

The Unity physical contact policy

Policy statement

This policy establishes clear guidelines for appropriate physical contact between teachers and guests, and between practitioners and guests, all while on Unity premises or other premises provided by Unity or while acting or practicing on behalf of Unity.

Our commitment is to maintain professional boundaries while providing effective instruction and therapies in a safe, pleasant and respectful environment.

Contents

Policy statement	1
Definitions	2
Scope	2
Core Principles	2
Specific Guidelines by Practice Area	3
Universal prohibitions	4
Special populations	5
Emergency Situations	6
Documentation Requirements	6
Guest rights and empowerment	7
Guest complaints	7
Policy violations	7
Policy Implementation	7
Contacts summary	8

Definitions

For ease of understanding, the following terms have these meanings throughout this policy document:

- “Unity”, “we” and “us” refers to any and all of
 - Unity Lewes CIC trading as The Unity Centre,
 - the Unity Professional Training School, and
 - Unity Retreats.
- “class” and “classes” refers to classes, workshops, training sessions and other instructional sessions in such fields as, but not limited to, yoga, Pilates, dance, exercise, fitness, meditation, martial arts, performing arts, massage, reiki, first aid and anatomy;
- “therapy” and “therapies” refers to therapeutic wellness and treatment services such as, but not limited to,
 - massage therapies, reflexology, ayurveda, acupuncture, tuina, reiki, shamanic healing, energy therapies and other bodywork, contact work and physical treatments,
 - talking therapies with the potential for physical contact, and
 - skin, hair and beauty treatments such as, but not limited to, facial work, scrubs, wraps, eyebrow work, nail work and podiatry;
- “teachers” refers to and includes
 - all providers of classes, and
 - all providers of training and education in teaching, instruction and therapies;
- “practitioners” refers to and includes all providers of therapies; and
- “guests” refers to and includes all paying and non-paying Unity clients, students, customers, trainees and other members of the public visiting or receiving services from Unity.

Scope

This policy applies to all directors, employees, suppliers, contractors and volunteers of Unity providing classes, therapies and any service involving potential or actual physical contact with guests.

Core principles

1. Informed consent

- Teachers and practitioners must
 - precede all physical contact with clear communication about the purpose, nature and extent of touch,
 - obtain verbal consent from each guest before each session, not assume consent from any previous session, and
 - when in groups of guests, obtain each guest’s prior individual consent, recognising that some guests may not wish to be included in group consent but may not wish to speak out while with the group.
- A guest’s consent must be ongoing and can be withdrawn at any time, and guests have the absolute right at all times to decline, without explanation, any physical contact.

2. Professional purpose only

- Physical contact must serve a legitimate professional purpose related to instruction, adjustment, treatment or training.
- Contact must be the minimum necessary to achieve the intended outcome.
- Teachers and practitioners must consider, where possible, alternative non-touch methods and offer such methods when preferred by guests.

3. Transparency and communication

Teachers and practitioners must

- clearly explain what they intend to do before making contact,
- encourage guests to communicate their comfort level and preferences, and
- make regular check-ins during sessions when physical contact is involved.

Specific guidelines by practice area

Classes

Permitted contact: teachers are permitted (with general consent) to provide

- light touch to guide a guest's proper alignment or positioning,
- gentle pressure (with explicit consent) to deepen a guest's stretches,
- spotting for safety during challenging poses or movements, and
- brief physical contact with a guest for demonstration purposes.

Required protocols: teachers must

- always ask permission (eg "May I help adjust your posture?" or "Would you like assistance with this pose?"),
- use clear, specific language about what they intend to do,
- offer verbal cues as the primary, default method of instruction,
- respect "hands-off" requests without question, and
- use props, blocks or straps when possible instead of physical adjustment.

Special considerations: teachers must

- ensure the wellbeing of any guest identified as pregnant, including the appropriateness to that individual of the class or activities within the class, modifying activities where appropriate,
- recognise that trauma survivors may need additional communication and consent protocols, and
- follow the policies below for minors and vulnerable adults.

Prohibited areas: teachers are not permitted any contact whatsoever with

- genital areas,
- breasts/chest area,
- inner thighs and buttocks, and
- any area the guest has specifically indicated as off-limits.

Therapies

Pre-therapy: practitioners must

- ensure that there is a comprehensive intake form for each guest documenting guest health history and areas of concern,
- have clear discussion with the guest about the treatment plan and areas to be addressed,
- obtain the guest's clear, explicit and unambiguous consent for the proposed therapy(ies), including specific body areas, and
- explain draping procedures and the guest's rights.

During therapy: practitioners must

- maintain appropriate draping at all times,
- communicate throughout the therapy session (eg "How does this pressure feel?"),
- stop immediately if the guest expresses discomfort or requests cessation, and
- document any areas guest prefers to avoid.

Prohibited areas: practitioners are not permitted any contact whatsoever with

- genital areas,
- breasts, and
- any area the guest has specifically indicated as off-limits.

Special considerations: practitioners must

- only provide therapies to pregnant guests if appropriately and adequately trained to do so and explicitly authorised by us to do so,
- recognise that trauma survivors may need additional communication and consent protocols, and
- follow the policies herein for providing therapies to minors and vulnerable adults.

Universal prohibitions

The following are strictly prohibited at all times and on all occasions, regardless of class or therapy:

- any contact that could reasonably be interpreted as sexual in nature,
- any behaviour or talk that could reasonably be regarded as threatening or coercive,
- physical contact when under the influence of substances,
- contact motivated by personal rather than professional reasons,
- touching without clear professional justification,
- continuing contact after a guest has indicated discomfort,
- assuming a guest's individual consent on the basis of group consent, and
- making assumptions about guest comfort based on the guest's profession, background or previous sessions.

Special populations

Minors (under 18) and vulnerable adults

For all minors and vulnerable adults:

- a teacher or practitioner must not ever participate in a one-to-one session (that is, a session where a lone teacher or practitioner is with a lone guest) with a minor or vulnerable adult unless authorised by us to do so and, additionally, unless at least one of the two following conditions is fulfilled:
 1. a parent, legal guardian or authorised chaperone is present continuously throughout the session and approves any physical contact before it takes place,
OR
 2. the teacher or practitioner holds an advanced DBS certificate with an 'enhanced with barred lists' check that was issued not more than two years prior to the session and that has been seen or obtained by us.
- A teacher or practitioner must provide extra sensitivity to comfort levels and maintain clear communication about and understanding of boundaries.

Additionally, for all children and young adults under the age of 18

- we require prior written and verified consent by a parent or legal guardian;
- in advance of each session the teacher or practitioner must inform the guest's parent or legal guardian of the nature of any proposed physical contact and must obtain that parent or guardian's clear, explicit and unambiguous agreement for such contact;
- should any accidental and not-consented physical contact take place, the teacher or practitioner must immediately report such contact to a parent or legal guardian and document it in writing, with the nature and circumstances of the contact recorded together with the time and date of the report to the parent or legal guardian.

Additionally, for all vulnerable adults, in advance of each session the teacher or practitioner must

- inform the guest's carer or guardian or, when appropriate, the guest themselves, of any proposed physical contact, and
- ensure clear, informed and comprehending consent has been obtained for such contact.

Trauma survivors

Where a guest is identified as a trauma survivor, teachers and practitioners must

- be trained in trauma-informed care principles,
- consider and use a modified approach with enhanced communication,
- give the guest maximum control over their experience, and
- always make alternative non-touch options available or, in the case of a therapy that intrinsically requires physical contact, always ensure in advance that the guest understands and is comfortable with any proposed contact.

First-time therapy guests

We understand that a first therapy session can be a very unfamiliar experience so where we know it's a guest's first visit we and our practitioners will

- offer a clear explanation of what to expect,
- discuss this policy and the guest's rights,
- start with minimal contact to establish comfort level, and
- offer more frequent check-ins

Emergency Situations

In medical emergencies or situations that threaten physical wellbeing, teachers and practitioners may need to provide assistance that involves physical contact beyond normal scope. In such situations they must

- prioritise guest and public safety and wellbeing,
- use minimum contact necessary for safety,
- seek emergency medical assistance when appropriate,
- document circumstances thoroughly, and
- notify their supervisor or a member of the Unity management team as soon as possible.

Documentation Requirements

Therapy records must include

- date, time and duration of session,
- services provided and techniques used,
- any physical adjustments or therapeutic contact,
- guest feedback or concerns expressed, and
- areas guest preferred to avoid

Incident Reporting:

Teachers and therapists must immediately report to their immediate supervisor or any member of our management team any

- boundary concerns or misunderstandings,
- inadvertent physical contact that could be interpreted as in breach of this policy,
- guest complaints related to physical contact, and
- situations where physical contact may have been misinterpreted.

Guest rights and empowerment

Guests have the right to

- decline any physical contact without explanation,
- request specific practitioners or gender preference,
- ask questions about techniques or procedures,
- stop or modify therapy at any time,
- request a witness or support person be present,
- file complaints without fear of retaliation, and
- a copy of this policy.

Guest complaints

Guests may submit a written or verbal complaint for suspected breach of this policy to any member of the Unity management team and have the right to expect that manager to treat the complaint with the utmost respect and confidentiality. Where appropriate it may be escalated in accordance with Unity's grievance policy. Email addresses for relevant members of the management team and the web address for Unity policies are at the end of this document.

Policy violations

Reported violations of this policy can result in

- immediate investigation of reported incidents,
- suspension of a teacher's or practitioner's contact with guests, pending investigation,
- mandatory additional training (if a minor violation is upheld),
- disciplinary action up to and including termination,
- reporting to accrediting body, and
- reporting to relevant legal authorities when required by law.

Policy Implementation

Effective date, reviews and updates

This policy takes effect immediately upon adoption and applies to all future guest interactions. It will be reviewed regularly and updated as needed to reflect best practices, legal requirements and professional standards.

Dissemination

Once adopted, this policy will be communicated to all teachers and practitioners and then to all future incoming teachers and practitioners as part of their supplier agreements and inductions. It will also be communicated to all our directors, managers, staff and volunteers. It is a public document that will be available for download on Unity's website at <https://being-in-unity.com> and for inspection at The Unity Centre.

Acknowledgment

Teachers and practitioners must sign an acknowledgment that they have read, understood and agree to comply with this policy. This acknowledgment will be maintained in personnel and supplier files and will form part of teacher and therapist supplier agreements.

Contacts summary

Inquiries about this policy and any complaints made under this policy may be addressed to any member of the Unity management team including the following:

Front of house manager

house@being-in-unity.com

Studio manager

studio@being-in-unity.com

Spa manager

spa@being-in-unity.com

Managing director

sevanti@being-in-unity.com

Other Unity managers and executive directors

<https://being-in-unity.com/who-are-we>

Unity policies and procedures

<https://being-in-unity.com/policies>

End of the Unity physical contact policy 2025-2027