

43. Code of Good Safeguarding Practice when Working with Children

Introduction

Every staff member associated with MFC has been selected to work with the organisation, because they have demonstrated a desire to provide a positive, fun and safe environment for children and young people. Any person working with children is automatically placed in a position of trust - that carries with it authority, status, power and responsibility. It has been proven, that where adults are positive role models - and display high moral and ethical standards - the benefits to a child's development can be significant.

Duty of care

Every staff member that works with MFC has a legal responsibility to provide a duty of care. This duty of care means that each and every individual adult must take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of any child involved in an activity for which they and MFC are responsible. This duty of care is extended by a moral responsibility to work at developing a culture in which all children can take part in activities in a safe and enjoyable environment.

Relationship of trust

MFC recognises that genuine and appropriate relationships do occur between staff members and the children that use the organisations services. While the relationship of trust should always be nurtured, allowing appropriate relationships to lead into sexual, or inappropriate relationships, will always be wrong. MFC staff members need to be aware of the power and influence that can be exercised over a child. Where activities undertaken by MFC have an element of competitiveness **e.g.** selection to play, mentoring, assessment **etc.** a child can become dependent on the adult - and thereby, be more vulnerable. Therefore, it is vital that staff recognise their responsibility - and ensure that they do nothing to abuse their position of trust.

Good safeguarding practice

Despite having the best safeguarding policies and procedures; and the most effective safeguarding induction training and refresher training - there can still be many situations, that an MFC staff member may find themselves in, which could be misconstrued and/or misinterpreted by others. MFC wants to help reduce such situations from occurring - and which could be viewed from the outside as inappropriate, poor practice, or abusive. **Therefore:**

- **By developing the following standards of good safeguarding practice, MFC is seeking to ensure that all of its staff are protected from false allegations relating to child safeguarding concerns.**
- **By MFC staff members following these standards of good safeguarding practice, we further live and breathe our mission of protecting all children.**

Ultimately though, every staff member should never believe that they can rely on their own good reputation; or the good reputation of MFC to protect them. All MFC staff members should always behave and conduct themselves in such a way as to ensure that nothing they do can be misconstrued or misinterpreted.

Underpinning Principles of MFC's Good Safeguarding Practice

For the avoidance of doubt, the following forms an unequivocal and unalterable core standard and principle that applies to all adults that work with - and for - MFC, in any capacity:

Never develop or nurture an inappropriate relationship (or any form of inappropriate contact) with a child, that in any way falls outside of the work that you have been authorised to undertake on behalf of MFC.

- An **inappropriate relationship** with a child also includes a sexual relationship, or any form of sexual contact.
- **Inappropriate contact** would include a breach of any of the good safeguarding practices detailed under any of the headings below, where contact is being made in breach of any instruction to the contrary.

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Even if a child is aged 16 years or older, it is forbidden for an MFC staff member to have a sexual relationship; sexual contact; or an otherwise inappropriate relationship with them. Any such behaviour - by any MFC staff member - towards any person under the age of 18 years of age, represents a serious breach of trust and is not acceptable under any circumstances.

In circumstances, where the above underpinning principle is breached by a staff member, they will be subject to MFC's disciplinary procedures. Any breach of the above underpinning principle involving a volunteer - or member of staff from another organisation - will result in them being asked to leave MFC.

Furthermore, any such breaches of MFC's underpinning principle by staff will always result in a referral being made to one or more statutory agencies such as the Police, the Local Authority Children's Social Care Department, the FA, the PL/PLCF or EFL Trust and/or the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Not-with-standing the above underpinning principle, it is MFC's intention to regularly review the following guidelines - relating to standards of good safeguarding practice - to ensure that they reflect the very latest best practice; and that they take account of the ever-changing safeguarding risks that children can face.

General good safeguarding practice

MFC staff members must adhere to the following:

Never

- Never exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues
- Never make inappropriate promises to a child, particularly in relation to confidentiality
- Do not ask a child to keep a secret
- Do not jump to conclusions about others, without first checking the facts
- Never allow allegations by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded - or in any way not acted upon
- Never agree to meet a child on their own on a one to one basis. If such a situation should be requested by a child, then you are required to immediately speak with MFC's **DSO**.

Behaviour good safeguarding practice

MFC staff members must adhere to the following:

Never

- Never act in a way towards a child that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive. This includes verbal aggressiveness and shouting
- Do nothing that would cause a child to lose self-esteem **e.g.** by embarrassing, humiliating, undermining them; or otherwise acting in a way that would reduce them to tears
- Never make sarcastic, insensitive or derogatory comments (or gestures) to a child, even if this was meant to be in fun
- Never make sexually suggestive comments (or gestures) to a child, even if this was meant to be in fun
- Never patronise or treat a child as if they are silly.

In addition to not behaving in any of the ways listed above, MFC staff members should always be careful not to behave in any of the ways listed above either in front of - or within the presence of - a child, even though it is not intended to be directed towards the child.

Communication good safeguarding practice

MFC staff members must adhere to the following:

- Never use inappropriate language in the presence of a child
- Do not allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.

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Personal contact good safeguarding practice

MFC staff members must adhere to the following:

- Never allow - or take part in - any form of inappropriate touching of a child
- Never take part in any rough, physical, or sexually-provocative games - which includes horseplay of any kind.
- Do not undertake things of a personal nature for a child which they can do for themselves unless you have been requested to provide that assistance by their parent or carer.

It is recognised that some children may need help with such things as tying laces and this is acceptable. This element of good safeguarding practice does not preclude attending to an injured or ill child, or from rendering first aid.

Personal information good safeguarding practice

MFC staff members must adhere to the following:

- Never let a child have your personal home address
- Never let a child have your personal telephone number/s
- Never contact a child via text message using a personal phone
- Never email a child from a personal email address.

Where emailing or texting a children is an accepted and documented operational procedure of MFC, this email and/or text must at all times come from the authorised MFC email account or work mobile phone - and each child's parent/carer must be copied into the email or text.

Physical contact good safeguarding practice

MFC staff members should only use appropriate physical contact if the sole aim is to:

- Develop sports skills techniques
- Treat an injury
- Prevent an injury or accident from occurring
- To meet the professional requirements of the sport or activity being undertaken.

Acceptable physical contact - as outlined above - would always take place in an open or public environment; and would never take place in secret or out of sight of others.

In all circumstances where physical contact is required, the adult must always explain the nature and reason for the physical contact; and reinforce the teaching or coaching skills being used. Unless the MFC staff member is responding to an emergency situation, the adult must always seek the child's permission for initiating the required physical contact.

Appropriate physical contact will never involve touching in or around the genital area, the buttocks and/or the breasts. In addition, any physical contact anywhere else on the body should not cause a child distress or embarrassment.

Positive influence good safeguarding practice

MFC staff members must adhere to the following:

Never

- Never smoke in front of children - or in any place that you could be seen smoking by them
- Never consume alcohol in front of children - or in any place that you could be seen drinking alcohol by them
- Never offer children drugs or other illegal substances
- Never offer children sexual materials **e.g.** adult magazines, adult videos and/or adult website addresses **etc.**
- Never accept bullying, rule violations, cheating or the use of prohibited substances - such as performance enhancers **etc.**

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Supervision good safeguarding practice

MFC staff members must adhere to the following:

- Never leave a child unsupervised
- A child must never be taken to an adult's home
- Avoid spending too much time alone with any one particular child where you are away from other adults
- Never go to a child's home where you would be alone with them
- Do not be in a dressing room with a child on your own. If this is unavoidable, ensure the door remains open
- Should circumstances require adults and children to share a dressing room, adults are required to provide the child with privacy and ensure that the adult showers and changes at a separate time to the child
- Mobile phones - and any technology capable of taken photos or videos - are not permitted to be used in changing rooms.
- Do not treat any child more favourably than others
- Never share a room with a child.

Social media definition

Social media is an interactive online media that allows users to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. It includes social and business networking websites such as Facebook, Myspace, Reddit, Twitter and LinkedIn. Social media also covers video and image sharing and blogging websites such as YouTube, Instagram, Google+, Tumblr and Flickr, as well as personal blogs, any posts made on other people's blogs and all online forums and noticeboards. This is a constantly changing area with new websites and apps being launched on a regular basis and therefore this list is not exhaustive.

This element of MFC's social media good safeguarding practice policy applies in relation to any social media that staff members and volunteers may use, regardless of whether it is specifically detailed in the definition above or not.

Social media good safeguarding practice

MFC staff members must adhere to the following:

- Never contact or communicate with a child through social media sites, or via any other form of social media app or interface
- Never permit a child to be added to your social media feed/s or social media apps.

Where a child requests to be added to any personal social media feed or social media app, you must immediately refuse the request and communicate the attempt to connect with you through social media to MFC's DSO. MFC's DSO will explain to the child that staff are not permitted to have child participants on their social media feeds; and that they should not send such requests again.

N.B. There may be circumstances where an MFC staff member may have a child participant on their social media feed - or on social media apps - as a consequence of appropriate contact prior to commencing work with MFC; or before the child became a participant with MFC. In all circumstances, MFC staff members should disclose this social media connection to the **DSO** and then delete all social media connections with that child. MFC's **DSO** will explain to the child and/or their parent/carer the reasons this action has been taken.

Transport good safeguarding practice

MFC staff members and volunteers must adhere to the following:

- Never use a mobile phone while driving with a child or children - whether or not the mobile phone meets handsfree legislation
- No adult is permitted to transport a child or children if they are in an unregulated job category
- Never transport a child or children if not in possession of the relevant licence entitlement, or the relevant insurances
- You should not transport a child without another adult being present.

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N.B. Where such a journey is unavoidable, then the staff member required to transport the child **must** first speak to their line manager or MFC's **DSO** and gain the consent of that other person **prior** to making the journey. The staff member must also ensure that they communicate with the parent/carer of the child to ensure that they are also fully aware that their child is being transported without another adult being present.

In all cases where the above procedure is used to transport a child without another adult being present, the staff member must complete a journey log and submit this at the end of each week to MFC's DSO. MFC will monitor journey logs to further reduce situations where a child needs to be transported by a lone adult.

In all cases where a child is transported as a single passenger - without another adult being present - the child should sit in the back seat of the vehicle and wearing their seat belt.

Reviewed & Updated: April 2021

MFC will review this **Code of Good Safeguarding Practice when Working with Children** at least annually. In addition, more frequent reviews will be undertaken following a change in safeguarding legislation; following the implementation of a new activity or service which involves contact with children and/or adults at risk; following a safeguarding incident within the Club (or one which directly concerns or affects the Club); and/or following a significant organisational change.