

Code of Conduct

1. General Principles

The Code of Conduct applies to staff, volunteers and trustees, although some sections will be more relevant to one group than another and some sections may not always be applicable to volunteers and trustees.

We expect you to:

- will work in accordance with Early Education's mission and in keeping with our charitable status, in providing public benefit.
- understand and follow Early Education policies and procedures at all times.
- fulfil your obligations under your contract of employment. This means you are expected to perform your duties so that an efficient standard of service is provided to members and the public.
- conduct yourself in a manner which brings credit to the organisation and to yourself.

2. Equality & Diversity

You must adhere to Early Education's Equality & Diversity Policy and any related policies. We wish to ensure that there is no discrimination in providing services, contracts of employment, or contracts for goods and services.

3. Confidentiality

Confidential business

We maintain a policy of open access to information, however, there will be occasions when the proceedings of committee meetings and the contents of documents relating to Early Education are confidential. You must not divulge the contents of any papers marked as confidential, and should treat all other papers with discretion, seeking advice if unsure about their status, both in terms of circulation to members and the general public.

You should not knowingly use information gained during your work for your own personal benefit or pass on confidential information to a third party which breaks the rules of disclosure or damages the organisation's reputation or competitive position.

Personal information

Personal information about other members of staff, volunteers and trustees is confidential. This includes home addresses, private telephone numbers, dates of birth, etc. You need to ask the permission of the person concerned to use or pass on any such information. If you are given any personal information which makes you feel uncomfortable or compromised you may discuss this with your manager.

Personal information about job applicants and former employees, former volunteers or former trustees should remain confidential and should not be divulged unless there is a serious risk to an individual or the organisation, or there are agreed protocols in place which the individual concerned has fully consented to, or it is a statutory requirement.

You must comply with Early Education's data protection standards and procedures on confidentiality.

3. Safeguarding our reputation

Media and press enquiries

You must refer all contacts with the media to the Chief Executive, or in their absence, the Chair of Trustees. If both are absent then you should refer to Vice Chairs and in their absence to the President.

Political activities

You must ensure that Early Education cannot be brought into the political arena, or its reputation or status damaged by personal political activities.

In relation to the Human Rights Act and The European Convention on Human Rights, Early Education will not restrict or support restriction of individual's thought, conscience or religion; nor freedom of expression or assembly or association.

You must not represent yourselves as acting on behalf of Early Education in relation to political activities, without authorisation of the Chief Executive or the Chair of the Trustees.

Social media

You must ensure that you do not bring the organisation into disrepute by your activities on social media. Wherever possible, you should ensure that any social media profiles you have for personal use are separate from any you may use in connection with Early Education's own activities.

Professional conduct – personal relationships

In order to protect all parties, if a personal relationship between an employee or volunteer and another employee, trustee, contractor or commissioner develops at any time, or existed before either party came to Early Education, then this must be declared to the Chief Executive or Chair of Trustees as appropriate. Any issues or conflicts will be discussed and appropriate risk minimisation plans drawn up to protect individuals and the reputation of the organisation.

4. Financial matters

Grants or loans

You must keep your personal monies separate from Early Education's monies.

We will not make payments, grants or loans from any Early Education funding source, except under the contract of employment, or according to the terms and conditions of employment for reimbursement of expenses relating to work.

You should not use personal money for work purposes, except in an emergency or in relation to agreed practice for reimbursable expenditure.

Expenses

You will be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses incurred in connection with your activities. Claims for expenses should be made on the Expenses Claims Forms with appropriate receipts.

Financial Controls

Early Education has a comprehensive Financial Controls policy in place in order to protect both the organisation and the staff, volunteers and trustees.

5. Personal property and office security

We do not take responsibility for personal property left or stored on Early Education's premises. Personal property is not insured under the organisation's insurance policies and no compensation is normally made for loss, theft or damage. You should take care in relation to any valuables you bring into the workplace.

All staff and volunteers are responsible for maintaining office security which includes ensuring that the front door is kept locked.

6. Bribery

In accordance with the Bribery Act 2010, bribery is defined as giving someone a financial or other advantage to encourage that person to perform their functions or activities improperly or to reward that person for having already done so. This could include seeking to influence a decision-maker by giving some kind of extra benefit to that decision-maker rather than by what can legitimately be offered as part of a tender process.

Early Education could be liable if a person commits a bribery offence which would then be attributed to the organisation.

In order to mitigate the potential for the offence of Bribery, Early Education has the following procedures in place:

- i Code of Conduct
- ii Financial Controls
- iii Whistle blowing Policy

In addition, the Council of Trustees maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards bribery.

Gifts or hospitality must not be given or received with the intention of influencing us or a third party to provide a business or personal advantage. Occasional, small value gifts may be accepted as long as they are appropriate in terms of type, value and timing. Such gifts will be considered as a donation and whenever possible, shared among staff.

Hospitality is not prohibited by the Act and Early Education will offer proportionate hospitality to members and other stakeholders as and when required. Early Education will also carry out proportionate and reasonable promotional activities.

Given the size, nature and area of operation, this should be sufficient to prevent any bribery offences from taking place.

7. Bullying and harassment

These terms are used interchangeably by most people, and many definitions include bullying as a form of harassment.

Harassment as defined in the Equality Act 2010 is: Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Bullying may be characterised as: offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Bullying or harassment may be by an individual against an individual or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual.

Examples of bullying/harassing behaviour include: spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by word or behaviour (copying memos that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know, ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail); exclusion or victimization; unfair treatment; overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position; unwelcome sexual advances – touching, standing too close, the display of offensive materials, asking for sexual favours, making decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected; making threats or comments about job security without foundation; deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading or constant criticism; preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities.

Bullying and harassment are not necessarily face to face. They may also occur in written communications, email, phone, and automatic supervision methods such as computer recording of downtime from work or the number of calls handled if these are not applied to all workers.

Bullying and harassment can make someone feel anxious and humiliated. Feelings of anger and frustration at being unable to cope may be triggered. Some people may try to retaliate in some way. Others may become frightened and de-motivated. Stress, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem caused by harassment or bullying can lead to job insecurity, illness, absence from work, and even resignation. Almost always job performance is affected and relations in the workplace suffer.

Early Education is responsible for preventing bullying and harassing behavior and such behaviour will not be tolerated. If you have experienced or witnesses bully please refer to Early Education's Grievance Procedure.

8. Alcohol & Drugs

Early Education aims to ensure the welfare of all its employees. This includes, where appropriate, possible support and access to counselling for employees with alcohol or drugs problems. Problems will be dealt with in confidence.

Legal obligations

There are legal obligations for employers under common law and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, The Transport and Works Act 1992 and The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

- Early Education has duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees. If an employer knowingly allows an employee under the influence of alcohol or drugs to continue working and this places the employee or others at risk, the employer would be liable to charges.
- Employees are also expected to take reasonable care of themselves and others who could be affected by what they do. They too could face charges if their alcohol consumption or drug-taking put safety at risk.

The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

- It is an offence to possess, supply, offer to supply or produce controlled drugs without authorisation.
- It is also an offence for the occupier of premises to permit knowingly the production or supply of any controlled drugs or allow smoking cannabis or opium on these premises.

Common Law

- Under Common Law it is an offence to 'aid and abet' the commission of an offence

Recognising there is a problem

Drinking alcohol can be an accepted part of social life and it can be hard for a manager to draw a line between appropriate social drinking and an employee who constantly drinks heavily, adversely affecting their work.

Although managers often take a very firm line on the issues of alcohol, recognising the signs of drug abuse can be more difficult. If managers have a good rapport with their employees they are more likely to pick up on signs such as:

- sudden changes in behaviour
- abnormal fluctuations in mood and energy
- deterioration in relationships with other people

Employees with an alcohol or drugs problem are likely to have higher absence levels than their colleagues (particularly on Mondays). A manager should focus on how an employee's addiction is affecting their performance and how they can get to the root of the problem.

Dealing with someone who has a problem

Keep accurate, confidential records of instances of poor performance or other problems.

Interview the worker in private as early as possible in the process.

Concentrate on the instances of poor performance that have been identified.

Ask for the worker's reasons for poor performance and question whether it could be due to a health problem, without specifically mentioning alcohol or drugs.

If appropriate, discuss your alcohol and drugs policy and the help available inside or outside your organisation.

Agree next steps / future action.

Arrange regular meetings to monitor progress and discuss any further problems if they arise.

- Refer to the local alcohol or drugs advice service which will provide a completely confidential service.

If the informal approach as outlined above is unsuccessful, then the Disciplinary Procedure will be invoked.

9. Failure to follow the Code of Conduct

Staff and volunteers should be aware that failure to follow this Code of Conduct is likely to damage Early Education and its work. Any breach of this Code will be regarded as a disciplinary offence and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.