



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

1 Introduction

The following are a guide to helping create a safe and protective culture for young people, staff and volunteers. For full guidance in relation to child protection procedures please refer to the Exchange House Ireland Child Protection Policy.

2 Practice to be encouraged:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity
- Involve young people in the decisions that affect them
- Always work in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with young people (e.g. not sharing tents, shower facilities or having an inappropriate or intimate relationship)
- 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

3 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 an

open place in view of others or in a room visible to those outside and where a colleague has agreed to visually monitor the meeting. If a young person participates in a review of their involvement in a programme as a result of disruptive or unacceptable behaviour, it is advisable that this review is witnessed by a second staff member/volunteer

- 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.
- 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
 - Making sexually suggestive comments about or to a child or young person even in fun
 - Inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form
 - Scape-goating or ridiculing a child or young person
 - Allowing inappropriate, foul, sexualised or discriminatory language to remain unchallenged
 - 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

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1

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