

Policy Title:	Young People’s Relationships with Staff Members Working in Residential Children’s Homes.		
Policy Code:	ICP 11.4		
Cross Referencing:	QS 11		
Authorised by:	Mark Parker		
Date:	Feb 2020	Review Date:	Feb 2021

1.0 Principles:

- 1.1 Impact for Change recognise that the ability to build, maintain and repair successful relationships is fundamental to young people’s successful development and that this ability may have been seriously impaired by previous experiences encountered by the young person before joining Impact for Change.
- 1.2 Impact for Change recognises that relationships between staff members and young people need to be based on honesty, mutual respect and recognised professional good practice. In addition staff members will need to relate effectively to young people and value them as unique individuals.
- 1.3 It is Impact for Change’s expectation that staff members will ensure that relationships with young people are based on integrity, trust and realistic expectations. Young people should feel that staff members relate to them through positive professional relationships.
- 1.4 Impact for Change recognise that staff members will need to spend significant amounts of time talking with the young people thus projecting a positive professional involvement in the young people’s lives.
- 1.5 Impact for Change acknowledges that it is crucial for staff members to recognise the importance of developing positive professional relationships with young people. Recognising the reality that a significant number of “Looked After” young people have a limited capacity to accept or trust relationships with adults.
- 1.6 Staff members are to act as professional parents and provide strong parental role modelling. Staff members are to be fully aware of their duty to “care”, “protect” and “safeguard” young people entrusted to Impact for Change’s care.
- 1.7 Staff members are to assist with:
 - Discussions with the young people to help them develop awareness and rationale in significant decisions.
 - Issues and feedback, which concern the young person arising from living in the home.
 - Problems in the young person’s personal life, which make it necessary that, they are looked after.
- 1.8 To promote openness and trust, employees are to:

- Provide opportunities for the young person to participate in a range of appropriate leisure time activities.
- Enable the young person to have an effective contribution in what activities should be available.
- Enable the young person to have input into the practical running of the home as a learning opportunity.
- Provide opportunities for young people's needs and expectations to be considered in all aspects of supporting them.

- 1.9 Staff members will be informed through team meetings and care plans of any difficulties a young person placed with Impact for Change is currently experiencing and of appropriate strategies/ guidelines that should be followed by the team.
- 1.10 Impact for change will make every effort to create a stable social environment by ensuring there is a continuity of approach from staff members supporting a young person.
- 1.11 Staff members are expected to provide a young person with consistency in approach and decision-making by having strategies and structure agreed through discussion with the Registered Manager and following action plans, for example from Reviews and Team Meetings.
- 1.12 All staff members have a duty to avoid actions, which may be misconstrued as sexual approaches, and to respond firmly but sympathetically if sexual approaches from young people occur.

2.0 Guidelines:

- 2.1 Basic guidelines in developing positive relationships with young people are:
- A genuine professional commitment.
 - Offering continuity to enable a young person to have confidence in building the relationship.
 - Make time available to talk, listen and take an interest in the young person's life.
 - Understand that the needs of the young person are best met if relationships are resilient and consistent.
 - Understand that mutual respect and confidence is not easily realised, and will require time. Although employees may show respect for the young people, it may take some time before that is returned.
 - Staff members must act at all times with integrity; this means, for example, keeping your word, and meeting agreements.
 - Staff members are not to make promises that they can not keep.
 - Staff members are to demonstrate that they are truthful, consistent and reliable.
- 2.2 Staff members care practice will be orientated towards:
- The reasons why young people need to be looked after in the home.
 - The needs of the young people as individuals.
- 2.3 Staff members will be aware of and comply with policies on:
- Appropriate language when talking to young people.
 - Appropriate tactile contact.

- Appropriate physical intervention.
- Appropriate professional boundaries.

3.0 Touch:

3.1 Physical contact is an important element of care and parenting of young people and related to the young people's varying individual needs.

3.2 The following principles should be followed:

- At or before admission, the significance of contact should, through discussion with the young person, other professionals and previous carers, be ascertained and taken into account and recorded in the care plan, and communicated to team members by the Registered Manager.
- Physical contact should not be in response to, nor intend to arouse sexual expectations or feelings.
- Age and gender of the young person must be considered.
- Where it is thought inappropriate to respond to a young person seeking physical comfort, staff members should offer explanation and verbal support.
- There should be no general expectations of privacy for the physical expression of affection/comfort although this may be appropriate in certain circumstances such as bereavement. All circumstances where physical expressions of affection or comfort occurs in privacy should be recorded in the young person's daily record.
- Staff members should develop awareness of their physical presentation and how to professionally approach contact with young people.
- Recognition needs to be made to any cultural differences and how touch and/or contact is perceived.

4.0 Freely Occurring Play/ Rough and Tumble Play (RTP):

4.1 This is a contentious issue, however this policy has been based around reattach and evidential practice

4.2 RTP appears to provide young animals the opportunity to finely tune their behaviour in a contextually relevant manner with peers and so modify the brain mechanisms that underpin social skills¹.

4.3 For RTP to remain playful, it has to be reciprocal. That is, partners have to show the restraint necessary to prevent one of the participants always gaining and maintaining the advantage.

4.4 RTP can be unpredictable and ambiguous. That is, participants cannot predict when or if they will lose control of the situation, nor how they will regain it. So, if one partner transgresses by being more forceful than expected, a decision has to be made as to whether that partner is abusing the situation or has just been carried away by exuberance.

¹ Pellis, S. M., & Pellis, V. C. (2009). The Playful Brain. Venturing to the Limits of Neuroscience. Oneworld Press: Oxford, UK.

- 4.5 RTP creates an experiential context that taxes and trains the pre frontal cortex (PFC)².
- 4.6 Children that engage in more RTP tend to be better liked by peers, over consecutive years exhibit better social skills, and, overall, perform more effectively in the school setting with regard to academic performance³.
- 4.7 Although the PFC is not fully developed until the mid- to late-twenties, by exposing young children to playful situations that require the exercise of turn taking, executive function can be improved, which shows that the PFC is amenable to enhanced function even before it is fully mature.
- 4.8 Children who have had positive playful experiences with their mothers and fathers prior to the onset of peer play appear to be provided with important preparation for later peer-peer behaviour. Such children are better able to establish friendships with peers once they begin school⁴
- 4.9 RTP needs to be professionally assessed for its suitability, and based on the young people's needs and individual circumstances.
- 4.10 RTP needs a risk assessment and agreement with the Registered Manager.
- 4.11 RTP needs to be young person led and the adult needs to stay in control, ensuring RTP doesn't become too rough or weighted in the favour of either party.

² Pellis, S. M., Pellis, V. C., & Bell, H. C. (2010). The function of play in the development of the social brain. *American Journal of Play*, 2, 278-296.

³ Pellegrini, A. D. (2009). *The Role of Play in Human Development*. Oxford University Press: New York, NY.

⁴ Denham, S. A., Mitchell-Copeland, J., Strandberg, K., Auerbach, S., & Blair, K. (1997). Parental contributions to preschoolers' emotional competence: Direct and indirect effects. *Motivation & Emotion*, 21, 65-86. Lindsey, E. W., Caldera, Y. M., & Tankersley, L. (2009). Marital conflict and the quality of young children's peer play behavior: The mediating and moderating role of parent-child emotional reciprocity and attachment security. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 23, 130-145. Paquette, D., Carbonneau, R., Dubeau, D., Bigras, M., & Tremblay, R. (2003). Prevalence of father-child rough-and-tumble play and physical aggression in preschool children. *European Journal of Psychology & Education*, 18, 171-189.