

Code of Behaviour and Good Youth Work Practice for Staff and Volunteers

The Limerick Pastoral Centre, in our behaviour and by our attitude towards young people respects their rights, dignity and worth. This will practically be expressed by working toward Best Practice and fulfilling the following Code: -

General Conduct:

- Maintain appropriate boundaries when dealing with young people entrusted to your care.
- Be sensitive to the possibility of becoming over involved or spending a disproportionate amount of time with any particular individual or group of children.
- Make sure that all children and young people feel equally valued: favouritism is not acceptable.
- Do not engage or tolerate any behaviour- verbal, emotional, psychological or physical- that could be construed as bullying.
- Under no circumstances give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to children or young people.
- Do not use alcohol, tobacco or drugs in the company of children or young people.
- Use only age appropriate language media products and activities in working with children and young people. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never appropriate.
- Comments and jokes of a sexual nature which may give offence or which could be interpreted as inappropriate are to be avoided.

Physical Integrity

- Respect the physical integrity of children and young people. Do not engage in inappropriate physical contact in any form. This should not prevent appropriate contact where it is necessary to comfort a child and ensure their safety and well-being; neither should it preclude normal expressions of warmth or happiness provided that they are acceptable to all parties concerned.
- Do not engage in any rough or physical play or horseplay with children or young people. Be alert to the risks involved in participating in some contact sports.

Privacy

- Care should be taken to ensure that the privacy of young people is respected at all times. Particular care must be taken with respect to places such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and toilets. Separate provision must be made for boys and girls. There must be adequate and gender appropriate supervision of boys and girls. Ensure at all times there is more than one adult supervising young people in these situations.
- Do not take photographs of children or young people while they are in the changing areas (for example, in a locker room or changing room). Never do things of a personal nature for children and young people, which they can do themselves.
- Leaders, who are involved in relationships with other leaders, or older members, should ensure that their personal relationships do not affect their leadership role within the organisation.

Meetings

- Being alone with a child or young person is not appropriate practice. Should circumstances arise where it is unavoidable a) immediately inform another responsible adult, by telephone if necessary, and b) make a diary note that the meeting with the young person took place.
- If the pastoral care of a young person necessitates the arrangement of an individual meeting, do not meet in isolated environments. Schedule meetings at times and locations that allow for transparency and accountability. Limit both the length and number of sessions. Make necessary referrals and appropriate contact with parents.
- Do not conduct meetings in, or encourage visits to, private homes or personal living quarters.
- When the need for a visit to the home of a child or young person arises professional boundaries must be observed at all times.

General:

Staff and volunteers should never –

- Engage in sexually, provocative or rough physical games, including horse-play, apart from structured sports activities
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a child, even in fun
- Let allegations a child makes go without being addressed and recorded
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves