

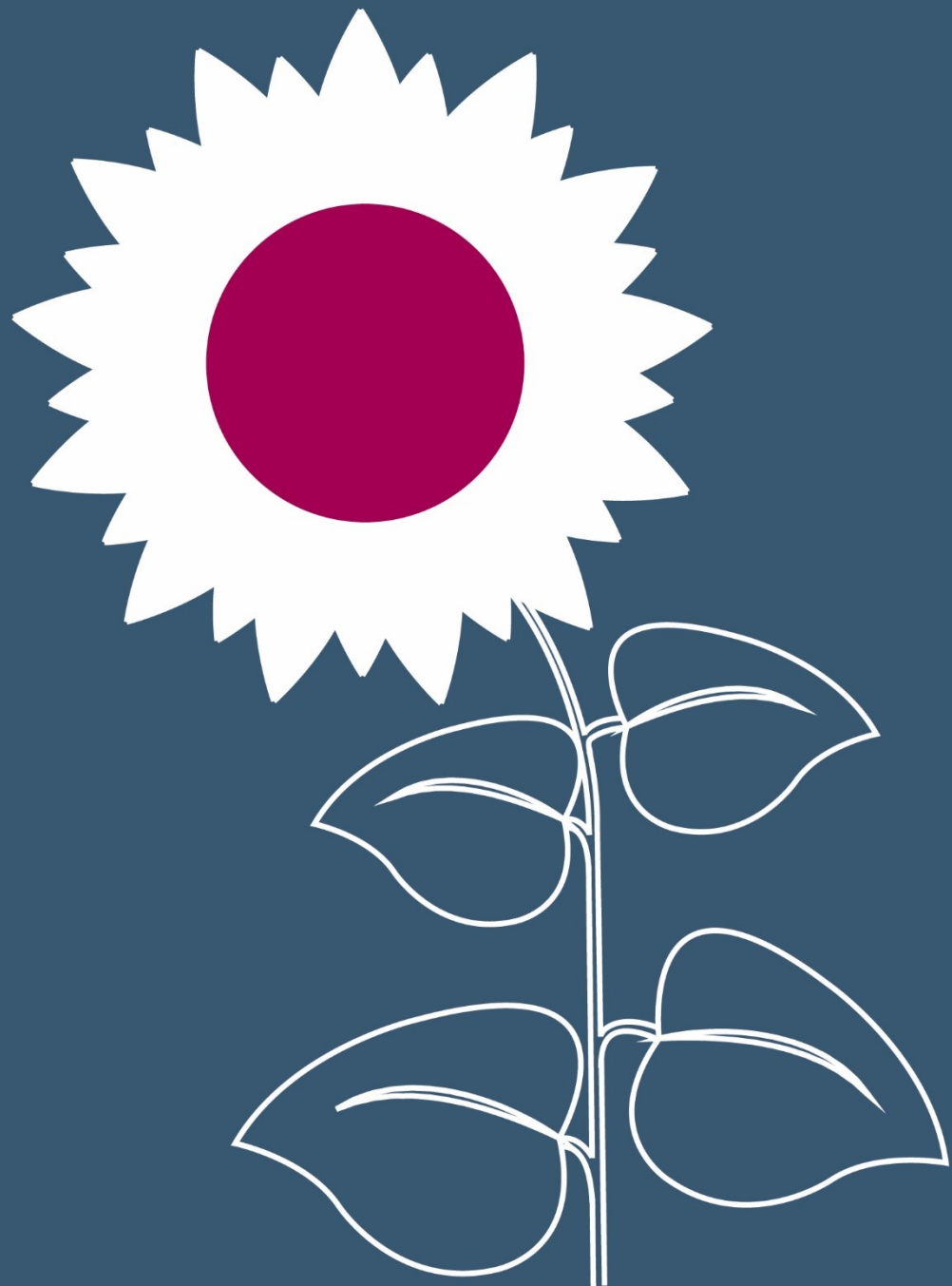


City of  
**Stoke-on-Trent**

# Relationships

Tri x 5\_4\_12 September 2023

Review September 2024



# Information sheet

<b>Service area</b>	Children's Social Care
<b>Date effective from</b>	Dec 2013
<b>Responsible officer(s)</b>	Strategic Manager Children in Care
<b>Date of review(s)</b>	Dec 2014 March 2021 July 2022 July 2023 September 2023
<b>Status:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mandatory (all named staff must adhere to guidance)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Optional (procedures and practice can vary between teams)</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Mandatory
<b>Target audience</b>	Between young people and staff Between young people Between members of staff
<b>Date of committee/SMT decision</b>	
<b>Related document(s)</b>	
<b>Superseded document(s)</b>	July 2023
<b>File reference</b>	5_4_12

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide clarification and guidance for members of staff who work with children and young people in residential children's homes with regard to supporting the development of appropriate relationships within the home.

## 2 Aims and Principles of Policy

- 2.1 All members of staff working in Stoke-on-Trent Children and Families, Early Intervention and Children's Social Care will maintain a safe, caring and warm environment with a consistent professional approach to young people's care at all times.
- 2.2 Young people may have historically had negative relationships with those who they love or, those whom they have come into contact with. It is therefore our responsibility as corporate parents to show young people that they are valued and respected by the people who now care for them.
- 2.3 Residential childcare workers must develop an understanding with the young people that all relationships are built on respect, honesty and trust.
- 2.4 At all times staff will ensure they give the young person respect, listening to their opinions and points of view and showing them a courteous response.
- 2.5 When caring for any young person staff must remember to respect their privacy and dignity at all times.
- 2.6 It is expected that all staff and young people will treat all those who live or work within the home with respect at all times regardless of their race, religion, sexual orientation or any disability.

## 3 Rights and Responsibilities of Children

- 3.1 All children have the right:
- To be treated with dignity, respect and privacy.
  - To have opportunities to make friends, to love and be loved.
  - To equal rights and responsibilities with regard to their personal relationships, appropriate to their age and understanding.
  - Not to be abused and/or exploited.
  - To be provided with protection appropriate to their age, needs and abilities.
  - Not to have other people's attitudes/values imposed upon them.
  - To express their views and to have these views heard, valued and acted upon.
  - To say no.
  - To environments which value their privacy and dignity.

- On a continual basis, to develop, learn and have access to information about themselves, human development and emotions at a level and pace appropriate to their needs and abilities.
- To the same basic rights as other citizens of the same age and country within the context of people's own cultural and religious beliefs.
- To decide who they share personal information with.

3.2 Alongside these rights children have responsibility to:

- Be respectful and considerate of other children and adults with whom they have contact.
- Consider the implications and possible consequences of their actions for themselves and others.

## 4 Relationships between Staff and Young People

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of all members of staff working in the children's home to maintain clear boundaries in all their relationships with children and young people.
- 4.2 Clear expectations and boundaries will be discussed at the initial admission process so the young people know what is expected of them and what they can expect from the staff.
- 4.3 Young people will be encouraged to take into account the points of view of others.
- 4.4 If it is thought that the young person may have inappropriate feelings towards a member of staff it is advised that no physical contact takes place and any approaches to the staff member are recorded and risk assessed accordingly.
- 4.5 The young person's wishes must be respected at all times when raising discussions about relationships.
- 4.6 No young person should be singled out or favoured by any staff member, and the buying of gifts for the young people must be in line with Stoke-on-Trent City Council Employee Handbook section on Buying and Receiving Gifts
- 4.7 **Young people must not be taken to the home of any staff member, at any time.**
- 4.8 Any disagreements between staff and young people will be dealt with in a professional manner, and if requested a complaint form provided and the complaints procedure followed.

## 5 Personal Relationships between Staff

- 5.1 It is appreciated that meeting a partner at work may occasionally happen.
- 5.2 Should this occur within the residential setting the Registered Children's Home Manager will need to be informed so appropriate precautions can be taken to protect all concerned. EICSC request this information because:
- When two people are involved in a relationship they may spend more time together than with the young people, however unintentional.
  - Evidence has shown that people in a relationship may also be reluctant to report inappropriate practice by their partner, therefore putting the young people at risk.
- 5.3 Failure to report such relationships may result in disciplinary action.
- 5.4 Friendships between staff members must remain on a professional basis during working hours, and the appropriateness of topics of conversation relating to personal issues needs to be considered.

## 6 Personal Relationships between Young People

- 6.1 As part of a young person's development, they may become attracted to another young person within the home. It is the responsibility of staff to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children, including supporting access to advice, information and contraceptive services.
- 6.2 If a young person asks questions with reference to relationships and sex, staff will need to give appropriate answers, which will be dependent on the young person age, stage of development and understanding.
- 6.3 Young people who are unsure of their sexuality should be given advice and support, and not become the topic of ridicule or humour.
- 6.4 The risks associated with young people being together in a bedroom must be assessed before it is allowed. Where it is allowed, the door should always be kept open while they are together.

## 7 Sexuality

- 7.1 It is important to be aware of issues regarding sexuality when working with children and young people in care. This can be a particularly sensitive area for a young person and so care and sensitivity are essential when approaching this issue.
- 7.2 Give the child space and time to share information about their sexuality. Try not to put words in their mouth about how they are feeling.

- 7.3 Be aware of confidentiality issues if a young person tells you something. It may be possible that they do not want their family to know. Care to be taken when discussing issues at meetings or when sharing reports.
- 7.4 Be aware of groups within other organisations that can offer help, support and counselling to young people who may need this. The Youth Service has groups where a young person can get peer support as well as advice. Other services can also be used.
- 7.5 It is important to reassure the young person that it's usual to have feelings of uncertainty about their sexuality and emphasise that staff are there to support them.
- 7.6 There may be issues regarding cross-dressing. This needs to be carefully addressed in the young person's Placement Plan. A balance is needed between enabling them to cross dress whilst also being aware of the possible response of other children who live in the home. This could be a difficult subject for some young people to deal with and seeing another young person dressed in a different way may cause tension. Careful monitoring is needed to reduce the potential for bullying.
- 7.7 Whatever a child shares with staff about their sexuality, a non-judgemental approach should be taken and any further discussions and direct work should be at the child's pace.
- 7.8 Young People may wish to read or look at material of a sexual nature that they either enjoy or want to learn from. Like with any issues relating to sex a judgement is needed as whether the material is age-appropriate. In some circumstances it may be necessary to advise the young person to do this in the privacy of their own bedroom.

## **8 Working with Parents and Carers**

- 8.1 When young people are admitted into care it can be a very traumatic time for the young person and their family. Some family members will have feelings of guilt, anxiety, fear, and in some cases resentment, towards EICSC. As professionals we need to acknowledge and empathise with some of the difficulties they may be experiencing and feelings they may have and respond appropriately to them.
- 8.2 We need to work in partnership with parents and carers to promote positive relationships between the young people and their families. Any relevant information therefore needs to be shared with them and they should be included in decisions affecting their child/children, when appropriate.
- 8.3 Parents, carers and family members must be treated with respect and dignity at all times and visitors are expected to respect all young people, staff and other visitors at all times.

- 8.4 If there are no issues relating to contact, all family members and friends are welcome in the home. Visits to the home are not restricted to visiting hours, however visitors will be asked to give advance notice by making arrangements with staff of when they intend to visit. Residential staff have the right to refuse admission if a visitor arrives at an inappropriate or inconvenient time or if it is felt they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- 8.5 Any form of abuse, verbal or physical, towards young people or staff will not be tolerated. If this situation arises the visitor will be asked to leave and if necessary the police will be called.
- 8.6 Visitors are expected to respect property and any intentional damage must be paid for.