

Labour Party

Safeguarding Code of Conduct

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1. Introduction

The Safeguarding Code of Conduct outlines the behaviour expected of staff, members and volunteers of the Labour Party, and staff, members and volunteers of other organisations who engage with children and young people through the Labour Party and its activities. The underpinning principles of the code are that:

- the welfare of children and young people is paramount;
- it is the responsibility of all staff, volunteers and members to behave with integrity, maturity and good judgement.

A separate safeguarding code of conduct for children and young people is under development although clearly many of the elements of this code would also apply to children and young people's behavior too.

2. Purpose

Following the Safeguarding Code of Conduct will help to protect children and young people from abuse and/or inappropriate behaviour from adults; clarifies the standard of behaviour expected of staff, members and volunteers; and will reduce the possibility of unfounded allegations of abuse being made against them. This is not an exhaustive list and cannot cover every eventuality. It is intended to provide a minimum framework for safer working practice when in contact with children and young people at all levels of Party engagement and activity.

This Code relates to Labour Party rules, that is: "No member of the Party shall engage in conduct which in the opinion of the NEC is prejudicial or in any act which in the opinion of the NEC is grossly detrimental to the Party" (2016 Rule Book, Chp 2.1.8).

3. Upholding the safeguarding code of conduct

Any breaches of the code of conduct should be reported:

- Staff or volunteers should report breaches to their line manager, or to the Executive Director of Governance.
- Members should report breaches to their regional or national office.

A detailed reporting and recording structure will be set out in a new complaints and safeguarding reporting procedure.

Staff, members or volunteers who breach this code of behaviour may be subject to the Labour Party's performance measures or disciplinary procedures. Any breach of the code involving a volunteer or member of staff from another organisation will result in them being reported to the appropriate safeguarding officer within that organisation.

Serious breaches may also result in a referral being made to a statutory agency i.e. the police and/or the local authority children's social care department if it is thought that the breach amounts to harm or risk of harm to a child or young person.

4. The role of staff, members and volunteers

It is important that staff, members and volunteers, including elected representatives and senior officials, are aware that they may be seen as role models by children and young people and therefore must act in an appropriate manner at all times. Elected representatives and others in positions of authority must take particular care that their status and power is not used, or may seem to be used, inappropriately to influence children or young people or to cause them harm.

5. Abuse of a Position of Trust

When engaging with children and young people on behalf of the Labour Party staff and volunteers are considered to be acting in a position of trust. Broadly speaking, a relationship of trust can be described as one in which one party is in a position of power or influence over the other by virtue of their work or the nature of their activity. It is vital for all those in positions of trust to understand the power this can give them over those they care for and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence of this relationship.

Young people of 16 or 17 can legally consent to sexual activity but they may still be relatively immature emotionally. It is essential that those who may be in a position of trust recognise this vulnerability and ensure it is not exploited.

Where a person aged 18 or over is in a specified position of trust¹ with a young person under 18, it is an offence in certain circumstances for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that young person, or to cause or incite that young person to engage in or watch sexual activity even if the young person appears to consent. Therefore, given this principle, the Labour Party expects that:

- any behaviour, which might allow a sexual relationship to develop between the person in a position of trust and the child or young people in their care, must be avoided;
- any sexual relationship within a position of trust relationship is not allowed so long as the relationship of trust continues.

6. When working with children and young people through any Labour Party activities or events, it is essential that you do:

- uphold this code, and any additional safeguarding procedures, at all times;
- treat children and young people fairly, without prejudice or discrimination and avoid favouritism;
- ensure allegations or disclosures about abuse by a child, young person or another adult are taken seriously and reported, including peer-on-peer abuse by children or young people and any allegations made against you. Follow the Labour Party safeguarding procedures for reporting such concerns;
- challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations and suspicions of abuse regardless of the status of the adult(s), including their political office, or organisation(s) that may be implicated in so doing;
- respect a child or young person's right to personal privacy but never agree to keep any information relating to the harm of a child or young person confidential;
- ensure all contact, interactions and communications (face-to-face and online) with children and young people are appropriate and relevant to the work of the Labour Party and always use language which is appropriate and is neither bullying, offensive, sexist, racist, homophobic, intimidatory or discriminatory regardless of political differences;
- maintain appropriate conduct and avoid threatening or potentially violent behaviour such that children or young people have no cause to feel anxious or frightened by adult behaviour during meetings or events;
- value and take children and young peoples' contributions seriously, actively involving children and young people in planning activities wherever possible;
- plan activities so that they involve more than one other person being present, or at least within sight and hearing of others. There may be occasions where this is not possible so in such circumstances the meeting should be conducted in a room with an open door or visual access.
- plan activities so that they are held in suitable venues and locations for children and young people and that appropriate travel arrangements and health and safety measures are in place where necessary;

¹ Sexual Offences Act 2003. Sect 16-19 re-enacts and amends the offence of abuse of position of trust. Position of Trust offences apply to those who care for, train, supervise or are in sole charge of those up to the age of 16 years in specified settings which include: children's homes, education settings, hospitals and those reporting for court proceedings.

- ensure that the focus of your relationship with a child or young person that you have met through the Labour Party remains professional at all times.
- foster a culture where children, young people and adults alike feel comfortable enough to raise any concerns they may have about inappropriate attitudes or behaviour towards children or young people;
- consider carefully any physical contact with a child or young person as there may be occasions where a distressed child or young person needs comfort. Staff, volunteers or other members should use their discretion to ensure that it is appropriate and not unnecessary or unjustified contact. Be aware that physical contact with a young person may be misinterpreted, no matter how well intentioned. This means you should:
 - consider the way in which they offer comfort and reassurance to a distressed child or young person and do it in an age-appropriate way;
 - never touch a child or young person in a way which may be considered indecent;
 - record and report situations which may give rise to concern from either party;
 - not assume that all children or young people seek physical comfort if they are distressed;
- ensure that if any kind of physical support is required during any activities, it is provided only when necessary in relation to the activity and that this is done in a way that other colleagues can observe you and in a way that the child or young person is comfortable;
- follow the recommended adult-to-young people ratios for meetings and activities and ensure there is separate sleeping accommodation for children and young people and adults at all residential events (see Event Guidance for more detail).

7. In addition, it is essential that you DO NOT:

- conduct a sexual relationship with a child or young person or indulge in any form of sexual contact with a child or young person. Any such behaviour between an adult member of staff, member or volunteer and a child or young person involved in Labour Party activity represents a serious breach of trust on the part of the staff member, party member or volunteer and is not normally acceptable. However, there may be exceptions to this for example if the adult is married to the young person or had a pre-existing relationship prior to the young person's involvement in the Labour Party;
- physically, emotionally or sexually abuse, maltreat or exploit any child or young person;
- exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues nor allow allegations against staff, members, volunteers or elected representatives to go unreported or simply 'investigate' them yourself;
- use inappropriate language in any media, or undertake activity which lessens the effectiveness of this code by displaying an attitudes or behaviours which are not conducive to protecting and promoting the welfare of children and young people;
- make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children and young people or discuss adult sexual relationships in front of them;
- rely on your reputation or that of the Labour Party or any elected office you hold to protect you;
- adopt an attitude of complacency with regard to your own conduct. Remember, even well intentioned actions may be misinterpreted by others;
- give or receive gifts and/or substances such as drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, e-cigarettes from or to a child or young person;
- encourage or appear to encourage children or young people to drink alcohol or take drugs;
- allow your judgment to be impaired by alcohol or any other substance when acting in a position of trust;

- smoke cigarettes or vape with, or in front of, children and young people;
- arrange any residential event involving children or young people without ensuring that another approved person will be present and parental consent has been given;
- use any type of physical punishment in order to discipline. Shouting at children and young people should be avoided whenever possible and only if alternative forms of discipline have failed;
- photograph or film children or young people for which no prior consent has been provided.

8. Online e-safety code of conduct

The term e-safety can be defined as the process of limiting the risks to young people, our staff, volunteers and members when communicating via the internet, digital and mobile devices and using social media. Social media includes blogs, Wikis, online communities, and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter and Instagram.

As an organisation that engages with children and young people, the Labour Party acknowledges the positive impact and involvement that social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have on the lives of young people and their ability to learn about and engage in political debate. The online environment is utilised by the Labour Party to encourage children and young people in our campaigning work and events. At the same time, we recognise the dangers and potential risks that online activity can pose to both children and young people.

There is a wide range of ways to communicate with children and young people and this is a rapidly changing environment as new technologies, applications and social media sites merge. No code of conduct for e-safety can cover all of these separately. However, there are broad principles that we expect all staff, volunteers and members to adhere to in order to safeguard young people and themselves in respect of using all these forms of media, devices, apps and social networking sites:

9. Content

- when communicating with young people online observe the same rules of behaviour as if speaking with them in person that is by being professional - polite, respectful, not swearing or saying anything (using the written word, images or icons) that could be regarded as sexual innuendo, bullying, intimidation or discrimination;
- ask yourself whether the content of the message could be misunderstood or misinterpreted by someone else;
- always ensure the content of any online communication has a clear 'work' purpose;
- don't use any 'text speak' abbreviations, symbols or emoticons even if you ordinarily use these in your personal life;
- never disclose non-public and confidential information about the Labour Party, its staff/volunteers or the children or young people with whom we are working;
- contact with children and young people online should only be a recognised element of your work and done strictly for Labour Party business purposes only;
- do not send any illegal or inappropriate content (written, images or icons) including sexting via mobile phones or sharing of abusive images of children or young people.

10. Openness and scrutiny

- always communicate with children and young people in a way that is open to others to see if necessary;
- do not use private messaging facilities on social networks or apps rather if it needs to be private then do this by email exchange or phone and note the conversation afterwards;
- ensure there is always a record of such conversations that would be open to others to check if necessary;
- it should always be clear who the communication is from when the Labour Party is communicating with a child or young person;
- there should be no use of anonymous apps – that is where the sender can remain anonymous.

11. Recording

Only use social media and apps where there is a permanent record of what's been said and sent thereby being open to scrutiny eg the use of Snapchat is inappropriate.

12. Use of equipment

Labour Party equipment (including computers, laptops, mobile phones, notebooks, etc.) must not be used to view, download, create or share (with colleagues or children) illegal content including abusive images of children or young people)

13. Expectations for paid staff:

The requirements of conduct online of all Labour Party staff with respect to children and young people are that they must not:

- share personal contact details with young people. This includes mobile phone numbers, home address, social networking accounts, personal website/blog URLs, online image storage sites, passwords etc.
- ask to become an online friend/contact of a young person or add/allow a young person to join your contacts/friends list on personal social networking profiles;
- use your own digital camera/video for work – this includes integral cameras on mobile phones unless this is part of Labour Party official business and has been agreed and documented by the line manager;
- share work photographs or films on personal social media sites including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram;
- play online games with any child or young person unless part of official Labour Party business using professional accounts and devices;
- seek to befriend a child or young person or their family online whom you have met through work for any purpose whatsoever including for the purpose of developing a personal and/or sexual relationship;
- view or share abusive images of children and young people (sometimes referred to as 'child pornography').
- use your personal mobile phone to communicate with young people unless an emergency or agreed as part of event procedures.

14. Text messaging

The use of text messaging to communicate with individual young participants increases the vulnerability of both the young person and (typically) the member of staff or volunteer. However, there may be circumstances in which it is justified, subject to appropriate safeguarding considerations. In these circumstances the following guidelines will apply:

- the decision to use text messaging should not be made by a staff/volunteers in isolation and should be discussed and agreed with the relevant line manager;
- only those staff members or volunteers approved to send bulk or individual messages are permitted to do so;
- staff and volunteers should only send individual text messages to a young person in response to a specific question or immediate request; staff and volunteers should not engage in general conversation with children and young people via text message;
- all messages should be stored and backed up regularly on the computer - phone messages should not be edited or deleted;
- children and young peoples' mobile phone numbers should be kept secure via passcode locks on phones and computers. The mobile phone numbers should not be shared with anyone else unless consent has been given;
- the content should relate solely to Labour Party activity;
- all bulk text messages sent to children and young people should also be sent through approved channels and recorded for external moderation if required.

