



Code of Conduct Policy

Description

The Code of Conduct is a framework of expected behaviours for all members of the workforce when at work and/or undertaking work-associated activities, including work related social events. It may also be used for behaviours outside the workplace which are against our values and could be considered as breaching this code. Every member of staff has a responsibility to challenge unacceptable behaviour, this is particularly where the behaviour impacts on Action for Children's reputation, dignity and well-being of staff and the lives of children and vulnerable people.

You must utilise the highest standard of personal integrity and take personal responsibility for your actions and the reputation of Action for Children. The Code of Conduct underpins Action for Children's ambition and values.

Who does this Policy apply to?

All Employees, Casual Workers, Foster Carers, Independent Visitors, Volunteers, Agency Workers and contractors are expected to follow the Code of Conduct including those in their probationary period. It does not form part of any contract of employment or otherwise have contractual effect and may be amended by us at any time.

This policy applies to all Action for Children Group Companies. Although the name 'Action for Children' has been used throughout this policy, you should interpret that as a reference to the particular Action for Children group company that you work for.

Responsibilities

- You should have a clear understanding of the Code of Conduct and when this policy should be applied.
- You must fully adhere to the code at all times.

Supersedes:	Code of Conduct
Policy Area:	People
Issued by:	People Department
Responsible Manager:	Chief People Officer
Policy Effective Date:	28 th January 2022
	Reviewed February 2020 - update para 1.6 for clarity
	Reviewed September 2021 – include two new bullet points at section 2.2
Policy Review Date:	January 2025
Consultation Approval Date:	December 2018
The policy will be reviewed in conjunction with operational managers and Trade Union representatives. Where review is necessary due to legislative change, this will happen immediately	



- This Code of Conduct framework covers the main standards of behaviour required by Action for Children and underpins our core values, behaviours framework, purpose and mission. You are under a duty to observe and follow the standards of behaviour required by the organisation and to behave in a reasonable manner at all relevant times.
- The Code of Conduct applies when at work and/or undertaking work-associated activities, including work related social events. It may also be used for behaviours outside the workplace which are against our values and could be considered as breaching this code because, for example, your behaviour may have impacted on Action for Children's reputation or the lives of children and young people we work with.
- A breach of this code of conduct will render employees liable to disciplinary action in accordance with the [Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#). Casual Workers are subject to the misconduct procedure as set out in the [Casual Workers Handbook](#).
- The requirements below are the minimum expected behaviours and conduct expected. Local rules and guidelines over and above these may be imposed at any time by local management as long as they are reasonable.

1. Safeguarding

In Action for Children safeguarding is integral to everything we do, and we are committed to ensuring our employees and workers are also enabled to work in a safe way and protected from harm.

- 1.1 You must behave and communicate in a way that safeguards and promotes the well-being of children and young people.
- 1.2 You have a duty and shared responsibility to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and young people, by being responsible for the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of your work. To reinforce this, the principles of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults are embedded in each section of this Code.
- 1.3 You must ensure that you understand and adhere to the [Safeguarding Framework](#) and associated procedures as appropriate to your nation and individual role.
- 1.4 You must, regardless of your role, raise any concern you may have regarding safeguarding issues with your line or appropriate manager immediately and in any event within 24 hours.
- 1.5 You must immediately report any behaviour or act that is causing harm or has the potential to cause harm to a child or young person to your line or appropriate manager.
- 1.6 With regards to children in your care, or within your household, you must notify your line manager if there has been any involvement of the police, a local authority or equivalent, or a mental health service due to a concern regarding the safeguarding of those children or there is domestic abuse.
- 1.7 You must notify us as soon as possible of any personal involvement in police investigations or proceedings. If you are charged with a criminal offence or receive any sanction for breaking the law (including a formal warning or receipt of a summons). This includes motoring offences with the exception of illegal parking tickets



- 1.8 You must notify us as soon as possible about offences against children by anyone who is a member of your household
- 1.9 Discrimination of any kind is also a safeguarding issue. All employees must raise any concerns of discrimination, of a colleague or service user, with your line or appropriate manager.

2. General Principles

The general principles of expected behaviour and performance are detailed in this section to help you understand what is expected.

Failure to comply with these principles may amount to misconduct and in some cases the breach may be so serious as to be considered gross (serious) misconduct. For further examples of what can be described as misconduct and gross misconduct please see appendix 1 below.

Please note this set of principles are not exhaustive.

2.1 Core Behaviours

Our Behaviour Framework should inform how we do our jobs and interact with one another to carry out our role in a way that leads to more effective working practices and healthy, authentic relationships.

Our key behaviours are the foundations to how we carry out our roles to ensure the best outcomes for the children and families.



2.2 Performance, Policies and Procedures

- You must ensure that you do not breach Action for Children's policies and procedures.
- You are required to maintain satisfactory standards at work, and a high level of quality, accuracy and diligence.
- You must ensure that you understand and adhere to the [Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure](#) and [Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedure](#).
- You must co-operate fully with your colleagues and with management and to ensure the maintenance of acceptable standards of politeness and respect.



- You have a duty to report wrongdoing (Whistleblowing) under the circumstances set out in the [Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure](#); Action for Children opposes all forms of discrimination and intolerance in the workplace and service settings and will take a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation
- You must take all necessary steps required to safeguard the public image of Action for Children and preserve positive relationships with its service users;
- You must adhere to the [Duty of Candour procedure](#), if applicable to your role. This includes being open and honest with individuals when something goes wrong with their care or support or has the potential to have an adverse effect on their wellbeing.
- You must notify your line manager of any additional employment or work outside of Action for Children;
- Membership of any organisation, political party or interest group whose values conflict with the core values of Action for Children must be disclosed to us;
- You are solely responsible for the safety of your personal possessions while in Action for Children's premises. You must ensure that your possessions are at all times kept in a safe place;
- If you find an item of personal property on the premises that does not belong to you, you are required to inform your line or other manager immediately;
- You must gain an understanding of our [Health and Safety procedures](#), observe them and ensure that safety equipment is always used, where relevant;
- You must not smoke (including vaping) inside our premises, workplaces or fleet vehicles (your personal vehicle where only you use the vehicle and home are excluded if you use these for the purposes of your work);
- You must work safely & efficiently and avoid any unnecessary waste of Action for Children's resources and with respect for the environment;
- All accidents, however minor, must be reported to management as soon as possible, and an entry made in Action for Children's [accident system](#);
- You must dress in a manner appropriate to the function and setting in which you are engaged, including the wearing of the designated uniform or personal protective equipment, where relevant.
- A dress code must not be discriminatory in respect of the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 for age, disability, gender reassignment, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. Therefore consideration will be made for staff who need reasonable changes to their dress code.



2.3 Timekeeping and Flexibility

- You must follow the procedure relating to notification of absence, including any which are set out in our [Attendance Management policy](#) and procedure;
- You must arrive at work promptly, ready to start work at your contracted starting times, and must remain at work until your contracted finishing times;
- If for any reason you wish to arrive later or leave earlier than your normal start and finish times you must obtain management authorisation first;
- We reserve the right not to pay you in respect of working time lost because of poor timekeeping and persistent poor timekeeping will result in disciplinary action in accordance with our disciplinary policy [insert link];

You are solely responsible for your own time recording on commencing and finishing work, where relevant. Any errors or omissions must be corrected by you and raised with management who will authorise or endorse any amendment. Action for Children is committed to supporting staff who need to be flexible regarding diversity and inclusion matters, such as parental or caring responsibilities or religious observances. Please speak to your line manager about flexible working requests

2.4 Confidentiality and Technology

- You must keep confidential, both during your employment and at all times after its termination, all information gained in the course of your employment about the business of Action for Children, and that of Action for Children's service users, suppliers and business partners, except in circumstances in which you are required to disclose information by law or in the course of the performance of your duties;
- You are not permitted to make use of Action for Children's IS and communication systems without management permission;
- Workers must adhere to the Action for Children [Acceptable Use Policy](#);
- Action for Children property, information and equipment must not be taken from our premises other than for use on authorised Action for Children business;
- You must adhere to our [Data and Information Security Policy](#) and act reasonably to ensure that no security breaches occur in manual or electronic systems;
- Personal photographic equipment must never be used, without appropriate authority gained in advance, to record images or videos of service users. [Cameras and other Imaging Devices](#)

2.4. Media and Communication

- You must not make any public statement to the media unless authorised by the press office, Operational Director of Children's Services or equivalent Functional Head. You are required to notify your Line Manager if you are contacted by the media;
- You must not publish any books or articles or make reference to Action for Children or Service Users in any personal publications or websites unless it has been authorised by an Operational Director of Children's Services or equivalent Functional Head;



- When using social media websites, you must consider the potential impact on the reputation of Action for Children. Any inappropriate material online is unacceptable, you must not put inappropriate and/or unauthorised material online, whether Action for Children can be identified or not.
- You must not have any contact with service users or their immediate family on social media websites, unless authorised by an Operational Director of Children's Services or equivalent Functional Head. Please refer to Action for Children's [Social Media Guidance](#) for further information.

2.5. Relationships and Gifts

- You must not enter into personal relationships/friendships with any service user or their immediate family including not inviting them into your home or to be part of their family or social network;
- You must not give or receive gifts or money, goods, services, tokens, hospitality or other favours of any kind from service users or their families in any circumstances;
- Gifts of money, goods, services or other favours of any kind from anyone should also not be asked for or accepted. Small tokens and reasonable hospitality from any person or body who is not a service user may only be accepted in accordance with the [Gift and Hospitality Register Policy](#).
- You must not enter a line management relationship with any colleague with whom you have a close personal relationship. Alternative line management arrangements must be made;
- You must declare a personal relationship with a peer worker to your respective line managers to ensure their professional integrity is not compromised. Any such disclosure will be treated sensitively and in strict confidence;
- You must ensure that personal, financial or business interests outside work do not conflict with Action for Children's values and must discuss any potential conflict with your line manager. No unauthorised private and/or for profit work may be undertaken on our premises including the use of Action for Children equipment;
- You must not use Action for Children contacts for personal or third-party gain or financial advantage;
- You must not give personal, legal or financial advice or recommend any professional person to service users or colleagues outside of your role and professional remit;
- Authorisation must be sought from your line manager prior to making collections for causes (other than Action for Children) during working hours.

Appendix 1 - Misconduct Examples

Set out below are examples which Action for Children considers to be misconduct, in some cases the breach may be so serious as to be considered gross (serious) misconduct This list is not exhaustive:

- Breach of Action for Children's policies and procedures, including those relating to equality and/or bullying; ([Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure](#); [Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedure](#))
- Failure to follow the procedure relating to notification of absence, including any which are set out in our [Attendance Management policy](#) and procedure;
- Poor time keeping (including but not limited to lateness, not ready to start work at your contracted starting times, and not remaining at work until contracted finishing times);



- Unreasonable refusal to work additional hours at short notice (as per your contract) or carry out reasonable tasks/duties outside your normal job description or remit, including at other locations as reasonably necessary;
- Unsatisfactory standards at work, poor level of quality, accuracy and diligence;
- Breach of confidentiality;
- Unsatisfactory standards of dress;
- Unacceptable standards of co-operation with colleagues and management and service users;
- Unacceptable standards of politeness with colleagues, management and service users;
- Failure to observe and follow our [Health and Safety procedures](#) and use safety equipment;
- Unnecessary waste of Action for Children's resources;
- Breach of the Action for Children Information Communication Technology Standards;
- Use of Action for Children property and equipment for unauthorised non-work-related purposes;
- Security breaches in manual or electronic systems;
- Unauthorised public statement, including to the media;
- Unauthorised reference to Action for Children or Service Users in any personal publications or websites;
- Unauthorised contact with service users or their immediate family on social media websites;
- Entering into personal relationships/friendships with any service user or their immediate family including inviting them into your home or to be part of your family or social network, including but not limited to online contact;
- Giving or receiving gifts or money, goods, services, tokens, hospitality or other favours of any kind from service users or their families;
- Not declaring a close personal relationship with a line report/reportee to a Senior Manager;
- Not declaring a close personal relationship with a peer worker to your respective line managers;
- Personal, financial or business interests outside work that conflict with Action for Children's values;
- Undertaking private work on our premises or time including the use of Action for Children equipment;
- Use Action for Children contacts or information for personal or third-party gain or financial advantage;
- Giving personal, legal or financial advice or recommending any professional person to service users or colleagues outside of your role or professional remit;
- Unauthorised collections for causes (other than Action for Children) during working hours;
- Unauthorised additional employment or work outside of Action for Children during working hours;
- Failure to disclose membership of any organisation, political party or interest group whose values conflict with the core values of Action for Children ;
- Failure to notify your line manager whether a Local Authority or other relevant body is, or has been, involved with the care of your child or a child for whom you are caring or has cared for in the past including shared care arrangements;
- Failure to notify us as soon as possible of any personal involvement in police investigations or proceedings. If you are charged with a criminal offence or receive any sanction for breaking the law (including a formal warning or receipt of a summons). This includes motoring offences with the exception of illegal parking tickets;
- Refusal to carry out reasonable management instructions;
- Insubordination.



Gross Misconduct

Set out below are examples which Action for Children considers to be gross (serious) misconduct, which will normally render an employee liable to summary dismissal without notice or pay in lieu of notice. This list is not exhaustive:

- Serious breach of Action for Children's policies or procedures;
- Failure to behave and/or communicate in a way that safeguards and promotes the well-being of children and young people;
- Failure to act in accordance with the Safeguarding Framework and/or any associated procedures, as appropriate;
- Failing to immediately report any behaviour or act that is causing harm or has the potential to cause harm to a child or young person to a line or appropriate manager;
- Where membership is a requirement of your role, failure to maintain registration to a professional body and adhere to any codes of practice or standards or legislative requirements relevant to that professional body;
- Where relevant to your role, failure to maintain registration under the UK vetting and criminal disclosure / barring scheme(s) relevant to your role;
- Theft, dishonesty or fraud (including by failing to act or make a disclosure);
- Assault, act of violence, dangerous behaviour or aggression;
- Unacceptable use of obscene or abusive language (including language of a discriminatory nature);
- Racism, Racist behaviour and/or Hate Crime
- Possession or use or being under the influence of non-prescribed drugs on Action for Children premises or during working hours;
- Possession or consumption of alcohol on Action for Children premises or during working hours, other than on occasions approved by Action for Children;
- Serious incapability at work brought on by alcohol or non-prescribed drugs;
- Wilful damage to Action for Children's property or the property of its employees or service users, suppliers or business partners;
- Serious insubordination;
- Falsification of records or other Action for Children documents, including those relating to obtaining employment;
- Unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying;
- Repeated refusal to carry out reasonable management instructions;
- Gambling at work (unless specifically authorised and undertaken in the course of your work e.g. lottery fundraising), bribery, corruption or tax evasion facilitation;
- Acts of indecency or sexual harassment;
- Serious breach of the health and safety policies and procedures, or endangering the health and safety of a fellow employee, service user or third party;
- Breach of confidentiality, including the unauthorised disclosure of Action for Children business to the media or any other party (this rule does not apply to making, in good faith, a protected disclosure (whistleblowing) or to a relevant pay disclosure);
- Unauthorised access to or use of computer data or computer hardware, or facilitating an unauthorised third party to gain such use or access;
- Copying of computer software, other than when authorised in your normal course of employment;



- Bringing Action for Children into disrepute;
 - Misuse of Action for Children's name or any names of a brand owned or used by Action for Children;
 - Serious negligence which causes or might cause unacceptable loss, damage or injury;
 - Conviction of a criminal offence (except for minor road traffic offences) that impacts on your suitability to do your job or your relationship with Action for Children, your work colleagues or Action for Children's service users, suppliers or business partners.