

University College Birmingham

Speak Out and Support Service Policy 2025/26

1. Purpose

This policy sets out University College Birmingham's (UCB) approach to the Speak Out and Support Service. The service provides a confidential, non-judgmental space for students and staff to disclose concerns relating to: sexual misconduct and harassment, stalking, spiking, domestic abuse and non-sexual harassment, and to receive practical and emotional support.

UCB is committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment where individuals feel able to speak out, are treated with dignity and respect, and are supported to make informed decisions about their options. This policy also ensures clear boundaries around the remit of the service and protects the wellbeing, safety and professional practice of Sexual Misconduct and Harassment Advisers.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff members and UCB students (college, university and apprentices) who use or wish to use the Speak Out and Support Service, including those who are on placement as part of their course.

3. Definitions

- **Student** – the term 'student' covers UCB students, including those on placement as part of their course and apprentices.
- **Staff** – Any individual employed by University College Birmingham.
- **Child** – in accordance with the Children Act (1989), UCB shall regard any young person below the age of 18 years old as a child.
- **Vulnerable Adult** – a person aged 18 or over who may need community care services by reason of mental illness or other disability, age, or illness and who is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation.
- **Adviser** – A trained member of staff delivering the Speak Out and Support Service, including Sexual Misconduct and Harassment Advisers.

- **Reporting Party** – An individual (student or staff member) who discloses an experience or concern relating to harassment or sexual misconduct.
- **Reported Party** – An individual (student or staff member) who has been reported as being involved in an alleged incident and who may access support from the service where appropriate.
- **Disclosure** – Information shared relating to an incident or concern affecting safety, wellbeing, or experience at UCB.
- **Safeguarding Concern** – Any disclosure indicating a risk of harm to an individual or others.

4. Data Protection and Confidentiality

Students aged 16 to 18 have the same entitlement to confidentiality as adults.

Advisers work within UCB's Safeguarding and Data Protection Policies, which includes clear guidelines for confidentiality and safe practice.

Advisers cannot offer absolute confidentiality to their students. In exceptional circumstances, the advisers may take the decision to break confidentiality, with or without the student's consent, if necessary. In this case their professional judgement will be used if:

- there is a risk of the student harming themselves or being harmed
- there is risk of another person being harmed
- there is risk of a serious crime being committed
- a court order requires the practitioner to disclose confidential information.

5. Students who are under 18

We may be working with a child client who discloses abuse, or another child protection need. In this situation we must assess:

- the seriousness of the likely harm
- how imminent the risk is to the child or others
- the effectiveness and impact of disclosure
- whether we are referring with client consent or making a referral without consent in the public interest

Disclosures and referrals may be necessary in the interests of the child client, or for the protection of other children. In these cases, the Adviser will report the student concern to the Safeguarding Team using MyConcern or if deemed urgent, email safeguarding@ucb.ac.uk or call 0121 232 4104 /4314, mobiles 07747 317486/ 07881 300348.

All personal and sensitive information will be managed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation, and the Common Law Duty of Confidentiality.

6. Areas of Support

The Speak Out and Support Service provides support in relation to:

- Sexual misconduct
- Sexual harassment
- Stalking
- Spiking
- Domestic abuse
- Non-sexual harassment

Support may be accessed regardless of when or where the incident occurred.

The service offers support to both the reporting party and the reported party, where appropriate.

7. Nature of the Service

The Speak Out and Support Service provides support, guidance and information. It is not an investigative or decision-making service.

1. The service does not conduct investigations, determine outcomes, or make findings of misconduct. Accessing the service does not automatically initiate a formal complaint, disciplinary, or grievance process.

8. Support Offered

Practical Support

The service may offer practical support including:

- Information about internal and external reporting options
- Guidance on relevant UCB policies, procedures and processes
- Support in understanding available options and potential next steps
- Signposting or referral to appropriate internal or external services
- Information about safety planning considerations, where appropriate.

Where a disclosure involves a member of staff, advisers may provide information about HR processes and reporting routes, and support individuals to understand how to access them.

Emotional Support

The service may offer emotional support including:

- A confidential, non-judgmental space to discuss concerns
- Discussion of the impact of the experience
- Coping strategies to manage distress
- Psychoeducation to support understanding of emotional responses

This service does not provide counselling or therapeutic interventions. Where therapeutic or specialist support is required, appropriate signposting or referral will be offered.

9. Accessing the service

Students and staff can access the Speak Out and Support Service via the online reporting form available on the UCB website or portal: <https://studentcases.ucb.ac.uk>

Staff are able to complete the referral form for a student, with their consent.

Following submission, a practitioner will contact the individual to discuss available support options. Engagement with the service is voluntary, and individuals retain control over how they wish to proceed, unless safeguarding thresholds are met.

10. Behaviour

The Speak Out and Support Service is a respectful and supportive space. Individuals accessing the service are expected to engage in a respectful and appropriate manner.

Where behaviour compromises the safety, wellbeing, or professional boundaries of Sexual Misconduct and Harassment Advisers, UCB reserves the right to withdraw or end support through the service. This includes, but is not limited to, harassment, aggression, threatening behaviour, or inappropriate language.

These measures are in place to protect staff and ensure the safe and effective operation of the service.

11. Significant/Safeguarding concerns

Students who disclose harm or self-harm including suicidal thoughts are deemed at risk and vulnerable. Advisers will carry out an assessment of the immediate risk and when necessary to ensure the continued safety of a student, refer students who are under 18 to UCB's Safeguarding Team and over 18s will be signposted to UCB's Mental Health and Wellbeing Team.

12. Electronic client files/notes

Advisers will keep electronic records of all students' attendance at sessions. The database is stored securely.

13. Withdrawn/deferred students

Where a student withdraws or defers their studies, they will no longer be able to access the Speak Out and Support service.

14. Service Exclusions

UCB's Speak Out and Support service will not be able to offer support to students who meet any of the following criteria:

14.2 Students presenting with high-risk or acute mental health needs

The service may exclude or redirect students who:

- Are at immediate risk of harm to self or others
- Require crisis intervention, psychiatric assessment, or Community Mental Health Team involvement
- Need medical management, such as medication initiation or psychiatric review.

These students are usually referred to:

- NHS Crisis Teams
- A&E
- GP / NHS mental health services.

14.3 If an individual displays inappropriate, abusive, aggressive, threatening or intimidating behaviour towards Sexual Misconduct and Harassment Advisers or other staff.

In such cases, the individual will be informed in writing that they cannot access or continue to access support through the Speak Out and Support Service and will be advised of alternative support routes where appropriate.

14.4 If the individual is not a current UCB student or staff member.

14.5 If an individual is under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of accessing the service and is unable to engage safely or appropriately, the session may be ended and alternative support options discussed.

14.6 Students whose primary concern is not related to sexual misconduct or harassment.

Examples:

- Housing, financial hardship, academic issues requiring specialist support
- Situations better suited to learning support or external agencies.

Any decision to exclude a student from the Speak Out and Support service will be communicated to the student either by the assessing practitioner or where required in writing by the Deputy Head of Student Support (Sexual Misconduct and Harassment)

15. Supporting documentation

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- [Comprehensive Single Source of Information on Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct – Fitness to Practice](#)
- [Student Complaints Procedure](#)
- Wellbeing Service Policy
- Support to Study Protocol

16. Complaints

If you are not satisfied with the service, speak to or email the Deputy Head of Student Support (Sexual Misconduct and Harassment) or the Executive Director of Student Support, in the first instance. If you remain unhappy, you can pursue formal action through UCB's complaints procedures.

17. Document control

This policy will be reviewed by the Deputy Head of Student Support (Sexual Misconduct and Harassment) every 2 years or sooner if required.

Date	Details	Author
March 2026	Creation of the policy	Deputy Head of Student Support (Sexual Misconduct and Harassment)

Date of next review: March 2028