

Code of Conduct for Working with Children

Introduction

This guidance document describes the standards of conduct and practice that Doncaster employees and volunteers should follow when working with children. The guidance applies equally to schools where the Governing Body has adopted it. It is designed to complement other advice or codes of conduct produced by employers or national bodies, not to replace or take priority over them.

Whilst this document covers a wide range of situations, it is recognised that it cannot cover every eventuality, however the principals contained within it must apply in every circumstance.

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Child	Anyone who has not yet reached their 19th birthday
Welfare	Well-being in relation to the 5 outcomes defined in the Children Act 2004: stay safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing
Worker	Employee, self-employed person, contractor or volunteer.
Allegation	An allegation made by anyone, child or adult, where there is or believed to be a risk of harm to a child
Parent	Adult with parental responsibility

Purpose

The purpose of the guidance is to protect and promote the interests of workers and the children they work with. All adults who come into contact with children and young people, in their work, have a legal and moral duty to keep children and young people safe and to protect them from sexual, physical and/or emotional harm. The duty that rests on an individual is to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the welfare of a child or young person is paramount.

The guidance aims to:

- Keep children safe by clarifying which behaviours constitute safe practice and which behaviours should be avoided;
- Assist adults working with children to work safely and responsibly and to monitor their own standards and practice;
- Support managers in setting clear expectations of behaviour and/or codes of practice relevant to the services being provided;
- Give a clear message that unlawful or unsafe behaviour is unacceptable and that, where appropriate, disciplinary or legal action will be taken;

- Support safer recruitment practice;
- Minimise the risk of misplaced or malicious allegations made against adults who work with children;
- Reduce the incidence of positions of trust being abused or misused.

Diversity

At all times consideration needs to be given to the diversity needs of workers and children. Aspects of gender, culture or religion may be relevant when considering the nature of allegations or appropriateness of communications or physical interventions.

Reporting incidents

Any incidents of concern should always be reported to a senior manager and recorded. In cases where there is an allegation or risk of harm to a child to the senior designated officer for the service area or the Local Authorities Designated Officer (LADO). Contact details are listed at Appendix 1.

Procedures are in place adopted through the Doncaster Safeguarding Board (DSCB) for dealing with allegations against staff, and a whistle blowing policy is in place.

The DSCB'S Commitment

The DSCB will ensure:

- Appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are in place in all areas that undertake work with children, that they are continually monitored and reviewed and made easily accessible to all workers;
- Workers are treated fairly and reasonably in all circumstances and if subject to an allegation will be supported and the principles of natural justice applied;
- The safe practice of workers is continually promoted through supervision and training;
- Workers have readily available access to senior management or other emergency contact person;
- Guidance is readily available to both adults and children;
- A culture of openness and support is fostered;
- Readily known systems are in place for situations and concerns, from either party, to be raised and recorded and for their outcomes to be analysed in order to review procedures and working practices;
- Agencies have procedures in place regarding lone working, physical intervention and risk assessment;
- That agencies will have agreed care plans in place when work involves intimate care;
- Clear eSafety policies are in place;
- A clear and easily accessible Whistle Blowing policy is in place.

Personal Conduct

Confidentiality

Workers must:

- Keep private and sensitive information confidential at all times and only share it to relevant people when it is in the interests of the child to do so;
- Not use information to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass the child;

- Be aware of the need to listen and support children whilst understanding the importance of not promising to keep secrets;
- Never request a child to keep secrets.

Making a professional judgement

Workers must:

- Make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the child;
- Record judgements taken and share them with a senior manager;
- Ensure actions taken are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably;
- Discuss any misunderstandings, accidents or threats with a senior manager;
- Be aware of their position of trust and ensure an unequal balance of power is not used for their own or others personal advantage or gratification;
- Not use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine children;
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others;
- Not promote relationships which create a personal friendship or are of a sexual nature, or which may become so.

Personal/living space

Workers must:

- Not invite a child into their home or any home or domestic setting frequented by them, unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parents and senior managers or the home has been designated as a work place e.g. childminders, foster carers;
- Be vigilant in maintaining their own privacy and mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations;
- Not ask children to undertake personal jobs or errands;
- Maintain professional boundaries.

Gifts, rewards and favouritism

Workers must:

- Be aware of their organisation's policy on the giving and receiving of gifts;
- Ensure that gifts received or given in situations that may be misconstrued are declared;
- Only give gifts to an individual child part of an agreed reward system;
- Ensure that when operating reward systems, methods and criteria for selection of children for awards are fair and transparent.

Infatuations

Workers must:

- Deal with infatuations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned;
- Make sure their own behaviour is beyond reproach;

- If they become aware of an infatuation developing or any indications that it may, record it and discuss it with a senior manager so that action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment.

Communication (including the use of technology)

Workers must:

- Ensure communication takes place within clear and explicit professional boundaries; this includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites and blogs.
- Not share any personal information with a child;
- Not request, or respond to, any personal information from a child, other than that which may be appropriate as part of their professional role;
- Not give their personal contact details to children, including their mobile number, home phone or personal e-mail address, unless the need to do so is agreed with senior management and parents;
- Only use equipment e.g. mobile phones, provided by their organisation to communicate with children, making sure that parents/carers have given permission for this form of communication to be used;
- Only make contact with children for professional reasons and in accordance with organisational policy;
- Only use text messaging as a last resort when no other forms of communication are possible;
- Not use internet or web-based communication channels to send messages;
- Use internal e-mail systems in accordance with the organisation's policy.

Social Contact

Workers must:

- Not have social contact with children unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with Senior Managers;
- Not have secret social contact with children and/or their parent(s);
- Always approve any planned social contact with children with senior colleagues;
- Advise senior management of any social contact that has occurred which may raise concern;
- Report and record any situation which may place a child at risk or may compromise the organisation or their own professional standing.

Sexual Contact

Workers must:

- Not engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of a child, or cause or incite a child to engage in or watch sexual activity, to do so would be considered a criminal offence;
- Not have any form of communication which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative or make sexual remarks to, or about a child either verbally, written or electronically;
- Not discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of children;
- Ensure relationships take place within boundaries of respect and professionalism;
- Ensure language, attitudes and demeanour do not give rise to comment or speculation;
- Be aware that consistently conferring in appropriate special attention and favour upon a child might be construed as part of a grooming process, and as such will give rise to concerns about behaviour.

Physical Contact

Workers must:

- Be aware that even well intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described;
- Only have physical contact with a child when it is necessary and in ways which are appropriate to their professional or agreed role and responsibilities, never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent;
- Be aware of the child's reactions or feelings and, as far as possible, only use a level of contact which is acceptable to the child and for the minimum time necessary;
- Seek permission from the child or the parent, if the child is very young, before physical contact is made and agree what contact is acceptable;
- Not assume that when a child is distressed they seek physical comfort;
- Always be prepared to report and explain actions and accept that all physical contact is open to scrutiny;
- Not indulge in horse play;
- Always encourage children, where possible to undertake self-care tasks independently;
- Be aware of cultural or religious views about touching and sensitive to issues of gender;
- Where there is regular physical contact needed, the nature of this must be agreed with senior management and the parent as part of a formally agreed plan;
- Where a child initiates inappropriate physical contact, you must sensitively deter them and help them understand the importance of personal boundaries.

Behaviour Management

Workers must:

- Not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a child;
- Not use sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments;
- Ensure any sanctions and rewards are part of an agreed behaviour management policy;
- Try to defuse situations before they escalate;
- Never use corporal punishment;
- Follow the behaviour policy and only use physical intervention in exceptional circumstances and as a last resort, when other behaviour management strategies have failed and where there is a risk of physical injury or serious damage to property;
- When, using physical intervention, use the minimum force necessary and techniques in-line with recommended policy and practice and always report and document the incident;
- Be mindful of other factors which may be impacting on a child's behaviour, i.e. bullying, changes in home circumstances;

Note: the use of unwarranted physical force is likely to constitute a criminal offence.

Personal/Intimate Care

Workers must:

- Adhere to the organisation's intimate care guidelines or code of practice;
- Make other staff aware of the task being undertaken;
- Explain to the child what is happening;
- Carefully and sensitively observe the emotional responses of the child, and record and report any concerns to senior management and parents, if appropriate;
- Respect children's privacy at all times;
- Avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress, other than as part of an agreed care plan;
- Not change, in the same place as children;

- Not shower or bathe with children;
- Not assist with any personal care task which a child can undertake themselves.

First Aid and the administration of medicine

Workers must:

- Be suitably trained and qualified before administering first aid and/or any agreed medication;
- Ensure arrangements are in place to obtain parental consent for the administration of first aid or medication;
- Adhere to the organisations policy;
- Make adults aware of the task being undertaken;
- Explain to the child what is happening;
- Ensure an appropriate health/risk assessment is undertaken prior to undertaking certain activities.

One to one situations/home visits

Workers must:

- Ensure that, when lone working is an integral part of their role, full and appropriate risk assessments have been agreed;
- Avoid meetings with a child in secluded areas;
- Always inform colleagues and/or parents about one to one contact beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by;
- Avoid the use of engaged or equivalent signs, where ever possible, these create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy;
- Carefully consider the need of the child when in one to one situation and always report any situation where the child becomes distressed or angry towards you;
- Agree the purpose for any home visit with senior management unless it is an acknowledged and integral part of your role;
- Never put yourself into a one to one situation when little or no information is available about the child.

Transporting

Workers must:

- Ensure requirements around seat belts and car seats are adhered to;
- Not offer lifts outside normal working duties unless this has been brought to the attention of senior management and been agreed with parents;
- Ensure they are fit to drive and free from any drugs, alcohol or medicine that is likely to impair judgement or ability to drive;
- Record details of the journey in accordance with agreed procedures;
- Ensure that there are proper procedures in place for vehicle, passenger and driver safety, including appropriate insurance;
- Ensure that any impromptu or emergency lifts are recorded and can be justified if questioned.

Trips and Outings

Workers must:

- Recognise that they are in a position of trust and ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times and stays clearly within defined boundaries;
- Ensure staff/child ratios and gender mix are appropriate;
- Always have another adult present in out of work activities, unless otherwise agreed with a senior manager;
- Ensure risk assessments are undertaken;
- Have parental consent to the activity;
- Never share beds with children;
- Not share bedrooms unless it is a dormitory situation and the arrangements have been agreed with a senior manager, parents and children.

Photography and Videos

Workers must:

- Be clear about the purpose of any activity involving photography and what will happen to the images when the activity is concluded;
- Be able to justify the reason for having images of children in their possession;
- Avoid making images in one to one situations or situations that may be construed as secretive or which show a single child with no surrounding context;
- Only use equipment provided or authorised by their organisation;
- Immediately report any concerns if any inappropriate or intrusive images are found;
- Have parental consent to take, display and/or distribute any images of children;
- Not use images that may cause distress or offence;
- Not use mobile phones or any other devices that have a camera to take images of children.

Access to inappropriate images and internet usage

Workers must:

- Not access, make or store indecent images of children on the internet, to do so would be illegal and lead to a criminal investigation;
- Not make or store images of children, gathered as a result of their work, on personal equipment;
- Follow their organisation's guidance on the use of IT equipment;
- Ensure that children are not exposed to unsuitable material through ICT;
- Ensure that any materials shown to children are age appropriate;
- Immediately report any concerns, if any inappropriate or intrusive images are found, to the LADO.

Appendix 1

Contact details

Role	Name	Telephone	email
eSafety Officer	Amy Simister	01302 736098	amy.simister@doncaster.gov.uk

Role	email
LADO	lado@doncaster.gov.uk

FLOW CHART PROCEDURES FOR INCIDENTS – to follow