



## **Code of Conduct for working with children and young people: promoting good practice and a safeguarding culture**

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Policy Area	Clinical Governance	Responsible Dept.	Managers

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### **1. Introduction**

This behaviour code outlines the conduct expected of staff and volunteers from Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service and staff from other organisations who engage with children and young people through The Children and Young Person Service and its activities.

It has been informed by the views of children and young people.

### **2. Purpose**

To create a safe and protective culture for young people, staff and volunteers.

Following this code will help to protect children from abuse and inappropriate behaviour from adults. It will also help staff and volunteers to maintain the standard of behaviour expected of them and will reduce the possibility of unfounded allegations of abuse being made against them.

For full guidance in relation to child protection procedures please refer to the Exchange House Ireland Child Protection Policy.

### **3. Upholding this code of behaviour**

All members of staff and volunteers are expected to report any breaches of this code to the Coordinator of service or the Manager of the service.

Staff and volunteers who breach this code of behaviour may be subject to Exchange House Ireland disciplinary procedures.

Serious breaches may also result in a referral being made to a statutory agency such as the police, the local authority children's social care department and/or the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

#### **4. The role of staff and volunteers**

When working with children and young people for Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service Children and Young people service all staff and volunteers are acting in a position of trust. It is important that staff and volunteers are aware that they may be seen as role models by children and young people, and must act in an appropriate manner at all times.

#### **5. When working with children and young people, it is important to:**

- operate within (name of group/organisation)'s principles and guidance and any specific procedures;
- follow the (name of group/organisation)'s child protection policy and e-safety policy and procedures at all times;
- listen to and respect children at all times;
- avoid favouritism;
- treat children and young people fairly and without prejudice or discrimination;
- value and take children's contributions seriously, actively involving children and young people in planning activities wherever possible;
- ensure any contact with children and young people is appropriate and in relation to the work of the project;
- always ensure language is appropriate and not offensive or discriminatory;
- follow the e-safety policy and report any breaches;
- always ensure equipment is used safely and for its intended purpose;
- provide examples of good conduct you wish children and young people to follow;
- challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse;
- ensure that whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people or if this isn't possible, that you are within sight or hearing of other adults;
- be close to where others are working. If a child specifically asks for or needs some private time with you, ensure other staff should know where you and the child are;
- respect a young person's right to personal privacy;
- encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like;
- recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young

#### **6. You must not:**

- patronise or treat children and young people as if they are silly;
- allow allegations to go unreported;
- develop inappropriate relationships such as contact with children and young people that is not a part of the work of Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service or agreed with the manager or leader;
- conduct a sexual relationship with a child or young person or indulge in any form of sexual contact with a child or young person. Any such behaviour between an adult member of staff or volunteer and a child or young person using the services of Exchange House Ireland represents a serious breach of trust on the part of the staff member or volunteer and is not acceptable under any circumstances;
- let children and young people have your personal contact details (mobile number or address);

- make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children and young people;
- act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive;
- make inappropriate promises to children and young people, particularly in relation to confidentiality;
- jump to conclusions about others without checking facts;
- either exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues;
- rely on your reputation or that of the organisation to protect you.

## **7. The role of parents and carers**

Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service welcomes and encourages parental involvement. Parents and carers are regarded as valuable partners in promoting positive behaviour and will be involved as appropriate.

In the event of their child becoming the subject of behaviour sanctions, parents/carers will be informed and involved.

## **8. Practice to be encouraged:**

- When organising events and meetings for children and young people, or their attendance at events/meetings, the following information/documentation should be requested by Exchange House Ireland staff in relation to each child or young person attending the event/meeting:
  - A Consent Form for all events or specific activities;
  - Contact details for the family/guardians, including emergency contact numbers;
  - Information relating to any special issues, needs or requirements (e.g. medical, health, diet, language assistance)
- Use a reporting form to keep a clear note of any incidents or concerns
- If physical contact is necessary (e.g. in an emergency), tell the young person clearly what you are doing and why, seek their permission and give choices where possible. If possible have another worker present.
- Every activity, event or session should be risk assessed to maintain the safety of young people
- When working with a mixed gender group there should be staff/volunteers of both genders to manage all activities

## **9. Practice to be avoided:**

- Workers should not give lifts in their car to individual children or young people or travel alone with young people. Where not doing this would compromise Exchange House Ireland Health and Safety Policy (e.g. leaving a young person alone at a venue) you should attempt to phone the parent/guardian of the young person to confirm what you will be doing. You should also ask the young person to sit in the back seat.
- Workers should not take young people to their home or that of another worker
- Workers should avoid situations where they are alone with young people. Where a private meeting with a lone child/young person is unavoidable it should be held in a room with an open door and a clear view of another staff member.
- Workers should not use their own 'personal' electronic communications (e.g. mobile phones, social networking sites) for contacting young people, unless agreed by the management committee.

**10. Unacceptable practice:**

- Invading the privacy of children and young people when they are toileting or showering, changing or dressing.
- Inappropriate physical or sexually provocative games
- Sharing sleeping accommodation with an individual child or young person
- Any form of physical punishment
- Illegal use of drugs
- Use of alcohol during an event
- Bullying of any form, including name calling or constant criticism
- 'Picking on' a young person because of their family background, manner of dress or physical characteristic
- Racism or sectarianism of any form
- Favouritism and exclusion - all young people should be equally supported and encouraged
- Abusive language or gestures