

Code of Conduct and Policy on Appropriate Professional Boundaries for Staff working with Children and Young people.

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1. Introduction

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people adults within the organisation is a shared responsibility. To prevent potential harm, it is essential that we demonstrate the highest standards of conduct.

This Code of Conduct - hereafter referred to as the Code

- This should be read alongside the safeguarding policy, undertake yearly safeguarding training, this is mandatory for all staff, volunteers, sessional staff and Directors.

- Any questions regarding the Code should be answered as a matter of urgency.

The Code's purpose is to:

- Specify appropriate behaviour required of all staff, volunteers and students whilst they are engaged in working for, or on behalf of Ampfield Riding Stables.
- Support those named above to meet their obligations towards safeguarding.
- Reduce the risk of misplaced or malicious allegations by clarifying expectations of behaviour so that any deviations from it can be easily identified.

2. Application

This Code of Conduct forms part of:

- The contract of employment, as a member of staff.
- The agreement to work as a volunteer
- The placement agreement as a student, on work experience.

Safeguarding will always be a contractual requirement when the work brings the contractor into contact with a child, adult at risk and all clients.

The Policy on appropriate professional boundaries covers the provision of services to children face to face, online and on the telephone. It applies equally to work with adult service users.

Adherence to this Policy will enable individuals to meet the expectations within the Code of Conduct.

3. Definitions For the purpose of these policies the following terms apply:

- 'Safeguarding' means 'keeping children and adults at risk safe from harm'
- 'Child' means anyone up to the age of 18 years. In the context of this policy the child may be a client or a non client.
- 'Adult at risk' means any person who is aged 18 or over and is at risk of abuse or neglect because of their needs for care and support. Formerly the term was 'vulnerable adult'
- Individual means staff, volunteers, students, those on work experience and Directors

4. The Code Staff, volunteers, students, those on work experience and, Directors as agreed, contractors must:

- Maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct.
- Treat all children and adults at risk with respect including respect for diversity
- Report any incidents or concerns that cause them to believe that a child or an adult at risk is, or is likely to be at risk of significant harm using reporting function through the NSPCC website
- Adhere to all policies and guidance on online-safety and social media activity
- Co-operate with any vetting and recruitment requirements appropriate to role.
- Ensure that whenever possible there is more than one adult present during activities with children, or at least you are within sight or hearing of others. Unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with your manager.
- Report any breaches of this Code to your Manager.
- It is not permissible (and in some instances, may be unlawful) for an individual to, engage in, or attempt to engage in, sexual relations or sexually inappropriate relationship with a child or adult at risk.
- Make sexually suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures to, or in the presence of a child, adult at risk or staff.
- Use their status or position to groom, form, or promote relationships with any child, adult at risk or service user, either face to face or online, which are of a sexual nature, or which may become so.
- Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sexual favours.
- Allow individuals to gain access to children or adults at risk, without having completed the appropriate checks and processes.
- Encourage or assist others to break the law in any way.
- Engage in any form of sexual harassment.
- Use their position to intimidate, bully, threaten, injure, discriminate against, coerce or undermine any child or adult at risk.
- Either exaggerate or trivialise child or adult abuse
- Invite a child or adult at risk that has been met through employment, placement or volunteering into their home.
- Carry out duties or volunteering whilst affected by alcohol, solvents or drugs.
- Be in the possession of, or profit from the sale of, illegal goods or substances.
- Possess abusive images of any children or 'adult at risk' or client.

- Be alone with children away from organisational premises, such as taking them out on trips unaccompanied by other adults or transporting them alone, unless the reason for this is part of Ampfield Riding Stables activities and with the consent of parents/carers.
- Breach confidentiality or seek information to which you have no right of access.
- Engage in activities either in the work environment or home life or online which might damage the reputation of the Business.

5. The consequences of breaching the Code

Any breach of the Code may result in adverse consequences for the individual. These will vary depending on the position of the individual and the nature of the work/volunteering that they perform:

- For employees, it may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.
- For volunteers, it may result in ceasing the volunteering activity.
- For contractors, it may result in cancellation of the contract.
- For students or those on work experience it may result in the placement being terminated.

Where a safeguarding allegation is made against a member of staff/volunteer/student/contractor this could include reporting to the NSPCC, children's social care, adult social care and/or the police. This can then be passed onto the Disclosure and Barring Service by the appropriate service.

As a business we cannot contractually require an individual to adhere to the Code outside their work. However, an individual's conduct outside their work/volunteering may be taken into consideration and may therefore have employment and volunteering implications for members of staff and volunteers.

Appropriate boundaries are the framework within which an individual's relationship with a client exist through their work or volunteering activity, and which make that relationship appropriate and safe for the client.

The framework sets the parameters within which services and work are delivered, making clear the roles and responsibilities of the individual in relation to the client.

Adherence to this policy will enable individuals to ensure they are meeting the requirements of the Code of Conduct.

A breach of professional boundaries can occur when an individual behaves towards a client in a way which is indicative of a personal rather than a working relationship.

It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure the relationship is always maintained on a professional level.

Boundaries must be set based on what the service user requires from the relationship and focussed on the purpose of the task or work. Any breach.

6. Why establish appropriate professional boundaries

Appropriate conduct is important because it:

- Safeguards children and ensure that individuals are aware of what the business expects of them in terms of their conduct and relationships with clients.

- Recognises and appropriately manages power imbalances
- Builds appropriate relationships of trust with client.
- Ensures we understand the issues around working with the clients and their expectations of us
- Protects the reputation of the business.

7. The difference between a working and personal relationship

Key differences between a personal and a professional relationship:

Characteristic	Working Relationship	Personal relationship (casual, friendship, romantic, family relation)
Remuneration	Paid to provide instruction in riding and associated equine services or provided based on a recognised volunteering role.	No payment for being in the relationship or no official volunteering role.
Length of the relationship	Time limited for the length of the client needs for a service or the period of the work	May last a lifetime
Location of the relationship	Place defined and limited to where the lesson or equine experience is to be carried out.	Place unlimited, often undefined.
Purpose of this relationship	Goal-directed to provide service	Pleasure, interest directed
Structure of the relationship	For the individual to provide a service or to work with the client	Spontaneous, unstructured
Power balance	Unequal power – individual has more power due to authority, knowledge, influence and access to privileged information about the client	Equal responsibility to establish and maintain
Responsibility of the relationship	Individual responsible for establishing and maintaining working relationship, not the client	Equal responsibility to establish and maintain
Preparation for the relationship	Individual requires formal knowledge, preparation, orientation and training.	Does not require formal knowledge, preparation, orientation and training.
Time spent in relationship	Individual defines a plan of work or activity with the client for a specific purpose which is time limited. Relationship does not go beyond this	Personal choice about how much time is spent in relationship and for how long.

8. Setting and Maintaining clear Boundaries

Before undertaking any work with or delivering any service it is important for the employee to set clear boundaries and parameters to the relationship with the client.

Any individual undertaking direct work with client or having contact with them through other activities should:

- Be clear of what your role and responsibilities are from your job description/volunteer agreement/contract. If necessary, in discussion with your manager.
- Ensure that the client understands what they can expect from the working relationship during a piece of direct work.
- Ensure the client understands the limits of confidentiality i.e., what you can and cannot keep confidential and when you may have to report a concern.
- Make clear to the client that this is a working not a personal relationship.
- Continually reflect upon and consider the relationships you have established with the client and ensure that the boundaries you have established are being maintained.

9. When are appropriate boundaries breached?

An individual's actions can at times lead to them breaching appropriate boundaries even though their initial intentions were well meaning. Regardless of the intention, the actual or potential breach must be shared with the Manager and steps taken to support the individual not to breach appropriate boundaries again.

Often the breach is not a single event but a series of events and interactions which together cause the individual to cross the boundary between what would be considered a working relationship to a personal relationship. The table above shows the characteristics of a personal relationship and moving from a working to a personal relationship in any of these ways is a breach of appropriate boundaries.

Examples of potential breach of boundaries

- Over familiarity
- Inappropriate feelings and actions
- Financial gain
- Sexual relationships
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Inappropriate clothing: clothing must not only appear professional for the job they also need to meet the Business' health and safety policy.

10. Warning signs of a potential breach of boundaries

This guidance is intended both for those who are themselves concerned that they may be crossing an appropriate boundary, and for those who are concerned about others potentially breaching appropriate boundaries. While this is not an exhaustive list, it gives some common indicators that might give rise to concerns about whether appropriate boundaries are being breached:

- Frequently thinking about the client when away from work

- Favours one client's needs at the expense of others or giving special treatment to one particular client
- Communicating in a guarded and defensive manner when questioned regarding interactions and relationship with the client.

11. Dealing with breaches of appropriate boundaries

If at any time a member of staff or volunteer believes that it is necessary to act in a way that breaches a professional boundary or which is counter to this policy, they must discuss this with their Manager before taking any action and a record must be kept by them and the manager of the discussion.

If an individual is concerned that they may have or are about to breach appropriate boundaries through work or volunteering, the individual must contact their manager immediately to talk through their concerns.

The primary focus must be for the welfare of the client. If a manager or colleague identifies warning signs that professional boundaries are being breached by an individual and are concerned about their conduct, you must not keep it to yourself. You must speak to a manager to share your concerns. If a manager or colleague feels unable to do this, or it is not possible for any other reason to speak to their line manager or second line manager, the person must report their concerns immediately. For safeguarding allegations and concerns: follow the Safeguarding Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers Procedure in the safeguarding policy. For any other concerns about conduct: follow the Whistleblowing Policy.

Signed Gerda Weston

Date.....

SignedAnna Beck

Date

Date Created May 2021

Date Review May 2023