



## Safeguarding Policy

### **PURPOSE OF POLICY/ DOCUMENT**

Heart of Worcestershire College fully recognises its responsibilities in safeguarding learners. This policy is relevant to all students and staff employed by the College and all agencies and visitors that have access to learners through the college.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004; the Education Act 2002; and in line with government publications the Teachers' Standards 2012, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2015 and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2015.

### **APPLICATION OF POLICY (RANGE AND SCOPE)**

This policy covers all learners, prospective learners, visitors, staff and stakeholders.

### **INTERPRETATION**

'Young Person' refers to someone who is over the school leaving age of 16 years and under 18 years. This Policy does not apply to 14 – 16 year old learners who fall under the jurisdiction of the school which they attend and the local authority policies relating to that age group.

'Vulnerable Adult' refers to a person who is aged 18 years and over, who is or may be, unable to take care of him or herself, or take steps to protect him or herself from significant harm or exploitation.

### **PARTICULAR LEGAL REQUIREMENTS/ISSUES OUTSIDE OF E.D.D**

The college has a duty of care to all of its learners, but particular responsibilities to those under 18 years, and those who are vulnerable adults. There are five main elements to the policy:

- Raising awareness of safeguarding issues and equipping young people and vulnerable adults with the skills needed to keep them safe;
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying and reporting safeguarding cases;
- Supporting young people and vulnerable adults who have been identified as in need of early help or at risk of harm and those presenting with safeguarding concerns.
- Establishing a safe environment in which young people and vulnerable adults can learn and develop.
- Ensuring Heart of Worcestershire College practices safer recruitment in checking the suitability of staff to work with young people and vulnerable adults.

### Relevant Legislation

Children Act 1989/2004

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Data Protection Act 1998

The Education Act 1996/2002/2011

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

Worcestershire Local Authority appendices on the following subjects are supplementary to this policy and are available on the College Portal:

- Recognising Abuse and Neglect
- Effects of Domestic Abuse on Children and Young People
- Forced Marriage – a Form of Domestic Abuse – New Law
- Private Fostering and Allegations Against and Concerns about Foster Carers
- Safeguarding Guidance for Work Related Experience
- Stalking Policy
- Guidance on Safer Working Practices for Adults who work with Children & Young People in Education Settings – March 2009
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015

#### LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES/DOCUMENTS

Positive Behaviour Policy	College Charter	Freedom of Information Act
Staff Disciplinary Policy	Data Protection Act	Search and Restraint Policy
Code of Conduct	Single Equality Scheme	Health and Safety Policy
IT Policy / internet safety	Confidentiality Policy	Substance Misuse Policy
Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy	Recruitment Policy	Fitness to Study Procedures
Managing Allegations Policy		

#### EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND DISABILITY (DISABILITY, EQUALITY, DUTY IMPACT ASSESSMENT)

Has a preliminary Equality Impact Assessment been completed?

\*Yes No Yes Date Completed:

Is a full Impact Assessment required?

\*Yes No No

If 'yes', has a copy been sent to the Equality Manager?

\*Yes No

For Completion by the Executive:

DOCUMENT REFERENCE CODE	SAF02
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POSTHOLDER RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEW (Job Title)	Director of Learner Services - Worcester
SIGNIFICANT CHANGE? (Delete as applicable)	YES
IF YES, STATE COMMITTEE & DATE OF APPROVAL	Corporation

## Key Contacts:

**Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/  
Prevent Single Point of Contact (SPOC):** Cat Draper, Director of Learner Services (W&M)

**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead:  
Safeguarding Team Leader:** Julia Breakwell, Director of Learner Services (R&B)  
Viv McLaughlin (W&M)  
Sal Friel (R&B)

**Early Years Safeguarding Deputy:** Emma Lockwood (W)  
Kyrene Bowes (B)

### **‘Safeguarding’ is defined as:**

- protecting children/young people from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's/young people's health or development;
- ensuring that children/young people are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
- undertaking a role so as to enable children/young people to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.
- taking action to enable all children/young people to have the best possible outcome.

**The College has a duty of care to all of its students**, but has particular responsibilities to those under 18 years, and those who are vulnerable adults. This policy seeks to ensure the safety and welfare of all those learners under 18 years and those who are vulnerable adults.

Specifically the College will seek to provide a safe environment for students to learn and to identify those suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and to take appropriate action to ensure that these students are kept safe.

We recognise that because of the day to day contact with young people and vulnerable adults, college staff are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse. The College will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where young people and vulnerable adults feel secure, are encouraged to talk and are listened to;
- Ensure that young people know that there is a dedicated Safeguarding Team whom they can approach if they are worried;
- Ensure that there are dedicated sessions within the Tutorial Framework and through the curriculum for young people and vulnerable adults to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse, including via the internet and other technologies.

Abuse may be physical, sexual or psychological. Whilst abusers may be relatives or friends of the family, some meet children, young people and vulnerable adults in other contexts. A small minority of these may gain access to children/young people in schools/colleges as teachers, support staff or through voluntary involvement in enrichment activities. Students should not feel inhibited from reporting abuse against them by staff or volunteers. Any incident where a student has grounds to believe that a member of staff has crossed the boundary of acceptable behaviour should be reported. The College will continue to ensure that the environment encourages students and staff to make truthful reports of any inappropriate behaviour. Handling allegations, particularly serious ones, is a complex and delicate process.

In addition, failure to address bullying or racist incidents in College may lead to consideration under safeguarding learners' procedures.

**Any fears or worries that children, young people and vulnerable adults bring into the College should not go unnoticed by staff but should be reported immediately and in confidence to the Designated Senior Lead (DSL) or the Deputy Designated Senior Lead.**

## **1. Safeguarding Procedures**

The college will follow the procedures set out by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) and take account of guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE). The College will:

- Ensure that a senior member of staff is appropriately trained and has designated duties to act as the Designated Senior Lead for Safeguarding. This is the Director of Learner Services (Worcester & Malvern). The DSL will ensure that Safeguarding policies and procedures are fully implemented and followed by all staff. The Director of Learner Services (Redditch & Bromsgrove) will act in the absence of the DSL as the Deputy DSL.
- Ensure that the DSL will co-ordinate action on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and vulnerable adults with the support of the Deputy DSL and the College Safeguarding Team, ensuring that all staff, volunteers and visitors to the College know who the DSL is, understands their role and who acts in his/her absence.
- Ensure that there is a nominated Safeguarding Governor.
- Ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and of their responsibility to report and record any concerns to the DSL or the Principal and that they may raise concerns directly with Children's Social Care Services if they believe their concerns have not been listened to or acted upon.
- Ensure that the duty of care towards students and staff is promoted by raising awareness of illegal, unsafe and risky behaviour and assist staff to monitor their own standards and practice;
- Ensure that parents/guardians have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the college and staff for safeguarding by publishing our policy on the college website.
- Ensure that partner organisations are aware of, and understand the need for compliance with our safeguarding guidelines and procedures.
- Be aware of and follow procedures set out by the DfE and the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Board where an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer, including making a referral to the DBS and/or dismissed or removed due to safeguarding concerns, or would have been had they not resigned.
- Operate safer recruitment practice, ensuring that at least one member on every recruitment panel has completed safer recruitment training.
- In instances that feature particularly high risk elements, the DSL will engage in 'priority dialogue' with the Principal and CEO and/or the Vice Principal in his/her absence, in order to come to an organisational position.
- Ensure that the Safeguarding policy and procedures are reviewed annually by the Corporation.

## 2. Training Guidelines

- When staff join the college they will be informed of the safeguarding arrangements in place. They will be given a copy of this policy, the college code of conduct, the leaflet 'Safer Working Practice for Staff in Education Settings' and informed who the DSL is and who acts in their absence.
- All staff are required to undertake a mandatory training session on safeguarding within their probationary period. The training programme will include basic child protection information relating to signs and symptoms of abuse, how to manage a disclosure from a young person or vulnerable adult, when and how to record a concern about the welfare of a young person or vulnerable adult, e-safety and advice on safe working practices. This will be updated at least every 3 years in line with Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board guidance.
- All volunteers, agency staff and regular visitors to the college will be told where to access our policy, given the name of the DSL and informed of the college's procedures in reporting concerns.
- Staff with specific responsibility for safeguarding will undertake both single and inter-agency training at a level suitable to their role and responsibilities, updated every two years.

## 3. Responsibilities of Heart of Worcestershire College

**The Governing Body** will nominate a member to have responsibility for liaising with the DSL and or the Principal in matters relating to safeguarding, to ensure that;

- safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, available to parents on the college website or by other means and reviewed annually;
  - an annual report on the effectiveness of the college's safeguarding procedures is presented to the governing body;
  - any weaknesses brought to its attention relating to safeguarding are remedied without delay.
- **The Principal** will ensure that the safeguarding policies and procedures are fully implemented and followed by all staff and that sufficient resources are allocated to enable the DSL and other staff to discharge their responsibilities with regard to child protection.
  - **The DSL** will co-ordinate action on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and vulnerable adults within the college setting. The DSL, with the support of the Deputy DSL and college Safeguarding Team, is responsible for:
    - Organising mandatory safeguarding training for all newly appointed staff and regular refresher training sessions to enable staff to update;
    - Undertaking, in conjunction with the Principal and Safeguarding Governor, an annual audit of safeguarding procedures, using the County safeguarding checklist;
    - Referring a young person or vulnerable adult to the Early Help Hub, Children's Social Care or Adult Social Care as appropriate, when there are concerns about possible abuse and neglect;
    - Keeping written records of concerns about young people and vulnerable adults, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately;
    - Ensuring all child protection records are kept securely and in locked locations;

- Ensuring that all child protection files are transferred in a safe and timely manner when a young person or vulnerable adult moves settings, both between and across phases, within and out of county;
- Notifying the key worker if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a young person who is subject to a child protection plan;
- Monitoring unauthorised absence, particularly where young people or vulnerable adults go missing on repeated occasions;
- Developing effective links with relevant agencies and other professionals and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding safeguarding matters including co-operation with serious case reviews, attendance at strategy meetings, initial and review child protection conferences, core group and child in need review meetings;
- Contributing to assessments and providing reports to initial and review conferences which, where appropriate, have been shared with parents first.

#### **4. Dealing with Disclosures**

- If a learner discloses directly to a member of staff, the following procedure will be followed:
  - Listen carefully to what is said.
  - Ask open questions such as:
    - 'Tell me what happened'.
    - 'Please explain what you mean when you say.....'
    - 'Can you describe the person?' or 'Can you describe the place?'
  - Do not ask questions which may be considered to suggest what might have happened, or who has perpetrated the abuse, e.g. 'Did your Dad hit you?'
  - Do not force the learner to repeat what he/she said in front of another person.
  - Do not begin an investigation.
  - Report immediately to the Designated Senior Lead and complete a written record, using the student's words as far as possible.
  - Where a student discloses safeguarding allegations against another student, the DSL should seek advice from the Access Centre before commencing investigation or contacting parents where appropriate.

#### **5. Information Sharing and Confidentiality**

The college recognises that all matters relating to safeguarding are confidential. The DSL or Principal will disclose information regarding a student to other staff on a need to know basis only.

- Members of the College Safeguarding Team will:
  - Explain to young people and families at the beginning of any involvement openly and honestly what information is to be shared and why.
  - Consider the safety and security of the young person when making a decision on whether to share information.
  - Respect the views of the young person and family when consent is not given. However, the Senior Designated Person may need to override their wishes and share information whilst being honest in the interests of maintaining a working relationship.
  - Seek advice if in doubt, especially where these relate to concern about significant harm to a child or serious harm to others. A cause, or possible cause, must not be ignored.

- A ‘breach of confidentiality’ only occurs where the sharing of information is not authorised by the individual who provided it and to whom it relates. Refusal of consent does not necessarily preclude the sharing of information. ***The College can lawfully justify the sharing of confidential information where:***
  - there is evidence that a young person/vulnerable adult is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm;
  - where there is reasonable cause to believe that a young person/vulnerable adult may be suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm;
  - to prevent significant harm arising to a young person/vulnerable adult including through the prevention, detection and prosecution of serious crime – Safeguarding Children in Education, WSCB 2015.

## **6. Record Keeping**

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse from a young person or vulnerable adult, or noticing signs or symptoms of abuse, will make notes as soon as possible writing down exactly what was said using the individual’s own words as far as possible. All notes will be timed, dated and signed. Concerns should be recorded via the College Safeguarding Team’s recording system. All records of a safeguarding nature should be passed to the DSL or Deputy DSL.

## **7. Supporting Learners**

We recognise that young people/vulnerable adults who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The College may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of some individuals at risk. The College will endeavour to support the student through:

- The achievement of their qualification;
- The College ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives individuals a sense of being valued;
- Adherence to the Positive Behaviour Policy, ensuring that unacceptable behaviour is challenged with due consideration paid to individual circumstances;
- Liaison with partner agencies such as Children’s Services, Child and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and other relevant voluntary agencies;
- The use of Early Help interventions, including the Early Help Assessment Framework (EHA) when appropriate;
- Notifying Children’s Social Care immediately there is a significant concern.
- Providing continuing support to individuals by ensuring that appropriate information is forwarded under confidential cover to any new provider.

## **8. Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults from Abuse**

All adults have a right to:

- Live free from violence
- Be protected from harm & exploitation
- Independence, which involves a degree of risk.

### **Who is vulnerable?**

The term “vulnerable” adult refers to any person aged 18 years and over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness and who is or may be

unable to take care of himself or herself, or unable to protect himself or herself against significant harm or serious exploitation.

'Abuse' is the inflicting of harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm.

Vulnerable students may be abused within a dependent relationship or, more rarely, by a stranger. Abuse can be intentional or unintentional. There are 6 categories of abuse, which are physical, sexual, neglect, emotional or psychological and financial. It is not unusual for a vulnerable student to suffer more than one kind of abuse. Abuse may be a part of a pattern of behaviour or an isolated incident.

### **Other instances of vulnerability**

We should also be aware of those students who might find themselves vulnerable due to circumstance. For example, those who have:

- Experience of domestic violence
- Experience of Child Sexual Exploitation
- Experience of past or repeat bullying
- A history of self-neglect or self-harm
- Been a victim of abuse or crime
- Experienced abuse due to their racial, cultural or religious background
- A poor socio-economic background
- Refugee or asylum status
- Been in the care system

Staff should note that vulnerable people are not a homogenous group, and the vulnerable status of a student can change constantly depending on their circumstances.

If anyone suspects witnesses or hears of abuse they should immediately contact the DSL, the Deputy DSL or a member of the college Safeguarding Team. Out of 'normal working hours', support can be obtained from the campus Head of Centre or Duty Manager. They will then follow the internal College safeguarding procedure and ensure that support is initiated.

## **9. Mental Health**

The College aims to provide a supportive environment that will help learners with mental health difficulties to realise their academic potential and meet course requirements. We also aim to facilitate and promote positive mental health and well-being. Please refer to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy and Fitness to Study Procedures for further guidance.

## **10. Supporting Learners in a Crisis**

If a student is considered to be at serious risk of self-harm the matter should be reported to the DSL, the Deputy DSL or a member of the Safeguarding Team. There are varying levels of risk; inevitably personal judgment will be required as to the seriousness and urgency of the situation and the appropriate course of action.

The safety of the individual concerned and of those around them is paramount. Where there are clear indications that the student is in imminent and serious danger the emergency services should be called. Student Services do not provide an emergency service.

The WCC Adult Protection Team will be informed of the incident within 24 hours by the Director of Learner Services or the Duty Manager. **Phone WCC on 01905 763763.**

### **11. Safer Recruitment and Selection of Staff**

The College has a Recruitment Policy linking explicitly to this policy. The policy statement regarding safeguarding is included in all job advertisements, publicity material, recruitment websites and candidate information packs.

The recruitment procedure is robust in seeking to establish the commitment of candidates to support the College's measures to safeguard young people and vulnerable adults and to deter, reject or identify people who might abuse individuals or are otherwise unsuitable to work with them. Please refer to this policy for information on DBS requirements and interim arrangements on appointment.

Our governors are subject to an enhanced DBS check without barred list check, in line with Worcestershire recommendation.

### **12. Allegations against Staff**

It is recognised that a learner may make an allegation against a member of staff. If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform the DSL and/or Principal, unless the allegations concern the Principal, in which case the Chair of Governors will be informed immediately.

The DSL (or Chair of Governors) on all such occasions will discuss the content of the allegation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The College will follow LA procedures for managing allegations against staff. Please refer to the Managing Allegations Policy for further guidance.

### **13. Whistleblowing**

It is recognised that learners cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so. All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the attitude or actions of colleagues. Please refer to the Whistleblowing Policy for further guidance.

### **14. Abuse of Position of Trust**

It is recognised that as adults working in College, we are in a relationship of trust with the learners in our care and acknowledge that it is a criminal offence to abuse that trust. We acknowledge that the principle of equality embedded in the legislation of the Sexual Offenders Act 2003 applies irrespective of sexual orientation: neither homosexual nor heterosexual relationships are acceptable within a position of trust. It is recognised that the legislation is intended to protect young people in education who are over the age of consent but under 18 years of age, a significant cohort of the learners in College. However, it is important to note that staff should maintain appropriate boundaries with learners of all ages. Please refer to the staff Code of Conduct for further guidance.

### **15. Positive Physical Intervention**

The College policy on positive handling is set out in a separate policy and acknowledges that staff must only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, and that at all times it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury or damage to property. Please refer to the Search and Restraint Policy for further guidance.

## **16. Health and Safety**

The College Health and Safety Policy reflects the consideration given to the safeguarding of learners both within the College environment and when away from College undertaking trips and visits.

Risk assessments are undertaken and reviewed regularly, in respect of site security, risk of young people being drawn into terrorism or exposed to extremist behaviour, risk to and from young people displaying harmful behaviour.

## **17. Photography and use of images**

The welfare and protection of our students is paramount and consideration should always be given to whether the use of photography is a risk. For this reason consent is always sought when photographing students and additional consideration given to photographing vulnerable students, particularly Looked After Children or those known to be fleeing domestic violence. Consent must be sought from those with parental responsibility (this may include the Local Authority in the case of Looked After Children).

## **18. Safe Environment**

The College undertakes appropriate risk assessments and checks in respect of all equipment and of the buildings and grounds in line with local and national guidance and regulations concerning health and safety. The College has adequate security arrangements in place in respect of the use of its grounds and buildings by visitors.

Visitors to the college, for example visiting speakers, theatre groups or curriculum specialists, will be appropriately checked and vetted, to ensure they are not linked to extremist groups or promoting extremist or other harmful material.

## **19. Radicalisation and Extremism**

The college encourages students to respect the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. We ensure that partisan political views are not promoted in the teaching of any subject in the college and where political issues are brought to the attention of the students; reasonably practicable steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views to students.

We value freedom of speech and the expression of beliefs/ideology as fundamental rights underpinning our society's values. Both students and staff have the right to speak freely and voice their opinions. However, freedom comes with responsibility and free speech that is designed to manipulate the vulnerable or that leads to violence and harm of others goes against the moral principles in which freedom of speech is valued. Free speech is not an unqualified privilege; it is subject to laws and policies governing equality, human rights,

We seek to protect children and young people against the messages of all violent extremism including, but not restricted to, those linked to Islamist ideology, or to Far Right / Neo Nazi / White Supremacist ideology, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and extremist Animal Rights movements.

## **20. Racist Incidents**

Racist incidents are dealt with through guidance set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy. The college acknowledges that repeated racist incidents or a single serious incident may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. We maintain a log of racist incidents in college.

## **21. Anti Bullying**

Bullying incidents are dealt with through guidance set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy. The college acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. All incidences of bullying, including cyber-bullying, racist, homophobic and gender-related bullying, will be dealt with in accordance with our Positive Behaviour Policy. We recognise that students with special needs and/or disabilities are more susceptible to being bullied. We maintain a log of bullying incidents in college.

## **22. Challenge and Escalation**

The College recognises that professional disagreements may arise between any agencies and resolving problems is an integral part of co-operation and joint working to safeguard young people/vulnerable adults.

As part of our responsibility for safeguarding, we acknowledge that we must be prepared to challenge each other if we feel that responses to concerns, assessments or the way in which plans are implemented are not safeguarding the young person/vulnerable adult and promoting their welfare.

We are aware of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board escalation procedures for raising concerns in respect of poor practice and recognise our responsibility to utilise these as and when necessary, in the interests of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our students.

## **23. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Our Safeguarding policy and procedures will be monitored and evaluated by:

- Termly audit and analysis of the Safeguarding Log;
- Completion of an annual safeguarding report to Corporation;
- Student surveys and questionnaires;
- Discussions with students and staff;
- Scrutiny of data and risk assessments;
- Scrutiny of the single central record of recruitment checks;
- Termly meetings with the Link Governor for Safeguarding;
- Monitoring of logs of bullying/racist/behaviour incidents;
- Supervision of staff involved in child protection cases;
- Case file audits undertaken by the DSL.

## Safeguarding Contacts

### Internal

Senior Designated Lead: Cat Draper, Director of Learner Services (Worcester/Malvern)  
Tel: 01905 725538 Mobile: 07940 410049  
Email: [cldraper@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:cldraper@howcollege.ac.uk)

Deputy SDL: Julia Breakwell, Director of Learner Services  
(Redditch/Bromsgrove)  
Tel: 01527 572599  
Email: [jbekwell@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:jbekwell@howcollege.ac.uk)

### **Safeguarding Team Lead:**

Worcester: Viv McLaughlin, Student Experience Manager  
Tel: 01905 725534 Mobile: 07977 252615  
Email: [vmclaughlin@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:vmclaughlin@howcollege.ac.uk)

Redditch/Bromsgrove: Sal Friel, Student Experience Manager  
Tel: 01527 572525  
Email: [sfriel@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:sfriel@howcollege.ac.uk)

### College Safeguarding Teams

Worcester & Malvern: Viv McLaughlin, Student Experience Manager  
Tel: 01905 725534  
Email: [vmclaughlin@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:vmclaughlin@howcollege.ac.uk)

Faye Williams, Senior Welfare Officer  
Tel: 01905 743415  
Email: [fwilliams@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:fwilliams@howcollege.ac.uk)

Lisa Doughty, Welfare Officer  
Tel: 01905 725632  
Email: [ldoughty@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:ldoughty@howcollege.ac.uk)

Alisha Ban, Mental Health Co-ordinator  
Tel: 01905 725548  
Email: [aban@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:aban@howcollege.ac.uk)

Chris Ridings, Student Activities Officer  
Tel: 01905 725559  
Email: [cridings@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:cridings@howcollege.ac.uk)

Bromsgrove & Redditch: Sal Friel, Welfare Manager  
Tel: 01527 572525  
Email: [sfriel@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:sfriel@howcollege.ac.uk)

Harrison Marsh, Student Activities Officer  
Tel: 01527 572953  
Email: [hmarsh@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:hmarsh@howcollege.ac.uk)

Helen Wood, Student Welfare Officer  
Tel: 01527 572811  
Email: [hwood@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:hwood@howcollege.ac.uk)

Jim Carroll, Mental Health Co-Ordinator  
Tel: 01527 572699  
Email: [jcarroll@howcollege.ac.uk](mailto:jcarroll@howcollege.ac.uk)

## **External**

Children's Services Access Centre (Professional number) 01905 822666  
(by e-mail) [childrensteam@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:childrensteam@worcestershire.gov.uk)

Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team 01905 768020

Senior Adviser for Safeguarding

Children in Education Sally Mills 01905 843656  
07809665973

LADO Jon Hancock 01905 843311  
07809586225

Early Help Hub 01905 822666

Stronger Families Team 01905 766796

### **Channel/Prevent contacts:**

Local Authority James Wheeliker ([jwheeliker@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:jwheeliker@worcestershire.gov.uk))

West Mercia Police DS Phil Colley 01386 591835 / 07736 084701

DC Gary Shephard 01386 591816 / 07772 904013

T/DC Jemma Greenhow 01386 591825 / 07890 746662

[prevent@warwickshireandwestmercia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:prevent@warwickshireandwestmercia.pnn.police.uk)

Police Public Protection Unit:

24hrs non-emergency 101

Emergency 999

NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000

## **Annex 1 – Recognising signs of child abuse**

### **Categories of Abuse**

- Emotional Abuse (including Domestic Abuse)
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect

### **Signs of Abuse in Children**

The following non-specific signs may indicate something is wrong:

- Significant change in behaviour
- Extreme anger or sadness
- Aggressive and attention-seeking behaviour
- Suspicious bruises with unsatisfactory explanations
- Lack of self-esteem
- Self-injury
- Depression
- Age inappropriate sexual behaviour

### **Risk Indicators**

The factors described in this section are frequently found in cases of child abuse. Their presence is not proof that abuse has occurred, but:

- Must be regarded as indicators of the possibility of significant harm
- Justifies the need for careful assessment and discussion with designated/named/ lead person, manager, (or in the absence of all those individuals, an experienced colleague)
- May require consultation with and/or referral to Children's Services

The absence of such indicators does not mean that abuse or neglect has not occurred.

In an abusive relationship the child may:

- Appear frightened of the parent/s
- Act in a way that is inappropriate to her/his age and development (though full account needs to be taken of different patterns of development and different ethnic groups)

The parent or carer may:

- Persistently avoid child health promotion services and treatment of the child's episodic illnesses
- Have unrealistic expectations of the child
- Frequently complain about/to the child and may fail to provide attention or praise (high criticism/low warmth environment)
- Be absent or misusing substances
- Persistently refuse to allow access on home visits
- Be involved in domestic abuse

Staff should be aware of the potential risk to children when individuals, previously known or suspected to have abused children, move into the household.

## **Recognising Physical Abuse**

The following are often regarded as indicators of concern:

- An explanation which is inconsistent with an injury
- Several different explanations provided for an injury
- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment
- The parents/carers are uninterested or undisturbed by an accident or injury
- Parents are absent without good reason when their child is presented for treatment
- Repeated presentation of minor injuries (which may represent a “cry for help” and if ignored could lead to a more serious injury)
- Family use of different doctors and A&E departments
- Reluctance to give information or mention previous injuries

## **Bruising**

Children can have accidental bruising, but the following must be considered as non-accidental unless there is evidence or an adequate explanation provided:

- Any bruising to a pre-crawling or pre-walking baby
- Bruising in or around the mouth, particularly in small babies which may indicate force feeding
- Two simultaneous bruised eyes, without bruising to the forehead, (rarely accidental, though a single bruised eye can be accidental or abusive)
- Repeated or multiple bruising on the head or on sites unlikely to be injured accidentally
- Variation in colour possibly indicating injuries caused at different times
- The outline of an object used e.g. belt marks, hand prints or a hair brush
- Bruising or tears around, or behind, the earlobe/s indicating injury by pulling or twisting
- Bruising around the face
- Grasp marks on small children
- Bruising on the arms, buttocks and thighs may be an indicator of sexual abuse

## **Bite Marks**

Bite marks can leave clear impressions of the teeth. Human bite marks are oval or crescent shaped. Those over 3 cm in diameter are more likely to have been caused by an adult or older child.

A medical opinion should be sought where there is any doubt over the origin of the bite.

## **Burns and Scalds**

It can be difficult to distinguish between accidental and non-accidental burns and scalds, and will always require experienced medical opinion. Any burn with a clear outline may be suspicious e.g.

- Circular burns from cigarettes (but may be friction burns if along the bony protuberance of the spine)
- Linear burns from hot metal rods or electrical fire elements
- Burns of uniform depth over a large area
- Scalds that have a line indicating immersion or poured liquid (a child getting into hot water is his/her own accord will struggle to get out and cause splash marks)
- Old scars indicating previous burns/scalds which did not have appropriate treatment or adequate explanation

Scalds to the buttocks of a small child, particularly in the absence of burns to the feet, are indicative of dipping into a hot liquid or bath.

### **Fractures**

Fractures may cause pain, swelling and discolouration over a bone or joint.

Non-mobile children rarely sustain fractures.

There are grounds for concern if:

- The history provided is vague, non-existent or inconsistent with the fracture type
- There are associated old fractures
- Medical attention is sought after a period of delay when the fracture has caused symptoms such as swelling, pain or loss of movement
- There is an unexplained fracture in the first year of life

### **Scars**

A large number of scars or scars of different sizes or ages, or on different parts of the body, may suggest abuse.

## **Recognising Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse may be difficult to recognise, as the signs are usually behavioural rather than physical. The manifestations of emotional abuse might also indicate the presence of other kinds of abuse.

The indicators of emotional abuse are often also associated with other forms of abuse.

The following may be indicators of emotional abuse:

- Developmental delay
- Abnormal attachment between a child and parent/carer e.g. anxious, indiscriminate or no attachment
- Aggressive behaviour towards others
- Scape-goated within the family
- Frozen watchfulness, particularly in pre-school children
- Low self-esteem and lack of confidence
- Withdrawn or seen as a “loner” – difficulty relating to others

## **Recognising Sexual Abuse**

Boys and girls of all ages may be sexually abused and are frequently scared to say anything due to guilt and/or fear. This is particularly difficult for a child to talk about and full account should be taken of the cultural sensitivities of any individual child/family.

Recognition can be difficult, unless the child discloses and is believed. There may be no physical signs and indications are likely to be emotional/behavioural.

Some behavioural indicators associated with this form of abuse are:

- Inappropriate sexualised conduct
- Sexually explicit behaviour, play or conversation, inappropriate to the child's age
- Continual and inappropriate or excessive masturbation
- Self-harm (including eating disorder), self-mutilation and suicide attempts
- Involvement in prostitution or indiscriminate choice of sexual partners

- An anxious unwillingness to remove clothes e.g. for sports events (but this may be related to cultural norms or physical difficulties)

Some physical indicators associated with this form of abuse are:

- Pain or itching of genital area
- Blood on underclothes
- Pregnancy in a younger girl where the identity of the father is not disclosed
- Physical symptoms such as injuries to the genital or anal area, bruising to buttocks, abdomen and thighs, sexually transmitted disease, presence of semen on vagina, anus, external genitalia or clothing

### **Sexual Abuse by Young People**

The boundary between what is abusive and what is part of normal childhood or youthful experimentation can be blurred. The determination of whether behaviour is developmental, inappropriate or abusive will hinge around the related concepts of true consent, power imbalance and exploitation. This may include children and young people who exhibit a range of sexually problematic behaviour such as indecent exposure, obscene telephone calls, fetishism, bestiality and sexual abuse against adults, peers or children.

Developmental Sexual Activity encompasses those actions that are to be expected from children and young people as they move from infancy through to an adult understanding of their physical, emotional and behavioural relationships with each other. Such sexual activity is essentially information gathering and experience testing. It is characterised by mutuality and of the seeking of consent.

Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour can be inappropriate socially, inappropriate to development, or both. In considering whether behaviour fits into this category, it is important to consider what negative effects it has on any of the parties involved and what concerns it raises about a child or young person. It should be recognised that some actions may be motivated by information seeking, but still cause significant upset, confusion, worry, physical damage, etc. it may also be that the behaviour is “acting out” which may derive from other sexual situations to which the child or young person has been exposed.

If an act appears to have been inappropriate, there may still be a need for some form of behaviour management or intervention. For some children, educative inputs may be enough to address the behaviour.

Abusive sexual activity included any behaviour involving coercion, threats, aggression together with secrecy, or where one participant relies on an unequal power base.

### **Assessment**

In order to more fully determine the nature of the incident the following factors should be given consideration. The presence of exploitation in terms of:

- **Equality** – consider differentials of physical, cognitive and emotional development, power and control and authority, passive and assertive tendencies
- **Consent** – agreement including all the following:
  - Understanding that is proposed based on age, maturity, development level, functioning and experience
  - Knowledge of society’s standards for what is being proposed
  - Awareness of potential consequences and alternatives
  - Assumption that agreements or disagreements will be respected equally
  - Voluntary decision
  - Mental competence

- **Coercion** – the young perpetrator who abuses may use techniques like bribing, manipulation and emotional threats of secondary gains and losses that is loss of love, friendship, etc. Some may use physical force, brutality or the threat of these regardless of victim resistance.

In evaluating sexual behaviour of children and young people, the above information should be used only as a guide.

### **Recognising Neglect**

Evidence of neglect is built up over a period of time and can cover different aspects of parenting. Indicators include:

- Failure by parents or carers to meet the basic essential needs e.g. adequate food, clothes, warmth, hygiene and medical care
- A child seen to be listless, apathetic and irresponsive with no apparent medical cause
- Failure of child to grow within normal expected pattern, with accompanying weight loss
- Child thrives away from home environment
- Child frequently absent from school
- Child left with adults who are intoxicated or violent
- Child abandoned or left alone for excessive periods

### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

The following list of indicators is not exhaustive or definitive but it does highlight common signs which can assist professionals in identifying children or young people who may be victims of sexual exploitation.

Signs include:

- underage sexual activity
- inappropriate sexual or sexualised behaviour
- sexually risky behaviour, 'swapping' sex
- repeat sexually transmitted infections
- in girls, repeat pregnancy, abortions, miscarriage
- receiving unexplained gifts or gifts from unknown sources
- having multiple mobile phones/sim cards and worrying about losing contact via mobile
- having unaffordable new things (clothes, mobile) or expensive habits (alcohol, drugs)
- changes in the way they dress
- going to hotels or other unusual locations to meet friends
- seen at known places of concern
- moving around the country, appearing in new towns or cities, not knowing where they are
- getting in/out of different cars driven by unknown adults
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- contact with known perpetrators
- involved in abusive relationships, intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations
- hanging out with groups of older people / anti-social groups / with other vulnerable peers
- associating with other young people involved in sexual exploitation
- recruiting other young people to exploitative situations
- truancy, exclusion, disengagement with school, opting out of education altogether

- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality (chaotic, aggressive, sexual)
- mood swings, volatile behaviour, emotional distress
- self-harming, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, overdosing, eating disorders
- drug or alcohol misuse
- getting involved in crime
- police involvement, police records
- involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership
- injuries from physical assault, physical restraint, sexual assault.

All schools should ensure that there is a dedicated lead person with responsibility for implementing local guidance in respect of child sexual exploitation. This would normally be the DSL.

The DSL must ensure they are aware of the guidance on Child Sexual Exploitation on the WSCB website: <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/safeguarding-our-children/child-sexual-exploitation.aspx>

The DSL must ensure that all staff are aware of signs and symptoms of CSE and know that these must be reported and recorded as child protection concerns. The DSL must follow the Worcestershire Pathway for dealing with issues of CSE, including completion of the screening tool.

## ANNEX 2 - Effects of domestic abuse on children and young people

**The impact of domestic abuse on the quality of a child's or young person's life is very significant. Children and young people who live with domestic abuse are at increased risk of behavioural problems, emotional trauma, and mental health difficulties in adult life.**

The impact of domestic abuse on children and young people can be wide-ranging and may include effects in any or all of the following areas:

**Physical:** Children and young people can be hurt either by trying to intervene and stopping the violence or by being injured themselves by the abuser. They may develop self-harming behaviour, or eating disorders. Their health could be affected, as they may not be being cared for appropriately. They may have suicidal thoughts or try to escape or blank out the abuse by using drugs, alcohol or by running away.

**Sexual:** There is a high risk that children and young people will be abused themselves where there is domestic abuse. In homes where living in fear is the norm, and situations are not discussed, an atmosphere of secrecy develops and this creates a climate in which sexual abuse could occur. In addition to this, children and young people may sometimes be forced to watch the sexual abuse of their mother/carer. This can have long-lasting effects on the sexual and emotional development of the child/young person.

**Economic:** The parent or carer of the child or young person may have limited control over the family finances. Therefore, there might be little or no money available for extracurricular activities, clothing or even food, impacting on their health and development.

**Emotional:** Children and young people will often be very confused about their feelings – for example, loving both parents/carers but not wanting the abuse to continue. They may be given negative messages about their own worth, which may lead to them developing low self-esteem. Many children and young people feel guilty, believing that the abuse is their fault. They are often pessimistic about their basic needs being met and can develop suicidal thoughts. Some children and young people may internalise feelings and appear passive and withdrawn or externalise their feelings in a disruptive manner.

**Isolation:** Children and young people may become withdrawn and isolated; they may not be allowed out to play; and if there is abuse in the home they are less likely to invite their friends round. Schooling may be disrupted in many ways, and this may contribute to their growing isolation. They may frequently be absent from school as they may be too scared to leave their mother alone. They may have to move away from existing friends and family – e.g. into a refuge or other safe or temporary accommodation.

**Threats:** Children and young people are likely to have heard threats to harm their mother/father. They may have been directly threatened with harm or heard threats to harm their pet. They also live under the constant and unpredictable threat of violence, resulting in feelings of intimidation, fear and vulnerability, which can lead to high anxiety, tension, confusion and stress.

This clearly highlights that living with domestic abuse has a significant impact on a child's ability to achieve the five outcomes as outlined in the *Every Child Matters* agenda:

- be healthy;
- stay safe;
- enjoy and achieve;
- make a positive contribution;
- achieve economic well being.

### **What you might see in school/college**

- Unexplained absences or lateness – either from staying at home to protect their parent or hide their injuries, or because they are prevented from attending school/college;
- Children and young people attending school/college when ill rather than staying at home;
- Children and young people not completing their homework, or making constant excuses, because of what is happening at home;
- Children and young people who are constantly tired, on edge and unable to concentrate through disturbed sleep or worrying about what is happening at home;
- Children and young people displaying difficulties in their cognitive and school/college performance;
- Children and young people whose behaviour and personality changes dramatically;
- Children and young people who become quiet and withdrawn and have difficulty in developing positive peer relations;
- Children and young people displaying disruptive behaviour or acting out violent thoughts with little empathy for victims;
- Children and young people who are no trouble at all.

This list is not exhaustive – this is intended to give you an idea of some of the types of behaviour that could be presented.

### **What schools/colleges can do**

**Schools/colleges can create an environment which both promotes their belief and commitment that domestic abuse is not acceptable, and that they are willing to discuss and challenge it.**

For many victims, the school/college might be the one place that they visit without their abusive partner.

It would help if schools/colleges displayed posters or had cards/pens available with information about domestic abuse and contact details for useful agencies: for example, NSPCC **0808 800 5000** and ChildLine **0800 11 11**; Parentline **0808 800 2222**; Worcestershire's Forum Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (WFADSA) 24 hr. helpline: **0800 980 3331**, website: <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/domestic-and-sexual-abuse.aspx>

West Mercia Constabulary - Police Domestic Abuse Units 101.

Research shows that the repeated use of physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse is one of the ways in which male power is used to control women. The underlying attitudes which legitimate and perpetuate violence against women should be challenged by schools/colleges as part of the whole school/college ethos.

### **Schools/colleges can support individual children and young people by:**

- Introducing a **whole-school/college philosophy** that domestic abuse is unacceptable;
- **Responding to disclosures** and potential child protection concerns; recognising that domestic abuse and forced marriage may be a child protection concern; policies and procedures must include domestic abuse;
- **Giving emotional support** – the child or young person might need referral to a more specialist service or need additional support to complete coursework, exams etc;
- **Facilitating a peer support network** – children and young people can become isolated but often welcome talking to friends about their problems;
- **Offering practical support** – if children or young people are new to the school/college they may not yet have a uniform, they may also need financial help with extra-curricular activities, or they may be unfamiliar with the syllabus, the area, where to hang out, etc;
- **Providing somewhere safe and quiet** to do their homework or just to sit and think;
- **Improving the self esteem and confidence** of children and young people by:
  - offering them opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities;
  - offering tasks which are achievable and giving praise and encouragement;
  - monitoring their behaviour and setting clear limits;
  - criticising the action, not the person;
  - helping them to feel a sense of control in their school lives;
  - involving them in decision making;
  - helping them to be more assertive;
  - respecting them as individuals;
  - encouraging involvement in extra-curricular activities.

### **From The Expect Respect Education Toolkit – Women’s Aid**

#### **Advice for schools/colleges on receiving notification of a Domestic Abuse incident**

##### **Background**

Following a call to a domestic abuse incident where children are involved, Police notify Social Care and Health. The Access Centre will sort the notifications into low, medium and high risk, depending on the perceived level of risk to the children. For those cases that are classified medium or high, the school DSL will receive an e-mail via their secure e-mail link on Edulink from the Access Centre informing them that an incident has taken place and giving them a copy of the Police log. For high risk cases, they will also be contacted by telephone and asked whether they have any concerns about the children at school/college. Social Care will also write to parents informing them that the school's DSL has been notified of the incident and reassuring them that the information will be treated confidentially.

## School action

On receiving this information, the DSL should:

- Log the information and keep the record alongside other information/concerns that the school has on this child/family, with all other confidential CP records in a secure place. This will allow the school to recognise any pattern and/or frequency of notifications and take appropriate action. **Please note that school may receive further communication about this same incident, once further assessment of the situation has been undertaken by Police – be careful not to log this as a separate incident.**
- Inform any staff of notification on a 'need to know' only basis – e.g. class teacher/form tutor.
- Alert all staff who teach pupil/student with minimum of information – e.g. 'This pupil/student may need extra support / may need extra time to complete homework'.
- Monitor pupil/student behaviour in school/college (including attendance) and should concerns arise which may be attributed to the impact of the incident, consult with Social Care through the Access Centre as the concerns may be significant and lead to new safeguarding action, or to seek advice on how to proceed.
- Provide appropriate support for child, **if required** – do not question pupil/student about the incident. Respect the child's decision on whether or not they wish to discuss the situation.
- Provide appropriate support for adult, **if asked** – e.g. helpline number (0800 980 3331) or website address: <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/domestic-and-sexual-abuse.aspx>

## Bear in mind

- Victim of incident may be anxious that the information will be shared inappropriately.
- Notification may not give details as to which parent is the perpetrator/victim – any disclosure to the 'wrong' parent could heighten risk.
- Need to be aware who is 'connected' to the child – e.g. TA/lunchtime supervisor may be child's relative / friend of the family.
- **Inappropriate sharing of information could heighten the risk for the victim and/or the child.**

**If in doubt, consult with either the Access Centre (01905 768054) or the Senior Adviser for Safeguarding Children in Education (01905 728902).**

### **ANNEX 3 Forced Marriage – a form of Domestic Abuse**

**Forced Marriage should be recognised as a human rights abuse – and should always invoke child protection procedures within the school.**

A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the full consent of both parties, and one where duress is a factor. A forced marriage is not the same as an arranged marriage – in an arranged marriage the families take a leading role in choosing the marriage partner. The marriage is entered into freely by both people.

#### **Warning signs**

Warning signs can include a sudden drop in performance, truancy from lessons and conflicts with parents over continuation of the student's education.

There may be excessive parental restrictions and control, a history of domestic abuse within the family, or extended absence through sickness or overseas commitments. Students may also show signs of depression or self-harming, and there may be a history of older siblings leaving education early to get married.

#### **The justifications**

Most cases of forced marriage in the UK involve South Asian families. This is partially a reflection of the fact that there is a large established South Asian population in the UK. It is clear, however, that forced marriage is not a solely South Asian phenomenon — there have been cases involving families from East Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

Some forced marriages take place in the UK with no overseas element, while others involve a partner coming from overseas, or a British citizen being sent abroad. Parents who force their children to marry often justify it as protecting them, building stronger families and preserving cultural or religious traditions. They may not see it as wrong.

Forced marriage can never be justified on religious grounds: every major faith condemns it and freely given consent is a pre-requisite of Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh marriage.

#### **Culture**

Often parents believe that they are upholding the cultural traditions of their home countries, when in fact practices and values there have changed. Some parents come under significant pressure from their extended families to get their children married.

#### **The law**

Although there is no specific criminal offence of 'forcing someone to marry' within England and Wales, forced marriage may involve criminal offences. Perpetrators — usually parents or family members — could be prosecuted for offences including: threatening behaviour, assault, kidnap, abduction, imprisonment and in the worse cases murder.

Sexual intercourse without consent is rape, regardless of whether this occurs within the confines of a marriage. A girl who is forced into marriage is likely to be raped and may be raped until she becomes pregnant.

### **What to do if a student seeks help**

- The student should be seen immediately in a private place, where the conversation cannot be overheard.
- The student should be seen on her own, even if she attends with others.
- Develop a safety plan in case the student is seen i.e. prepare another reason why you are meeting.
- Explain all options to the student and recognise and respect her wishes. If the student does not want to be referred to Children's Services, you will need to consider whether to respect the student's wishes — or whether the student's safety requires further action to be taken. If you take action against the student's wishes you must inform the student.
- Establish whether there is a family history of forced marriage — i.e. siblings forced to marry.
- Advise the student not to travel overseas and discuss the difficulties she may face.
- Seek advice from the Forced Marriage Unit.
- Liaise with Police and Children's Services to establish if any incidents concerning the family have been reported.
- Refer to the local Police Child Protection Unit if there is any suspicion that there has been a crime or that one may be committed.
- Refer the student with her consent to the appropriate local and national support groups, and counselling services.

### **What to do if the student is going abroad imminently**

The Forced Marriage Unit advises education professionals to gather the following information if at all possible — it will help the unit to locate the student and to repatriate her:

- a photocopy of the student's passport for retention — encourage her to keep details of her passport number and the place and date of issue
- as much information as possible about the family (this may need to be gathered discretely)
- full name and date of birth of student under threat
- student's father's name
- any addresses where the student may be staying overseas
- potential spouse's name
- date of the proposed wedding
- the name of the potential spouse's father if known
- addresses of the extended family in the UK and overseas

### ***Specific information***

It is also useful to take information that only the student would know, as this may be helpful during any interview at an embassy or British High Commission — in case another person of the same age is produced pretending to be the student.

Professionals should also take details of any travel plans and people likely to accompany the student. Note also the names and addresses of any close relatives remaining in the UK and a safe means to contact the student — a secret mobile telephone, for example, that will function abroad.

### **Forced marriage: what educators should not do**

- treat such allegations merely as domestic issues and send the student back to the family home
- ignore what the student has told you or dismiss the need for immediate protection
- approach the student's family or those with influence within the community, without the express consent of the student, as this will alert them to your concern and may place the student in danger
- contact the family in advance of any enquires by the Police, Children's Services or the Forced Marriage Unit, either by telephone or letter
- share information outside child protection information sharing protocols without the express consent of the student
- breach confidentiality except where necessary in order to ensure the student's safety
- attempt to be a mediator

Further guidance is available from The Forced Marriage Unit:

**Tel:** (+44) (0)20 7008 0151 between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday

**Emergency Duty Officer** (out of hours): (+44) (0)20 7008 1500

**E-mail:** [fmufco@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fmufco@fco.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage](http://www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage)

FMU publication: '*Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Handling Cases of Forced Marriage*' June 09

See also: '*The Right to Choose – Multi-Agency Guidance in relation to Forced Marriage*' Government Office - November 2008 and Interagency Guidance on Forced Marriage on the WSCB website.

## **ANNEX 5 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – a form of Human Rights Abuse**

### **What is FGM?**

FGM includes procedures that intentionally alter or injure the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

There are four known types of FGM, all of which have been found in the UK:

**Type 1** – clitoridectomy: partial or total removal of the clitoris and, in very rare cases, only the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris)

**Type 2** – excision: partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (the labia are the ‘lips’ that surround the vagina)

**Type 3** – infibulation: narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or outer, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris

**Type 4** – other: all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g., pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterising the genital area.

FGM is sometimes known as ‘female genital cutting’ or female circumcision. Communities tend to use local names for this practice, including ‘sunna’.

### **Why is FGM carried out?**

It is believed that:

- It brings status and respect to the girl and that it gives a girl social acceptance, especially for marriage.
- It preserves a girl’s virginity/chastity.
- It is part of being a woman as a rite of passage.
- It upholds the family honour.
- It cleanses and purifies the girl.
- It gives the girl and her family a sense of belonging to the community.
- It fulfills a religious requirement believed to exist.
- It perpetuates a custom/tradition.
- It helps girls and women to be clean and hygienic.
- It is cosmetically desirable.
- It is mistakenly believed to make childbirth safer for the infant.

Religion is sometimes given as a justification for FGM. For example, some people from Muslim communities argue that the Sunna (traditions or practices undertaken or approved by the prophet Mohammed) recommends that women undergo FGM, and some women have been told that having FGM will make them ‘a better Muslim’. However, senior Muslim clerics at an international conference on FGM in Egypt in 2006 pronounced that FGM is not Islamic, and the London Central Mosque has spoken out against FGM on the grounds that it constitutes doing harm to oneself or to others, which is forbidden by Islam.

### **Within which communities is FGM known to be practised?**

According to the Home Office it is estimated that up to 24,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of FGM.

UK communities that are most at risk of FGM include Kenyan, Somali, Sudanese, Sierra Leonei, Egyptian, Nigerian and Eritrean, as well as non-African communities including Yemeni, Afghani, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani.

Obviously, this not to say that all families from the communities listed above practise FGM, and many parents will refuse to have their daughters subjected to this procedure. However, in some communities a great deal of pressure can be put on parents to follow what is seen as a cultural or religious practice.

### **Is FGM harmful?**

FGM is extremely harmful and is often described as brutal because of the way it is carried out, and its short and long term effects on physical and psychological health.

FGM is carried out on children between the ages of 0 and 15, depending on the community in which they live. It is often carried out without any form of sedation and without sterile conditions. The girl or young woman is held down while the procedure of cutting takes place and survivors describe extreme pain, fear and feelings of abandonment.

Where the vagina is cut and then sewn up, only a very small opening may be left. This is often seen as a way to ensure that when the girl enters marriage, she is a virgin. In some communities the mother of the future husband and the girl's own mother will take the girl to be cut open before the wedding night.

Repeat urinal tract infections are a common problem for women who have undergone FGM, and for some, infections come from menstruation being restricted. Many women have problems during pregnancy and childbirth. The removal of the clitoris denies women physical pleasure during sexual activity and some groups will practise complete removal to ensure chastity.

### **Is it illegal?**

FGM is internationally recognised as a violation of the human rights of girls and women, and is illegal in most countries – including the UK. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 came into force in 2004:

The act makes it illegal to:

- practise FGM in the UK
- take girls who are British nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM, whether or not it is lawful in that country
- aid and abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad.

The offence carries a penalty of up to 14 years in prison, and/or a fine.

## **Signs, symptoms and indicators**

The following list of possible signs and indicators are not diagnostic, but are offered as a guide as to what kind of things should alert professionals to the possibility of FGM.

Things that may point to FGM happening:

- a child talking about getting ready for a special ceremony
- a family arranging a long break abroad
- a child's family being from one of the 'at-risk' communities for FGM (see above)
- knowledge that an older sibling has undergone FGM
- a young person talks of going abroad to be 'cut', or get ready for marriage.

Things that may indicate a child has undergone FGM:

- prolonged absence from school or other activities
- behaviour change on return from a holiday abroad, such as the child being withdrawn and appearing subdued
- bladder or menstrual problems
- finding it difficult to sit still, and looking uncomfortable
- complaining about pain between their legs
- mentioning something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about
- secretive behaviour, including isolating themselves from the group
- reluctance to take part in physical activity
- repeated urinal tract infection
- disclosure.

## **What should schools/colleges do?**

Where schools/colleges have a concern about a child, they should contact Children's Social Care Services. If the concerns are based on more concrete indicators – i.e., the young person says this is going to happen to them, or disclosure that it has happened to them or to an older sister – schools/colleges should make a child protection referral. Schools/colleges should not:

- contact the parents before seeking advice from children's social care;
- make any attempt to mediate between the child/young person and parents.

It is important to keep in mind that the parents may not see FGM as a form of abuse; however, they may be under a great deal of pressure from their community and or family to subject their daughters to it. Some parents from identified communities may seek advice and support as to how to resist and prevent FGM for their daughters, and education about the harmful effects of FGM may help to make parents feel stronger in resisting the pressure of others in the community. Remember that religious teaching does not support FGM.

**The 'one chance' rule**

In the same way that we talk about the 'one chance rule' in respect of young people coming forward with fears that they may be forced into marriage, young people disclosing fears that they are going to be sent abroad for FGM are taking the 'one chance', of seeking help.

It is essential that we take such concerns seriously and act without delay. Never underestimate the determination of parents who have decided that it is right for their daughter to undergo FGM. Attempts to mediate may place the child/young person at greater risk, and the family may feel so threatened at the news of their child's disclosure that they bring forward their plans or take action to silence her.