

RISE GLOBAL CODE OF CONDUCT & POLICY ON APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

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PART ONE: SAFEGUARDING CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Introduction

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young adults is a shared responsibility to prevent harm to RISE Global Mentorship Network's reputation and credibility, it is essential that we demonstrate the highest standards of conduct.

This Safeguarding Code of Conduct - hereafter referred to as the Code - is part of a suite of mandatory policies for all staff, mentors, and others working with us.

The RISE Global Mentorship Network hereafter referred to as The RISE.

Staff and mentors may also be required to undertake safeguarding training as well as discussing this Code and their understanding of it with their line manager.

The Code includes a Policy on appropriate professional boundaries for all those undertaking any type of work with service users (see Policy below).

The Code's purpose is to:

1. Specify appropriate behaviour required of staff, mentor and mentees whilst they are engaged in working for, or on behalf of the The RISE Global Mentorship Network.
2. Support all those named above to meet their obligations to safeguard
3. Reduce the risk of misplaced or malicious allegations against members of staff and mentors by clarifying expectations of behaviour so that any deviations from it can be easily identified

2. Application

The Safeguarding Code of Conduct forms part of:

- The contract of employment, as a member of staff *or*
- The agreement to work as a Mentors
- The placement agreement as a Mentee

The Policy on appropriate professional boundaries covers the provision of services to young people (mentees) and young adults (mentors) in **all** settings, whether during face-to-face or online mentoring, in college settings, using online platforms, messaging forums, participation work or within the wider community.

Adherence to this Policy will enable individuals to meet the expectations within the Code of Conduct.

On joining The RISE staff, mentors and others are expected to adhere to The RISE Network policies and procedures including this Code.

In specific circumstances, at the discretion of The RISE Network, anyone to whom the Code applies may be required to sign a Commitment to adhere to the Code. This might include, for example, those providing services on a temporary basis.

3. Definitions

For the purpose of these policies the following terms apply:

- 'Safeguarding' means 'keeping young adults at risk safe from harm'
- 'Adult at risk' means any person (mentee) who is aged 18 or over and is at risk of abuse or neglect because of their needs for support.
- Individual means staff, mentor, those on work experience
- 'Service User' is anyone who actively uses The RISE' Network Services whether as a one off workshop/ event attendee or someone who uses our services longer term such as a mentee or an ambassador etc.
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) - the nominated senior lead for the organisation who will set policy and procedure. They will ensure that safeguarding policy and practice is adhered to. They will also be the escalation point for any serious matters arising inc. concerns/ allegations against staff, mentors or partner.
- Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) - this person is a nominated lead on day to day safeguarding support within the organisation and the main port of call for day to day enquiries, advice and guidance.

4. The Code

Staff, mentors, mentee, those on work experience and, as agreed, must:

- Maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct including sensitivity to the cultural context of the work being undertaken
- Treat all adults at risk and their diversity with respect.
- Work in partnership with other departments and organisations to ensure that everything possible is done to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk
- Report any incidents or concerns that cause them to believe that an adult at risk is, or is likely to be at risk of, significant harm in line with The RISE Network procedures
- Adhere to all policies and guidance for online-safety and social media activity
- Co-operate with any vetting and safer recruitment requirements appropriate to role
- Ensure that when work is being undertaken with an adult at risk an assessment is undertaken of whether or not more than one person should be present.
- Report any safeguarding allegations against any individual in line with The RISE Network procedures
- Report any breaches of this Code to a network manager (if you are a mentor) or line manager (if you are a member of staff) and the designated safeguarding officer.

It is not permissible (and in some instances, may be unlawful) for an individual to:

- Engage in, or attempt to engage in, sexual relations or sexually inappropriate relationship with an adult at risk or service user.
- Make sexually suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures to or in the presence of an adult at risk, or service user.
- Use their status or position to groom, form, or promote relationships with any adult at risk or service user, either face to face or online, which are of a sexual nature, or which may become so.
- Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sexual favours.
- Accept significant gifts or incentives from governments, beneficiaries, donors, suppliers or others.
- Allow individuals to gain access to adults at risk without having completed the appropriate checks and processes.
- Encourage or assist others to break the law in any way.
- Engage in any form of sexual harassment.
- Use their position to intimidate, bully, threaten, injure, discriminate against, coerce or undermine any child or adult at risk.
- Either exaggerate or trivialise adult abuse.
- Invite an adult at risk or other service user that has been met through employment, placement or mentoring into their home.
- Carry out duties or mentoring with young people/ adults at risk whilst affected by alcohol, solvents or drugs.
- Be in the possession of, or profit from the sale of, illegal goods or substances.
- Possess abusive images of any 'adult at risk' or service user.
- Breach confidentiality or seek information to which you have no right of access, such as sharing personal details or contact details of a adult at risk or service user with a 3rd party. The exception to this is safeguarding, in which case we can and will share information on the service user if they are at risk of coming to harm as per our safeguarding policy and procedures.

PART TWO: POLICY ON APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

5. Introduction

This policy describes the difference between a personal and professional relationship with a service user; clarifies how to set and maintain appropriate boundaries; and identifies actions to address any breaches of appropriate boundaries.

In this policy, the term 'service user' refers to any young adult who actively uses The RISE Network Services, whether as a one-off workshop/ event attendee or someone who uses our services longer term, such as a mentee or an ambassador (Mentor).

6. Application

Appropriate boundaries are the framework within which an individual's relationship with a service user exists through their work or mentoring activity and which make that relationship appropriate and safe for the service user. The framework sets the parameters within which services and work are delivered, making clear the roles and responsibilities of the individual in relation to the service user. Adherence to this policy will enable individuals to ensure they are meeting the requirements of the Safeguarding Code of Conduct.

7. Why establish appropriate professional boundaries

Appropriate conduct is important because it:

- Safeguards adults at risk and all service users and ensures that individuals are aware of what The RISE Network expects of them in terms of their conduct and relationships with service users
- Recognises and appropriately manages power imbalances and unequal relationships, which are inevitable by virtue of The RISE Network providing services, be they paid, voluntary or otherwise

- Builds appropriate relationships of trust with service users
- Ensures we understand the issues around working with service users and their expectations of us
- Contributes to fulfilling the registration requirements of different regulatory bodies and the need to comply with their codes of conduct
- Protects the reputation of The RISE Network.

8. The difference between a professional and personal relationship

The table below highlights some of the key differences between a personal and a professional relationship. We understand that for mentors who are interacting with young people in a mentoring capacity, this line can become a little blurred, which is why it is good practice to reflect on the relationship and ensure it stays more professional rather than personal for the benefit of both the mentee and mentor.

Characteristic	Professional Relationship	Personal relationship (casual, friendship, romantic, family relation)
Remuneration	Paid to provide care or a service provided on the basis of a recognised mentoring role	No payment for being in the relationship or no official mentoring role
Length of the relationship	Time limited for the length of the service user's needs for a service or the period of the work	May last a lifetime
Location of relationship	Place defined and limited to where the service/work is to be carried out	Place unlimited, often undefined - often in personal space
Purpose of relationship	Goal-directed to provide service or carry out work with the service user	Pleasure, interest directed
Structure of the relationship	For the individual to provide a service or to work with the service user	Spontaneous, unstructured
Power balance	Unequal power – individual has more power due to authority, knowledge, influence and access to privileged information about the service user	Relatively equal
Responsibility for the relationship	Individual responsible for establishing and maintaining professional relationship, not the service user	Equal responsibility to establish and maintain
Preparation for the relationship	Individual requires formal knowledge, preparation, orientation and training	Does not require formal knowledge, preparation, orientation and training
Time spent in relationship	Individual defines a plan of work or activity with the service user for a specific purpose and which is time limited. Relationship does not go beyond this	Personal choice about how much time is spent in relationship and for how long

9. Setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries

Before undertaking any work with or delivering any service it is important for the individual to set clear boundaries and parameters to the relationship with the service user. Any individual undertaking direct work with service users or having contact with them through other activities (for example mentoring, participation work, evaluation) should:

- Be clear of what your role and responsibilities are from your job description/mentor agreement. If necessary in discussion with your line manager/supervisor.
- Ensure that the mentee/ ambassador/ service user understands what they can expect from the professional relationship during a piece of direct work.
- Ensure the mentee/ ambassador/ service user understands the limits of confidentiality i.e. what you can and can't keep confidential and when you may have to report a concern.
- Make clear to the mentee/ ambassador/ service user that this is a professional not a personal relationship and that the relationship is not a friendship, but can offer them appropriate support.
- Continually reflect upon and consider the relationships you have established with the mentee/ ambassador/ service user, and ensure that the boundaries you have established are being maintained. You may need to refer back to some of the points above if needed as a reminder.

PART THREE: HOW BOUNDARIES ARE BREACHED AND CONSEQUENCES

10. When are appropriate boundaries breached?

At times, an individual's actions can lead to them breaching professional boundaries even though their initial intentions were well-meaning. Regardless of the intention, the actual or potential breach must be shared with the appropriate network manager/senior

network manager (if you are a mentor) or your line manager (if you are a member of staff), and steps must be taken to support the individual not to breach appropriate boundaries again.

Often the breach is not a single event but a series of events and interactions which together cause the individual to cross the boundary between what would be considered a professional relationship to a personal relationship. The table above shows the characteristics of a personal relationship, and moving from a professional to a personal relationship in any of these ways is a breach of appropriate boundaries.

We would recommend that if you have concerns about any of these to discuss them with your network manager (if you are a mentor) and your line manager (if you are a member of staff). The safeguarding team are also on hand to support.

Examples of potential or actual breaches:

Over-familiarity

Moving from a professional relationship with a mentee/ Ambassador or service user to one which is over-familiar, looking more like a friendship than a professional relationship, can lead to a range of problems.

These include: the clouding of an individual's judgement about the service user and their needs; the other person pushing the relationship further and becoming more demanding than is appropriate to the work being conducted; or the individual feeling as service user though they have more of an obligation to the other person than is required of the role. Once a relationship has crossed over in this way, it is difficult to return to a professional relationship.

It is important to recognise that the young people with whom we work, especially in a mentoring setting, may be very isolated. For this reason, they may seek a different form a relationship or misinterpret the support that they are receiving. If the boundary is not

carefully and appropriately managed, the service user may experience loss and betrayal when the mentoring relationship comes to a close.

Feelings and actions

At times, when working with a service user an individual may have feelings that cause them concern or that they feel are perhaps inappropriate. Having these feelings is not in itself a breach of appropriate boundaries. There is a difference between having feelings and acting on those feelings and behaving inappropriately. If an individual finds that they are having such feelings, they should discuss and explore them further with their network manager (for mentors) and their line manager (if a member of staff) in order to ensure that appropriate boundaries are maintained.

Occasionally, a mentee/ ambassador or service user may develop an infatuation with an individual who works with them. The individual must deal with these situations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned. They should remain aware that such infatuations carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and must therefore make every effort to ensure that their own behaviour is above reproach.

Similarly, a mentee/ ambassador or service user may develop a dependency on an individual which may alter the nature of the professional relationship and make the individual feel responsible for fulfilling that dependency, especially in a mentoring setting. Again, this must be addressed sensitively whilst being clear the focus of the relationship is a professional one with a clear focus and remit.

An individual, who becomes aware that a service user is developing an infatuation or over-dependency, must make a record of this and discuss this at the earliest opportunity with their network manager (if they are a mentor) or line manager (if they are a member of staff) in the first instance so appropriate action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment.

Personal gain

Individuals must never manipulate a mentee/ ambassador or other service user to bring about personal gain. This includes using contacts made to get information that they would not otherwise have access to, to get discounted or free products or services that they would not otherwise have been offered or to get any unnecessary work or services that they would not ordinarily have had.

Giving and accepting gifts

Gift giving and accepting must only take place in line with The RISE Network standards and policies. These must be agreed with the network manager (if they are a mentor) or line manager (if they are a member of staff). Large or expensive gifts must never be given as they can generate false expectations from the service user and change the nature of the relationship, and may also lead to a feeling of obligation by the other person.

There are occasions when service users wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to mentors/ members of staff, for example on special occasions or as a thank you and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value.

Family and friends

It may be inappropriate for individuals involved to work with mentees/ambassadors or service users or people that you know on a personal basis. If this situation occurs, arrangements should be made for another staff member to take over where possible. If you are a volunteer mentor this should be flagged to your Network Manager.

It is also inappropriate for an individual to discuss their own personal or sexual relationships with or in the presence of mentees, ambassadors or service users. Physical contact

As a general rule of thumb, it is advisable to avoid physical contact with young people

since an action that is appropriate with one person in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different person.

Any physical contact made with a mentee, ambassador or service user should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, Individuals, nevertheless, must use their professional judgement at all times, observe and take note of the service user's reaction or feelings, and – so far as is possible use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to the child for the minimum time necessary.

Where a mentee/ mentor or service user seeks or initiates inappropriate physical contact with an individual, the situation should be handled sensitively and care taken to ensure that contact is not exploited in any way. Careful consideration must be given to the needs of the service user and advice and support given to the person concerned.

Physical contact, which occurs regularly with a child, adult at risk or service user, is likely to be of concern.

Self-disclosure of personal details to a young person by a mentor or member

of staff While recognising that some individuals may have had deeply personal experiences in their own life which may give them empathy and understanding of the situations in which the adults they work with find themselves, it is not acceptable for any individual to disclose their personal experiences to a mentee, ambassador or service user with whom they are working. It changes the boundary of the relationship. Moreover, the individual will have no control over how that information is subsequently used or shared with others

Working within the parameters of the role and professional relationship

In any substantial direct work undertaken with mentees, ambassadors or service users, there must be a clear plan of how, where, when and why the work will be undertaken

and by whom such as the 121 mentoring taking place weekly. The work must be undertaken within these agreed parameters following The RISE Network policies, procedures and practice standards. Any changes to the agreed parameters of the work (such as work experience or extra opportunities) must be discussed with your network manager (if a mentor) or line manager (if member of staff) and recorded in a work plan.

Giving out personal contact details

Staff must never give out their personal contact details, including email and social networking sites, to mentees, ambassadors or service users. If a mentee, mentor or service user needs to contact a member of staff they should be given a work email address or telephone number. This is to ensure that if an individual is absent and a service user urgently needs to get hold of them, another person can pick up and deal with it.

Mentors will often give out their personal details but are ONLY to have contact with the young person via agreed routes of communication that have been signed off RISE.

Social Media Contact

Staff and mentors must not accept a service user's request to join their personal social network page e.g. as a Facebook or Instagram friend. Further guidance on the expectations around online behaviour and online-safety are contained in The RISE Network Guidance on using Social Media and Online Guidance for Mentors.

Certain social media platforms are open access and there is little you can do to prevent a young person following you such as on X (previously twitter) or Linked In. If someone does follow you on these platforms, it is advisable to avoid personal messaging.

Sarcasm, demeaning comments and corporal punishment

All service users have a right to be treated with respect and dignity even in those circumstances where they display difficult or challenging behaviour. Individuals should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a service user. The use of sarcasm,

demeaning or insensitive comments towards service users is not acceptable in any situation. The use of corporal punishment is never acceptable and could constitute a criminal offence.

Sexual relationships

Any sexual relationship with a service user is a serious breach of appropriate boundaries, and in some instances illegal. This includes attempts to 'groom' or befriend a service user for this purpose. Any sexual activity between an individual and a service user may constitute a criminal offence and will always be investigated in line with The RISE Network Managing Safeguarding Allegations Against Staff and Mentors procedures and will also be a matter for disciplinary action.

11. Key Points of Contact

Organisational Safeguarding Lead and Designated Safeguarding Officer:

Nicole Tanchu, Program Manager:

hello@riseglobal.co.uk