course of action.

All child protection records are kept separate from your child's general college file. Records are stored in a locked cabinet and if stored on computer they are password-protected. The only staff who have access to the records are those who need to know about the concerns in order to protect and support your child.

Child protection is a very sensitive issue and it raises many questions and a range of strong emotions. We will do everything we can to support our students and you can be assured that any action we take will be in the best interests of your child.

<b>Sources of support and information</b>	
<p><b>Child protection – national</b></p> <p>NSPCC helpline: 0808 800 5000</p> <p>Childline: 0800 1111</p> <p>Child Law Advice Line: 08088 020 008</p> <p>Africans Unite Against Child Abuse (AFRUCA) 0844 660 8607 <a href="http://www.afruca.org">www.afruca.org</a></p>	<p>Child protection – local</p> <p>Childrens Social Care: 01282 425961</p>
<p><b>Bullying – national</b></p> <p>NSPCC helpline: 0808 800 5000</p> <p>Childline: 0800 1111</p> <p>Kidscape: 08451 205 204 <a href="http://www.kidscape.org.uk">www.kidscape.org.uk</a></p>	<p>Bullying – contact college and speak to your child’s Progress Leader: 01282 436311 ext 123</p>
<p><b>Mental health – national</b></p> <p>Young Minds: 0808 802 5544 <a href="http://www.youngminds.org.uk">www.youngminds.org.uk</a></p> <p>Mental Health Foundation: 020 7803 1100 <a href="http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk">www.mentalhealth.org.uk</a></p> <p>Mind: 0845 766 0163 <a href="http://www.mind.org.uk">www.mind.org.uk</a></p>	<p>Mental health – local</p> <p>Mary Burbury Unit: 01254 226336</p>
<p><b>Parents’ support – national</b></p> <p>ParentlinePlus: 0808 800 2222 <a href="http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk">www.parentlineplus.org.uk</a></p>	<p>Parents’ support – local</p> <p>MAPS Team: 01282 477202</p>
<p><b>Sexual harm and sexually harmful behaviour – national</b></p> <p>Stop It Now! 0808 1000 900 <a href="http://www.stopitnow.org.uk">www.stopitnow.org.uk</a></p> <p>The AIM Project (for children with sexual behaviour problems): <a href="http://www.aimproject.org.uk">www.aimproject.org.uk</a></p>	<p>Sexual harm and sexually harmful behaviour – local</p> <p>Children’s Social Care: 01282 425961</p>
<p><b>Internet safety – national</b></p> <p>ChildNet International: <a href="http://www.childnet.com">www.childnet.com</a></p> <p>Child Exploitation and Online Protection: 0870 000 3344 <a href="http://www.ceop.gov.uk">www.ceop.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Internet Watch Foundation <a href="http://www.iwf.org.uk">www.iwf.org.uk</a></p> <p>Think U Know: 0870 000 3344 <a href="http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk">www.thinkuknow.co.uk</a></p>	<p>Internet safety – local</p>
<p><b>Local agencies</b></p> <p>Police: 01282 425001</p> <p>Children’s Social Care: 01182 425961</p> <p>Local authority designated officer for Child Protection: 01772 532634</p>	