

Volunteer code of conduct policy

This code applies to all volunteers, including those supporting Spark! led workshops and events, mentors, work experience placement host and Spark! Trustees. It is designed to support them in their contact with children, young people and adults with whom they work. It sets out what staff, volunteers and trustees should and should not do in terms of their behaviour.

There may be occasions where the code is breached however, the reasons for so doing should be discussed with a Spark! and recorded. Major breaches of the code of conduct will be dealt with under the Spark! Disciplinary Policy and where it is considered necessary the police or children's social care/social services may also be involved.

You must:

- Treat all children, young people and adults with dignity and respect including respect for their diversity and personal circumstances including his or her family circumstances, health, sexual orientation, race and cultural background, religious beliefs, academic achievements and career aspirations.
- Maintain professional boundaries in all our activities and contact with young people
- Operate within the policies and procedures of Spark! in order to provide an example of good conduct which reflects our values.
- Encourage young people to respect and care for others.
- Encourage young people to feedback on attitudes or behaviours that they find problematic.
- Respect the young people right to personal privacy and confidentiality, however be honest when it is necessary to break that confidentiality; for example, to protect someone at risk of harm or where the law has been broken.
- Work in partnership with other departments and/or external organisations to ensure that everything possible and reasonable is done to safeguard and promote the health, safety and welfare of our young people.
- Ensure that you do not allow yourself to get into a situation where an abuse of trust may occur. This means that you should not form a close personal relationship, sexual or otherwise, with a young person even if the young person is seeking and consenting to such a relationship. Should a relationship develop between two young people and one individual subsequently becomes an employee, trustee or volunteer, then this should be discussed with your manager or the designated safeguarding lead, in order that appropriate safeguards can be put into place.
- Plan activities that take account of particular young person vulnerabilities.
- Ensure that whenever possible there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people, or at least you are within sight or hearing of others. Unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with Spark! and young person, e.g. for one-to-one mentoring
- Ensure you put in place appropriate safeguards if required to transport young people, including seeking consent from parents/carers and Spark! if the young person is under 18 years.
- Be aware that physical contact with a young person may be misinterpreted by others, no matter how well intentioned. Do not engage in any 'horseplay' with young people or physical affection such as kissing and hugging.

- Communicate with young people through work based email accounts, work based face book and your work phone only.
- Report all allegations/suspensions of abuse, neglect or poor practice which might harm young people, using the safeguarding procedure or whistle blowing policy.
- Understand Spark!'s confidentiality policy and when it can/cannot be breached.
- Record in writing any concerns or issues raised about the safety or protection of young people, or any concerns about the conduct of individuals towards young people.
- Give guidance and support to new staff and volunteers to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities and behaviours expected by Spark!.

Make the best use of training and development opportunities offered to you to ensure that your knowledge and skills are at a level which allows you to contribute to organisational goals and objectives.

You must not:

- Have inappropriate, abusive or harassing physical or verbal contact with any young person or colleague.
- Engage in or encourage swearing or flirtatious behaviour, sexual innuendo or derogatory remarks that indicate prejudice or discrimination.
- Jump to conclusions or make assumptions about others without checking the facts as far as you are able.
- Show favouritism to any young person.
- Take a chance or an unnecessary risk when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach.
- Encourage young people to break the law e.g. in respect of smoking, alcohol, drugs or fraud, theft etc.
- Allow individuals to gain access to children and young people without having completed the appropriate checks and processes.
- Put yourself in positions where you are alone with children or young people away from organisational premises, unless the reason for this is part of a written work plan authorised by Spark!.
- Encourage children, young people or adults to be absent from school, work placement etc. unless it's an absolute necessity.
- Seek information you have no right of access to. This includes not printing off personal details about a young person for which you have no work purpose.
- Take advantage of young people in anyway. In particular gifts, including money or food, must not be accepted from or given to them unless this is part of a planned piece of work and you record having done so. Small gifts from young people as a token of appreciation are acceptable but again ensure you record this and usually these can be shared with other colleagues.
- Engage in activities which might damage the reputation of Spark! and undermine our goals and values.

When interacting with young people, partners, volunteers and colleagues online, you must follow the below code of conduct rules.

- Dress appropriately, as you would in an office environment
- Ensure that the room in the background is either blurred or appropriate:
 - Neutral where possible
 - No age inappropriate objects (such as alcohol)
 - No family photos should be displayed in your background
 - Not where others may interrupt the call
- Do not share personal information, such as where you live, location, DOB, last name
- Do not share any links that are not relevant to the reason for the meeting or inappropriate
- Use language that is age appropriate (*14/15 year old young people*)
- Do not record or take screen shots of the workshops in line with GDPR regulations, without prior permission

Professional Boundaries

Professional boundaries are the framework within which an individual employee's or volunteer's relationship with a young person exists, and which make that relationship professional and safe for both parties. They set the parameters within which services and work are delivered, making clear the roles and responsibilities of the employee or volunteer in respect of the young person. Staff, trustees and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure they set and maintain appropriate professional boundaries in relation to their work with all young people but in particular children and young people.

Areas where professional boundaries are often breached, include:

Over familiarity

Moving from a professional relationship with a young person to one which is over familiar, perhaps looking more like a friendship than a working relationship, can lead to a range of issues. This includes the clouding of a person's judgement about the young person and their needs or a member of staff feeling more obliged to the person that is required of the role.

Feelings and actions

At times when working with young people a volunteer may have personal feelings that can cause them concern or that they feel are perhaps inappropriate. Having such feelings is not in itself a breach of professional boundaries but acting on them might be. If an individual finds they are having such feelings they should discuss and explore them further with Spark! in order to ensure professional boundaries are maintained. In the same way a young person may develop personal feelings for that member of staff or volunteer. It is important that when this is identified, the volunteer deals with the situation sensitively and appropriately, talking it through with Spark! so that professional boundaries with the young person are maintained.

Family and friends

It is inappropriate for staff involved in work with young people, to work with or deliver a service to a friend or family member. If the situation arises, arrangements should be made for another staff member to take over the work responsibilities.

Social contact and becoming friends

There may be some circumstances in which those who work with young people may live in the same community or locality as those young people and their families and therefore may on occasions encounter each other in the course of normal daily activities. It is not acceptable for staff or volunteers to initiate social contact with young people outside or after the end of the working relationship. If an individual finds that a young person is trying to enter into social contact with them, the individual must raise this with Spark!, record it and deal sensitively with the matter.

Sexual relationships

Any sexual relationship with young people with whom Spark! undertakes any work is a serious breach of professional boundaries, and in the case of children under the age of 18 is against the law.

Self disclosure

While recognising that some members of Spark! and volunteers may have had personal experiences in their own life which may give them empathy and understanding of their young people' situation, it may be unwise for staff or volunteers to self-disclose their personal experiences as they would risk losing control over who and how that information is shared.

Working within the parameters of the role and working relationship

In any work with young people, there must be a clear plan of how, where and, when and why the work will be undertaken and by whom. Visiting young people at home or working outside of agreed and planned working hours must only be done if it is part of the agreed work plan.

Giving out personal contact details

Staff and volunteers must never give out their personal mobile or home telephone numbers, home email or address. This is to ensure that if a member of staff is absent then another staff member can deal with their call/email. It also protects staff and volunteers and keeps the relationship on a professional level.

Continuing a personal relationship after the service has finished

It is never acceptable for a staff member or volunteer to continue to see a young person in a personal capacity once the services or piece of work they have been involved in is completed. Some young people like to keep in touch but this should be only in relation to the work and purpose of Spark! and should be recorded.

Procedure for dealing with breaches of the code of conduct and professional boundaries

If you become aware that the code of conduct or professional boundaries are being breached by an individual and are concerned about his/her/their conduct, you must not keep it to yourself. You should first speak with the Spark!. If you feel unable to do this, or it is not possible to speak with the Spark!, you must report your concerns immediately using the procedure for dealing with Allegations against staff and volunteers, to the CEO or the Chair of Trustees. If you are concerned that you may have or are about to breach the code of conduct or professional boundaries you should talk through your concerns with Spark!