

## **Guidance for Adults working with Children**

### **This Guidance has been taken from the Policy for Safer Working Practice and (formerly) DCSF document Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People.**

This guidance has been produced to help adults to establish safe and responsive environments which safeguard young people and reduce the risk of being unjustly accused of improper or unprofessional conduct.

The vast majority of people who work with children act professionally and aim to provide a safe and supportive environment which secures the well-being and very best outcomes for children and young people in their care. However, it is recognized that in this area of work tensions and misunderstandings can occur. It is here that the behaviour of working community members can give rise to allegations of abuse being made against them. Allegations may be malicious or misplaced. They may arise from differing perceptions of the same event, but when they occur, they are inevitably distressing and difficult for all concerned. Equally, it must be recognized that some allegations will be genuine and there are people who will deliberately seek out, create or exploit opportunities to abuse children. It is therefore essential that all possible steps are taken to safeguard children and young people and ensure that the adults working with them are safe to do so. Some concerns have been raised about the potential vulnerability of adults in this area of work. It has been suggested that there is a need for clearer advice about what constitutes illegal behaviour and what might be considered as misconduct. As such Wynstones School provides the following guidance.

#### **Duty of Care**

All adults who work with, and on behalf of children are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority; manage risk; use resources; and safeguard children and young people. Whether working in a paid or voluntary capacity, these adults have a duty to keep children and young people safe and to protect them from sexual, physical and emotional harm. Children and young people have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. It follows that trusted adults are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people. Failure to do so may be regarded as neglect.

#### **Confidentiality**

Adults may have access to confidential information about children and young people in order to undertake their responsibilities. In some circumstances they may have access to or be given highly sensitive or private information. These details must be kept confidential at all times and only shared when it is in interests of the child to do so. Such information must not be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the child or young person concerned. If an adult who works with children is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential he or she should seek guidance from a senior member of staff or nominated child protection person. Any actions should be in line with locally agreed information sharing protocols. and young people is governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. Whilst adults need to be aware of the need to listen to and support children and young people, they must also understand the importance of not promising to keep secrets. Neither should they request this of a child young person under any circumstances. Additionally, concerns and allegations about adults should be treated as confidential and passed to a senior manager without delay. There may be occasions and circumstances in which adults have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the child or young person which could contravene this guidance or where no guidance exists. Individuals are expected to make judgements about their

behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge. Staff should;

- discuss the circumstances that informed their action, or their proposed action, with a senior manager, or with the parent/carer if not working for an organisation
- report any actions which could be mis -interpreted to their senior manager
- always discuss any misunderstanding, accidents or threats with a senior manager
- always record discussions and reasons why actions were taken.
- record any areas of disagreement about course of action taken and if necessary referred to a higher authority.

### **Power and Positions of Trust**

Adults should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential.

This means that adults should not:

- Use their position to gain access to information for their own or others' advantage
- Use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine children or young people
- Use their status and standing to form or promote relationships which are of a sexual nature, or which may become so.

### **Propriety and Behaviour**

All adults working with children and young people have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the public in general and all those with whom they work.

This means that adults should not:

- Behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or act as a role model.
- Make, or encourage others to make, unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate, or which might be interpreted as such.

This means that adults should:

- Be aware that behaviour in their personal lives may impact upon their work with children and young people
- Follow any codes of conduct deemed appropriate by their organisation
- Understand that the behaviour and actions of their partner (or other family members) may raise questions about their suitability to work with children and young people.

### **Dress and Appearance**

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However adults should dress in ways which are appropriate to their role and this may need to be different to how they dress when not at work.

This means that adults should wear clothing which:

- Is appropriate to their role
- Is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing, or sexually provocative
- Does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding
- Is absent of any political or otherwise contentious slogans
- Is not considered to be discriminatory and is culturally sensitive.

## **Personal Living Space**

No child or young person should be in or invited into, the home of an adult who works with them, unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parents/ carers and senior managers or the home has been designated by the organisation or regulatory body as a work place e.g. childminders, foster carers.

This means that adults should:

- Be vigilant in maintaining their privacy and mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations
- Challenge any request for their accommodation to be used as an additional resource for the organisation
- Be mindful of the need to maintain professional boundaries
- Refrain from asking children and young people to undertake personal jobs or errands.

## **Gifts, Rewards and Favouritism**

The giving of gifts or rewards to children or young people should be part of an agreed policy for supporting positive behaviour or recognising particular achievements. In some situations, the giving of gifts as rewards may be accepted practice for a group of children, whilst in other situations the giving of a gift to an individual child or young person will be part of an agreed plan, recorded and discussed with senior manager and the parent or carer. It is acknowledged that there are specific occasions when adults may wish to give a child or young person a personal gift. This is only acceptable practice where, in line with the agreed policy, the adult has first discussed the giving of the gift and the reason for it, with the senior manager and/or parent or carer and the action is recorded. Any gifts should be given openly and not be based on favoritism.

This means that adults should:

- be aware of their organisation's policy on the giving and receiving of gifts
- ensure that gifts received or given in situations which may be misconstrued are declared generally, only give gifts to an individual young person as part of an agreed reward system
- where giving gifts other than as above, ensure that these are of insignificant value
- Ensure that all selection processes which concern children and young people are fair and that wherever practicable these are undertaken and agreed by more than one member of staff.

## **Infatuations**

Occasionally, a child or young person may develop an infatuation with an adult who works with them. These adults should deal with these situations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned.

This means that adults should:

- report and record any incidents or indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggest a child or young person may have developed an infatuation with an adult in the workplace always acknowledge and maintain professional boundaries.

## **Communication with Children and Young People (including the Use of Technology)**

Communication between children and adults, by whatever method, should take 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. Adults should not share any personal information with a child or young person. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the child/young person, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Adults should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

This means that adults should:

- Not give their personal contact details to children or young people, including their mobile telephone number and details of any blogs or personal websites
- Only use equipment e.g. mobile phones, provided by organisation to communicate with children, making sure that parents have given permission for this form of communication to be used Only make contact with children for professional reasons and in accordance with any organisation policy
- Recognise that text messaging is rarely an appropriate response to a child in a crisis situation or at risk of harm. It should only be used as a last resort when other forms of communication are not possible
- Not use internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to a child/young person
- Ensure that if a social networking site is used, details are not shared with children, young people and their parents and privacy settings are set at maximum.

### **Social Contact**

Adults who work with children and young people should not seek to have social contact with them or their families, unless the reason for this contact has been firmly established and agreed with senior managers, or where an adult does not work for an organisation, the parent or carers. If a child or parent seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the adult should exercise her/his professional judgment in making a response but should always discuss the situation with their manager or with the parent of the child or young person.

This means that adults should:

- Have no secret social contact with children and young people or their parents
- Consider the appropriateness of the social contact according to their role and nature of their work
- Always approve any planned social contact with children or parents with senior colleagues,
- Advise senior management of any social contact they have with a child or a parent with who whom they work, which may give rise to concern
- Report and record any situation, which may place a child at risk or which may compromise the organisation or their own professional standing
- Be aware that the sending of personal communications such as birthday or faith cards should always be recorded and/or discussed with line manager.
- Understand that some communications may be called into question and need to be justified.

### **Sexual Contact**

All adults should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their contacts with children and young people. Intimate or sexual relationships between children/young people and the adults who work with them will be regarded as a grave breach of trust.

This means that adults should not:

- Have sexual relationships with children and young people
- Have any form of communication with a child or young person which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative i.e. verbal comments, letters, notes, electronic mail, phone calls, texts, physical contact
- Make sexual remarks to, or about, a child/young person
- Discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of children or young people.

This means that adults should:

- Ensure that their relationships with children and young people clearly take place within the boundaries of a respectful professional relationship

- Take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when members of staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

### **Physical Contact**

Many jobs within the children's workforce require physical contact with children as part of their role. There are also occasions when it is entirely appropriate for other adults to have some physical contact with the child or young person with whom they are working.

This means that adults should:

- 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
- Never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent
- Always be prepared to report and explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny
- Not indulge in 'horseplay'
- Always encourage children, where possible, to undertake self-care tasks independently
- Work within Health and Safety regulations
- Be aware of cultural or religious views about touching and always be sensitive to issues of gender
- Understand that physical contact in some circumstances can be easily misinterpreted.
- Treat children with dignity and respect and avoid contact with intimate parts of the body
- Always explain to a child the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take
- Seek consent of parents where a child or young person is unable to do so because of a disability.
- Consider alternatives, where it is anticipated that a child might misinterpret any such contact,
- Be familiar with and follow recommended guidance and protocols
- Conduct activities where they can be seen by others
- Be aware of gender, cultural or religious issues that may need to be considered prior to initiating physical contact.

### **Use of Control and Physical Intervention**

There are circumstances in which adults working with children displaying extreme behaviours can legitimately intervene by using either non-restrictive or restrictive physical interventions. This is a complex area and adults and organisations must have regard to government guidance and legislation and the policies and practice of their specific organisation.

This means that adults should:

- Adhere to the organisation's behaviour policy
- Always seek to defuse situations
- Always use minimum force for the shortest period necessary
- Record and report as soon as possible after the event any incident where physical intervention has been used
- Not use force as a form of punishment
- Try to defuse situations before they escalate
- Inform parents of any behaviour management techniques used
- Adhere to the behaviour management
- Be mindful of factors which may impact upon a child or young person's
- Adhere to any individual positive handling plans in respect of a child or young person.

### **Children and Young People in Distress**

For all other adults working with children there will be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance and this may involve physical contact. Young children, in particular, may need immediate physical comfort, for example after a fall, separation from

parent etc. Adults should use their professional judgment to comfort or reassure a child in an age-appropriate way whilst maintaining clear professional boundaries.

This means the adult should:

- Consider the way in which they offer comfort and reassurance to a distressed child and do it in an age-appropriate way
- Be circumspect in offering reassurance in one to one situations, but always record such actions in these circumstances
- Follow professional guidance or code of practice where available
- Never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent
- Record and report situations which may give rise to concern from either party not assume that all children seek physical comfort if they are distressed.

### **Intimate Care**

Some job responsibilities necessitate intimate physical contact with children on a regular basis, for example assisting young children to go to the toilet, providing intimate care for children with disabilities or in the provision of medical care.

This means that adults should:

- 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
- Consult with senior managers and parents/carers where any variation from agreed procedure/care plan is necessary
- Record the justification for any variations to the agreed procedure/care plan
- and share this information with parents
- Ensure that any changes to the agreed care plan are discussed, agreed and recorded.

### **Personal Care**

Young people are entitled to respect and privacy at all times and especially when in a state of undress, changing clothes, bathing or undertaking any form of personal care.

This means that adults should:

- Avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress
- Avoid any visually intrusive behaviour
- Where there are changing rooms announce their intention of entering.

This means that adults should not:

- Change in the same place as children
- Shower or bathe with children
- Assist with any personal care task which a child or young person can undertake by themselves.

### **First Aid and Administration of Medication**

It is expected that adults working with children and young people should be aware of basic first aid techniques. It is not however, a contractual requirement and whilst adults may volunteer to undertake such tasks, they should be suitably trained and qualified before administering first aid and/or any agreed medication. When administering first aid, wherever possible, adults should ensure that another adult is aware of the action being taken. Parents should always be informed when first aid has been administered. In circumstances where children need medication regularly a health care plan should have been established to ensure the safety and protection of children and the adults who are working with them. Depending upon the age and understanding of the child, they should where appropriate, be encouraged to self administer medication or treatment including, for example any ointment, use of inhalers.

This means that adults should:

- Adhere to the organisation's policy for administering first aid or medication
- Comply with the necessary reporting requirements
- Make other adults aware of the task being undertaken
- Explain to the child what is happening.
- Always act and be seen to act in the child's best interests
- Report and record any administration of first aid or medication
- Have regard to any health plan which is in place
- Always ensure that an appropriate health/risk assessment is undertaken prior to undertaking certain activities.

### **One to One Situations**

One to one situations have the potential to make child/young person more vulnerable to harm by those who seek to exploit their position of trust. Adults working in one to one settings with children and young people may also be more vulnerable to unjust or unfounded allegations being made against them. Both possibilities should be recognised so that when one to one situations are unavoidable, reasonable and sensible precautions are taken. Every attempt should be made to ensure the safety and security of children and young people and the adults who work with them.

This means that adults should:

- Ensure that when lone working is an integral part of their role, full and appropriate risk assessments have been conducted and agreed.
- Avoid meetings with a child or young person in remote, secluded areas,
- Always inform other colleagues and/or parents/carers about the contact(s) beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by
- Avoid use of 'engaged' or equivalent signs wherever possible. Such signs may create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy
- Always report any situation where a child becomes distressed or angry to a senior colleague
- Carefully consider the needs and circumstances of the child/children when in one to one situations

### **Transporting Children and Young People**

There will be occasions when adults are expected or asked to transport children as part of their duties. Adults, who are expected to use their own vehicles for transporting children should ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy, appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded.

This means that adults should:

- Ensure they are fit to drive and free from any drugs, alcohol or medicine which is likely to impair judgment and/ or ability to drive
- Be aware that the safety and welfare of the child is their responsibility until they are safely passed over to a parent/carer
- Record details of the journey in accordance with agreed procedures
- Ensure that their behaviour is appropriate at all times
- Ensure that there are proper arrangements in place to ensure vehicle, passenger and driver safety. This includes having proper and appropriate insurance for the type of vehicle being driven
- Ensure that any impromptu or emergency arrangements of lifts are recorded and can be justified if questioned

### **Trips and Outings**

Adults should take particular care when supervising children and young people on trips and outings, where the setting is less formal than the usual workplace. Adults remain in a position

of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times and stays within clearly defined professional boundaries. Health and Safety arrangements require members of staff to keep colleagues/employers aware of their whereabouts, especially when involved in activities outside the usual workplace.

This means that adults should:

- Always have another adult present in out of workplace activities, unless
- otherwise agreed with a senior manager
- Undertake risk assessments in line with their organisation's policy where
- applicable
- Have parental consent to the activity
- Ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times
- Never share beds with a child/children or young people.
- Not share bedrooms unless it involves a dormitory situation and the arrangements have been previously discussed with senior manager, parents and children and young people.

### **Photography and Videos**

Working with children and young people may involve the taking or recording of images. Any such work should take place with due regard to the law and the need to safeguard the privacy, dignity, safety and well being of children and young people.

This means that adults should:

- Be clear about the purpose of the activity and about what will happen
- to the images when the activity is concluded
- Be able to justify images of children in their possession
- Avoid making images in one to one situations or which show a single child with no surrounding context
- Ensure the child/young person understands why the images are being taken and has agreed to the activity and that they are appropriately dressed.
- Only use equipment provided or authorised by the organisation
- Report any concerns about any inappropriate or intrusive photographs found
- Always ensure they have parental permission to take and/or display photographs.

This means that adults should not:

- Display or distribute images of children unless they have consent to do
- so from parents/carers
- Use images which may cause distress
- Use mobile telephones to take images of children
- Take images 'in secret', or taking images in situations that may be
- construed as being secretive.

### **Access to Inappropriate Images and Internet Usage**

There are no circumstances that will justify adults possessing indecent images of children. Adults who access and possess links to such websites will be viewed as a significant and potential threat to children. Accessing, making and storing indecent images of children on the internet is illegal. This will lead to criminal investigation and the individual being barred from working with children and young people, if proven.

This means that adults should:

- Follow their organisation's guidance on the use of IT equipment
- Ensure that children are not exposed to unsuitable material on the
- internet
- Ensure that any films or material shown to children and young people
- are age appropriate.

## **Whistle blowing**

Whistle blowing is the mechanism by which adults can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion.

This means that adults should:

Report any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern regardless of source.

## **Sharing Concerns and Recording Incidents**

Individuals should be aware of their organisation's child protection procedures, including procedures for dealing with allegations against adults. All allegations must be taken seriously and properly investigated in accordance with local procedures and statutory guidance.

These means that adults should:

- Agree the purpose for any home visit with senior management, unless this is an acknowledged and integral part of their role e.g. social workers
- Adhere to agreed risk management strategies
- Always make detailed records including times of arrival and departure and work undertaken
- Ensure any behaviour or situation which gives rise to concern is discussed with their manager and, where appropriate action is taken.

This means that adults:

- Should be familiar with their organisation's system for recording concerns
- Should take responsibility for recording any incident, and passing on that information where they have concerns about any matter pertaining to the welfare of an individual in the workplace.

This means that organisations:

- Should have an effective, transparent and accessible system for recording and managing concerns raised by any individual in the workplace.

**If there is anything in this guidance that concerns you or would like to know more, please speak to Andy Fayter – Designated Safeguarding Person.**