



# The ND Harbour Behaviour Management Policy

## – Children and Young People

### Purpose and Principles

At The ND Harbour, our aim is to create safe, inclusive, and affirming spaces for neurodivergent children and young people.

We recognise that all behaviour is a form of communication. Our approach is neuroaffirming and low-arousal, focusing on understanding, support, and environmental adaptation rather than behaviourist approaches.

Key principles:

- Reduce stress, sensory overload, and emotional demand.
- Respond with empathy and curiosity.
- Adapt the environment and expectations rather than expecting compliance.
- Work collaboratively with families and young people.
- Maintain safety and dignity for everyone.

### Scope

This policy applies to all children and young people (0–17), their parents or carers, staff, and volunteers supporting The ND Harbour.

### Understanding Before Responding

Behaviour support begins before challenges occur.

When a child or young person joins The ND Harbour, we gather information from their family (and, where appropriate, from the young person) to understand:

- Known triggers for distress, dysregulation, or overwhelm.
- Distressed behaviours that might happen, e.g., running off, hitting, or throwing objects.
- What helps them feel calm and safe, such as sensory supports, activities, or specific responses.

This allows staff to:



- Reduce potential triggers.
- Plan low-arousal, consistent responses.
- Support regulation proactively.
- Help the child feel understood and safe.

Information is reviewed and updated regularly as children grow and develop.

## **Parental Responsibility During Sessions**

When parents or carers are present in sessions:

- They retain responsibility for their child's behaviour.
- Staff and volunteers provide guidance, maintain group structure, and model low-arousal strategies.
- Parents are expected to intervene to support their child, follow staff guidance for safety, and collaborate with staff on strategies.

If parents do not intervene when unsafe or disruptive behaviour occurs, staff will act to protect others. Continued issues may lead to reviewing the child's attendance or additional support.

## **Age-Appropriate Approach**

### **Ages 0–8 (approx.)**

- Young children may communicate distress through movement, noise, or physical behaviour.
- Responses focus on safety and understanding, not punishment.
- Staff assess triggers, make environmental adjustments, and communicate with families.
- One-to-one support or short breaks may be offered if difficulties continue.

### **Ages 9–17 (approx.)**

- Young people are encouraged to build self-awareness and shared responsibility.
- Expectations include:
  - Keeping hands and bodies to themselves (no touching without consent).
  - Respecting others' communication needs.



- Using kind and respectful language.
- Restorative conversations are used to address behaviour. Continued harm may lead to temporary suspension or ending attendance.

## Shared Code of Behaviour

### What's OK

- Being kind, patient, and respectful.
- Asking before touching someone or their things.
- Taking breaks as needed.
- Using words and actions that help others feel safe.
- Speaking up if something feels unfair.
- Learning from mistakes.

### What's Not OK

- Hurting anyone physically or emotionally.
- Prejudiced, hateful, or bullying language.
- Damaging property on purpose.
- Ignoring consent or communication needs.
- Teasing or “joking” in ways that make someone feel unwelcome.

## Use of Mobile Phones and Handheld Devices

- No photos, videos, or recordings of others without explicit consent.
- If a photo or video is taken with consent, participants must be told why it is being taken and how and where it will be used.
- Breaches may result in deletion of content, a discussion with the family/participant, or suspension/removal from sessions.
- Staff may ask devices to be put away if they are distracting, unsafe, or disruptive.

## Contact Between Children and Young People Outside Sessions



- The ND Harbour is not responsible for interactions outside sessions (e.g., messaging, gaming, social media).
- Young people, with their parents support where appropriate, are responsible for safety, consent, and boundaries.
- Young people are welcome to bring challenges or questions relating to friendships to group sessions for discussion and support.
- Staff and volunteers help young people reflect on boundaries, safety, and respectful interaction without taking over responsibility.

## **Before Things Go Wrong – Proactive Regulation**

We support emotional and sensory regulation by:

- Providing quiet and sensory spaces.
- Allowing movement, stimming, or breaks as needed.
- Offering visual supports and clear communication.
- Modelling calm, respectful interactions.
- Supporting self-advocacy and emotional literacy.

## **When Things Go Wrong**

Behaviour is communication. Staff and volunteers respond with **safety, understanding, and respect**, prioritising wellbeing over punishment. Responses are age-appropriate and guided by the child's needs, the environment, and safety considerations.

### **Step 1 – Ensure Safety**

- Ensure everyone is safe immediately.
- Separate children if they are lashing out at each other; if parents are present, they are responsible for managing their child.
- Volunteers should not put themselves at risk. Physical intervention should only occur if volunteers or staff have received appropriate training (e.g., breakaway techniques), or is absolutely necessary to prevent significant harm.
- Remove or guide other children to a safe space.
- Staff should use environmental adaptations and low-arousal strategies to prevent escalation rather than relying on physical intervention.



- For situations that cannot be safely managed, emergency services should be called.

### **Step 2 – Wait and Reflect**

- Allow the child to return to their personal baseline; this may take time and may not happen in the same session.
- When calm, reflect collaboratively with the child, family, and staff as appropriate about what happened.
- Explore triggers, feelings, and strategies to support regulation in the future.

### **Step 3 – Implement Adaptations**

- Adjust the environment, staffing, or activity to prevent re-escalation.
- Introduce supports identified collaboratively, such as sensory tools, quiet space, or structured activities.

### **Step 4 – Consider Attendance Adjustments**

- If difficulties persist despite adaptations:
  - Consider a short pause in attendance, or
  - Provide one-to-one support, or
  - Explore whether the child is happy in that environment and whether they wish to continue attending.

Exclusion is a last resort, only considered after all other reasonable adjustments have been tried and safety is likely to be compromised.

## **Hard Boundaries**

Some behaviours are never acceptable because they put anyone at risk or cause serious harm:

- Causing serious physical harm to others (e.g., repeated or severe hitting, kicking, biting).
- Deliberate property damage.
- Hate speech, bullying, or discrimination.
- Incitement to violence or harassment.
- Sharing personal information without consent.



For younger children, occasional hitting or pushing may happen as part of learning to manage emotions. Staff & volunteers respond with support, guidance, and adaptations rather than punishment.

Serious incidents may result in immediate removal from the session and follow safeguarding procedures.

## **Supporting Understanding and Repair**

We help children and young people:

- Recognise when they are dysregulated.
- Use strategies to calm themselves.
- Communicate needs and boundaries.
- Understand the impact of their actions.
- Engage in restorative conversations to repair relationships.

## **Safeguarding**

If a child or young person's behaviour indicates risk of harm to themselves or others, staff will follow The ND Harbour's Safeguarding Policy.

## **Review and Involvement**

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if needed, with input from:

- Staff and volunteers
- Parents and carers
- Children and young people (in accessible formats)

## **Summary for Children and Young People**

- Everyone deserves to feel safe and respected.
- Take breaks, move, or ask for space when needed.
- Mistakes happen - we'll help you work through them.
- No hitting, hurting, or unkind words.
- No hate or bullying.



- Ask before touching someone or their things.
- No photos or videos of others without consent.
- Be kind to others, and yourself.

## Version Control - Approval and Review

Version No	Approved By	Approval Date	Main Changes	Review Period
1.0	Trustee Board		Initial draft approved	Annually