

## **Code of Conduct**

### **Preventing abuse of young people in care**

All staff are expected to be strong advocates for young people in care and to place the utmost importance on ensuring the safety and well-being of young people. Everyone working with young people must deal promptly with any suspicions that they may have regarding the abuse of a young person. The priority is to protect the young person and all other factors must be a secondary consideration to this priority.

[\(Refer to Section 4, Child Protection for more details on making a child protection report\).](#)

### **Caring Gesture**

Stepping Stone House supports the safe and age related expression of caring gesture in relationships between staff and young people. Caring gesture is an expression of positive regard between young people and their caregivers. Young people in out-of-home care have a right to genuine care and affection in relationships with their caregivers, as part of their developing emotional experience. The onus is on the staff member to ensure that their expression of caring gesture towards young people is safe and agreed to, and never imposed upon or abusive. The following guidelines will assist staff members to identify and maintain professional and safe boundaries in their expression of affection towards young people. Professional and safe affection – as caring gestures includes:

- Light touch on the shoulders or arms to comfort.
- Hugging to comfort. Any physical contact must be initiated by the young person or prior consent must be obtained.
- Use of affectionate names which the young person finds agreeable and safe.

### **Unnecessary and unacceptable affection includes:**

- Physical contact with the young person's breasts, buttocks and/or genitalia
- Kisses on the lips
- Prolonged hugging
- Any contact which makes the young person feel uncomfortable.

### **Prohibited Actions**

Staff members, volunteers, Board members and students are expected at all times to provide positive role models for the young people at Stepping Stone House and, to adhere to professional standards of behaviour. All those employed by or involved with the organisation are expected to be accountable, and to carry out their work with integrity and transparency, according to the ethics and philosophy of the organisation, the requirements of the child protection legislation, National principles for child safe organisations and the principles of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The duty of care responsibility is high and this policy will assist in ensuring duty of care requirements are understood and adhered to.

**Staff members, volunteers, Board members and students must not:**

- Physically, sexually, emotionally or verbally abuse any client, other member of staff, volunteers, member of the Board, student, or visitor to the service, at any time.
- scream at, or shout at, or verbally threaten any young person, or discipline any young person in a manner which humiliates or in any way degrades the young person
- bring any pornographic or other restricted material onto the premises
- Be in the young person's bedroom with the door closed. If having private conversations these must be moved into a meeting room or common areas available
- use Stepping Stone House computers/laptops for the purpose of accessing pornographic or other restricted material via the Internet
- bring any weapon or any item that may be used as a weapon onto the premises
- bring any alcohol onto the premises at any time or be on the premises or at work in an intoxicated state
- bring any illegal drugs onto the premises at any time or be on the premises or at work under the influence of illegal drugs
- consume any alcohol or illegal drugs during rostered shifts
- During any periods of being "on call" staff may have an alcoholic drink but remain under the legal limit to drive.
- be on the premises or at attendance at any meeting, conference or workshop, or activity under the adverse influence of any legal drug (prescription drugs to be kept safely in personal belongings or in medicine cabinet during rostered shifts)
- be involved in or allow any young person to be involved in any illegal activity on the premises, or elsewhere when clients are in your care or accompanying you
- Add any SSH young people on any social media platform
- Impose their religious beliefs or political persuasion on young people of the Stepping Stone House, other staff members, volunteers, Management members, students and visitors.
- condone, utter or practice any racist, sexist or other discriminatory remarks or actions
- direct any verbal or emotional abuse to any young person, other member of staff, Volunteers, Board member, student or visitor
- Conduct or participate in any activity inside or outside work hours, which would bring disrepute onto Stepping Stone House. This involves criminal acts, which have an impact on employment or involvement with Stepping Stone House.

**Allowable Alcohol Consumption**

When attending meetings, conferences, activities etc. where staff are representing Stepping Stone House a low level of alcohol may be consumed during breaks and recreation time, as long as consumption does not prevent the person participating in the forum adequately.

Participating adequately includes attending each session on time, taking notes, being coherent etc.

The legally allowed limit of alcohol for driving is suggested as the maximum amount to be consumed.

However – should a staff member be representing Stepping Stone House and supporting a young person – alcohol is never to be consumed while a young person is in your care – regardless of event or age of the young person.

The use of illegal drugs is prohibited when representing Stepping Stone House at any forum.

### **Anti-Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity**

All staff have the right to a safe workplace, free of discrimination and harassment. All staff must adhere to Stepping Stone House anti-discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity policies. (Please refer to section 13 for further information)

### **Breach of Code of Conduct**

Any breach of these conditions is to be reported to the Chief Executive Officer – who will deal with the situation and may report the matter to the Chairperson of the Board if necessary. Breaches may result in termination from employment or disciplinary action.

All staff, Board members, volunteers and students have a direct responsibility to report any contraventions of the Code of Conduct directly to the Chief Executive Officer. Where the Chief Executive Officer is observed as contravening the Code, the Chairperson of the Board will deal with this situation.