



CODE OF CONDUCT WORKING WITH CHILDREN

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US Code of Conduct – Working with Children

Introduction

As an established, well-run, and responsible organisation, the United Synagogue (US), has both a moral and legal duty of care, to provide a safe environment, which secures the well-being and best outcomes for the children that visit any US setting, or otherwise engage with the Charity. In the context of this policy, a child is any person under the age of eighteen.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out clearly, what is expected in terms of professional behaviour, what might be considered misconduct, and what constitutes illegal behaviour, both towards, and when working with children. It also highlights safe practices as well as behaviour that should be avoided, when working, or dealing with children.

This guidance is intended to support individuals to establish a safe environment, safeguard children, and reduce the risk of employees or others, being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct.

Legal Framework

The United Synagogue follows the Department for Education's [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2023\) statutory guidance](#). All staff and volunteers must also comply with relevant legislation including; the [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#), [Children Act 1989 & 2004](#), [Data Protection Act 2018/UK GDPR](#), [Online Safety Act 2023](#) and [DBS requirements for regulated activity with children](#).

Associated Policies

This policy, together with our [Confidentiality](#), [Whistleblowing](#), [Data Protection](#), [Privacy](#), [Social Media](#), [Safeguarding & Child Protection](#), [Whistleblowing](#), [Employee Code of Conduct](#), [Sexual Harassment](#), [Health & Safety](#), [Anti-Bribery and Corruption](#) policies and our Best Practice Guidance for Rabbis & Rebbetzins, set out the Charity's comprehensive approach in this area.

Scope

The provisions set out in this document apply to all staff, senior management, volunteers, and all other stakeholders, working with or on behalf of the Charity, regardless of location, department, function, seniority, or length of service.

Any individual who disregards or fails to comply with this code of conduct, may be subject to disciplinary action.

Statement of Principles

Set out below are the core principles that underpin the Charity's approach to the safeguarding of children in its care, or that otherwise come into contact with the organisation, and to whom it owes a duty of care in this regard.

- The welfare of children is paramount.

- Individuals have a responsibility for their own actions and behaviour and must avoid any contact which would lead a reasonable person to question their motivations and intentions.
- Colleagues should always behave and dress appropriately.
- Staff and volunteers should report and/or take advice promptly from their line manager or another senior member of staff, over any incident or situation, which gives them cause for concern.
- Colleagues should ensure they know the name of the designated individual for safeguarding within their team or area, familiarise themselves with United Synagogue Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies, and understand their individual responsibilities to safeguard and protect children.
- Individuals should be aware that breaches of the law could result in criminal, or disciplinary action being taken against them.

Duty of Care

Staff and volunteers are responsible for the way in which they exercise authority, manage risk, use resources, and protect children from discrimination and harm.

All colleagues have a duty to keep children safe, and to protect them from emotional and physical harm. This duty is exercised through the development of respectful, caring, and professional relationships between colleagues and children, and behaviour by individuals that demonstrates integrity, maturity, and good judgement.

When individuals accept a role that involves working with children, they need to understand and acknowledge, the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role.

Colleagues must:

- Understand the responsibilities, which are part of their employment or role, and be aware that sanctions will be applied if these provisions are breached.
- Always act, and be seen to act, in the child's best interests.
- Avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motives and intentions.
- Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour.

Professional Judgement

This guidance is intended to highlight behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate, or inadvisable. It does not provide an exhaustive or complete checklist of what is, and what is not acceptable behaviour, for individuals working with children.

Where no specific guidance exists, colleagues should:

- Discuss the circumstances that informed their action, or their proposed action, with a senior colleague. This will help to ensure that the safest practices are employed and reduce the risk of actions being misinterpreted.
- Always discuss any misunderstanding, accidents, or threats, with a senior member of staff.
- Always record discussions, actions, and justification.

Power and Position of Trust

Individuals working with children in a US setting, are in a position of trust in relation to the children in their care. A relationship between a colleague and a child, cannot be a relationship between equals. Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that this unequal balance of power, is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

Colleagues should always maintain appropriate professionalism and wherever possible, they should avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others, and report and record any incident with that potential.

Any individual working with children, who attempts to engage in sexual activity with any child under the age of eighteen, will be a cause for concern, and will be considered a breach of trust. It may also be deemed a criminal act, dependant on the circumstances.

Colleagues should not:

- Use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage, and/or to a child or family's detriment.
- Use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce, or undermine a child.
- Use their status or standing, to form or promote a relationship with a child, which is of a sexual nature.

Confidentiality

Staff and volunteers may have access to confidential information about a child, to undertake their everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances, colleagues may be given additional sensitive or privileged information. They should never use such information about a child or their family, for their own, or other's advantage. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass a child.

Confidential information should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a strictly need to know basis. In circumstances where a child's identity does not need to be disclosed, sensitive information should be used anonymously.

There are some circumstances, in which a colleague may be expected to share information about a child, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass on the information without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities.

If a colleague is unsure about whether to share certain information, they should seek guidance from an appropriate member of the Central Safeguarding and Welfare Team.

Individuals should note, that although it is important to listen to children, they should never promise confidentiality, or request a child to do the same, under any circumstances.

Additionally, concerns or allegations about colleagues, should be treated as confidential, and passed to the CEO or the United Synagogue Designated Safeguarding Lead, immediately.

Colleagues:

- Are expected to treat information they receive about a child in a discreet and confidential manner.

- In any doubt about sharing information, they hold, or which has been requested of them, should seek advice from the Central Safeguarding and Welfare Team.
- Need to be cautious when passing information about a child to others.
- Need to know, to whom any concerns or allegations should be reported.

Information sharing

Sharing information to keep a child safe is lawful and expected, do not rely on consent where this may place a child at risk, record what you shared and why, for more guidance on this, contact the Central Safeguarding and Welfare Team.

Appropriate Behaviour

Colleagues have a responsibility to maintain public confidence, in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interest of all children. They should adopt a high standard of personal conduct, to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, children, and the public.

A colleague's behaviour within or outside of US settings, should not compromise their position within the work setting, it is therefore important to exercise due care and attention, when outside of the US environment.

Behaviour that conflicts with US policies, may result in further action being taken.

Colleagues should not:

- Behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person, to question their suitability to work with children, or act as a role model.
- Make inappropriate remarks to children, (including by email, text message, phone, or letter etc).
- Discuss sexual relationships, with or in the presence of children.
- Make, (or encourage others to make), unprofessional comments in any form of communication, (including email, in person conversations, or social media posts).

Colleagues must:

- Be aware that their behaviour in their personal lives, may impact their work with children.
- On trips, or other occasions when children are under their supervision, ensure there are sufficient representatives available and able to respond appropriately, to any emergency that might occur.

Alcohol and Smoking

Whilst discharging their duties, colleagues must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substance, that may affect their ability to care for or respond to the needs of children under their supervision.

Smoking on the premises, (including e-cigarettes), is against US policy, and could therefore be subject to further action.

Appearance

Colleagues should ensure that their dress and appearance is appropriate to the role and tasks they undertake.

Anyone who dresses or appears in a manner which could be considered inappropriate, may render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation.

Colleagues should ensure their appearance:

- Promotes a positive and professional image.
- Is appropriate to their role and the organisation.

Gifts

Colleagues must not accept gifts that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment, and similarly, may not give personal gifts to children.

Colleagues should:

- Ensure that gifts received or given, in situations which may be misconstrued, are declared.
- Where giving gifts other than above, ensure that it is done with the full knowledge of your line manager.

Infatuation

Colleagues need to be aware, that it is not uncommon for children to be strongly attracted to a member of staff, and/or develop an infatuation. Individuals should understand that such circumstances carry an elevated risk of words or actions being misinterpreted, and for allegations to be made against them as a result.

Staff or volunteers who become aware that a child may be infatuated, either with them or a colleague, should discuss it at the earliest opportunity with a senior member of staff, so that appropriate steps can be taken.

Colleagues should:

- Promptly report to a senior manager, any indications (verbal, written or physical), that suggest a child may be infatuated, with themselves, or another colleague.
- Be mindful if they are alone in a room with a child, to leave the door open.

Personal Living Space

No child should be invited into the home of a member of staff or volunteer, who works with them, unless the reason for this has been properly and clearly established and agreed with parents and senior staff.

Colleagues should:

- Be vigilant in maintaining their privacy, and mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in a vulnerable situation.
- Be mindful of the need to maintain professional boundaries.

Communication With Children (including the use of technology)

Communication between colleagues and children they are working with, regardless of method or medium, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, webcams, websites, social media, online gaming, and blogs. Individuals should not share any personal information with children. They should not request, or respond to any

personal information from a child, other than that which might be appropriate, as part of their professional role.

Colleagues should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

Staff and volunteers should be cautious in their communications with children, to avoid any misinterpretation of their motives, or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming. They should not give out their personal contact details to any child, including e-mail, home, or mobile telephone numbers.

Colleagues should:

- Only contact children for professional reasons.
- Not use internet or web-based communication, to send personal messages.
- Not have images of children stored on personal cameras, devices, or home computers.
- Not make images of children available on the internet, other than through the United Synagogue website, or social media accounts, without permission from the parent/guardian.

Social Networking and Online Gaming

Whilst of course colleagues may use social networking sites for personal use. The Charity advises that profiles and photos be kept private, so that children, or parents do not have access to your personal data or images.

Colleagues should not accept friend or follower requests from children or parents they are working with.

Where relationships already exist between colleagues and parents, either at the setting, or as personal friends, social networking is acceptable, but caution must be exercised, so that professional standards are maintained, and colleagues do not compromise themselves.

As soon as an employee or volunteer becomes aware that they are in an online game with a child of the setting, they should cease to play. They should not seek out, or share their own gamer tag/ID, with any children from the United Synagogue setting.

Colleagues should:

- Ensure their profile is private, to ensure that data and images are not freely available.
- Not permit children or parents they are working with, to have access to your profile.

Physical Contact

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper, for individuals to have physical contact with children, but it is crucial that they only do so, in a way appropriate to their professional role. When physical contact is made with a child, this should be in response to their needs at the time, and of limited duration.

Colleagues should always use their professional judgement, about the appropriateness of any physical contact.

Physical contact should never be secretive, for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If an individual believes that an action could be misinterpreted, they should report the incident and circumstances, to their senior manager.

On occasion, physical contact may be required, to help support a child, so they can perform certain tasks safely, to demonstrate the use of a piece of equipment. This should be done with the child's agreement.

Contact under these circumstances, should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity, and take place in an open environment. Individuals should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally, or non-verbally by the child.

Colleagues should:

- Consider alternatives, where it is anticipated that a child might misinterpret any contact, perhaps involve another member of staff, or another child, to help demonstrate.
- Always explain to the child, the reason contact is necessary, and what form that contact will take, unless their safety is at immediate risk.

Distressed Children

There may be occasions when a distressed child needs comforting and reassurance. This may include age-appropriate physical contact. Individuals should always ensure, that their contact is not threatening, intrusive, or subject to misinterpretation.

Colleagues should:

- Consider the way in which they offer comfort to a distressed child.
- Always tell another colleague, when and how they have offered comfort to a distressed child.
- Record situations that may give rise to concern.

Additional Needs

The United Synagogue strives to ensure that our programmes and services are accessible to all. Should a child have additional needs, the responsibility is on the parent/guardian, to inform the employee or volunteer concerned, precisely what adjustments are required. Colleagues should work together with parents, and the central Safeguarding and Welfare Team, to ensure that, wherever possible, we are able to meet the needs of the child safely and, within the parameters of the activity or event.

Physical Intervention

Colleagues may legitimately intervene to prevent a child from committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others, or causing damage to property. Staff and volunteers should have regard to the health and safety of themselves and others.

Under no circumstances should physical force be used as a form of punishment. The use of unwarranted physical force is likely to constitute a criminal offence.

In all cases where physical intervention is deemed necessary, the incident and subsequent actions, should be documented and reported.

Colleagues should:

- Always seek to defuse situations.
- Only use minimum force, for the shortest period necessary, (you may have to justify the amount of force used).

Sexual Contact

Any sexual behaviour by a colleague, with, or towards a child, is both inappropriate and illegal. Sexual activity does not just relate to physical contact. It may also include non-contact activities, such as causing children to engage in, or watch sexual activity.

Colleagues should:

- Not pursue sexual relationships with children, either in, or out of the setting
- Avoid any form of communication with a child, which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive, or provocative, i.e. verbal comments, letters, notes, e-mails, phone calls, text messages, and physical contact.

For the avoidance of doubt, under the [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#), it is a criminal offence for an adult who is coaching, teaching, training, supervising or instructing in a religious setting, to engage in sexual activity with a 16–17-year-old in their care (s22A SOA 2003). Any breach will be reported to the police and relevant authorities.

Intimate Care

All Children have a right to safety, privacy, and dignity, when contact of an intimate nature is required, (for example removing wet or soiled clothes).

Children should be encouraged to act as independently as possible, and to undertake as much of their own care as is practical. When assistance is required, colleagues should ensure that another appropriate adult is in the vicinity and is aware of the task to be undertaken.

Colleagues should:

- Make other colleagues aware of personal or intimate care being undertaken.
- Explain to the child what is happening.

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, to ensure it remains relevant, appropriate, and compliant, both with prevailing legislation and best practice.