



Code of Conduct - Working with Children

Overview

The United Synagogue seeks to provide a safe environment, which secures the well-being and the best outcomes for children that visit any US setting.

This code of conduct clarifies what is expected in terms of professional behaviour, it gives clear advice about what constitutes illegal behaviour and what might be considered misconduct. It also describes safe practices and behaviour that should be avoided.

If a representative does not follow this code of conduct disciplinary procedures may be taken.

Core Principles

1. The welfare of the children is paramount.
2. Representatives have a responsibility for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any contact which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivations and intentions.
3. Representatives should behave and dress appropriately at all times.
4. Representatives should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager or another senior member of staff over any incident, which may give rise to concern.
5. Representatives should know the name of the designated individual for safeguarding, be familiar with children protection policy and understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children.
6. Representatives should be aware that breaches of the law could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.

Safe Working Practices for the Protection of Children and Representatives

1. Introduction

This guidance has been produced to support all representatives establish a safe environment. The aims are to safeguard children and reduce the risk of representatives being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct.

This means that these guidelines include:

- *Representatives of the United Synagogue whatever their position, roles or responsibilities (inclusive of volunteers).*

2. Duty of Care

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

All representatives have a duty to keep children safe and to protect them from emotional and physical harm. This duty is in part exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between representatives and children and behaviour by representatives 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 in that role.

This means that representatives should:

- *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.*

3. Professional Judgement

This guidance cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for representatives. It does highlight however behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable.

This means that where no specific guidance exists representatives 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 senior member of staff.*
- *Always record discussions, actions and justification.*

4. Power and Position of Trust

All representatives 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 representative and a child cannot be a relationship between equals. Representatives have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

Representatives 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 this potential.

Any representative working with children under the age 18 who attempts to engage in sexual activity with any child under the age 18 within the US, will be a cause for concern and will be a breach of trust. It may also be a criminal act dependant on the circumstances.

This means that Representatives should not:

- *Use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or 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.*

5. Confidentiality

Representatives may have access to confidential information about a child in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances representatives may be given additional highly sensitive or private information. They should never use confidential or personal 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 need to know basis. In circumstances where a children's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.

There are some circumstances in which a representative 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 representative is in any doubt about whether to share information or to keep it confidential they should seek guidance from an appropriate member of the Central Child Protection Team.

Representatives should be aware 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 and allegations about representatives should be treated as confidential and passed to the CEO or the CPO immediately.

This means that Representatives:

- *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 Child Protection Team.*
- *Need to be cautious when passing information to others about a child.*
- *Need to know whom any concerns or allegations should be reported to.*

6. Appropriate Behaviour

All representatives 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 in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, children and general public.

An individual's behaviour in or out of US settings, should not compromise their position within the work setting so it is important to exercise due care and attention when outside of the US environment.

Behaviour that is in conflict with US policies may result in further action being taken.

This means that representatives 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 email, text messages, 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, conversations or social networking comments).*

Representatives must:

- *Be aware that their behaviour in their personal lives may impact their work with children*
- *On trips or on 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.*

7. Alcohol and Smoking

All representatives whilst discharging their duties must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substance that may affect their ability to care or respond to the needs of children.

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

8. Appearance

Representatives should consider the manner of dress and appearance appropriate to the role and tasks they undertake.

Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be considered inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation.

This means that representatives should ensure their appearance:

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

9. Gifts

Representatives need to take care that they do not accept gifts that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment.

Representatives may not give personal gifts to children.

This means that Representatives 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.*

10. Infatuation

Representatives 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. Representatives should be aware that such circumstances carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against representatives.

A representative who becomes aware that a child may be infatuated with them or a colleague should discuss it at the earliest opportunity with a senior member of staff so that appropriate action can be taken.

This means that representatives should:

- *Report to their senior colleagues any indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggest a child may be infatuated with a representative.*
- *Be mindful if they are alone in a room with a child to leave the door open.*

11. Personal Living Space

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

This means that Representatives 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.*

12. Communication with children (including the use of technology)

Communication between child and representatives by whatever method should take place with clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobiles phones, text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites, social networking sites, online gaming and blogs. Representatives 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. Representatives should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

Representatives should be cautious in their communications with children so as to avoid any possible 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. This also includes communications through internet based web sites, such as social networking, instant messaging or gaming.

This means that Representatives should:

- *Only make contact with 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 network/website, without permission from the parent/guardian.*

13. Social Networking and Online Gaming

Representatives may use social networking sites for personal use. The United Synagogue advises that representative's profiles and photos should be private so that children or parents do not have access to your personal data or images.

It is advised that representatives should not accept friendship or follower requests from participants.

Where relationships exist between representatives and parents at the setting, or personal friends, social networking is acceptable but caution must be exercised so that professional standards are maintained and representatives don't compromise themselves.

As soon as a representative 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.

This means that representatives should:

- *Ensure their profile is private to ensure that data and images are not freely available.*
- *Not permit current participants or parents to have access to your profile.*

14. Physical Contact

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for representatives to have physical contact with children, but it is crucial that they only do so in a way appropriate to their professional role.

A 'no touch' approach is impractical for most representatives and may in some circumstances be inappropriate. When physical contact is made with a child this should be in response to their needs at the time and of limited duration.

Representatives should use their professional judgement at all times about the appropriateness of any physical contact.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult or represent a misuse of authority. If a representative believes that an action could be misinterpreted then 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. Representatives should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the child.

This means that Representatives 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 why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take unless their safety is at immediate risk.*

15. Distressed Children

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

This means that Representatives should:

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

16. Physical Intervention

Representatives may legitimately intervene to prevent a child from committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others, or causing damage to property. Representatives 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.

This means that Representatives 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).*

17. Sexual Contact

Any sexual behaviour by a representative with or towards a child is both inappropriate and illegal.

Sexual activity does not just involve physical contact. It may also include non-contact activities, such as causing children to engage in or watching sexual activity.

This means that representatives 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-mail, phone calls, text and physical contact.*

18. 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, representatives should ensure that another appropriate adult is in the vicinity and is aware of the task to be undertaken

This means that Representatives should:

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

Other related policies:

Best practice guidance for Rabbis/Rebbetzins

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