



Staff Code of Conduct Policy

1. Introduction

This Code of Conduct policy outlines what CareTrade and The Autism Project expects of all those that work here, whether that work is on or off CareTrade premises. This code is designed to be supportive and aims to help employees to maintain professional standards of behaviour and protect themselves from misunderstanding or criticism.

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to provide a framework for safe professional practice and effective partnerships between staff, leaders and learners/clients and parents/carers.

The Code does not supersede local operating guidelines nor the need for employees to fulfil their obligations laid down in their job description and contract of employment. It does not attempt to identify every CareTrade or The Autism Project (TAP) policy or procedure that exists but highlights some key rules, which broadly apply to all employees.

In addition all TAP staff have a common law duty of care towards students and have a legal obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare and well-being of all students, whose needs must be the first and paramount consideration. (Student Act 1989, Education Act 2002, Education and Inspections Act 2006).

2. Behaviour and standards

All staff have a responsibility for recognising the sensitivities and feelings of others, which may be different from their own but no less valid. All staff should be committed to high standards in delivering their work and working with colleagues, this will not only be about the tasks people do but the effect of their words, how they interact/engage with others and tackling discriminatory or inappropriate behaviour.

All CareTrade staff are expected to give the highest possible standard of service. CareTrade staff have a responsibility to not behave in such a way that may bring the reputation of The Autism Project or the Charity into disrepute, including outside of working hours. Employees have a responsibility to work with colleagues and treat them with respect.

CareTrade encourages all staff and volunteers to report any concerns to their line manager or other senior staff member. We have a **Whistleblowing policy and procedure** to ensure this can be done without fear of recrimination.

3. Confidentiality and Disclosure of information

All information about students, their families or about employees or volunteers whether oral, written or recorded electronically is strictly confidential, may only be used for the professional purposes for which they were gathered and may not be shared with third parties or other individuals except within the confines of a professional information exchange.

If unsure as to whether a particular piece of information may be confidential it is your responsibility to treat it as such and to seek advice from your line manager before proceeding. You must follow the guidance as set out in the **Data Protection Policy**. Breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action.

Any notes, photographs, reports or personal records that may be used as part of your day-to-day role must be stored securely and used for the purpose they were obtained only. They must be returned at

the termination of any relevant project or at the termination of employment.

Those responsible for managing or reviewing confidential information (for example student records) must ensure they maintain security of these records and do not take them from CareTrade premises in line with the **Data Protection Policy**. Failure to follow these procedures may lead to disciplinary action.

All staff are required to sign a confidentiality agreement as part of their contract of employment.

4. Safeguarding

All staff are obliged to support The Autism Project's statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare and well-being of all students. Staff must be aware of the name of the designated safeguarding leads and how to report an incident. They have an absolute duty to familiarise themselves with the **Adult at Risk Safeguarding and Prevent Policy** and to follow this.

All staff have a responsibility to raise concerns about the inappropriate or worrying behaviour of a colleague: in good faith and without fear of repercussions. Staff must accept responsibility for their own actions and behaviour and avoid any conduct that might lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions. They must make a record of any incident and promptly consult their line manager.

All CareTrade staff must complete a DBS check and have clearance to work with vulnerable adults prior to starting work. These have to be renewed every 3 years in line with Southwark Safeguarding Board requirements. In the interim period, staff must declare to their line manager any caution, conviction or if bound over, as soon as possible.

5. Health and Safety

All employees should ensure that they are fully aware of their own duties and responsibilities under the health and safety at work legislation and be familiar with CareTrade's **Health and Safety Policy** and procedures and protocols around risk assessments. These must be fully implemented at all times.

6. Equal Opportunities and Diversity

CareTrade is committed to equality of opportunity and diversity in the workplace and in the services we deliver. All employees must ensure they are familiar with and uphold CareTrade's **Equality & Diversity Policy** and the Equalities Act, at all times, and have a duty to promote equality of opportunity.

7. Attendance and Punctuality

Good timekeeping is essential to ensure that we can deliver all our services and that CareTrade maintains and builds its reputation as a reliable and trusted partner. It also ensures all staff are treated fairly.

Work hours are defined within contracts of employment but are generally between the hours of 9 to 5.30 Monday to Friday. There are however exceptions to this for some staff and occasions when all staff will be asked to work outside of their 'normal' hours. Time off in lieu (TOIL) is granted accordingly by line managers.

Staff should inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity if they are going to be absent or late. These will be recorded by the line manager. Where there is repeated or persistent lateness, this may lead to disciplinary action.

8. Appropriate dress

CareTrade expects all employees to dress appropriately whilst at work. Employees' clothing at work should be neat, clean, modest and appropriate to their role: -

- Staff are expected to adopt the style of dress appropriate to representing CareTrade within a given forum, and to match their style of dress to the environment (e.g. in a business environment to wear smart casual clothing)
- Staff should not wear clothing with slogans inappropriate to their professional status and position as role model, e.g. reference to drug or alcohol use/abuse
- It is not acceptable to expose underwear at work
- Footwear should be such that you are enabled to work directly young people and to move swiftly and safely in all environments
- Hair should be tied back, jewellery removed, and protective equipment worn, where required by the working environment
- Inappropriate dress or jewellery will be brought to the wearer's attention by his/her line manager and should be remedied as soon as is feasible.

9. Mobile Phones and Laptops

CareTrade will issue mobile phones and laptops to staff who need them for their work. These remain the property of CareTrade, and staff are responsible for their safe keeping. These must be used in accordance with the **ICT and Internet Acceptable Use Policy** and staff are required to sign agreement to this.

Personal phones should not be used for work, except in emergency circumstances and no CareTrade data should be transferred to personal computers, under any circumstances.

10. Press and Media

If you are asked to talk with the media at any time about CareTrade, The Autism Project or anything associated with our work please discuss with the Development Director first. This is to ensure consistency of message and to ensure necessary permissions are in place (e.g., names of students should not be given without prior written permission).

11. Social Media

Social media is the term commonly given to websites and online tools allowing users to interact with each other; by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social media can include any website where comments, and/or information, can be shared and are considered to be in the public domain for example photo sharing, blogs as well as the more well-known social networking sites such as twitter and Facebook.

This guidance aims to help staff make responsible decisions to ensure they are using them in line with the Caretrade's Code of Conduct. They must be used carefully to avoid potential pitfalls. Where actions in using social media are judged to contravene the Code of Conduct employees may face disciplinary action, this may include activities outside employment.

Protocol

The basic premise is to exercise common sense. What you write on social networking sites is essentially in the public domain, even if you have privacy settings or material is posted on a closed profile or group.

1. You should only use social media in your capacity as an employee of CareTrade or The Autism Project where this is an appropriate communication tool which must be specifically endorsed by the

Head of Education and Learning or the Development Director.

2. If you are not using social media to support you directly in your employed position, you should always access this in your personal time.
3. In any circumstance:
 - Be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent
 - Be mindful that what you publish may be public for a long time
 - Respect copyright and data protection laws as well as maintaining confidential information.
 - Do not publish or report information or conversations that are accessed through your employment at the college without explicit permission. "Conversations" maybe oral or e-mail exchanges
 - Do not use swear words or use derogatory language.
 - It is unacceptable to use social media in a manner that would generally be accepted as a hostile attempt to hurt, upset or embarrass another person, or groups of people, associated with CareTrade
 - Never refer to stakeholders, suppliers or staff in a way that they can identify individuals
 - Never represent or reproduce the CareTrade or The Autism Project logo without authorisation
 - Do not publish images relating to learners/clients services unless consent has been given in writing
 - Be aware of safeguarding issues and materials which may adversely impact on students and vulnerable adults. Challenge and report inappropriate use of media.
4. In addition, in your personal use of social media:
 - Ensure that your online activities or expressed opinions do not interfere with or conflict with your job or your colleagues (for example many TAP staff are viewed as role models, views expressed should not conflict with this).
 - If you are identifiable as a CareTrade or TAP employee on social networks, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you should present yourself with colleagues and users of our services
 - Do not download or copy CareTrade or TAP materials without permission
 - If you publish content to a website not owned by CareTrade, and it has something to do with work that you do as an employee of the charity or TAP (e.g. evident from your profile), use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of my employer."
5. Maintain boundaries between your personal and professional lives, including customising your privacy settings and avoiding inappropriate, personal information becoming visible to members of the group (please note that information can be passed on by individuals that have been allowed access to and any inappropriate views or content will be viewed as contravening the code of conduct)

12. Photography and videos

Whilst photographic and video images can play a valuable role within the curriculum, after-college activities and to celebrate achievement, there is potential for such images and opportunities to be misused.

Hence all learners/clients or other persons (we wish to film) must have given their written permission to be filmed and for the use of those images – see Media Consent Forms. All images and films must be stored appropriately and securely only used by those authorised to do so.

Anyone may withdraw their permission at any time and at that point their images can no longer be used and must be removed from all media in line with Data Protection.

13. Social Contact

- Staff must not give their personal phone numbers or email addresses to students/clients or their parents/carers.
- No member of staff should enter into an arrangement to provide support or tuition to a student/client outside of CareTrade/The Autism Project without the permission of the Head of Education & Learning or the Development Director.
- Staff should notify their line manager of any existing or previous family or social relationship with a student, client or their parents/carers.
- CareTrade encourage our students/clients to meet each other socially and organise 'social events and meet ups' to facilitate this. Staff should not arrange to meet with students outside of these groups and if this happens incidentally, it should be reported to your line manager at the earliest opportunity.

14. Physical contact

- Physical contact with a young person should always be student lead and in the interest of the young person and not the member of staff. It should be in response to their needs at that time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background.
- Physical contact should never be secretive, for the gratuity of the adult or represent a misuse of authority. Extra caution should be exercised where a student is known to have suffered previous abuse or neglect. Such experiences may sometimes make a student exceptionally needy and demanding of physical contact and staff should respond sensitively by deterring the student through helping them to understand the importance of personal boundaries. Any extreme attention-seeking or behaviour by students that makes staff feel uncomfortable should be reported to a line manager.
- All staff should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their contacts with students and clients. Intimate relationships between students/clients and the adults who work with them will be regarded as a grave breach of trust. Allowing or encouraging a relationship to develop in a way which might lead to an inappropriate relationship is also unacceptable. Staff must understand that any breaches in the law or professional expectations will lead to criminal or disciplinary action and barring. Staff should make themselves aware of the safeguarding and behaviour policies.

15. Infatuations

- It is not unusual for learners or, sometimes, their parents to develop infatuations or "crushes" towards trusted staff. All such situations must be responded to sensitively to maintain the dignity of those concerned and any indications that this might be happening, should be reported to the Head of Education & Learning for TAP learners and to Director of Development for other beneficiaries.
- In addition the object of the learner's or parent's affections may not even be aware of this, in this case colleagues must bring this to the colleague's attention and report this to the Head of Education & Learning or the Development Director.

16. Learners in distress

On those occasions when a learner may be in distress and in need of comfort and re- assurance, staff should ensure that they remain self-aware at all times and that their contact with the learner is not open to misunderstanding. Such incidents, must always be recorded and shared with a line manager.

17. Intervention procedure if needed

CareTrade and The Autism Project staff are not expected or trained to physically restrain learners or clients. Young people with challenging behaviours are unlikely to be suited to our services.

Should a situation arise where a learner's behaviour is endangering them or others, staff will follow de-escalation procedure as detailed in **TAP Learner Behaviour & Conduct Policy and Procedure (Section 5)**. All staff should make themselves familiar with this policy and procedure.

Any incidents of this nature must be recorded and reported to Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.

18. One to one working

Staff working individually with a learner/client should recognise the potential vulnerability of students and adults in such situations and ensure that they manage these situations with regard for the safety of both the learner/client and themselves – please refer to the **Lone Working Policy**.

Individual work with learners should not be undertaken in isolated areas or rooms where there is no external visual access. Where it is necessary to close doors for reasons of confidentiality, a colleague should be made aware of this and asked to remain vigilant.

19. Home Visits

All work with learners, clients and meetings with parents/carers should, wherever possible, be undertaken at CareTrade premises or other recognised workplace, there are however occasions, in response to urgent or specific situations where it may be necessary to make one-off or regular home visits.

A risk assessment should include an evaluation of any known factors regarding the learner/young person, parents and others living in the household. Following an assessment, appropriate risk management measures should be put in place before visits are agreed. Where little or no information is available, visits should not be made alone.

No learner or young person should be in or invited into, the home of an adult who works with them, unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parents/ carers and a senior manager in writing.

20. Educational Visits and Social Activities

Staff remain in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour remains professional, at all times and stays within clearly defined professional boundaries. Risk assessments should be completed and careful attention is given to staff/learner ratios.

21. Transporting or accompanying students off-site

Where staff need to accompany learners off or between sites on their own, a risk assessment should be completed first (eg. as part of travel training). The exception to this would be in an emergency situation (eg. accompanying to A&E), in these circumstances the member of staff should contact their line manager (or senior) at earliest convenience to report the incident verbally and complete a written report as soon as possible.

Staff must not use their own cars for transporting learners, unless they have ensured appropriate escort arrangements and that they have business use motor insurance in place.

22. First Aid

All first aid will be administered only by suitably trained and accredited staff except in an emergency where the illness or injury is such that to delay assistance might cause harm. All incidents requiring first aid must be recorded.

All CareTrade staff should complete emergency first aid training within their first six months and complete annual refresher courses. This should be recorded in staff training files.

23. Alcohol and Drugs

CareTrade recognises the importance of the health and welfare of its employees and realise that the misuse of alcohol and drugs is a health problem, and as such, will be treated sympathetically. However attending work or representing CareTrade or The Autism Project under the influence of alcohol or drugs is likely to be considered as gross misconduct.

24. Money, Gifts and Donations

Employees should never put themselves under any financial obligation to individuals or organisations that might influence them in their judgement or performance of their duties.

CareTrade receives public and private funds to support our work and has a duty to fully account for these resources properly and effectively. All staff have a duty to comply with financial procedures as appropriate to your role. All financial transactions and expense claims must be properly authorised and recorded and wasteful or unnecessary expenditure avoided.

From time to time employees may receive personal gifts from funders, partners, suppliers, parents, students or clients. To ensure standards of probity, any gift must be notified to your line manager. In respect of gifts of a value above £50, consideration will be given as to how they can best be used to benefit the organisation as a whole.

Similarly staff should only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent CareTrade in the community. Offers to attend purely social, entertainment or sporting functions should be accepted only when these are part of the life of the community or where CareTrade should be seen to be represented. All such offers of hospitality should be properly authorised and recorded by a senior manager.

Acceptance by employees of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal, where the CEO has given consent in advance and where the CEO and Treasurer are satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised.

Personal gifts should not be given by staff to students and any reward to a student should be transparent, consistent with **The Autism Project Learner Behaviour & Conduct Policy**, recorded and not based upon favouritism.

25. Outside commitments and conflict of interest

Employees' off-duty hours are their own personal concern. However, employees should not take up any outside activities or employment, whether paid or unpaid, which conflicts with or reacts detrimentally to, or has such potential, to CareTrade's interests, or which exposes themselves to a significant health risk.

Staff should note that all intellectual property (patents, trademarks and other rights in inventions or concepts that are created or developed by employees during and arising from or related to their employment) belongs to CareTrade, subject to any rights acquired by employees under the Patents Act 1977. The Trust also owns the copyright in all work produced by employees during their employment.

26. Whistleblowing

If employees have concerns about something that is happening at work which they believe could be unlawful conduct, financial malpractice, a concern for the welfare or safeguarding of a student or be dangerous to the public or the environment, it is important that you bring it to CareTrade's attention. Further details can be found in the **Whistleblowing Policy**. Should the concern relate to a safeguarding matter, the **Adult at Risk Safeguarding & Prevent Procedures** must be followed.

Policies Referred to in the Code of Conduct: -

- **Adult at Risk Safeguarding & Prevent**
- **Data Protection**
- **Equality and Diversity**
- **Health & Safety**
- **ICT and Internet Acceptable Use**
- **TAP Learner Behaviour & Conduct**
- **Whistleblowing**