

## 2. Code of conduct

### What do I need to do?

A code of conduct outlines expected standards of behaviour for all stakeholders interacting with children and young people in your service environment. Most organisations already have a standard code of conduct for employees. However, the code of conduct for your child and youth risk management strategy must specifically address interactions with children and young people.

### Why do I need a code of conduct?

A strong code of conduct will provide clear guidelines for everyone involved in your organisation about what is expected of them and the consequences if they fail to meet the expectations. When a code of conduct is well established and implemented, it promotes a transparent and accountable service environment.

### Who should be involved in developing a code of conduct?

Involving all stakeholders in the development of your code of conduct will encourage greater ownership and adherence to the code.

By involving children and young people in the development of a code of conduct, staff can be made aware of the impact of their behaviour on children and young people and can adopt a code that maximises their welfare. In addition, involving children and young people enhances their confidence and trust that any concerns they raise will be taken seriously, and encourages them to consider their own responsibilities in relation to a code of conduct within the organisation.

### Who should a code of conduct apply to?

Your code of conduct should apply to all people involved with your organisation, for example:

- employees (permanent, temporary and casual)
- volunteers
- children and young people
- parents
- consultants and contractors
- board/committee members
- students on placement
- people undertaking work experience
- visitors, and
- spectators.

#### TIPS

- Involve everybody in your organisation, including children and young people where appropriate, in the development of your code of conduct.
- You may wish to consider developing separate codes of conduct for each group of people.

### How do I draft a code of conduct?

Every organisation is different so you should undertake a thorough analysis of your service environment, identify the potential risks, and tailor your code of conduct to ensure that it addresses those risks.

You should consider if the following issues are relevant in your organisation, and if so, develop specific policies and guidelines which clearly outline expected standards of behaviour within your organisation:

- **Language**

People involved with your organisation should be clear about the expected standards of language and the types of language which are encouraged in your organisation and those that are not permitted.

- **Supervision of children**

You should have clear guidelines to ensure children are adequately supervised at all times, for example:

- outlining ratios of staff to children to ensure adequate supervision and limit opportunities for unsupervised access to children
- setting clear expectations as to when children may be left with your organisation or whether parental supervision is required
- specifying the arrangements for drop offs and pick-ups, including:
  - providing clear details of the physical locations for this to happen and the supervision arrangements in place
  - developing a procedure which will apply if a child remains uncollected, and
  - addressing issues which may arise in relation to the collection of children, for example, intoxication of a person collecting them.

- **Physical contact**

There should be clear guidelines in relation to the circumstances in which it might be necessary to have physical contact with a child, e.g.:

- injury management
- to demonstrate a skill or for instructional purposes as part of an activity, or
- to assist with toileting of young children.

You should also clearly outline what would be considered inappropriate physical contact, e.g.:

- violent or aggressive behaviour such as hitting, kicking, slapping or pushing
- kissing, or
- touching of a sexual nature.

You should consider whether in your service environment it is practical and necessary to provide an explanation to a child about what physical contact will occur and why it will occur. Additionally, you should consider if it is necessary to seek permission from a child and/or parents in relation to the physical contact and how this would be clearly documented. You should also consider what supervision is necessary while physical contact is occurring.

- **One-on-one contact with a child**

Your strategy should outline when/if it is appropriate for a person to be alone with a child and the strategies which are expected to be put in place to minimise risks, for example, where possible ensuring that the child and the person are visible to others.

Your strategy should aim to achieve an appropriate balance between maintaining privacy for children and young people (if it is required) and maintaining their safety.

- **Relationships**

Your strategy should outline clear guidelines in relation to developing appropriate relationships with children and young people. For example, you should provide guidance for your staff about:

- how to set clear personal and professional boundaries
- when, or if, it is appropriate to have contact with a child outside of the service environment, including on social media, and
- when, or if, it is appropriate to give a child or young person a gift.

- **Behaviour management**

You should clearly outline the behaviour management policies of your organisation and how staff are expected to manage challenging behaviours in accordance with your code of conduct, for example, ensuring policies are not punitive, humiliating or aggressive.

There should be clear expectations for children and young people about what is acceptable behaviour and the behaviour management strategies which will be used should be clear for children and young people and their parents.

- **Transport of children and young people**

There should be clear guidelines about whether it is appropriate in any circumstances for staff to transport children and young people

If transportation of children is a necessary part of your activities, there should be clear policies and procedures to outline the safeguards which should be put in place in relation to transporting children, for example, consideration should be given to providing specific guidance about the following issues:

- ensuring that approved child restraints are used
- when, or if, it would be acceptable for a child to travel alone with a staff member
- how consent from the child's parents will be sought and documented, and
- the processes to be followed to ensure that all drivers are correctly licensed and vehicles are registered, insured and safe for the children and/or young people.

- **Change rooms/toilets**

There should be clear guidelines in relation to the use of change rooms and toilets which are age appropriate. These guidelines should maintain the privacy of children and young people while allowing for adequate supervision.

- **Managing injuries or illnesses**

Your policies should provide clear guidelines in relation to managing illness or injuries, including:

- procedures for first aid
- adequate supervision of a child who is sick or injured, and
- relevant notifications to parents.

- **Visitor policy**

Your organisation should consider what processes need to be put in place to manage any risks associated with visitors, for example outlining:

- processes for identifying and recording visitors to the premises, and
- expected levels of supervision while visitors are on the premises.

- **Photography policy**

There should be a comprehensive policy which clearly outlines:

- the circumstances in which it would be appropriate to take photographs or videos of a child or young person while participating in activities
- the processes to be followed in relation to photographing children (e.g. parental consent)
- if official photographers are designated, the processes and guidelines which apply, and
- guidelines in relation to the use of photographs (including on social media), for example:
  - when it is appropriate to publish a photograph of a child or young person
  - when it is appropriate to include identifying information about a child with their photograph
  - ensuring children are appropriately clothed and the photos are appropriate for the child's age, and
  - limiting, where possible, the ability for photographs to be copied or redistributed.

- **Use of technology and social media**

Your organisation should have guidelines in place for staff and children and young people in relation to when use of the internet, computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices is permitted and for what purpose.

It is also advisable to develop a clear policy in relation to the use of official websites and social media platforms associated with the organisation and the expected standards of behaviour.

There should be clear policies for managing issues which arise from inappropriate usage of electronic devices or inappropriate conduct on social media

- **Smoking, alcohol consumption and the use of medications and drugs**

Your organisation should have clear guidelines in place for all stakeholders in relation to smoking, alcohol consumption and drugs on the premises.

It is also important to provide clear direction in relation to:

- staff attending work while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs (including medications) which may impair their judgment or impact on their performance, and
- outlining processes to ensure that medications are secured and not accessible by children and young people.

- **Organisation standards**

You should have clear guidelines in place for all stakeholders involved with the organisation in relation to the general standards which apply within your organisation, including:

- an outline of what constitutes bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment
- a clear policy in relation to how allegations of bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment will be dealt with by the organisation
- an outline of your organisation's commitment and relevant policies which promote cultural diversity and equal opportunity within your organisation, and
- a clear outline of expected standards of dress and attire.

- **General safety**

It is important that you consider the general safety of children and young people within your service environment and what policies need to be put in place, for example you should consider the following:

- any risks posed by the physical environment or equipment used in your service environment
- the security of the physical premises in which your services are offered
- that children and young people can only access safe play spaces and equipment, and
- policies are in place in relation to:
  - sun safety
  - the administration of medications to children and young people, and
  - the management of allergies and other medical conditions.

- **Confidentiality of information**

It is important that you have clear guidelines for staff in relation to how they are expected to manage confidential information about children and young people, including in relation to:

- how information is stored and who has access to it
- any breaches of your child and youth risk management strategy, and
- information about disclosures or suspicions of harm.

It may also be relevant to have clear policies in relation to providing any information to the media, to ensure that the privacy of children and young people is protected.

- **Other requirements**

There may be similar, or additional, requirements under other legislation, e.g. the National Quality Framework (NQF) in relation to education and care/family day care.

You should outline clearly any relevant legislative requirements which apply to your organisation.

#### **DRAFTING TIPS**

- You should use direct, assertive and easily understood language as this will help minimise confusion about what is expected. For example, use 'will', 'will not' or 'must', 'must not' rather than 'should' or 'should not'.
- Steer clear of words which can be subjective or subject to interpretation.
- If you use 'appropriate' provide specific examples, as what is appropriate for one person may not be considered appropriate by another. For example, rather than stating something like -  
*'inappropriate relationships with young people will not be tolerated'*, it is more useful to specify the types of behaviours that you consider to be 'inappropriate', such as -  
*'close personal relationships with children and young people outside of the service are inappropriate and will not be tolerated'*.

## DRAFTING IDEA

You may wish to format your specific policies and procedures in a table, for example\* -

<b>Behaviour</b>	<b>Appropriate (I must...)</b>	<b>Inappropriate (I must not...)</b>
Language	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>
Behaviour	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>
Supervision of children	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>
Physical Contact	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>	<i>[You should insert a list of clear examples relevant to your organisation]</i>

\* Please note that structuring parts of your code of conduct in tabular format is not compulsory, it is merely a suggestion which may or may not be appropriate for your organisation. Additionally, the examples provided are not an exhaustive list of the policies which would need to be included in a code of conduct. You should assess your organisation's needs when determining which aspects need to be covered in your code of conduct.