



## **POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR GOOD YOUTH WORK PRACTICE 2023/2024**

These guidelines are to support youth work practitioners in delivering quality youth work, which meets the needs of young people within the professional standards which govern the work. They are designed to ensure that all staff are aware of good youth work practice so that they can perform their duties in a manner which respects and protects young people, themselves, colleagues and the wider community.

The term “Youth Workers” is used within this policy due to the nature of the Youth Work roles, however, the standards are expected to be upheld by all staff, volunteers and trustees.

Ethics in the context of professional practice is about:

- Developing the ability of practitioners to see the ethical dimensions of problems, to reflect on issues, to make difficult decisions when appropriate and to be able to justify these decisions; and
- Acting with integrity according to ones responsibilities and duties, this may be about behaving in accordance with professional principles, guidelines, legal or ethical responsibilities or agency rules

### **Ethical principles:**

Youth workers have a commitment to:

- Treat young people with respect, valuing each individual and avoiding negative discrimination.
- Respect and promote young people’s rights to make their own choices, unless the welfare or legitimate interests of themselves or others are threatened.
- Promote and ensure the welfare and safety of young people, while permitting them to learn through undertaking challenging educational activities.
- Contribute towards the promotion of social justice for young people and in society generally, through encouraging respect for difference and diversity and challenging discrimination, not in a tokenistic way but by being truly anti-discriminatory in practice.

## **Professional principles:**

Youth workers have a commitment to:

- Recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life and to be aware of the need to balance a caring and supportive relationship with young people with appropriate professional distance.
- Recognise the need to be accountable to young people, their parents or guardians, colleagues, funders, wider society and others with a relevant interest in the work, and that these accountabilities may be in conflict.
- Develop and maintain the required skills and competence to do the job.
- Promote and work within an environment where these principles are discussed, evaluated and upheld.

## **Respect and trust in youth work**

Because youth workers have privileged access to young people, they have ethical and practical responsibilities which they must respect and abide by. Therefore it is very important that youth workers are clear about the boundaries of their role and that they ensure that young people with whom they have contact are aware of the nature of their working relationship.

Young people have the right to trust in the relationship that they have with a youth worker. Many young people involved in youth work are vulnerable and in need of support. Staff including youth workers must not abuse the balance of power in the relationship and must be very careful to establish and maintain clear boundaries which are understood by the young people.

This involves ensuring that a proper professional distance is maintained in the relationship between the youth worker and the young person so that the relationships of friendship or dependency are avoided. Therefore youth workers must not:

- Develop physical, sexual or emotional relationships with young people who are, have been or could be associated with their work.
- Develop friendships, outside of working time, with young people with whom they are working.
- Use language that is inappropriate or could be misconstrued by young people, such as sexualised language or over familiar terms that could be misleading to the young people and other staff members.
- Behave physically in a manner which could be misconstrued by young people.
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour exhibited by young people that is illegal, unwise from a safety point of view, or which is discriminatory or oppressive to others.
- Behave in a manner that is disrespectful of the physical or emotional privacy of young people.

Staff must dress appropriately for their role in working with young people. (if guidance is needed please ask)

## **Duty of Care**

Youth workers must recognise that, as adults, they have a responsibility towards the safety and welfare of the young people with whom they are working. Youth work does not happen in isolation and many young people and their families are in contact with other agencies. Some young people are vulnerable and may be at risk of physical or psychological harm, or emotional, verbal, or sexual abuse. It is the responsibility of youth workers to minimise the risk of harm. This duty of care may, in some circumstances, override other youth work considerations, such as confidentiality. (refer to Livewire's confidentiality policy)

Youth workers must:

- Ensure they work effectively with other agencies for the best interests of young people.
- Coordinate with other agencies to ensure effective individual case management and the best outcomes for young people.
- Keep accurate casework recordings, including telephone conversations, of services provided, actions taken and reviews of plans.
- Share information with other agencies to ensure the best outcome for young people.
- Discourage young people from making choices which may be detrimental to their well-being.

## **Professional Competence**

Youth workers must also consider their personal and professional competence in relation to their duty of care. Workers should not operate when their functioning is impaired due to personal or emotional difficulties, or as a consequence of taking medication. Workers must not consume alcohol or operate under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances, during their work with young people. Where there are no policies to determine practice and guide staff, the individual must ensure that they consider first the safety of young people and make appropriate decisions.

Staff must also ensure that they keep their knowledge of youth work and their professional practice up to date by:

- Taking responsibility for their own continuing professional development; by attending training seminars, meetings and conferences.
- Constantly evaluating their own practice, through session recordings, supervision and appraisal.
- Taking reasonable steps to be aware of current legislation affecting their role. Ignorance of the law is no defence against legal liability.

- Reading appropriate material to keep up to date with current trends.
- Engaging with working groups and contributing to the working knowledge of others.

Youth workers must not conduct themselves in ways which undermine public confidence in either their role as a youth worker or in the work of other youth workers. This includes:

- Complying with requests for information and data.
- Being punctual for meetings and other events.
- Communicating respectfully by letter, email and telephone.
- Maintaining dress and appearance appropriate to professional staff.

### **Self Protection**

Youth workers can be in situations where they may be at risk of physical harm themselves, or may be at risk of being falsely accused of harming or abusing young people. In order to minimise risk to themselves and young people youth workers should:

- Avoid being alone with a young person in a room or building. If being alone in a room or building is unavoidable then doors should be left open, the young person's acceptance of the situation sought and a colleague informed.
- Workers should only be alone in a building with a group of young people with the knowledge and approval of the line manager.

### **Lone Working**

Staff who are involved in lone working must ensure that they comply with Livewire's lone working policy and procedures and undertake regular assessment of the risks involved.

Working away from Livewire

- Always carry a mobile phone and identity card
- Ensure that a colleague or manager knows of your movements and expected time of return.
- Ensure compliance with Livewire's detached youth work policy when working away from Livewire.

When transporting young people

- Youth workers should not transport young people alone. If transporting a young person alone is unavoidable, staff should ensure that a colleague knows of your movements and expected time of return.

- When using private vehicles for work, staff must ensure that they have appropriate insurance cover and consent forms. However in very exceptional circumstances (for example in an emergency) the health and welfare of the young person must be the first priority.

### **Individual, Team and Management processes**

Livewire will take responsibility for the safety of its workers. This is done partly through the process that individuals, teams and managers must assess and manage risk. Youth workers have a right to expect that systems will be in place to help them, and have a responsibility to participate in those systems; they are that:

- All youth work is risk assessed.
- All staff have clear job descriptions and are aware of their support entitlement including supervision and appraisal.
- All staff are appropriately trained and aware of relevant policies.
- Staff inform their line manager and colleagues when they are concerned about a young persons or their own safety.
- A log is kept of issues of concern
- Line managers ensure that staff in potentially hazardous, stressful and or emotionally difficult work situations are closely supervised and supported.
- Line managers ensure that the number of staff on duty is compatible with the type of work and the numbers of young people involved.
- Staff, who suspect misconduct by another worker must immediately discuss their concerns with their line manager. If their concerns involve their line manager or for any other reason it is not appropriate to talk to their line manager, they should refer to the relevant management committee member with safeguarding responsibility: Currently Pete Bond: - 07966 519471

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if necessary and is due for review 23/03/2024