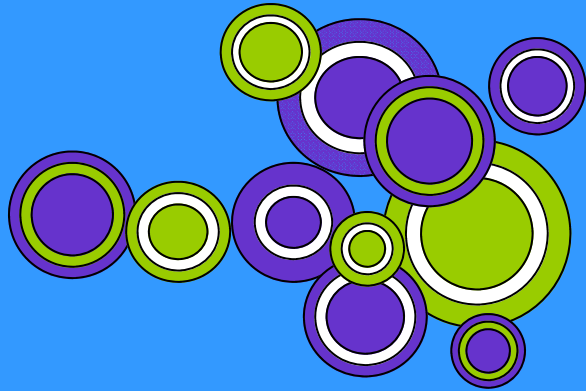


Professional Boundaries: Your Role with Children and Young People

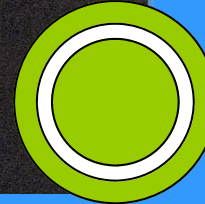
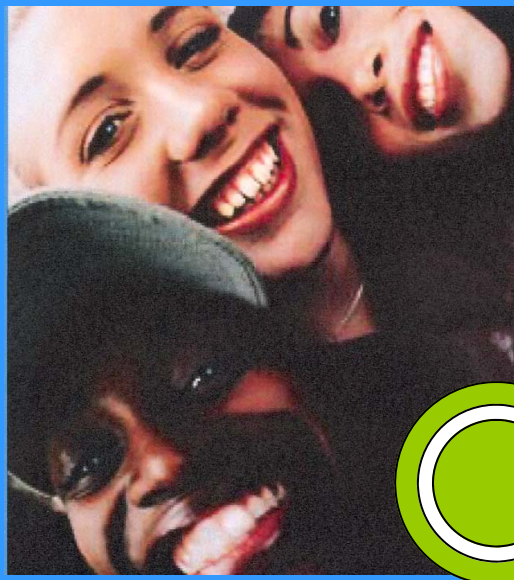


We hope that you enjoy your role working with children and young people. We would urge that you approach it thoughtfully, so that you can fulfil your duty of care, and avoid any misunderstanding. The following guidance is provided to help you.

Allegations against staff

Each week, an average of 3 allegations are made against staff working with children and young people in Buckinghamshire. The total number goes up every year. Each allegation involves distress to all concerned - not least to the individual accused of harming a child.

Many of these allegations came about as a result of naivety on the part of the member of staff, but the consequences can be very serious. This leaflet has been produced to help you to think about appropriate boundaries for your behaviour to avoid an allegation being made against you.



Does your place of work have a Code of Conduct for Staff?

Have you seen it? And signed it?

If not, ask your line manager or the lead person responsible for child protection about this: it is important for you to know from the start what is expected of you.

In addition, please take time to read the "Guidance for Safe Working Practice" document (www.bucks-lscb.org.uk) which has been agreed nationally. Consult it for guidance when necessary, and discuss any issues this raises for you with your manager.

Buckinghamshire LADOs:

Bridget Day

For concerns about staff & volunteers in education settings
01296 382070

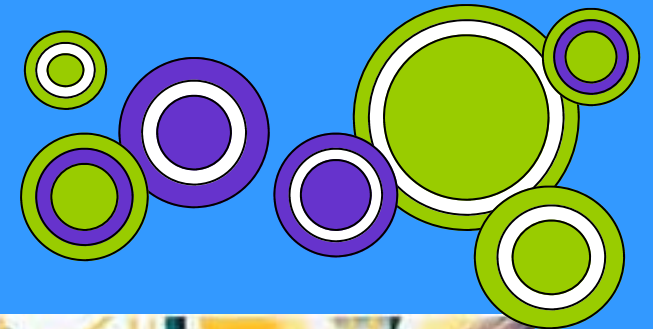
Sarah Harris

For concerns about staff and volunteers working with children in all other settings
01296 387757

Thanks to colleagues in Surrey for original text



Professional Boundaries: Your Role with Children and Young People



In your role you will be in regular contact with children / young people. They (and their families) will look to you to safeguard and promote their interests and it is likely that strong and meaningful relationships will be forged. It may also mean that you will become an important person in their lives. Such a position can be personally highly rewarding but also brings some very important responsibilities, and some potential risks.

You are in a position of trust

All concerned (including your employer) will have expectations of how you relate to the individuals you are serving, and it is important that you are clear in your own mind that the relationship is a professional, and not a personal, one. You must also remember that others may see the relationship differently. No matter how close the relationship is, you must always be aware of the power and influence of your position, and the vulnerability of children with whom you are in contact.

What should I do if I'm unsure what is expected of me?

Whilst warm and friendly relations are important in your role, overly familiar relationships can be misunderstood and lead to difficulties. If you have concerns about these matters - or feel that you may find yourself in a difficult position because of the way something may appear - you need to raise them with your mentor and/or line manager. Don't be afraid to raise such matters - especially if this is your first job - it will be better to discuss them openly and frankly so that you can receive support and guidance. All workers need to be aware that inappropriate relationships with (and inappropriate behaviour with or towards) children are unacceptable, may be unlawful, and that such relationships must be avoided.

Is it ever acceptable to touch a child or young person?

In your role you may need to use touch. It is a misconception that touching a child is unlawful. Touch may be necessary in the care of very young children, if a child is in immediate danger, or with those physically dependent for care needs. Nursing and instructing in practical tasks such as sport or music all require limited touch, and it may also be appropriate at times when reassuring or comforting others. The act of touching, however, must always be acceptable to the other person, and never in a way, or on a part of the body, where it could be construed as sexual or over familiar. People working with children need to take into account the child's own signals, and factors such as cultural difference, age, gender, and maturity, so that the touch is not unwelcome or misunderstood.

What about text messages, facebook or emails?

Contact may be made not only in face to face meetings but also through other forms of communication. Care needs to be taken when using electronic media, such as mobile phones and email, and should be agreed with your manager where it is part of your job. Do not give out personal contact details. If you use social networking in your own time, don't publish anything that you would not want a close member of your family or your boss to see, either now or in ten years time. If you are expected to use these sites with children as part of your work, use must be with senior management approval, using a separate and approved account set up for this purpose

What should I do if I have safeguarding concerns about the behaviour of another adult working with children?

Raise your concerns with the Manager / Head of your establishment. If you are still worried, contact one of the Buckinghamshire LADOs (Local Authority Designated Officers). Their contacts are on the reverse of this leaflet.

