



# Staff Code of Conduct

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## *BeLonG To Youth Services*

This Code of Conduct has been developed to ensure that all of those working on behalf of BeLonG To Youth Services are aware of the minimum expectations with regard to their conduct, behaviour, and practice. It is in place to help create a safe and protective culture for young people<sup>1</sup>, staff<sup>2</sup> and stakeholders<sup>3</sup> who avail of, take part in, or interact with our services. This code also exists to ensure that all interactions with these stakeholders is carried out with integrity, professionalism, and to the highest possible standards we can afford them.

This Code should not be viewed in isolation. Other relevant documents include, but are not limited to:

- Child Protection and Welfare Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Garda Vetting Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Staff Handbook
- Ethical Fundraising Policy
- Data Protection Policy

The Code is mandatory and as such requires compliance by all staff. Where a breach of this code occurs, BeLonG To may take actions as deemed appropriate under its disciplinary procedures.

Our Code of Conduct is kept under regular review at least every two years or as otherwise deemed appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> Young people includes all those accessing our service/s who are 23 and under.

<sup>2</sup> Staff for the purposes of this policy includes employees, volunteers, interns, students on placement, locums, and board members.

<sup>3</sup> This may include parents, funders, donors (potential or realised), patrons, civil servants and any other professionals we engage with in the course of BeLonG To's work.

## Our Values

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- Providing a welcoming, inclusive, supportive, safe, and fun space for service users and those that work or volunteer with us.
- Conducting our work with integrity, honesty, openness, and respect.
- Promoting human rights, social justice, solidarity, and intersectional equality.
- Collaboration with our partners and youth participation.
- Being a better and a learning organisation.

## Practices which BeLonG To encourages:

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- Treat all service users, members of the BeLonG To team and all those that we interact with in the course of our work in a way that fully respects their dignity, identity and rights.
- Involve young people in equal partnership as appropriate and as practicable given time and resource constraints.
- Work in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations with young people.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with those we work with, particularly being respectful of people's personal boundaries.
- Leading by example.
- Maintain confidentiality and discretion within the organisation, taking due regard to sensitive information obtained through the course of our work.
- Adherence to the Charity Regulator's fundraising guidelines.
- Ensure informed consent or assent is received for activities young people engage in, in particular those which:
  - will record their image,
  - have a media/press element,
  - outdoor activities<sup>4</sup>,
  - residentials,
  - fundraising events,
  - the delivery of training, workshops, or talks to external organisations,
  - participation on external forums and committees,
  - other activities as deemed appropriate.
- Adhere to BeLonG To's policies and procedures, and where appropriate, highlight any short comings in the practical implementation of them.
- Follow all statutory obligations with regard to your role.

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<sup>4</sup> This refers to activities that demand physical challenges and risk.

- Promote and preserve your own health and safety as well as that of those you come into contact with in the course of your work.
- To act with integrity at all times, never privately profiting from your work or association with the organisation.
- Ensure that young people participating in media projects are fully supported to engage in the process, including being given the option of training and pre and post briefings.
- Work collaboratively with colleagues, young people and our peers in other organisations as much as practicable.
- Establish clear professional boundaries between young people through your actions as well as adherence to, and enforcement of, codes of conduct.
- Give early notice to line-managers of illness or unavailability for work, youth groups, and other events which are staff sensitive.
- Ensure all data collected by BeLonG To is used only for the purpose for which it was gathered and compliant with all relevant legislative and policy provisions.
- To be appropriately prepared for attendance at meetings, events, and other engagements.
- To seek and be afforded support when needed.

### **Practices to be avoided without prior consent from management:**

BeLonG To recognises that some of the statements below may not be appropriate or feasible to certain staff due to the participation in the service of their relatives, the children of their friends, colleagues outside of BeLonG To, or fellow students in a third level institution. Where such a relationship exists, BeLonG To expects staff to inform their line manager. Regardless of such relationships, professional boundaries while at work should be upheld and the child's or young person's best interest and welfare remains the first and paramount consideration in dealings with them.

- Staff should not give lifts in their vehicle to individual children or young people or travel alone with them. In some circumstances, for example in an emergency, a staff member may need to bring a young person on their own. Where a taxi is available, this should be used.
- Staff should not accept benefits of any kind from a third party which might reasonably be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity and should at all times follow the organisations policies in respect of gift acceptance, conflicts of interest, and loyalty.

- Staff should avoid situations where they are alone with young people. Where a private meeting with a lone child/young person is unavoidable, it should be either held;
  - in view of
  - audible to
  - or with prior awareness of other staff.

A written record of such meetings should always be made (for example in a calendar entry and meeting notes or minutes).

- Staff should not use their own 'personal' electronic communications (such as mobile phone or e-mail) for the befriending of or contacting young people unless necessitated by an emergency or in exceptional circumstances as agreed by management in advance.
- Staff should not use their personal social media accounts for the befriending of young people. BeLonG To recognises that social media can give rise to legitimate opportunities to engage young people in the work of the organisation. Any such engagement should be public.
- Develop any form of sexual or romantic relationship with a service user.
- Develop any form of personal relationship with a service outside of work, unless unavoidable due to their connection with family, friends, place of work or educational institute.
- Give support to young people unless it relates to your role.
- Giving support to young people when a referral to the youth work team or external agency is more appropriate.
- Favouritism for and the exclusion of young people. All young people should be equally supported while acknowledging different needs, provided with opportunities, encouraged to take part and develop skills or abilities.
- Staff should not acknowledge a service user in public unless the service user starts the interaction. This is in order to protect their privacy.
- Consumption or availability of alcohol during an event by or for BeLonG To in the company of service users without clear boundaries and expectations being put in place beforehand. These should include clear guidelines for:
  - staff and volunteers on duty.
  - service users attending on behalf of BeLonG To.
  - service users attending of their own accord.
  - Safe storage of alcohol.

## Unacceptable practices:

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- Bullying of any form.
- Harassment of any form, particularly sexual harassment, including:
  - Making sexually suggestive actions, comments, jokes, or innuendo about or to a young person or member of staff;
  - Promote or allow inappropriate physical or sexually provocative 'games'; and
  - Inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form.
- Allowing inappropriate, foul, sexualised or discriminatory language to remain unchallenged.
- Invade the privacy of service users, particularly in changing facilities.
- Staff taking a young person to their home or that of another worker or volunteer.
- Share sleeping accommodation with service users under any circumstance.
- Having an intimate relationship with any current service user of the organisation or of a young person you come into contact with during the course of your work, nor for a period of 2 years following the end of their support relationship with the organisation.
- Inappropriate interpersonal actions including:
  - Scapegoating or ridiculing a service user, member of staff;
  - Any form of physical or threatening punishment or chastisement.
  - To aggressively scold or reprimand a service user, member of staff, or volunteer under any circumstance.
  - Behave in a manner that is physically intimidating to service users, members of staff, or volunteers.
  - 'Picking on' a young person for any reason.
  - The use of abusive language or gestures.
- Being present in work under the influence of illegal drugs or illegally obtained medication.
- Being present in work under the influence of any mood-altering substance (including alcohol) likely to put you or others at risk to harm or seriously impair your fitness to work.
- Give personal contact information (including home address, mobile number or email address) to young people in the service unless unavoidable due to emergency, or with line-management approval.
- Take photographs or videos of a service user without their full consent. If the subject is under 18 or is above 18 and has limited capacity to make an informed decision, the consent of their parent or guardian is required.

- Racism, sectarianism, ableism, hetero/LGBTI+ phobia, sexism (including that against cis, trans, non-binary and intersex people) or any other form identity-based discrimination.

### **What staff of BeLonG To can expect from the Organisation:**

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- To be treated fairly, equally, and with respect.
- To have their data only used for the purpose for which it was gathered.
- To have complaints and concerns about their work dealt with appropriately and sensitively.
- To have their employment rights fully respected.
- To ensure that their safety, health, and welfare is protected as far as reasonably practical.
- To be given their leave entitlement in accordance with the legislation and the BeLonG To staff handbook.
- To have grievance and disciplinary procedures dealt with fairly and impartially.
- To have their work recognised.
- To be given clear guidance in relation to their roles and responsibilities.
- To be offered learning opportunities related to their position.

I confirm receipt of the staff code of conduct. I have read a copy of the code and I understand that within my role it is my responsibility to abide by BeLonG To's staff code of conduct.

If I have questions about the code or any other organisational policies or procedures, I understand it is my responsibility to seek clarification from my line manager.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print Name:** \_\_\_\_\_