

## **Code of Conduct Policy**

Ambitious about Autism exists to campaign for change, to make the world a more autism friendly place, to raise awareness and to provide specialist education and support for children and young people aged between 3 and 25. Whatever your role you have a key part to play in ensuring that we maintain our positive, credible reputation with all of our stakeholders and in order to maintain the highest standards of integrity & effectiveness be accountable in our work and to build and maintain good working relationships with parents/carers, pupils/students and others.

This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

### **1 Principles**

This code of conduct outlines what Ambitious about Autism expects of all those who work here. It should be read in conjunction with our policies and procedures. Failure to follow this code is a serious matter and can lead to disciplinary action.

Other policies to be referred to:

Disciplinary

Dignity at Work

Drugs & Alcohol

Equality and Diversity

Grievance

Flexible Working

Special Leave of Absence

Capability

ICT Acceptable Use

Social Media

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## **2 Behaviours and Performance**

Our values are:

### **We are ambitious**

We invest in our people and aim high to make sure our work has the biggest impact for children or young people with autism and their families.

### **We are team players**

We know, that leading change and making a real difference requires strong teamwork, so we work collaboratively across our entire organisation, we co-create with children and young people with autism and their families and we work in partnership with other organisations.

### **We are open**

We strive to be open – open to new ideas, open in how we work and open in how we make decisions.

### **We value difference**

We know that creating equal opportunity does not mean one size fits all and aim to make ourselves accessible to children and young people with autism across the spectrum, from all communities and backgrounds.

### **We are experts**

We respect and develop the expertise of our talented staff and make sure that we are evidence based, rigorous and accountable in everything we do.

## **3 Equal Opportunities & Diversity**

Ambitious about Autism will ensure that any breaches of this code of conduct are dealt with in line with the Equalities Act.

Ambitious about Autism is committed to equality of opportunity and values diversity in the workplace and in all services we deliver. It is a condition of your employment that you are familiar with and understand the Equality and Diversity Policy and actively seek to ensure that it is upheld in your area of work.

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#### **4 Confidentiality**

All information about pupils, students, their families or about employees or volunteers whether oral, written or recorded electronically is strictly confidential, may only be used for the professional purposes for which they were gathered and may not be shared with third parties or other individuals except within the confines of a professional information exchange. If unsure as to whether a particular piece of information may be confidential it is your responsibility to treat it as such unless and to seek advice from your line manager before proceeding.

Any notes, photographs, reports or personal records that may be used as part of your day to day role must be stored securely and used for the purpose they were obtained only. They must be returned at the termination of any relevant project or at the termination of employment.

You might be responsible for managing or reviewing confidential information (for example pupil records). You are responsible for ensuring that you maintain security of these records and do not take them from Ambitious about Autism premises in line with the detailed protocols laid out in the data security policy. Failure to follow these procedures can lead to disciplinary action. You may be required to sign a confidentiality agreement as an essential requirement of your role.

#### **5 Attendance and Punctuality**

Good timekeeping is essential at Ambitious about Autism to ensure that learners are fully supported throughout the day, that all services run efficiently, and that all staff are treated fairly. Staffing levels must remain in line with the demands of Ambitious about Autism at all times of the day. Repeated or persistent lateness will be viewed as misconduct.

Each employee's contract defines the minimum hours of work that he/she is contractually required to work, including start time, finish time and provision for breaks.

- Employees should arrive at work early enough to enable them to begin work at their appointed start time.
- Similarly, employees are required to remain at work until the finishing time defined in their contracts, unless granted permission by their line manager to leave work before that time.

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- It is accepted that some circumstances are outside an employees' control, for example if a traffic accident has caused long delays on the roads. However, a high volume of traffic causing delays that is a regular occurrence, or can reasonably be anticipated, will not be regarded as a valid reason for lateness.
- Employees also need to be aware of timekeeping while at work, in particular with respect to meetings (for example, morning briefings at School and College).

If an employee is late to work, a meeting, or other work commitment:

- The line manager should speak to the employee informally (and privately) to establish the reason for the lateness, and how the employee might be supported to achieve improvement.
- The line manager/SLT at TreeHouse School/Ambitious College will be responsible for keeping records of lateness.

TreeHouse School and Ambitious College employees:

If an employee is likely to be late for work, he/she should call ahead before the contracted start time to explain the situation and give an estimated arrival time.

If an employee has three or more occasions of lateness within any six month period, Ambitious about Autism may follow its disciplinary procedure.

Charity employees:

All contracts of employment state an employee's start time, and if flexibility is required on an ad hoc basis this must be agreed with the line manager.

Employees and line managers should be mindful of the service delivery and customer service needs of the organisation, and ensure that a service is provided by the department between the charity's working hours of 9am-5pm.

Day to day adhoc changes should be approved and monitored by line managers.

Employees should make colleagues within their team aware of any variance in working patterns by noting this on their Outlook calendar.

If an employee is likely to be late for work, he/she should call ahead before the contracted start time to explain the situation and give an estimated arrival time.

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If an employee has three or more occasions of lateness within any six month period, Ambitious about Autism may follow its disciplinary procedure.

## **6 Dress**

Clothing should be smart and practical. Clothing should also be appropriate to your role – for example, it should allow service-based staff to communicate appropriately with learners and to otherwise perform their duties as required.

Care should be taken that clothing is not revealing – this is particularly important because of the client group we work within TreeHouse School and at Ambitious College.

The only parts of the body that can be acceptably exposed are:

- Arms (shoulders should be covered)
- Neck and face (chest should be covered)
- Lower legs (shorts, skirts and dresses should be knee length)

Feet should be covered to protect you from injury (this may depend on your role) e.g. by another person stepping on them, furniture, bikes running over feet. Footwear should be such that you are enabled to work directly with learners and to move swiftly and safely in all environments. Non- service based staff going into the School or College should dress appropriately for being around our pupils and learners.

For those working with pupils and learners, hair should be tied back if appropriate, and protective equipment worn, where required, to reduce the risk of injury.

Staff should not wear clothing with designs or slogans inappropriate to their professional status and position as role models for our pupils and learners, e.g. rips in clothing, skin tight or see-through clothing including lycra, cut off jeans, slogans such as FCUK, or any reference to drug or alcohol use/abuse.

It is not acceptable to expose underwear at work.

Smart jeans, shorts, trainers, and other casual clothes are acceptable for staff who are not meeting with parents, external visitors, or attending external events. When staff are meeting with parents, external professionals, LAs, or attending AaA events where visitors will be present, smart clothing should be worn. Staff working in the services who are going directly

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from working with pupils or learners into a meeting may wear smart jeans. All staff are expected to adopt the style of dress appropriate to representing Ambitious about Autism within a given forum, and to match their style of dress to the environment (e.g. in a formal/external business environment to wear business suits).

Jewellery can hurt learners and it is not sensible to wear anything which may injure either a learner or the wearer, or be easily broken. Body piercings must be covered. Ear or facial piercings should be limited to simple studs within the workplace for all those staff working directly with learners.

Inappropriate dress or jewellery will be brought to the wearer's attention by his/her line manager and should be remedied as soon as is feasible and no later than the following day. In extreme cases, a staff member may be sent home. It is the responsibility of all the staff team working with someone dressed inappropriately to bring this to the wearer's attention if he/she seem not to be aware (e.g. low-cut trousers that expose flesh when seated).

## **7 Press & Media**

Ambitious about Autism works to raise the profile of children and young people with autism and their families in the media and elsewhere. We are at times asked to comment on issues relating to our work or activities on site and in the community. Such interest is generally welcomed. However, the messages that go out to the media have to be carefully considered and should be in the very best interests of the organisation. Positive comments and open discussions can at times be distorted or misconstrued. For this reason you are asked not to talk directly to the media at any time without first contacting the Ambitious about Autism Communications Team.

## **8 Mobile Phones**

Each area of the organisation will have different rules in relation to the use of personal and work mobile phones. These should be followed at all times.

## **9 Social Media**

Ambitious about Autism has in place a comprehensive Social Media Policy which outlines which forums the organisation uses, how you can contribute and gives guidance on do's and don't with regard to both work and personal use in work time.

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All employees and volunteers are required to become familiar with this policy and to follow the guidance.

## **10 Whistleblowing**

Whistleblowing is when an employee raises a concern about malpractice or a dangerous activity that they are aware of through their work or from colleagues and raises the matter so that it may be investigated and where necessary corrected. It is important that concerns can be raised in a confidential manner with no detriment to the whistle blower. For this reason Ambitious about Autism has a Whistle Blowing Policy in place which outlines the steps to be taken by any employee who wishes to raise a concern. Should the concern relate to a Safeguarding matter the Safeguarding Procedures must be followed.

## **11 Language**

Language used in the workplace should be professional and considered (especially in areas where you are working with children or young people or which are open to the public). Sexist, racist, homophobic, language which does not promote fundamental British values \*\* or any other abusive language is not acceptable. Swearing is not acceptable within the School or the College, or their grounds or when you are out on Ambitious about Autism business.

\*\* fundamental British values are upheld as part of the government's Prevent Programme and refers to: democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths.

## **12 Alcohol & Drugs**

Ambitious about Autism recognises the importance of the health and welfare of its employees. We realise that the misuse of alcohol and drugs is a health problem and, as such, will be treated sympathetically. However attending work or events outside of normal work hours on behalf of Ambitious about Autism when under the influence of alcohol or drugs is likely to be considered as gross misconduct. Please see the Drugs and Alcohol Policy for further information.

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### **13 Money & Donations**

Employees should never put themselves under any financial obligation to individuals or organisations that might influence them in their judgement or performance of their duties. Ambitious about Autism received public and private funds to support its work and has a duty to fully account for these resources properly and effectively. You have a duty to comply with the financial procedures as laid out and appropriate to your role. All financial transactions must be properly authorised and recorded and wasteful or unnecessary expenditure must be avoided at all times.

From time to time employees may receive gifts including from funders, suppliers or parents. To ensure the highest standards of probity any gift must be notified to your line manager or team head. In respect of gifts of a value above £50 consideration will be given as to how they can best be used to benefit the organisation as a whole.

### **14 Resources**

Valuable equipment must be stored and secured appropriately as directed. We all have a duty to ensure that good care is taken of property and finite resources at all times. This includes items in your care such as work mobile phones.

### **15 Relationships at Work**

Pupils and students physical handling should be gentle but firm. Physical prompts should comprise no or minimum force. Children and Young People should be prompted rather than forced to undertake tasks. Physical contact with children and young people should always be pupil or student lead and in the interest of the child or young person not the member of staff. Staff should never be negative, critical or undermining in the way they talk about pupils within or outside of their hearing. Where possible Children and Young People should be included in any discussion about themselves in their presence. Inappropriate discussion about the child, young person, parents/carers or other pupils or personal matters should not occur.

### **Parents and Carers**

Relationships with parents/carers must remain professional at all times. Employees should ensure that they do not develop personal relationships that could compromise the essential professional relationship. Communications between parents and staff should, in almost all situations, take place during working hours. Staff personal telephone numbers should not be

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given out. School/College staff should never discuss pupils or student with their parents/carers and never with the parents of another student. Further guidance on professional boundaries appropriate to role will be supported by line managers and school/college leaders.

### **Trustees and Governors**

Relationships with trustees and Governors must remain professional at all times. Employees should ensure that they do not develop personal relationships with Trustees or Governors that could affect their professional relationship. Employees should not discuss individual pupils or students with Trustees or Governors except where essential for professional reasons.

### **Staff & Team Relationships**

Ambitious about Autism recognises that work is demanding and at times can be stressful. Good supportive relationships between colleagues are essential. Staff are expected to treat each other with courtesy and respect. Intolerance and harassment are not acceptable and will be treated seriously. Refer to the Dignity at Work policy for more details.

Close personal relationships can develop between members of staff or between a member of staff and a volunteer and these should be declared and open. This is particularly important where the individuals are in the same team, where one individual in a personal relationship may be the line manager of the other or where issues of integrity or accountability may come into question. Should you find yourself in this situation you are strongly advised to inform your line manager.

Personal information about staff and volunteers or about those applying for roles at Ambitious about Autism should remain confidential and on a strictly 'need to know' basis.

All employees are encouraged to offer each other positive feedback, constructive criticism and support. It isn't acceptable to criticise a colleague or a volunteer in front of a pupil or student or their family or in front of a representative of another organisation.

Should a grievance or dispute arise between colleagues the grievance or disciplinary procedures will be used as appropriate. Guidance in their use emphasises the importance of

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aiming to resolve such difficulties with more informal, open dialogue and mediation arrangements which may involve your line manager in the first instance rather than moving directly to more formal procedures. This approach will only be appropriate in some cases.

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