VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

All VICTA activities are designed to allow us to meet our charitable objectives. We use activities as a positive setting for social interaction and work hard to help participants question limiting presumptions they might have, helping them to view themselves and their potential in a new way. As such, relationships between staff, volunteers and children and young adults must be based on mutual respect and understanding. There must be clear professional and personal boundaries. By adhering to this code of conduct, volunteers become a positive contributor to the charity’s objectives and its beneficiaries.

Code of conduct

*When working with children and young adults*

As a volunteer, you should take steps to ensure that you do not place yourself in a position where an allegation can be made against you including on social media. Such consideration may involve, but is not limited to:

* treating children and young adults with respect and dignity at all times, appropriate to their age, background, culture and needs
* ensuring your contact with children and young adults is in the company of others wherever possible
* maintaining a professional approach to children and young adults that involves behaviour such as not divulging personal information, ensuring there is no inappropriate physical contact, avoiding inappropriate familiarity, including discussing inappropriate matters, losing self-control and being sensitive to issues that can be misconstrued
* the safety and wellbeing of all participants at all times
* respecting the confidentiality of information relating to individual children and young adults
* displaying consistently high standards of behaviour and appearance at all times
* discussing potential concerns with the Safeguarding Officer before any allegations are raised

Social media

The informality that social media encourages can mean that it might be harder to maintain a



professional distance that is required when working with children, young adults and the vulnerable. Communicating directly online with someone, for example with private messaging, is like meeting them in private.

When acting on behalf of VICTA, do not engage in social media activity unless managed by VICTA staff. Examples include but are not limited to messaging groups, accepting and/or sending friend request.

*When working with VICTA staff and other volunteers*

* Exercise a duty of care and respect towards others
* Be aware of the professional needs of others
* Keep in confidence discussions with colleagues unless it involves the welfare of child protection
* Make every effort to resolve misunderstanding informally by direct approach to the other person involved

*Drugs*

No drugs (other than prescribed medication or over the counter medicines which should be in a safe place out of the reach of participants) should be taken, consumed or shared on any VICTA activity.

*Smoking*

VICTA enforces a no smoking policy. Smoking can only take place in designated areas away from children or young adults during designated breaks. It must not encroach on a working role.

*Alcohol*

While alcohol is tolerated on 18 Plus activities, it is not appropriate to become inebriated at any point on the activity. You must be able to fulfil your volunteering duties each morning/day to the best of your ability.

With respect to activities where children and or families are present, alcohol must not be brought onto the activity site and/or consumed at any point. The only exception to this is where a licenced bar is available on site. In this instance, as a volunteer, you are reminded that it is not appropriate to become inebriated at any point on the activity. You must be able to fulfil your volunteering duties each morning/day to the best of your ability.

*In loco parentis*

When engaged on an activity with under 18s, as a volunteers, you are said to be ‘in loco parentis’. As such, when the children are in your care, you are expected to exercise the same degree of care which a ‘reasonable, prudent and careful parent would exercise.’ This duty extends to all who assist in a voluntary capacity, though a court may not always expect the same level of competence from a voluntary helper as from those who are professionally employed.

Guidelines for where abuse is witnessed, disclosed or reported

Safeguarding is the right of every child and vulnerable young adult accessing our services to be protected from any form of abuse. Abuse occurs when the child’s or vulnerable adult’s rights are not respected.

The welfare of the child or vulnerable young adult is the paramount consideration. If you are concerned that a child or young person has been abused, or is at risk of abuse, the one thing you must not do is nothing.

You should never try and deal with any allegation or disclosure alone. It must be reported to the VICTA Activity Leader or Designated Safeguarding Lead. The Designated Safeguarding Lead at VICTA is: Luke Wakefield.

Ways you may be alerted to a concern  
The most direct way you will be alerted to a concern is a direct disclosure. However, children or young people might not recognise or disclose that they are being harmed.

Other ways you may be alerted to a concern include:

* physical injuries or behavioural differences
* overhearing someone voicing concerns
* the way another adult behaves towards a child.

Children and young people do not always disclose information as they are likely to know the abuser, are afraid of the consequences for disclosing or worry they won’t be believed. Always remain vigilant and alert.

Guidelines and procedure for responding to a disclosure of abuse or suspicion of abuse

If there is a direct disclosure from a child or vulnerable young adult, or their behaviour or appearance gives rise to concerns, follow the guidelines below.

In all situations it is important:

* to stay calm – do not let emotions take over
* not to dismiss a child or vulnerable young adult’s concerns
* to listen and not to jump to conclusions
* to reassure them they are not to blame and they did the right thing to tell you
* to be honest about your own position, who you have to tell and why it can’t be a secret
* consider if you should move to a place that is out of earshot of others, but not to a private setting
* to keep the child or vulnerable young adult safe and seek medical attention if necessary
* to write down everything said and what was done (see ‘*recording information’*  for further guidance)
* speak with the DSL.

Do not:

* make promises you can’t keep
* interrogate the child or vulnerable young

adult

* cast doubt on what the child or young adult

has told you

* do nothing.

If a child or young person has chosen to speak to you, it is your responsibility to respond in an appropriate manner. Adults often have concerns about taking action including fears that they will make the situation worse, worried that the family involved will react badly or think it is someone else’s responsibility.

Sometimes, there are also data protection concerns. The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR does not prevent the sharing of information to keep children safe.

Recording information

VICTA has a ‘Record of Concern’ form held by members of the VICTA Activities Team, however you may not always have readily available access to this.

In this instance, any written record on paper is acceptable, following the procedure below. In the worst-case scenario, it is possible to record with typed notes on a mobile phone/device but write this up on paper at the earliest opportunity.

It is not always possible to record the information in real time as the child is speaking and this can sometimes distract the child from making a full disclosure. However, if this is possible, it provides the most accurate record of the disclosure.

Otherwise, after the disclosure, make the written record at the earliest possible opportunity.

When recording information, make sure that:

* concerns are recorded as soon as possible and ensure all key information is documented
* sign and date it, and keep it in a safe place until you can speak to the DSL
* If the child has disclosed information, keep a record of the exact words/phrasing used.

If the DSL feels that further corroboration is not required, then he/she should report concerns to the local social services.

If the DSL feels that further corroboration is required, he/she will have a confidential conversation with other relevant employees. Observations should be shared. The DSL may contact social services at this stage, or other agencies for advice. If the DSL considers there is a consensus of concern, then he/she should report concerns to social services.

The DSL should continue to maintain records of observations and reports. Depending on the situation the DSL may discuss employee concerns with the parents/carers.

The DSL may feel it necessary to confer with other relevant staff, to gather other observations and to keep relevant staff informed of the situation.

The DSL should contact the social services/agencies for advice and support.

Unannounced visitors

You should not allow any visitors to come into contact with the children unless you have been advised beforehand of their arrival.

Lost child procedure

If children are split into groups for their activities, the group leader, who may be a volunteer, must be aware at all times who is in their group and where they are. When going out in a group, participants must be made aware who is in charge of their group and not move groups without the leader’s permission.

If a child goes missing, the rest of the group should be brought together and supervised while other members of the team search the area immediately. If this does not locate the missing person then the parent should be contacted and the whole site searched by staff. After this, the police should be called if they cannot be found.

Where travel is required within an activity, for example to the venue, the Activity Leader will make you and all volunteers aware of any additional procedures in place.

Bullying

Bullying is not tolerated, verbal or physical, on any VICTA activity. You must report any incidents to the Activity Leader.

Safe practice

During an activity, you will be asked to assist children and young people in a number of different ways. Do not do things of a personal nature for a participant that they are able to do themselves

Toilets

Where possible, encourage groups to take a comfort break together with one responsible adult while the other adult(s) supervises the remaining children or young adults.

If you find yourself in a situation where you are only taking one child or young adult to the toilet, notify at least one other adult in your group and if possible, take an additional adult or young person with you.

Adults who haven’t previously volunteered and/or haven’t had a DBS check shouldn’t be left alone with children or take them to the toilet unaccompanied.

Photographs and video material

Photos and videos of the children or young adults taken by volunteers on personal cameras or phones can be taken and shared with VICTA for marketing purposes. Once shared with VICTA, these photos and videos must be deleted from your camera/phone before you leave the activity or as soon as possible afterwards. Volunteers are not permitted to use images of participants in any way, including social media, as this contravenes the permissions given by participants and their families.

Insurance

VICTA Children holds Public Liability which covers staff and volunteers on activities and residential activities. It does not cover your personal belongings, so anything that you bring to a residential activity or a general activity is your responsibility.

Travel expenses

For UK activities, you will be reimbursed up to £50.00 for either the cost of a standard return on the train/coach, and any necessary pre-agreed taxi fares to the venue. Alternatively, private mileage will be reimbursed at 30p a mile up to £50.00. If you elect to claim just for petrol usage (and save VICTA costs), please keep a receipt of the petrol and attach to your claim form. All of these must be agreed with the Activity Leader and fall within our expense guidelines.

Other expenses

If you have been asked to buy supplies for the activity then please keep your receipts for this and attach to your expense claim form.