Cadet Vocational College

Code of Conduct for Staff Working with Young Learners

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1. Introduction

1.1 This code has been drawn up to assist staff in maintaining entirely proper and professional relationships with learners. It attempts to provide a clear and unambiguous picture of the boundaries associated with staff roles and the use of power and authority.

1.2 The Duty of Care for learners will usually lie with our partner organisations – but on certain Cadet Vocational College run courses, trips or events, Cadet Vocational College will have the Duty of Care responsibility. Where the Duty of Care rests with an organisation other than Cadet Vocational College, it is important to bear in mind that organisation's policies, procedures and responsibilities. Irrespective of which organisation has Duty of Care, this Code of Conduct provides guidance to Cadet Vocational College staff on how they should behave with young learners and inappropriate behaviour could lead to a dismissal.

1.3 It is stressed that this Code is not a legal document but is intended to provide guidance to employees in carrying out their responsibilities.

1.4 As an employee of a vocational learning provider, all staff are required to demonstrate high standards in their exercise of authority, their management of risk, in the proper use of resources and in the active protection of learners from discrimination and avoidable harm. This document is designed to both be useful for staff in avoiding situations that might lead to allegations against them, and to reassure other parties that a strategy exists to safeguard young and/or vulnerable learners.

1.5 Staff need to be prudent about their own conduct and vigilant about the conduct of others, so that their relationships with young learners remain, and are seen to remain, entirely proper and professional. It is recognised that staff are vulnerable to the possible consequences of their close professional relationships with young learners and to the potential for malicious and misplaced allegations being made by young learners, either deliberately or innocently, arising from the normal and proper associations that staff may have with them.

2. Principles

2.1 The duty of staff is to:

- Train and educate the learners assigned to them according to their learning needs.
- Promote the general progress and well-being of individual learners and of any class or group of learners assigned to them.
- Ensure the health and safety of learners.

2.2 Provide advice and guidance to learners, when approached or the need becomes apparent, on educational, personal and social matters, including the provision of information about sources of more expert advice on specific questions

2.3 These principles are intended to guide staff members and ensure that they give paramount consideration to the learner's well-being by respecting and attempting to understand the following:

- The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the person concerned (considered in the light of their age and understanding).
- The learner's physical, sexual orientation emotional and learning needs. The likely effect on the learner of any change in his/her circumstances.

- The learner's age, gender, background and any other relevant characteristics.
- Any harm that the learner has suffered or is at risk of suffering. Staff members are in a position of trust and they owe a duty of care to the learner for whom they are responsible.
- Staff should never seek gratification of their own emotional or physical need in their relationships with learners and all affiliations must always be professional, appropriate and justifiable.

3. Guidelines for All Relevant Staff

3.1 Physical Contact

- As a general principle, staff should not have unnecessary physical contact with young learners or vulnerable adults. There may be very limited occasions when a learner needs comfort or reassurance, which may include physical comforting. Any such comforting gestures must always be acceptable to the learner concerned i.e. there should be no unwanted physical contact, however well intentioned. However, be aware that any physical contact may be misconstrued by a learner, parent/carer or observer. Such contact can include well intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, which, if repeated with an individual young learner, could lead to serious questions being raised.
- Some staff are likely to come into physical contact with their young learners from time to time in the course of their training activities, for example when showing a young learner how to use a piece of apparatus or equipment. Staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and should consider the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted by the young learner. If physical contact is necessary staff should first ask if it is okay and explain what they are going to do before they do so.
- Any form of physical punishment of learners is unlawful, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour unless it is by way of restraint. It is particularly important that employees understand this both to protect their own position and that of Cadet Vocational College and its partner organisations.
- There may be occasions where it is necessary for a member of staff to physically restrain a young learner to prevent them from inflicting injury to themselves or others. In such cases only the minimum force necessary must be used and any action taken must be to restrain a young learner.
- Where the member of staff has taken action to restrain a young learner they should report the matter to the DSL/DSO.

3.2 The Practice of Physical Restraint

- Restraint can be defined as "the reasonable application of the minimum necessary force to overpower a child or vulnerable adult with the intention of preventing them from harming themselves or others, or from causing serious damage to property".
- Restraint should only be used exceptionally, when unavoidable and in keeping with the incident leading to it. It should be primarily for the benefit of the young person/s and, though immediate, should as far as possible be a considered response.
- Restraint should not be used as a form of punishment or, in normal circumstances, to enforce compliance with instructions. It should not be attempted where the member of staff is put at undue risk.

- Incidents of restraint should, in appropriate circumstances, be subject to debriefing for staff involved and lead to a review of strategies for managing the behaviour of young learners between relevant parties, e.g. Director, Manager, Instructor, etc. All incidents should be recorded in writing with witness statements etc. and reported to the DSL/DSO.

3.3 Sexual Contact

- There is NO acceptable behaviour that has either explicit sexual connotations or innuendo. Any such behaviour will always be treated as extremely serious and must be reported to the DSL/DSO immediately.

3.4 Inappropriate Language/Banter

- Staff should be careful in their use of language/banter/terminology that may be misconstrued.
- The systematic use of insensitive, disparaging or sarcastic comments is unacceptable.

3.5 One to One Discussions with Young Learners

- Staff should be aware of the potential risks which may arise from interviewing individual learners in private. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place but such interviews must be conducted in a room with visual access or with the door open, or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people. Meetings with young learners away from educational or business premises normally utilised, should not take place unless specific approval has been obtained from those responsible for the young learner (e.g. DSL/DSO).
- Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. The use of "engaged" signs or lights is not advisable and where possible another young person or another adult should be present or nearby during the interview and unless the conversation needs to be confidential the door to the room should be left open.

3.6 Caring/First Aid

- If a young person complains of injury or sickness, a judgement should be made as to whether they should be referred to a person qualified in First Aid or advised to see their own doctor. The young learner's parents/carers should also be informed, if appropriate.
- Staff who have to administer first aid (normally a trained First Aider) should ensure wherever possible that another adult is present, if they are in any doubt as to whether necessary physical contact could be misconstrued.
- Another adult should accompany employees who have to help young learners with personal care and young learners should, wherever possible, be encouraged to deal with such matters themselves.
- Where it is necessary to assist with/supervise dressing or undressing, staff must be of the appropriate gender and be careful to protect the dignity of the young person.
- Male staff should not, as a general rule, enter female toilets nor should female staff enter male toilets, except in extreme situations such as fire, or where there may be a threat to life or limb.

3.7 Provision of Advice and Guidance

- Staff may from time to time be approached by learners for advice. Learners may also appear distressed and staff may feel the need to ask if all is well. In such cases staff must judge whether it is appropriate for them to offer counselling and advice or whether to refer the young learner to a member of staff of another gender or to one with acknowledged expertise, experience or responsibility for that young learner. Staff must in these circumstances use their discretion to ensure that e.g. any probing for details cannot be construed as unjustified intrusion.
- Staff are advised never to stop a free-flowing account disclosure of abuse but to make sure that at an appropriate point they inform the young person that they cannot keep such information confidential and need to tell someone else to get help. Example: 'Thank you for telling me, I now need to tell (where possible give the name and position of who will be told) so that we can get some help for you'.
- A young learner may ask a member of staff to 'keep a secret', or to promise not to tell other people what they are about to tell them, where this happens the member of staff must explain that they are not able to promise confidentiality as they may need to tell someone else if they are to help the young person.
- Where a young person is told by a member of staff that they cannot promise confidentiality the young person may decide not to continue telling. If a young person starts to say, something and then stops, the member of staff needs to try to leave it open for the young person to come back to the discussion; the member of staff must act, following the Cadet Vocational College Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. It may be appropriate to refer the young person to available counselling / medical services, for instance their GP or a professional based service.

3.8 Social Contact

- Social contact with young learners outside of the confines of that organised as part of the course should be positively resisted.
- It is recognised that there may be occasions when accidental or reasonable social contact may be unavoidable, e.g. meeting young learners at social venues open to the general public or in shops or at private parties. In such circumstances, staff should be mindful at all times of their professional relationship with young learners.
- The use of social networking sites such as Facebook or any other social media platforms are not to be used with learners, if staff receive “friend requests” from learners they must refuse. The member of staff can then explain to the learner that they are not allowed to have learners as “friends” on social networking sites and it is not their personal choice.
- Staff must not give out their personal details such as mobile numbers, landlines or home addresses.
- The information of any social contact groups, such as WhatsApp, Facebook Groups etc, will be subject to stringent risk assessments undertaken by the DSL/DDSL. Staff must not join any such group set up by learners.

3.9 Driving

- During the course of work, it is possible in **exceptional** or emergency situations that learners may need to be driven from one place to another.

- All staff must ensure that they are accompanied by another member of staff/responsible adult and inform their line manager.
- No staff member is to give learners a lift outside normal working hours, other than in **exceptional** or emergency situations and must be accompanied by another member of staff/responsible adult.

3.10 General Relationships with Young Learners

- Staff should ensure that their relationships with learners are appropriate to the age and gender of the learner, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when dealing with adolescent children.
- Comments by staff to young learners, either individually or collectively, can be misconstrued. As a general principle, staff must not make unnecessary comments to and/or about learners, which could be construed to have a sexual connotation. It is also unacceptable for staff to introduce or to encourage debate amongst young learners in a class, training situation or elsewhere, which could be construed as having a sexual connotation that is unnecessary given the context of the training session or the circumstances. However it is recognised that a topic raised by a young learner is best addressed rather than ignored.
- Staff must not favour a particular learner, although it is recognised that some learners need more help /attention.
- No gifts/rewards should be given to one learner unless it is an open competition where all involved are aware of the arrangements.
- If staff, at any time, feel that their relationship with a young learner is developing into one that would be inappropriate between a member of staff and a young learner, it is their responsibility to discuss the situation with the organisation's DSL/DSO.

3.11 Online Learning

Now that more and more of Cadet Vocational Colleges' learning is moving towards becoming online using a variety of platforms (Zoom, MS Teams), there is a need for staff to protect themselves and learners against allegations of impropriety and inappropriateness. Staff should therefore be aware of the following:

- All online learning sessions must be recorded and saved in SharePoint https://cvqoorg.sharepoint.com/videos/SitePages/Home.aspx
- Staff will conduct themselves appropriately and professionally at all times
- Staff must sit against a neutral background wherever possible – they should be encouraged not to record in their bedroom as that is unprofessional and can give the wrong impression.
- Staff will ensure they are dressed like they would be for a normal workday, in accordance with the Staff Handbook dress code. StaffHandbook
- Staff will ensure that ground rules are established at the beginning of each session, including what will happen if there is any inappropriate behaviour.
- Staff will hold a debriefing session with the other responsible adult(s) after the end of the learning session and after all learners have left, so that any potential safeguarding issues (amongst other things) can be raised.

3.12 Calling learners

- All texts and phone calls must be done from work phone.
- Staff will conduct themselves appropriately and professionally at all times

3.13 Prevent Duty

- Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation is part of our wider safeguarding duties.
- Staff should familiarise themselves with the signs of radicalisation (see Cadet Vocational College Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Supporting Information) and be alert for them.
- If you have a concern that a child may be being drawn towards radicalisation you must treat the matter as a safeguarding issue and report it to the DSL/DSO in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

3.14 Reporting of Incidents

- **All incidents must be appropriately reported following the procedure set out in the Cadet Vocational College Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy document**
- Following any incident where a member of staff feels that their actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, the member of staff should report the matter to the DSL/DSO.
- Such reporting is especially important in any case where a member of staff has been obliged to restrain a young person physically to prevent him/her from inflicting injury to others or themselves, or where he/she has been personally attacked by another young learner, parent or carer.