

## **SAFEGUARDING CHILD AND YOUNG PEOPLE GUIDANCE**

### **Code of Conduct for staff working with children and young people**

**These guidance notes have been drawn up to raise awareness of staff dealing with young people and also to protect employers and their businesses.**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This advice is intended for all staff who work with children. In the context of child protection, children and young person (people) refer to anyone under 18 years of age, whether they are employees or visitors, henceforth referred to as 'children'. Managers are encouraged to include this code of conduct and information on reporting concerns within any future induction programme. Existing staff should be briefed by Managers.
- 1.2 Staff working in establishments with children have a duty to act reasonably and properly towards them. This code of conduct is designed to protect both children and staff and should help staff consider their behaviour, act accordingly and challenge any behaviour by a colleague, which may fall outside of this code of conduct.

#### **2. The Code**

##### **2.1 General**

All staff working with children should take care that their relationships with them reflects the age, gender and maturity of the child or young person. It will be important that all aspects of behaviour language and attitude do not give rise to any misunderstandings. This is particularly important when dealing with adolescents. Ambiguous comment or behaviour should be avoided.

Good practice includes valuing and respecting children as individuals. Bullying, shouting, racism, sectarianism or sexism are prohibited.

##### **2.2 Physical Contact**

There is no easy definition of what is acceptable in regard to physical comfort if a child is distressed. This would depend on the circumstances and level of distress. For example a hand on an arm may be acceptable, or even on the shoulder if a young person is very distressed, but any contact which could be considered as more intimate should be avoided. It must be remembered that some young people will not welcome comfort that involves physical contact and using comforting words is better. Professional judgement and discretion should be used.

Adults should consider how others might perceive the action even if no one else is present and ensure that this does not develop into



unnecessary contact. If a child tries to seek physical contact this should be firmly discouraged.

### **2.3 Physical Restraint**

It is important to note that any incident that involves an adult restraining a young person could potentially lead to a police prosecution for assault. Force and restraint should not be used.

### **2.4 Punishment**

It must be made clear to all staff that any form of physical punishment is prohibited.

### **2.5 First Aid**

First Aid should only be administered by a trained first aider in line with Health and Safety consideration. Minimal physical contact should be used which is necessary to treat the young person. If at all possible another adult should be present.

### **2.6 Private Meetings with Young People**

Private meetings with children, by their very nature can lead to false allegations being made, provide opportunity for abuse to take place or lead to misunderstandings between the adult and the young person. Private meetings should be avoided. However if meetings are required it is advisable for all meetings to be in a room where the door is left open or where the meeting can be observed through the glass. Wherever possible another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

Under no circumstances should meetings be arranged off the premises without approval of the manager. This includes the transporting of individual children by car. Where transporting of children does take place, the venue and time of arrival should be specified before leaving the premises and parents should be informed of activity (preferably in writing).

### **2.7 Choice and use of materials for activities.**

All staff should be very careful about the choice of materials to use with children. The use of books, videos or films of an explicit or sensitive nature, in particular in relation to language, violence or sexual behaviour must be given careful consideration. These should only be used when linked with a clear target of the programme.

All staff must adhere to the guidance age for films and not use material, which is not age appropriate.

### **2.8 Off site Activities**

Staff must be careful when supervising students in less formal activities off site. Children can misinterpret the more relaxed and less formal atmosphere. The same code of conduct should apply onsite and offsite. No overnight stays are to be arranged.

### **2.9 Comments and Discussion with Children**

All staff should avoid any comment about children, which could have sexual overtones.



### **2.10 Infatuations and Crushes**

These unfortunately do develop and can involve young people and staff of both sexes and on both a homosexual and heterosexual basis. They need to be handled sensitively. Careless and insensitive remarks have been known to provoke false accusations. It is therefore in the interest of all parties to avoid encouraging the crush or making jokes about the situation. In such situations all staff must inform their manager.

Staff should alert colleagues to the possibility of an infatuation to minimise the hurt and distress of all concerned and risk to the member of staff. If this occurs the manager should also be informed.

It is essential that if a member of staff feels that a child is contacting him or her, talking of personal matters or seeking out his or her presence at inappropriate or excessive times they must inform the manager.

### **2.11 Reporting Concerns**

Staff should always report any incident where he or she feels that his or her actions may be misinterpreted. This report should be made to the manager and a written note made.

If any member of staff is concerned about behaviour of a colleague, which breaches the agreed code of conduct, he or she should report these concerns to the manager. There must be an ethos in every project, which encourages an openness for discussion on adherence to a code of conduct and an agreement that any behaviour, which falls outside of this, will be challenged.

## **3. Keeping children safe.**

Children are not adults and all adults who work with them need to be aware of how to behave and what to do to keep them as safe as possible and to avoid any difficult situations. They also need to know what to do if they are worried about a child.

This guidance should help.

#### **Don't be over familiar.**

These are children in an adult environment. Don't use embarrassing or offensive language to them. Don't horseplay.

#### **Don't touch.**

Unless it is absolutely necessary, demonstrate how to do something rather than show. Them in a way that means you have to touch them.

#### **Don't be alone with a child.**

Avoid being in an isolated place or a closed room. If you are travelling with a young person make sure someone knows where you are going and when you expect to arrive at your destination.

**Share concerns.**

Children may confide in you. If you are worried about a child's safety tell your line manager. You will then need to give the information to the appropriate person within education.

Useful website:

<http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au>