



Safeguarding Children – Code of Conduct for Staff & Volunteers

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Introduction

The vast majority of adults who work with children and young people in professional contexts act responsibly and in the child's best interests in line with their duty of care. Such adults seek to provide a safe and supportive environment which secures the well-being and the very best care of the child. Staff and volunteers have a crucial role to play in shaping the lives of young people. They have a unique opportunity to interact with children and young people in ways that are both affirming and inspiring. However, achieving such aims is not always straightforward. When working with children and young people it is possible that tensions and misunderstandings can occur. It is in such circumstances that the behaviour of staff or volunteers can cause allegations to be made against them. Such allegations may be genuine, malicious or misplaced. However they may have occurred, they are undeniably distressing and difficult for all concerned.

This document seeks to set out what constitutes 'best practice' in relation to working safely with children and young people. It is hoped that staff and volunteers will use it to monitor their own standards and practice. It will also help to give a clear message that unlawful or unsafe behaviour on the part of staff will not be tolerated and that, where appropriate, legal or disciplinary action will follow. In this way its aim is to reduce the risk of staff and volunteers being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct.

This document is not meant to be exhaustive; no guidance can cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not mentioned here. In these circumstances it is expected that staff and volunteers will advise their managers or Director of any justification for such action, whether already taken or proposed.

1. Basic Principles Which Underpin this Code

- a) The welfare of the child is paramount (Children Act 1989).
- b) Staff and volunteers should understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in their care.
- c) Staff and volunteers are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation or intentions.
- d) Staff and volunteers should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way with children and young people.
- e) Staff and volunteers should discuss/and or take advice promptly from their manager or another senior member of staff about any incident that may give rise to concern.
- f) Records should be made of any such incident and of decisions made/further actions agreed, in accordance with the Oldbury Cottage Care Farm (OCCF) Safeguarding Children and Young People Procedures.
- g) Staff and volunteers should apply the same professional standards regardless of disability, race, gender or sexuality.



- h) Staff and volunteers should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.
- i) Staff and volunteers must be clear about their responsibilities to report concerns about the conduct of any OCCF staff or volunteer or any partner organisation, as well as who they should report such concerns to.

2. The Context for OCCF Staff and Volunteers

Through their work, OCCF, staff and volunteers come into contact with children in a variety of ways, including:

- a) Providing work experience for young people.
- b) Guidance on farm and café tasks and activities.
- c) Involving children and young people in a wide variety of fundraising events and social activities

The above are purely examples; the list is not meant to be exhaustive.

3. Guidelines for safe working practice:

3.1 Confidentiality

Members of staff and volunteers may have access to confidential information about children and young people in order to undertake their day to day responsibilities; this may include some highly sensitive or private information in respect of some children. Information of this kind should never be used for the staff member's own, or other's advantage (including that of partners, friends, relatives or other organisations). Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass the child or young person.

Similarly, such information should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any other person other than on a need-to-know basis. In circumstances where the child's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.

All staff and volunteers should:

- a) Treat personal information about a child/young person confidentially and discreetly.
- b) Seek advice from their manager if they are in any doubt about the need to share the information they hold.
- c) Pass any legal or media enquiries about a child or their family to their manager/senior manager.

The storing and processing of personal information about a child/young person is governed by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All staff and volunteers who



are responsible for storing/processing such information should be familiar with their responsibilities under this legislation.

3.2 Physical Contact

There are times when it is entirely appropriate for staff and volunteers to have physical contact with children, but it is crucial to do so only in ways that are appropriate to their professional role. Physical touch should never come as a surprise to the child or young person. If touch is deemed necessary the permission of the child/young person should always be sought.

Appropriate physical contact may include:

- a) Responding to the needs of the child at the time, for example a child in distress. Staff and volunteers offering such comfort and reassurance should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or open to misinterpretation. The touch should be of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Appropriate physical contact will most often occur with young children.
- b) Any regular physical contact that it is necessary to provide should be part of a formally agreed care plan and subject to review.

Further guidelines for appropriate physical contact

- a) Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff or volunteer believes that their action could be misinterpreted, the incident and the circumstances should be reported and recorded as soon as possible.
- b) A child should never be touched in a way that could be considered indecent.
- c) Staff and volunteers should never indulge in horseplay, tickling or 'fun fights'.
- d) Children and young people should always be encouraged, where possible, to undertake self-care tasks independently.
- e) Extra caution should be exercised where it is known that a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect. In the child's view, physical contact might be associated with such experiences and lead to staff or volunteer being vulnerable to allegations of abuse. Some children, in such circumstances, may seek out inappropriate physical contact. It is **always** the responsibility of the adult to deter the child sensitively by helping them to understand the importance of personal boundaries. Any action from a child of this nature must be reported to your manager or Director.



Appropriate physical contact during OCCF activities

Given the specific nature of OCCF activities best practice will include: Ensuring that children, young people and their parents/carers are informed, prior to and during session if certain types of physical contact will be necessary, examples include (but not limited to):

- preventing the child or young person from stepping into danger
- teaching the child about the farm activities
- placing hands on shoulders of child in order to reinforce positions when turning
- demonstrating correct positioning to ensure activities are performed safely.
- placing hands on the person in order to reinforce positioning and use of tools

3.3 Managing a Child or Young Person's Behaviour

All children and young people have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Corporal punishment is illegal and should never be used. Similarly, staff and volunteers should never use any form of degrading treatment to punish a child.

There may be occasions where a child or young person presents angry or aggressive behaviour or 'pushes the boundaries' with a staff member or volunteer.

In these circumstances:

- a) Be aware of the situations a child or young person may deliberately try to create in order to make staff members or volunteers angry. Try to defuse such situations early, if at all possible.
- b) Staff and volunteers should maintain self-awareness and self-control at all times.
- c) Staff and volunteers should talk calmly to the child or young person without engaging in argument or confrontation. A consistent message should be given at all times. If a child verbally abuses a member of staff or volunteer this should be ignored; the member of staff should walk away if at all possible. However, it may not be possible for the member of staff to absent themselves because it is deemed necessary to stay in contact to keep the child (or other children safe). Such a judgement will need to take precedence over other considerations.
- d) If the child or young person runs away, the member of staff and volunteer should not give chase unless the child appears to be placing themselves at risk. A 'cooling off' period can be helpful in situations such as this.

3.4 Physical Intervention

There may be occasions where it is necessary for staff and volunteers to intervene physically with a child or young person to prevent them from inflicting injury to others, self-injury, damaging property, or causing disruption. In such cases only the minimum force



necessary may be used and any action taken must not exceed the need to make the situation safe.

Acceptable forms of intervention are defined as:

- a) Physically interposing between children and young people
- b) Blocking a child or young person's path
- c) Holding
- d) Pushing
- e) Pulling
- f) Leading a child or young person by the hand or arm
- g) Shepherding a child or young person away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
- h) In more extreme circumstances, using more restrictive holds. Such actions should only be undertaken by staff that have been appropriately trained in such methods.

Intervention should avoid areas such as the head, neck, or collar. Intervention should not be such that it causes injury through, for example, slapping, punching, kicking, twisting, tripping, holding or pulling by the hair or ear, holding a child or young person face down to the ground or holding/touching a child or young person in a manner which might be considered indecent.

N.B. The Use of Reasonable Force

There is no legal definition of 'reasonable force'. So it is not possible to set out comprehensively when it is reasonable to use force, or the degree of force that may reasonably be used. It will always depend on all the circumstances of the case.

There are two relevant considerations:

- a) The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. The use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force. Therefore physical force cannot be justified to prevent a child or young person from committing a trivial misdemeanour, or in a situation that clearly can be resolved without force.
- b) **The degree of force employed must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent. Any force used should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.**

3.5 Reporting

Where a member of staff or volunteer has taken action to physically restrain a child or young person they should make a written report of the incident and promptly send it to their Manager and the Directors of OCCF.



- a) The name of the child or young person(s) involved, and when and where the incident took place.
- b) The names of any other staff or volunteer or children/young people who witnessed the incident.
- c) The reason that force was necessary.
- d) How the incident began and progressed, including details of the child or young person's behaviour.
- e) What was said by each of the parties, including the steps taken to defuse or calm the situation.
- f) The degree of force used, how that was applied and for how long.
- g) The child or young person's response and the outcome of the incident.
- h) Details of any injury suffered by the child or young person, or another child or young person, or a member of staff and of any damage to property.

Parents/ Carers with Parental Responsibility should be notified of any incident directly or in accordance with partner organisations protocols for reporting.

3.6 Debriefing after an Incident of Physical Intervention

A considerable lapse of time should be allowed (a minimum of several hours or ideally half a day) before a debriefing session takes place between the child/young person and the adult(s) involved in the incident of physical intervention. Consideration should be given to whether or not including a mediator might be helpful.

Each party should have an opportunity to say what happened from their point of view and to explain how they were feeling. Apologies should be made if this is at all possible. Some children find it humiliating to admit that they were wrong. It is important, therefore, for adults to model an ability to apologise and admit that they are sorry for any distress that may have been caused. The adult should always explain the need to prevent harm from taking place. If the child cannot apologise in words it might be helpful to acknowledge any behaviours which are conciliatory on their part after the event.

4 Propriety and Behaviour of Staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare of children and young people. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct.

Staff and volunteers should not:

- a) Behave in a manner that would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or act as a role model.
- b) Meet with children or young people outside of organised activities in order to pursue a personal relationship with them.



- c) Make sexual remarks to, or about, a child or young person.
- d) Discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of children and young people.
- e) Engage in sexual relationships with children or young people either in the work context or out of it.
- f) Make (or encourage others to make) unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate or might be interpreted as such.
- g) Dress in a way which could be considered inappropriate or overtly sexually provocative.
- h) Smoke or Vape in front of young children or encourage/abet them in smoking/vaping.

N.B. The Sexual Offence (Amendments) Act 2000) makes it a criminal offence for a person over the age of 18 to have sexual intercourse or engage in any other sexual activity with a person under that age, if the older person is in a relationship of trust with the younger person. As a member of staff or volunteer you are in a position of trust.

4.1 Infatuations

Staff and volunteers should be aware that it is possible that a child or young person may develop a strong attraction to them and may develop a heterosexual or homosexual infatuation or crush. All situations should be responded to sensitively in order to maintain the dignity of all concerned. Such situations may carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted which can result in allegations against a member of staff and volunteers. Such situations should be discussed with the manager at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate action can be taken.

4.2 One to One Situations

Staff and volunteer working in one to one situations with children may be more vulnerable to allegations of abuse.

When working with children in one to one situations staff and volunteers should:

- a) Ensure you adhere to any partner organisation's (e.g. school's) policy documents relating to withdrawing a child for a one to one session.
- b) Avoid working in remote or secluded areas.
- c) If meeting in a room, ensure there is visual access and/or an open door.
- d) Inform other staff and volunteers beforehand that the work is to take place and assess the need to have them present or close by. If the work is being undertaken in a school, then the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) should be briefed beforehand.
- e) Always report any situation to your Manager or to the appropriate member of staff or volunteer in the partner organisation in which you are working (e.g. the SEN in a school) where a child becomes angry or distressed or when you feel uncomfortable with a child during a session.



- f) When collecting or returning a child to their home it should be with the express permission of the child's parent. Where the parent is absent the member of staff or volunteer should not enter the home but collect the child from the front door or see the child safely inside where the parent has given full permission to do so. It should be made clear to the parent that it is with their permission and that OCCF responsibility starts and ends on the doorstep.

4.3 Intimate Care

OCCF staff and volunteers do not normally have a responsibility to provide intimate care for a child or young person. However, there may be occasions when as part of their duty of care, staff and volunteers may need to perform or assist a child in carrying out such care in the absence of a parent or named carer. This might occur if a child unexpectedly wets or soils themselves or if a child becomes sick in the care of a member of staff and volunteer.

In such circumstances the following should apply:

- a) The dignity of the child should be a primary consideration.
- b) Encourage the child to act as independently as possible and to undertake as much of their own personal care as practicable.
- c) If another member of staff or volunteer is in the vicinity make them aware of the task to be undertaken.
- d) Undertake the tasks that may be required as sensitively and discreetly as possible, paying attention to the child's well-being.
- e) Make your manager aware of the circumstances of your intervention as soon as it is possible to do so.
- f) Make a written note of the circumstances of the intervention, date and sign it.
- g) Make parents/carers aware that you provided such care and explain the circumstances of your intervention.

4.4 Communications with Children and Young People Using Technology

Communication between children and adults, by whatever method, should take place within professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as Social Media, mobile phones, text messaging, emails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites and blogs. When it is considered necessary for staff or volunteers to communicate with children/young people the equipment used by staff and volunteers should be provided by OCCF

Staff and volunteers should avoid any communication with children which could be open to misinterpretation of their motives or behaviour and which could be misconstrued as grooming. Staff and volunteers should not give their personal contact details to children/young people, including e-mail, home or mobile telephone numbers unless the need to do so is first agreed with their manager and parent. Internal e-mail systems should only be used in accordance with OCCF policy. Staff and volunteers should never take or send images of children using personal mobile phones. Where videos or images



are captured as part of training examples, written permission to do so and consent to retain the images must be sought from the parent and the child.

4.5 Photography, Videos and other Creative Arts

Some workplace activities may involve recording images. These may be taken for publicity or to celebrate achievement. Staff and volunteers need to be aware of the potential for such material to be misused for pornographic or 'grooming' purposes. Careful consideration should be given as to how such activities are organised and undertaken. A Manger should be aware that the photography/image equipment is being used and for what purpose. Particular care needs to be given when they involve young and vulnerable children who may be unable to question why or how the activities are taking place.

Children who have been previously abused in this way may feel threatened by the use of photography, filming etc. even for legitimate purposes. Staff and volunteers should remain sensitive to any child in this position and should recognise the potential for misinterpretation.

Using images of children for publicity purposes will require age-appropriate written consent of the individual concerned and their legal guardians. (See 'Parent/ Guardian and Young Person Form for the use of photographs and recorded Images'. All images taken should be available for scrutiny in order to screen acceptability. Staff and volunteers should avoid making images in one to one situations. Images should not be displayed on websites, in publications or in a public place without written consent. The definition of a public place includes areas where visitors have access to the workplace.

It is recommended that when using a photograph, the following guidance should be followed:

- a) If a photograph is used, avoid naming the child or young person's full name or use only the first name
- b) If the child or young person is fully named, avoid using their photograph
- c) Establish whether or not the image will be retained for further use.
- d) Images should be securely stored only by individuals who are authorised to do so. Any individual should be able to justify images of children in their possession.

4.6 Inappropriate Images

Staff and volunteers should take great care to ensure that children and young people are not exposed, through any medium, to inappropriate or indecent images. Under no circumstances should an adult use OCCF equipment to access such material, including

adult pornography. Personal equipment containing such images, or links to them, should never be brought into or used in the workplace.



Accessing indecent images of children on the Internet, whether using OCCF equipment or personal equipment, on or off the working premises and making, storing or disseminating such material is illegal. If proven this will lead to criminal proceedings and the individual being barred from work with children and young people.

All staff and volunteers should keep their passwords confidential and not allow unauthorised access to workplace equipment. In the event of any illegal material being discovered on a workplace computer, the equipment should not be tampered with in any way. **Staff / volunteers and/or managers should not attempt to investigate the matter themselves until the police investigation is completed or to evaluate the material as this may lead to contamination of evidence and a possibility that they might risk prosecution themselves.** Instead, the Police should be contacted immediately.

5 Transporting Children and Young People

In exceptional circumstances where alternatives such as taxi's can not be used, staff or volunteers may transport children and young people with the agreement of OCCF Manager or Directors.

Transportation should be undertaken in vehicles other than private cars unless they are authorised for the purpose, with at least one adult additional to the driver acting as escort. The vehicle should be checked to ensure that it meets all legal requirements and is appropriately insured.

Staff and volunteers should:

- a) Ensure that all children and young people being transported wear seatbelts. Encourage children and young people to fasten their own seatbelts. Monitor to ensure that this is done properly. Avoid leaning across a child or young person if you have to help them in fastening or adjusting the seat belt.
- b) If a child or young person needs a booster seat (i.e. if they are aged between 3 and 12 years old or are less than 1.36m in height) this should be agreed with the parents/carers/school.
- c) Ensure that individual children are transported in the rear of the car. If more than two students are being transported, one may sit in the front seat (it is safer for a child or young person to be seated in the front of a car as opposed to in the rear middle seat if only a lap belt is available).
- d) Plan, agree and record all arrangements with all parties in advance, e.g. parents and school
- e) Ensure that they are alone with a child for the minimum time possible
- f) Be aware that the safety and welfare of the child is their responsibility until the responsibility is safely passed over to a parent/carer.
- g) Report the nature of the journey, the route and the expected time of arrival.



For further information on child care seats, the law and safety standards visit the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents website (<http://www.childcarsafety.org.uk>)

6. Farm animals/dogs/cats and Safeguarding Children and Young People

Different children and young people will have different responses to animals. Some may approach an animal and wish to touch it. Others may not be used to being in contact with animals and be fearful. Here are some basic do's and don'ts when taking a animal to a location where there may be children or young people:

DO:

- a) Inform or ensure (where possible) that children and young people are told beforehand that they are here to see animals.
- b) Inform children and young people of the correct way to approach and touch the farm animal/dog.
- c) Reassure any child or young person that animals are unpredictable and may scratch, nudge and bite.
- d) Remove any child or young person who becomes over-excited or behaves inappropriately around the animals.
- e) Advise school/club to check with parents/carers and children/young people about allergies or phobias in relation to animals.

DON'T:

- a) Allow children or young people to push their faces towards the animals or attempt to kiss the animals.
- b) Allow children or young people to feed the animals without supervision of an OCCF staff or volunteer.
- c) Allow children or young people to take hold of or control the harness or lead without the supervision of an OCCF staff or volunteer.

7. Health and Safety

All staff/volunteers should be aware of Health and Safety procedures within OCCF and any other agencies in which OCCF activities are undertaken.

For urgent concerns - if you have an urgent child protection concern and need to get in touch with us, call the Front Door on **01926 414144**.

Lines are open:

- Monday to Thursday - 8.30am – 5:30pm
- Friday - 8.30am – 5:00pm



You will then need to complete and return a [Multi-Agency Contact Form \(MAC\)](#) and send via email to the Front Door team:

Please email - TriageHub@Warwickshire.gov.uk

Out of hours - if you need to get in touch out of usual office hours, please contact the Emergency Duty Team immediately on **01926 886922**.

8. Sign-off

Signature	Position	Date
	Director	
	Director	
	Director	