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Staff Code of Conduct

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Last Reviewed: June 2024 (Annually)

To be reviewed again: June 2025

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This policy sets out clear guidance on the standards of behaviour expected from all staff at The Peaceful Pony CIC (TPP). The principles underlying the guidance aim to encourage staff to achieve the highest possible standards of conduct and minimise the risk of inappropriate conduct occurring.

1.2 TPP staff are in a unique position of trust and influence as role models for our learners. Therefore, staff must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all within TPP family.

1.3 Staff also have an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the TPP both inside and outside working hours and work setting.

1.4 This policy applies to all staff and volunteers in the TPP family regardless of their position, role or responsibility. References to ‘staff’ throughout the policy relate to all of the following groups:

1.4.1 All members of staff including therapists and support staff

1.4.2 Volunteers, including trustees

1.4.3 Casual workers

1.4.4 Temporary staff

1.4.5 Student placements, including those undertaking work placements and apprentices.

1.5 TPP requires that all staff have read and agree to comply with this policy.

1.6 Breach or failure to observe this policy will result in action being taken under the TPP disciplinary procedures including, but not limited to, dismissal.

1.7 This code of conduct is not an exhaustive list of acceptable and unacceptable standards of behaviour. In situations where guidance does not exist in this policy staff are expected to exercise their professional judgement and act in the best interests of learners and all at TPP.

**2.0 Professional Behaviour and Conduct**

2.1 Staff are expected to demonstrate the highest possible standards of personal and professional conduct and behaviour and consistently act with honesty and integrity. TPP expects staff to treat each other, pupils/students, parents and the wider community with dignity and respect at all times.

2.2 Staff must act in accordance with their duty of care to learners and ensure that the safety and welfare of learners are accorded the highest priority.

2.3 Staff should show fairness in their treatment of children and avoid behaviours such as embarrassing or humiliating our learners, making jokes at the expense of anyone else, discriminating against or favouring one and sarcasm.

2.4 Staff must have regard for the mission statement, ethos and values of The Peaceful Pony Specialist Alternative Education and must not do or say anything which may bring the TPP into disrepute. Care should be taken by staff to avoid any conflict of interest between activities undertaken outside TPP and responsibilities within. Staff should act in accordance with The Peaceful Pony’s Specialist Alternative policies and procedures at all times.

**3.0 Dress and Appearance**

3.1 The Peaceful Pony CIC recognise that dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, all staff must dress in a manner that is appropriate to the task and working with young learners.

3.2 Staff should dress in a manner that is not offensive, revealing or sexually provocative and in a manner that is absent from political or contentious slogans.

**4.0 Smoking, alcohol and other substances**

4.1 The Peaceful Pony CIC operates non-smoking sites. Staff must not smoke on site. Any member of staff wishing to smoke must leave The Peaceful Pony Specialist Alternative Education grounds.

4.2 Staff must not smoke whilst working with or supervising pupils offsite.

4.3 Staff must not consume or be under the influence of alcohol, illicit drugs or other illegal substances on or near our premises.

**5.0 Relationships with learners**

5.1 Staff must maintain professional boundaries with learners appropriate to their position and must always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably. Staff should act in an open and transparent way that would not lead any reasonable person to question their actions or intent. Staff should think carefully about their conduct so that misinterpretations are minimised.

5.2 Staff must not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. If a young person seeks to establish social contact you should exercise your professional judgement in making a response and be aware that such social contact could be misconstrued.

5.3 Staff must not develop personal or sexual relationships with learners and should not engage in any sexual activity with a learner. Sexual activity does not just involve physical contact including penetrative and non-penetrative acts.

5.4 Working Together to Safeguard Children1 defines sexual abuse as ... ‘forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

 5.5 Staff should be mindful of section 16 of The Sexual Offences Act 20032.

5.6 Staff must not make sexual remarks to a learner, discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, learners or discuss a learner’s sexual relationships in an inappropriate setting or context.

5.7 Contact with learners should be through TPP’s authorised mechanisms [liaison with Directors and referring school]. Personal phone numbers, email addresses or communication routes via all social media platforms should not be used and staff should not share their home address with learners. If contacted via an inappropriate route the member of staff must inform the Director immediately.

5.8 TPP staff must not accept friend invitations or become friends with any learner of The Peaceful Pony CIC on any social media platform. Staff should also refrain from following the Twitter or other similar social media accounts of learners or their parents. Staff must read TPP’s e-safety policy carefully and follow all advice and guidance contained within it.

 **6.0 Infatuations**

6.1 It is not unusual for learners or, sometimes, their parents to develop infatuations towards members of staff. All such situations must be responded to sensitively to maintain the dignity of those concerned.

6.2 Staff should also be aware that such circumstances carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against staff. Any indications of an infatuation towards yourself or another member of staff must be reported to the Alternative Education Lead.

**7.0 Gifts/Hospitality**

7.1 Staff need to take care that they do not accept any gift/offer of hospitality that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. However, there may be occasions where learners or parents wish to give a small token of appreciation to staff, for example at religious festivities or at the end of the year.

7.2 It is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or to suggest to learners that gifts are appropriate or desired. Money must not be accepted as a gift. If you are unsure whether to accept a gift you should consult the Alternative Education Lead.

7.3 Staff must not accept significant gifts [Over £30] or hospitality from pupils, parents, carers, actual or potential contractors or outside suppliers. All such gifts/offers of hospitality should be reported to your line manager and recorded.

7.4 Personal gifts must not be given by staff to learners and any reward to learners should be in accordance with TPP’s behaviour policy, recorded and not based on favouritism. (for e.g. all our learners will receive a birthday gift of a nominal amount from all at The Peaceful Pony).

 **8.0 Physical Contact with Pupils**

8.1 There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with learners, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. A 'no touch' approach is impractical for most staff and may in some circumstances be inappropriate. When physical contact is made with learners it should be in response to their needs at that time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background.

 8.2 Where feasible, staff should seek the child's permission before initiating contact. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and, so far as is possible, use a level of contact which is acceptable to the child for the minimum time necessary.

8.3 It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Staff should therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.

8.4 Staff should be aware that even well intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described. Staff should never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent. Always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny.

8.5 Extra caution should be exercised where a child is known to have suffered previous abuse or neglect. Such experiences may sometimes make a child exceptionally needy and demanding of physical contact and staff should respond sensitively by deterring the child through helping them to understand the importance of personal boundaries.

8.6 Staff supervising games should demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment on another member of staff if possible. However, they may be required to initiate physical contact with learners to support a child to perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment or to assist them with an exercise. Contact under these circumstances should be done with the learner’s agreement, for the minimum time necessary and in an open environment. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the learner.

8.7 Physical contact must never be secretive, for the gratification of the adult or represent a misuse of authority.

8.8 If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be reported to your line manager, recorded and, if appropriate, a copy placed on the child’s file.

**. 9.0 Child in distress**

 9.1 There may be occasions when a learner is in distress and in need of comfort as a reassurance. This may include age appropriate physical contact. Staff should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.

9.2 Such incidents should always be recorded and shared with the Alternative Education Lead. If you have a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance you should seek further advice from your manager.

**10.0 Changing**

 10.1 Learners are entitled to respect and privacy whilst they are changing (if their clothes get wet / dirty). This should be done in the toilet if supervision is needed then two members of staff should be present. The supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the leaner and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

**11.0 One to one situations**

11.1 Staff working individually with learners should be aware of the potential vulnerability of the learner they are supporting and staff in such situations. Staff should manage these situations with regard to the safety of the learner and to themselves.

11.2 Individual work with pupils should not be undertaken in isolated areas or rooms where there is no external viewing panel. Where it is necessary to close doors for reasons of confidentiality a colleague should be made aware of this and asked to remain vigilant.

**12.0 Transporting pupils**

12.1 In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for staff to transport learners offsite for e.g. functional skills trip to a shop etc. A designated member of staff should be appointed to plan and provide oversight of all transport arrangements and to respond to any difficulties that may arise.

12.2 Staff should ensure that the transport arrangements and the vehicle meet all legal requirements. Staff should ensure that the driver has the appropriate license for the vehicle, that the vehicle is roadworthy, has a valid MOT certificate and is appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded.

12.3 Staff should ensure that the driver is not distracted while the vehicle is in motion for any reason other than an emergency and should also ensure all passengers are wearing correctly fastened seatbelts. Staff should never transport pupils/students while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

12.4 Prior to transporting pupils offsite consent must be obtained from learners parent/guardian and staff should be aware that the safety and welfare of the learners is their responsibility until this is safely passed back to their parent/carer.

**13.0 E-Safety**

13.1 Staff should follow The Peaceful Pony pecialist Alternative Education E-Safety policy for staff and the Acceptable Use Policy at all times and have regard for TPP’s E-Safety policy for learners.

13.2 Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the The Peaceful Pony Specialist Alternative Education or their community into disrepute. Staff should adopt the highest security settings on any personal profiles they have.

13.3 Staff should remain mindful of their digital footprint and exercise caution in all their use of social media or any other web based presence they have. This includes written content, videos or photographs and views expressed either directly or by ‘liking’ certain pages or posts or following certain individuals or groups. Staff should exercise care when using dating websites where staff could encounter students.

13.4 Staff must not make contact with learners, must not accept or initiate friend requests nor follow learners accounts on any social media platform. Staff must not communicate with learners via social media, websites, instant messenger accounts or text message. The only acceptable method of contact is via the use of The Peaceful Pony email accounts, telephone equipment or social media.

13.5 Staff should not make contact with pupils’ family members, accept or initiate friend requests or follow pupils’ family member’s account on any social media platform.

13.6 However, TPP acknowledges that staff who are also parents may wish to make contact with other parents, who are friends, over social media. Staff must exercise caution and professional judgement in these circumstances and should not have any contact with pupils’ family members via social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.

13.7 Mobile phones and personally-owned devices may not be used working hours at The Peaceful Pony CIC. They should be switched off (or silent) at all times. The Bluetooth functionality of a mobile phone should be switched off at all times and may not be used to send images or files to other mobile phones. Mobile phones and personal devices are not permitted to be used in certain areas within the TPP site such as changing rooms and toilets.

13.8 Mobile phones and personally-owned mobile devices brought in to The Peaceful Pony CIC are the responsibility of the device owner. TPP accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of personally-owned mobile phones or mobile devices.

**14.0 Photography, video and images of children**

14.1 Many The Peaceful Pony Specialist Alternative Education activities involve recording images as part of the curriculum, publicity or to celebrate an achievement. In accordance with The Data Protection Act 1998 the image of a learner is personal data. Therefore, it is a requirement under the Act for consent to be obtained from the parent/guardian of a learner for any images made. It is also important to take into account the wishes of the learner, remembering that some pupils/students do not wish to have their photograph taken or be filmed so we must always ask in the moment also.

14.2 Using images for publicity purposes will require the age-appropriate consent of the individual concerned and their parent/guardian. Images should not be displayed on websites, in publications or in a public place without their consent. Staff should also be clear about the purpose of the activity and what will happen to the photographs/images/video footage when the lesson or activity is concluded.

14.3 Staff should ensure that a member of the Senior Leadership Team is aware of the proposed use of photographic/video equipment and that this is recorded in lesson plans. All photographs/stills and video footage should be available for scrutiny and staff should be able to justify all images/video footage made.

14.5 Staff should remain aware of the potential for images of learner to be misused to create indecent images of children and/or for grooming purposes. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to how activities which are being filmed or photographed are organised and undertaken. Particular care should be given when filming or photographing young or vulnerable learners who may be unable to question how or why the activities are taking place. Staff should also be mindful that learners who have been abused through the use of video or photography may feel threatened by its use in a learning environment.

**15.0 Confidentiality**

15.1 Members of staff may have access to confidential information about learners, their parents/carers or their siblings. Staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil/student on a need to know basis.

15.2 Staff should never use confidential or personal information about a pupil/student or her/his family for their own, or others’ advantage (including that of partners, friends, relatives or other organisations). Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the pupil/student.

15.3 All staff are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential. For example, where a learner is bullied by another learner, this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate TPP procedure. It must not be discussed outside the TPP environment including with the learner’s parent or carer, nor with colleagues except by a senior member of staff with the appropriate authority to deal with the matter.

15.4 Staff have a statutory obligation to share with The Peaceful Pony’s Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead any information which gives rise to concern about the welfare or safety of a pupil/student or that might suggest a learner is in need or at risk of significant harm. Staff should pass on information without delay in accordance with The Peaceful Pony CIC’s safeguarding policy and procedures and this should be recorded. Staff must never promise a learner that they will not act on or pass on any information that they are told by the them.

15.5 Staff should refer to the Department of Education’s document Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for further guidance on information sharing. If you are in any doubt about whether to share you should seek guidance from a member of the senior leadership team.

15.6 Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to the senior leadership team and only approved.

**16.0 Whistleblowing**

16.1 Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, without fear of repercussion.

16.2 All The Peaceful Pony CIC staff have a duty to report any behaviour by a colleague which raises concern. Staff should refer to TPP’s whistleblowing policy for further guidance. This is particularly important where the welfare of learners may be at risk.

**17.0 Compliance**

17.1 All staff must follow this code of conduct alongside the employee handbook and by accepting and signing your contract you agree to all laid out in both.