



Code of Conduct for Staff & Volunteers

Latest update: May 2020

The Code of conduct for staff and volunteer's policy of Off The Grid Adventures CIC (OTGA) is to ensure, so far as it is reasonably practicable, that its operations will be carried out with a commitment to protecting and enhancing the environment.

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1. Values, Ethics & Expectations.

This policy sets out standards, guidance and good practice in relation to staff conduct and professional boundaries. It is vital that Off The Grid Adventures CIC is able to maintain a positive, credible reputation amongst young people, other voluntary and statutory agencies and with the general public. It is expected that all staff working on young people's projects give the best of their time and energy during working hours in order to serve the needs and best interests of young people and in so doing to maintain their professional reputation and the values, ethics and reputation of the company.

Using the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with OTGA policies & procedures and other relevant documents.

Where staff are unsure how a procedure or regulation should be applied, or whether an action or request is permissible they should seek guidance through their line management. OTGA will provide training opportunities linked to this code.

As the work does involve personal interaction with young people, the code makes no attempt to be an exhaustive prescriptive list of behaviour but underlines the ethics, values and principles that all staff & volunteers will need to use to guide their day to day professional decisions. The use of the term "staff" is intended to refer to all of the above groups.

The Term "Young Advisors" is in reference to a national programme we deliver locally. Young people are trained and qualify as volunteers to deliver a range of activities and services to other young people and professionals. (Y.A.) work in a junior staff position within the company structure and the principles within this policy apply fully to all young people involved in Young Advisors.

2. Principles of the Code of Conduct

All members of staff are expected to show a positive commitment to the quality of services the project offers and should demonstrate honesty, reliability, use of initiative and the ability to establish good working relationships with young people, young advisors, volunteers and staff colleagues, external agencies and the general public.

Staff must model and promote the following principles as they carry out their duties:

- 2.1: Favouritism:** There must be no favouritism, or the appearance of favouritism shown with young people. Whilst support workers will find some young people easy or difficult to work with, this must not be reflected in the amount or quality of attention a customer is offered.
- 2.2: Flexibility:** Staff must strive to offer a flexible approach and not just one way of working with young people. A regimental approach can lead to institutionalisation of both young people and staff; different approaches work with different people.

- 2.3: Choice:** Throughout the support process, young people must be offered choice, and expressions of individual culture and personal preference must be encouraged and respected. This must be part of a general empowering approach that encourages personal development.
- 2.4: Influence:** Staff must be careful not to influence young people with their own beliefs and personal values where these may be at variance with the organisations.
- 2.5: Privacy,** All staff must respect clients right to privacy, and be sensitive to different personal and cultural needs for privacy. These principles should only be breached where issues of risk override them. This must only be done following discussion with line management.
- 2.6: Unconditional Positive Regard:** Staff must be aware of their own behaviour and language when working with young people and seek to avoid any actions, comments or behaviours which stereotype, prejudge or label. Staff should positively challenge in a respectful manner any inappropriate actions or behaviours exhibited by young people in a way which does not criticise or devalue.
- 2.7: Elitism:** Staff must be careful not to present themselves as superior in any way, including morally. To this end, workers must always be prepared to admit error, or lack of knowledge.
- 2.8: Professionalism:** At all times a professional relationship must be stressed and maintained: young people must not feel in any way indebted to support workers, or that they are recipients of charity. It should be always appreciated that workers are paid to carry out their duties and overt gratitude from young people must be discouraged and the reasons for this explained

This must be achieved while recognising that good support delivery is based on the development of working relationships with young people not a cold mechanical approach. If colleagues find themselves in difficulty because of their own or the customer's feelings, these must be discussed at the earliest opportunity with the line manager.

- 2.9 Personal Disclosure:** Personal disclosure can be a powerful and appropriate tool in supporting our young people. However there are some pitfalls to be aware of; staff must only disclose information that they are comfortable with. There is no expectation for a member of staff to have to disclose any personal information to a client and staff must consider for whose benefit a personal disclosure is taking place - the client or their own.
- 2.10 Objectivity:** Staff must ensure that responsibilities are carried out impartially and that the decisions taken are fair based on merit and have sound reasoning.
- 2.11 Professionalism & Integrity:** ensure that actions and decisions taken are based on the protection of our young people's best interests, maintaining public trust in the organisation, the proper use of funds and charitable resources and high standards of

professionalism in achieving the overall objectives of the OTGA. Decisions must not be made in order to gain financial or other material benefits for members of staff, their family or friends.

- 2.12 Accountability & Scrutiny:** accept responsibility for decisions and actions and be prepared to submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate.
- 2.13 Openness & Transparency:** be as open as possible about the decisions and actions that are taken. Information should only be restricted where confidentiality demands.
- 2.14 Honesty & Integrity:** staff must behave with integrity at all times, must not steal property or gain financially from the organisation (other than their legitimate remuneration), must declare any private interests relating to their duties, and must take steps to resolve any conflict that may arise in a way that is lawful and protects the reputation of Off The Grid Adventures.
- 2.15 Equality:** show commitment to valuing and respecting diversity, promoting equality and respecting human rights.

3. Working with Young People – Professional Conduct & Boundaries

OTGA recognises the trust placed in members of staff by our young people and our funders, and the power and opportunities that can result from this. This places a responsibility upon all members of staff to ensure that young people are treated with dignity and respect.

Customer safety, choice and empowerment are central to the project's ethos and there is an expectation that all those working within the project will reflect this approach in their work. It should be noted that the blurring of these boundaries can potentially lead to the development of negative relationships which can put staff at risk of allegations of improper conduct even if this was not intended.

- 3.1 Safeguarding & Protection from Abuse:** OTGA is committed to the support of young people and protection from neglect and abuse. Staff should never ignore safeguarding issues relating to young people and any concerns should be dealt with in accordance with their organisations safeguarding procedures and that of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. OTGA is committed to the provision of training regarding safeguarding procedures.
- 3.2 Complaints:** OTGA view complaints as a positive tool to support service delivery and the process must be promoted and not be treated negatively even if they suspect the complaint may be about them. Staff must empower customer to complain independently, if appropriate support them to make the complaint or signpost them to independent advocacy.
- 3.3 Data Protection:** Staff must ensure that a customer's personal data is processed in line with the Data Protection Act and their organisation's policy. Information provided

must not be made available to individuals outside the organisation without consent, working protocol or if required under the safeguarding and protection from abuse policies. Workers must maintain young people's confidentiality however information can, and must be shared within the organisation and the customer should be made aware of this. Limits on confidentiality must be explained to young people on their introduction to the Service.

3.4 Confidentiality: Young people must be aware that all workers cannot keep knowledge of suspected illegal activity confidential. Workers must not disclose customer's names, whereabouts or occupancy to outside callers without their permission to do so. This includes previous young people, family; friends etc.

3.5 Financial Transparency: Many of OTGA young people suffer from poverty and it is part of our role to support, enable and empower them to become financially secure. As we hold this position of trust and power it is crucial that there are never any financial transactions, buying, selling, lending of money or possessions, exchanging or bartering between staff and young people or contractors. This may be interpreted as financial abuse and will be subject to disciplinary procedures. The informal looking after or holding of a young person's possessions or money should also never happen.

Staff must not give or accept personal presents or offers of work from young people however where it would offend to refuse, a small gift may be accepted on behalf of the team and shared with colleagues.

3.6 Befriending: Befriending is an appropriate relationship for workers, and part of building the necessary trust and rapport to work with young people however staff must never overstep professional boundaries and confuse befriending with friendship. All workers should be aware of the difference between befriending a customer (which is a professional relationship, which is made to meet the customer's needs), and becoming a customer's friend (which is a relationship which meets the needs of both parties). Staff must not use inappropriate language with young people e.g. referring to them by pet names, in terms of endearment, or in ways which are demeaning.

3.7 Relationships with Young People: Staff must never enter into anything but a professional relationship with young people. Staff must not allow young people to visit their homes or encourage young people to develop relationships with their friends or family members. There will be occasions when staff know someone socially who is referred, or in some other connection – in these circumstances, it is necessary to always inform the line manager. Staff must not share personal email or phone details and must not be 'friends' or 'followers' of young people on any social networking sites. The development of a sexual relationship will be treated as gross misconduct and is grounds for dismissal & possible criminal proceedings.

3.8 Contact with Young People Outside of Work: Out of hours social contacts must be kept to minimum. Staff who "bump into" young people out of hours must be pleasant and civil, if approached, but must generally discourage prolonged

social contact. Where this does occur, a note of the encounter must be entered into case file.

3.9 External Events and Activities: Care must be taken in carrying out extracurricular activities, particularly where they might directly or indirectly affect or involve a customer. Examples of such activities are the promotion of political or campaigning events, the running of lottery syndicates, book clubs or charitable fundraising activities. Permission should be obtained from your line manager who can and will withdraw permission if it considers it to be in the best interest of the customer or OTGA. For specific activities with young people during work time or out of hours work activity risk assessment should be carried out and signed off by a manager. (See Health and Safety policy)

3.10 Volunteers and Professional Boundaries: This Staff Code of Conduct also applies to volunteers & Young Advisors. The following is to offer further clarity in the area of young people who may be volunteers.

- Staff must not lend money or personal possessions to a volunteer.
- Staff must not borrow money or personal possessions from a volunteer.
- Staff must not invite a volunteer to their home for any reason.
- Professional boundaries in the office (e.g. in terms of banter, jokes etc) must be maintained in the same way we expect staff to behave with each other, young people and other agencies.
- Volunteers must be challenged if they overstep the mark in terms of what is acceptable/unacceptable behaviour, in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct.
- Staff must be role models to clients & volunteers and maintain professional boundaries. Volunteers need to be clear themselves on how they, in turn, must behave with young people

4. Team Working & Colleague Relations

In order to deliver high quality and effective services the establishment and maintenance of professional, co-operative and open relationships with colleagues is essential. Likewise, an individual worker's responsibility to contribute constructively to effective team practices and procedures is paramount.

It should be noted that a failure to communicate with and support co-workers is a major contributory factor in many instances of risk and dangerous/violent behaviours at work.

The following values and principles must underpin all aspects of practice in relation to boundaries and professional practice with individual colleagues and the team.

4.1: Teamwork: Every staff member must actively try to maximise team performance and contribute positively to team performance. All staff are responsible for making individual contributions to the general well-being of the team. If an individual is unhappy

they have a responsibility to deal with this in a professional manner employing if necessary appropriate organisational procedures.

4.2: Honest and Open Approach: Teamwork involves learning how to communicate with one another and to resolve any differences, difficulties or grievances in an open and constructive way. In any team there are inevitably differences of attitude, view, personality and competencies, which need to be addressed openly and honestly. If this isn't achieved appropriately, there is a risk of team members feeling put down or bullied by colleagues or factions within a team. This division can only damage the work that is carried out by the team and would lead to action under the disciplinary or grievance procedures.

4.3 Managing Personal Conflict: From time to time personal conflict will occur within the workplace. This inevitable fact requires all staff and managers to respond in a professional and constructive way. It is not acceptable for any party to 'blow up', to shout, intimidate, or abuse each other in public or in private. OTGA expects all staff to resolve conflict in a way which is constructive and enabling.

In seeking to resolve conflict all staff must employ the recognised principles of giving and receiving constructive feedback. Failure to adopt a constructive and professional approach to conflict may result in disciplinary action.

4.4 Personal Relations between members of staff: Work is a large part of our lives, and it is accepted that close friendships and relationships will be formed, and broken. Staff must conduct their inter-relationships at work on a friendly but professional basis. Displays of animosity, personal affection or privilege, sexualised behaviour or banter are not appropriate.

The requirement for staff to behave in a friendly professional way extends to all cases of work days including away days, training or conferences. This does not mean that staff at an appropriate point cannot 'let their hair down' or relax and enjoy themselves, but such activity must be appropriate to the context of the occasion.

4.5 Punctuality: It is essential that all those working within OTGA in whatever capacity are reliable and punctual.

4.6 Equal Opportunities: OTGA is committed to ensuring that all its young people and all those who work for it enjoy equality of opportunity as set out in the Equality and Diversity Policy both in the letter and the spirit of the policy. It is a condition of employment that members of staff are conversant with this policy, and actively pursue its implementation in every area of work.

4.7 Health and Safety: Each partner organisation has a responsibility to ensure that premises and services are safe for all concerned. Each member of staff is therefore expected to ensure Health and Safety policies are adhered to at all times. Any areas of concern should be reported to line-management.

4.8 Internet Use: Reasonable use of the internet either on work computers or personal mobile phones (including banking, shopping and social networking) in your normal breaks or outside working hours is acceptable where it does not have a detrimental impact on your work or resources.

4.9 Social Networking: There will be staff who as part of their job will administer social networking sites for work purposes. They are responsible for posting information on behalf of the organisation for professional networking and marketing purposes and must adhere to the values, ethics and principles of the project.

Staff who conduct any personal blogging, social networking, texting or emailing must ensure it is not done with their organisation's email or phone accounts. It must not relate to Off the Grid Adventures, its staff or any of its young people or services. Staff must accept full responsibility for their posts and ensure they do not submit and defamatory or libellous posts; any material that infringes and/or violates any right of third party or law; any vulgar, obscene discourteous, or indecent languages or images.

5. General Conduct

The establishment and maintenance of professional relationships with partner agencies and individuals is essential to ensure that our young people obtain the best possible range of services. In their dealings with other agencies staff are representing both the project and young people.

5.1 Working for External Organisations: It is important that all staff are able to carry out their duties without conflict or confusion and in a manner that is healthy and sustainable for themselves and the project.

All staff must declare all additional paid and voluntary activity that they undertake in addition to their work on the organisations Declaration of Interests Form (Appendix 4).

The purpose of the declaration of interest is to:

- Protect the integrity of OTGA
- Protect the interests of the employee
- Ensure compliance with employment law such as the Working Time Regulations

Line managers will seek to formally agree secondary activities with its staff, but cannot guarantee to do so in all cases and will if necessary review its agreements with individuals in the light of experience.

5.2 Relationships/Conduct with other Agencies and Professionals: Staff must always remember that they are representing the reputation of OTGA when working with partner agencies and professionals and therefore must conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times.

The below list is a guide to working with partner agencies/professionals:

- Discuss only relevant information keeping this concise and accurate, avoiding anecdote and gossip.
- Dress appropriately for the working environment e.g. smart casual appearance and ensure a good standard of personal hygiene.
- Ensure any issues that may impact on confidentiality are discussed with their manager prior to meetings/events.
- Never represent the service or organisation or its young people in a negative light.
- Staff will have personal views which may differ from the approach OTGA takes on specific issues, however, staff are expected to present and support the project's viewpoint, and not present personal views under the OTGA name. Staff are required to seek clarification from their line manager if they're unclear about our position on a particular issue and use supervision to explore complicated issues they may be expected to respond to.
- Conflicts of interest arising between staff, young people and other professionals are expected to be addressed openly and professionally.
- If a partner agency/professional wishes to make a complaint, compliment or suggestion then they must be encouraged to do so and given all the relevant information necessary and then inform your manager.

5.3 Illegal Activity: If a member of staff is arrested or cautioned by the police they must inform a director immediately. If they are convicted of or involved in illegal or immoral activity which is contrary to OTGA values or aims, or damages the project's reputation in the view of stakeholders and partners or undermines the credibility of the individual in working with specific groups of young people then they will be subject to their organisation's disciplinary procedures.

Staff must not collude with young people by deliberately ignoring illegal activities. The project does operate a harm reduction approach in relation or drug use and this complies with the legal situation and training opportunities are provided on this area.

5.4 Use of alcohol and other substances: It is expected that all staff working within the organisation will act responsibly and with maturity. Use of alcohol or other substances (e.g. certain medications) must be considered in the light of duties towards young people, and the impression which may be conveyed to young people regarding integrity and professionalism. No one may carry out their duties for OTGA if they are incapacitated through alcohol/drugs and/or their effects.

If a staff member is unable to perform their role (including driving if required) to the required or legal standard due to the effects of alcohol, other substances or non-prescribed medication or uses illegal substances during working time or whilst representing OTGA (this includes whilst on residential courses and conferences or similar events) then they will be subject to their organisation's disciplinary procedures.

6. Declaration of Interests

Staff must ensure that private and personal interests do not influence decisions, and that their position is not used to obtain personal gain of any sort, either for themselves, or for their families, friends or associates.

Any actual or potential conflicts of interest arising must be declared to the staff member's line manager immediately. If there is any doubt as to whether a conflict exists, advice must be sought from the manager.

- 6.1 Declaration of interest:** Any staff working within OTGA who has a financial interest in any organisation or person with whom we are carrying out a transaction must declare that interest. Members of staff must not use any business with which they, their partner, family, or close relatives have some personal or professional connection without first obtaining the informed consent of a director.
- 6.2 Membership of certain organisations:** Staff must declare their membership of any organisation not open to the public which has any secrecy about its rules, membership or conduct. This should be done via the Staff Declaration of Secondary Employment or Interests pro forma.
- 6.3 Private Use of Contractors:** Members of staff must avoid the use for private purposes contractors, consultants or external suppliers who are involved with OTGA. If this is not possible, they must consult a director.

Appendix 1: Professional Boundaries a Simple Model

Appropriate Boundaries	Boundary Crossing	Boundary Violation
Indicators	Indicators	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff perform duties within legislative framework. • Avoid personal; bias in performance of duties. • Promote customer's participation • Able to identify own strengths and limitations through supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending free time with a client. • Planning others care around a young person's needs. • Keeping secrets with a client. • Acting or feeling possessive about a client. • Sharing personal information with a client. • Changing dress style when working with a client. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering into a sexual relationship with a customer. • Borrowing or giving money. • The indulgence of personal privilege by a member of staff. • Abusive or neglectful behaviour. • Involvement in illegal behaviours. • The breaking of trust/divulgence of privileged or confidential information.

Appendix 2

Private & Confidential

Staff Declaration of Understanding of Staff Code of Conduct

As part of the implementation of the staff code of conduct, all staff should read the policy and declare below their understanding of it.

Staff Name:	Team:
Have you read the Staff Code of Conduct Policy?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand the implications and procedures if the Staff Code of Conduct is not followed?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If no to any of the above please state why.	
Are there any actions that could be taken to help you better understand the policy and procedures?	
Signed: Staff Member	Date:
Signed: Line Manager	Date:

*****Please retain on personnel file*****

****This form will be reviewed annually as part of the appraisal process****

Private & Confidential

Appendix 3

Staff Declaration of Secondary Employment and Interests

As part of the implementation of the staff code of conduct, all staff undertaking secondary paid employment should declare this employment to their line manager in order to protect the integrity of the organisation and the interests of employees.

All such employment is subject also to agreement of OTGA Director approval which will take into account issues such as potential conflicts of interest and Health and Safety.

In addition, staff are asked to record unpaid work that may give rise to a conflict of interest and to declare any board membership or links to any suppliers of goods or services.

Staff Name:	Team:
Are you engaged in secondary paid employment or self-employment?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, please give the name and address of the employer including contact details and the nature and hours of the work being undertaken Employer:	Nature and hours of Work:
How many hours a week do you work?	
Are you engaged in any personal voluntary work with a similar customer group that may involve a potential conflict of interest?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please record brief details overleaf
Do you have any links with any of YPP's contractors or suppliers?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please record brief details overleaf
Are you currently a member of any organisation not open to the public? If so, please give brief details.	
Signed: Staff Member	Date:
Signed: Line Manager	Date:

Please retain on personnel file

****This form will be reviewed annually as part of the appraisal process****

This has been approved and authorised by:

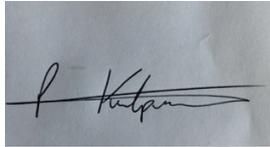
Name: Paul Kirkpatrick

Position: Executive Director

Date: 23/5/20

Date Of Next Review: 24/5/21

Signature

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "P. Kirkpatrick".