

Valley Youth Hub CIC (VYH)

Behaviour Policy

Children have a right to express themselves through their play. Sometimes this involves noise, mess, risk taking and testing boundaries. Children benefit from learning to manage risk and relationships for themselves. If children are not causing physical or emotional harm to themselves or others or destroying equipment, staff should always consider whether children are best placed to manage their own behaviour and support them to do this, if necessary. Children will often sort out their own differences through play and this provides valuable learning opportunities. Staff are ready and available to support where children have been unable to resolve issues themselves or where behaviour is causing physical or emotional harm.

Where there are any concerns about bullying or ongoing behaviour difficulties that pose a risk to other children's physical or emotional wellbeing, then these must be addressed quickly by staff so that they do not affect children's enjoyment of the setting.

Encouraging Positive Behaviour

VYH wants to encourage positive behaviour so when children attend our settings staff should talk to them about:

- Listening to staff and each other
- Asking staff for help where they have concerns
- Playing in ways that are safe for themselves and other children
- Respecting each other's differences

Treating each other well

In order to have settings where children treat each other, the staff and the setting well, staff should:

- Create a welcoming and inclusive environment
- Let children know where staff will be and that they can bring any problems to staff
- Treat all children and adults with politeness and respect
- Allow children to sort out their own differences where possible
- Try to be fair
- Talk to children about their own ideas of positive behaviour
- Praise positive behaviour (children and adults)
- Talk about children's achievements
- Respond to politeness verbally
- Never accept racism, bullying or other discriminatory behaviour

Early intervention

Staff can avoid incidences of dangerous or hurtful behaviour by early identification, seeing things coming. They can do this by:

- Noticing body language

- Being alert, listening and observing
- Being aware of tensions building up in children's communications
- Remaining close when tensions are building
- Responding when children express that they are having trouble resolving an issue and, where possible, offering support and guidance first before intervening directly
- Being aware of any risk assessments relating to children's behaviour
- Intervening early to head off damaging behaviours
- Offering diversionary suggestions/activities to help reduce tensions or support children to have some space from each other where this would be helpful

Communication around behaviour

These are some expectations for staff communication around behavior:

- Ongoing issues with behaviour should be discussed in team meetings
- Staff should apply rules of confidentiality to children's behaviour
- Records of dangerous and hurtful behaviour should be recorded on an incident report form and should be kept with confidential information
- Staff should never use the possibility of speaking to families as a threat
- Communication with parents should be used as a way of letting parents know how their children are doing and should happen in positive times as well as times of challenging behaviour.
- When families are approached about their child it should be as a support with the child's behaviour rather than as a punishment.
- Staff may choose to offer families extra support, if the families are having difficulties with their child's behaviour, by signposting them to other services

Managing challenging behaviour

When staff do have to manage challenging behaviour they should:

- Never take it personally, the behaviour is about the child's feelings not the adults.
- When staff are dealing with behavioural issues they should let the children know that it is the behaviour they are displaying that is wrong and not the children themselves.
- Avoid confrontation and power struggles. Getting into one of these means that the situation cannot be resolved unless someone backs down, which will make matters worse rather than better. The child will see you as an opponent rather than as someone to be trusted.
- Speak calmly and slowly. This is particularly important with children who may have difficulties in comprehending speech. They may be attending more to your tone than to the words you are using.
- Be aware of the effects of violating someone's personal space. Never put your face 'in' theirs.
- Remove immediate pressures and any background distractions where possible. Try to talk to the child away from other children.
- Be confident and assertive, but never aggressive. Make sure that what you say to the child, or ask them to do, is clear.

Keep talking to the child. Use eye contact sensitively, offer choices, and be prepared to negotiate and to compromise. Give the situation time to de-escalate. Never use physical punishment, however, appropriate physical intervention may be necessary to prevent accident or harm to the children, e.g. restraining a child who is about to run into the road or stopping a child from seriously harming another. If an incident like this takes place it must be recorded on an incident form (see form in our Safeguarding Policy). Staff should be able to call on each other for support when dealing with challenging behaviour.

Restorative approaches should be used to support children to think about the impacts of their behaviour and to support them to make amends.

It might be appropriate to implement a behaviour agreement, which should be drawn up with the child (and their parent/carer depending on the child's age). This will set out clear expectations for behaviour and clear consequences for not meeting these expectations. This should include a date to review the behaviour agreement, where next steps can be agreed on.

Restricting children's attendance

VYH reserves the right to restrict children's ability to attend VYH activities following serious incidents or ongoing behaviour that impacts the health and wellbeing of this child, other children or staff. This will be decided on a case by case basis and discussions will involve the child as well as their parent/carer.

- A Playworker in charge of the session should make any decision about sending a child home
- Parents should be informed immediately when a child is sent home and invited to a meeting to discuss behaviour
- It might be appropriate to restrict how often or for how many hours at a time a child can attend play sessions. A meeting with child and parent/carer should be held to discuss issues and concerns with a clear reason for the restriction. A clear behaviour agreement should be drawn up, in collaboration with the child, to set expectations for when they are in attendance. Restrictions may be reduced over time where children can demonstrate that they can consistently meet the expectations.
- Behaviour agreements and restricted access should be seen as tools/additional framework to help children who are demonstrating harmful behaviour to be able to reflect on the impact of their behaviour and be able to change their behaviour and continue to engage with the play offer
- A record must be taken and kept of any behaviour agreements or restricted hours.
- A record of reoccurring or serious incidents MUST be taken and reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.