

Guardians UK

Staff Code of Conduct

Rationale

As stated in the statutory government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2023, schools and other organisations working with young people have a requirement to provide a code of conduct for all staff. For Guardians UK this Code of Conduct applies to suppliers eg. host families and drivers as well as to employees. The word 'staff' in this Code of Conduct therefore applies to both categories.

Guardians UK Aims, Principles & Practice

Your child is our priority.

At Guardians UK we care for each child as if they were our own. We act as a bridge between the school and the parent: communicating with both, caring for the child and making practical arrangements, to enable the child to thrive.

We spend time getting to know your child, meeting up with them, staying in contact with them and responding quickly to their needs and your requests.

Guardians UK always acts professionally and fosters genuine friendships with people in our care.

Linked documents

This code of conduct must be read with due regard to the following documents which are available either on the Guardians UK website www.guardiansuk.com or upon request:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Prevent / Anti-Radicalisation Policy
- Online Safety and Sexting Policy
- Anti-bullying and Cyberbullying Policy
- Missing Students Policy
- Emergency Contingency Policy (includes pandemic information)
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Information Sharing and Data Protection Policy
- Host Family Handbook
- Student Handbook including A-Z of Behaviour Guidelines

- Drivers Handbook
- Staff Terms & Conditions and Contracts
- Personal job descriptions

Safeguarding & Welfare

Guardians UK is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of both young people and staff within its organisation. It operates within prescribed government guidelines including;

- Children's Act 1989 & 2004
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023

and fosters a positive working culture through mutual respect and tolerance of all staff and students.

Communication

When communicating with students by email always use the company email if you have access to it and send mail to the student's school email address whenever possible. If not, it is a sensible precaution to copy in another staff member such as the Regional Guardian or Director Guardians UK. A phone call is an acceptable method of communicating with the students if they are confident enough in their use of the spoken language. Other acceptable means of electronic communication are text messages, WhatsApp or WeChat messages if you need to communicate urgently and take care using emojis so as not to cause offence or misunderstanding. Hasty messages sent without proper consideration can cause upset, concern or misunderstanding. Using social network sites as a means of communication between parties within the company is not acceptable.

Dress

Staff appearance and style of clothing also need considering depending on a student's culture and background; revealing clothing can cause offence.

Gifts & rewards

It is normally inappropriate to give personal gifts or high value rewards which single out specific students in a group. It is important not to cause embarrassment or appear to favour one student for preferential treatment in this way. However, gifting an Easter egg to each student in the group or a small value birthday present to one person as part of company policy is acceptable and would be encouraged.

Language

When working with young people staff need to use language appropriate to the student's age, level of English and maturity. It is always inappropriate to swear in front of them and it is also important to be aware that blasphemy may be viewed differently by different cultures so there is a need to be sensitive.

Meetings

When meeting with a student consider the location carefully. To safeguard yourself and the student choose somewhere which offers adequate privacy if you think that might be needed but one which is not hidden from view. Most classrooms and meeting rooms in schools have a window in the door which is useful. A student's bedroom should be avoided as a meeting place but, if it is necessary to use this, try to keep the door open.

Photos & videos

No member of Guardians UK staff is allowed to take photos or videos of students without their permission. If photos or videos are taken they must not be uploaded onto social media sites or otherwise distributed without written permission.

Privacy

When staying with a host family it is important to appreciate a student's right to privacy in their bedroom and bathroom. Do not enter your student's room before knocking, calling out and receiving a response and do not hurry a student whilst they are using the bathroom.

Relationships

Appropriate social interaction with the students is important. Depending upon your role within Guardians UK you will develop a certain relationship. For example, working as a host family 'in loco parentis' and caring for the student as if they were one of your own family necessitates a different level of social interaction from that which a Guardians UK driver would have. The primary carer in the host family may need to offer support to a distressed student or restrain an upset student from hurting themselves or someone/something else. In these cases, it may be justifiable and helpful to make physical contact with the student but, under no circumstances should corporal punishment be used. Any form of sexual contact with a young person in the care of Guardians UK, regardless of their age, is forbidden and would lead to external involvement

When working for Guardians UK your role may entail interacting on a business or social level with the students' parents, agents and school staff. In all circumstances you are representing Guardians UK and therefore need to maintain appropriate levels of professionalism.

Searches

It is not acceptable to search a student or their belongings unless very strict guidelines are followed. If any member of staff has good reason to request a search, permission must first be sought from their line manager.

Smoking, drugs and alcohol

Guardians UK operates a no smoking and no drugs policy. Alcohol should not normally be consumed within the working day other than for celebrations or business-related means. Host families may consume a sensible amount of alcohol whilst caring for students if that is the norm in the household. If a member of the host family smokes, Guardians UK needs to be informed of this, and care must be taken not to smoke in rooms to which the student has access. Drugs or other illegal substances must not be used within host families.

Transportation

When transporting Guardians UK students, the normal rules of the road need to be followed including appropriate use of child seats. If space permits, it is normal practice for the student to sit in the rear seat and this is strongly advisable when only transporting one passenger over a long distance. The Guardians UK Driver's Handbook provides more details about this and is available on the Guardians UK website or upon request.

Summary

Guardians UK appreciates that whilst its staff work in positions of power and trust, uphold a duty of care to children and young people and need to exercise their own professional judgement to carry out their roles, there needs to be transparency and openness within the company.

All Guardians UK staff need to self-refer if they believe any of their actions have or may cause offence or upset to any client or other member of staff.

All Guardians UK staff should feel able to raise concerns ('any concerns' or 'low-level concerns') about poor or unsafe practice and any potential failures in the safeguarding regime and know that such concerns will be taken seriously.

Helen Lewis, Director is happy to answer any query, offer support or provide clarification – the virtual door is always open.

Helen Lewis – Designated Safeguarding Lead

Email: helen.lewis@guardiansuk.com Tel: 01823 703190 or 01823 703199 ext 1

Jakki Henderson – Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Email: jakki.henderson@guardiansuk.com Tel: 01823 703191 or 01823 703199 ext 1