



TRAFFORD  
COUNCIL

# Services for Children, Young People and Families

Children in care

Children's homes

## Safe caring practice

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**Author: Sally Rimmer**

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# Introduction

The Safe Care approach to looking after children/young people arises from the recognition that some adults physically and sexually abuse children, and many Children in Care may have experienced this. This has implications for the care of children and those who care for them.

There is a careful balance to be maintained between providing children with the personal, caring relationships they require and exposing them and staff to unsafe practices.

This guidance attempts to address this by providing a framework for practice with the objectives of:

- a) Keeping children safe from abuse by adults.
- b) Keeping children safe from other residents.
- c) Keeping members of staff safe from false allegations of abuse.
- d) Clarifying personal and professional boundaries.
- e) Restoring/maintaining children's trust in adults and staff.

In order to reduce the risk of poor practice or development of harm to a child the following codes of conduct must be observed.

## Professional relationships

- Whilst it is beneficial for children to be involved in caring relationships with responsible adults, exclusiveness and secrecy must always be challenged and should not develop into an exclusive 'special relationship'.
- A member of staff should not come in during their off duty time to spend time with a child.
- Senior staff should be alert to staff always volunteering for specific duties. This should be viewed as a matter of concern rather than worthy of admiration.
- Children must never be taken to a staff member's home and staff must not give children their personal address or telephone numbers.
- Gifts are socially and emotionally important. Any giving or receiving of gifts between staff and children must be discussed and agreed at staff meetings. Small gifts (e.g. key rings from a holiday) may be given to all the children by a member of staff, with the consent of the manager of the home. Gift giving should be a positive experience for all children; staff should not single out individual children in a way which creates favouritism.

- Other examples of some specific behaviours that are not allowed with service users, their carers or families include:
  - a) Selling or buying property, goods.
  - b) Lending or borrowing money or property.
  - c) Witnessing wills or acting as a named executor.
  - d) Arranging extra help for a fee or receiving any payments.
  - e) Personal relationships (i.e. friendships) or sexual relationships.

## Personal privacy

- Staff must recognise the importance of a child's need for privacy. Staff must always knock at a child's bedroom door and if entering into a bedroom ensure another member of staff is aware of this. This applies both day and night.
- No person should walk around the home inappropriately dressed, dressing gowns must be worn over night clothes, staff must be dressed prior to waking young people in the mornings. Staff must be dressed appropriately at all times. Staff should be aware of how the clothes they wear may affect the way they are viewed.
- Children should undertake personal hygiene activities for themselves and only ever with staff assistance where this is an agreed part of the Care Plan with Risk Assessment undertaken. Two staff should be involved if the activity might expose a member of staff to the risk of allegations being made by the child.
- Never take photographs of children wearing nightclothes, underwear or no clothes. Only appropriate photos of children with very little clothing are allowed (e.g. swimwear on holiday is acceptable).

## Responsible parenting

- Staff must ensure that children/young people only watch videos/computer games for a child of their age within the home. Adult certificate 18 videos/computer games are not to be allowed.
- Pornographic or erotic material must not be on view generally around the home. If the older young people choose erotic pictures for their rooms these must be vetted by the manager. No pictures must show bare private parts.
- Staff must be able to supervise children when playing and keep checking on them at regular intervals.
- Staff must not use any knowledge of a child's previous experiences as a way of gaining the child's trust inappropriately.

- Staff must always undertake a risk assessment before travelling in a car with a child. If alone, it may be advisable to sit the child in the back. Avoid taking children to isolated places. Only transport children when on duty i.e. do not offer lifts on off duty days.
- It is permissible when raised by a child for staff to discuss sex as a part of a child's development needs. Extra care should be taken where there is a history of sexual issues. In all cases discuss this work in supervision and seek advice from the Community Nurse for Children in Care if appropriate. All discussions must be recorded.

## Smoking and alcohol

### Smoking

It is recognised that smoking, both actively and passively, is harmful to health. This guidance below seeks to emphasise the positive role that adults have in setting a good example to children in their care.

This guidance includes all staff, young people and visitors to Trafford children and young people's residential homes.

- No member of staff shall at any time smoke in the presence of any children in their 'care'.
- No member of staff shall supply smoking materials to any resident or purchase them on their behalf.
- Where a child in care is already a habitual smoker, the health care plan shall address what efforts are to be made to encourage the child to give up smoking.
- Children who do not smoke should be actively discouraged from developing the habit through an appropriate health education programme.
- Smoking is not permitted in the residential children's homes or any of Trafford's vehicles see Health and Safety Guidance no 19.1 Driver and Escorts pg.9
- Smoking will be permitted in separate, designated areas, especially provided for staff.

### Alcohol

Alcohol is potentially dangerous in two ways:

- Sustained drinking can lead to health risks and, in extreme cases, to alcohol dependence
- Intoxication can lead to uncontrolled, disorderly or dangerous behaviour

This guidance includes all staff, young people and visitors to Trafford children and young people's residential homes.

- No Trafford residential children's home shall store alcohol on the premises.
- No member of staff shall supply alcohol to any resident or purchase it on their behalf.
- The consumption of alcohol is not permitted in the residential children's homes.
- The consumption of alcohol is not permitted by staff or young people during days out or holidays.
- Staff must not be under the influence of alcohol and are not permitted to consume alcohol whilst caring for children and young people within the home or on duty off site.
- Where a child in care has alcohol problems, the health care plan shall address how the child's needs are to be met.
- Staff should bear in mind the need for health education about the sensible use of alcohol and the consequences of its misuse.

Staff and carers may have to deal with explicit questions raised by the young people at any time. It is important that these questions are answered honestly.

However, it is also appropriate to say that you do not know the answer and that you will check and respond later. It may be helpful to ask the young person what they think the answer is, or why they have asked the question.

## **Physical contact with children and young people**

**Any physical contact between staff and children must be carefully considered and discussed with the children's home manager. The following points are guidance.**

- Staff may occasionally kiss a child on the cheek, if this is appropriate to their age, the occasion, and the relationship. If a child goes to kiss a member of staff this is to be done on the cheek only.
- When giving a child a hug the staff member must hug from a side position in order not to allow any private part to be in contact with the child. If a child initiates a hug, staff should take care in responding so that the hug is not intensified or prolonged inappropriately.
- Play fighting/wrestling with children needs to be discouraged and never initiated by staff. If initiated by a child, care must be taken to minimise any risk to staff or children and staff should bring it to a swift end.

- Always seek to involve another member of staff when physical contact might expose you to the risk of serious allegations.
- Where a child seeks physical contact with a member of staff, the member of staff must discuss this with their manager. Staff must record any extended or persistent physical contact and the outcome of the supervision discussion.
- Staff must discuss any inappropriate physical contact initiated by a child as soon as possible with their manager. The nature of contact and the action agreed in supervision must be recorded.