



## **Staff Code of Conduct**

### ***1. Introduction***

My Guardians recognises its responsibility for Safeguarding and Child Protection. With this safeguarding policy we promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. We endeavor to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support and protection. We have duty of care to keep children safe and to look after the child's best interests. We undertake rigorous checks on all who work with us, all our personnel are DBS checked.

### ***2. Power and Positions of Trust***

It is important to build trust between guardianship students and host families, as well as other guardianship personnel at My Guardians, and to create a safe homestay environment through being positive and using praise. My Guardians hosts are expected to promote positive behavior in all our guardianship students and be fair and transparent in dealing with under 18s years old.

Hosts and other members of host families must ensure that their conduct does not have any risk or harm to the safeguarding or welfare of students, their behavior would be acceptable to My Guardians management or students' parents and they should ensure all adults who come into contact with My Guardians students are of good character and trust.

### ***3. Duty of Care to Student***

During the times that you are hosting, your responsibilities are to protect, care for and provide full board and lodging for your student on a day-to-day basis. Please exercise the same level of care as a responsible parent – 'in loco parentis'. When providing accommodation for students try to include them within the routines of the family as much as possible and provide a homely environment.

The overall guardianship responsibility remains with My Guardians, whom you should contact whenever a situation arises in which you are uncertain as to the appropriate action to take.

### ***4. Exercising Professional Judgment & Professional Conduct***

My Guardians expects the highest standards of professional conduct at all times.

- Dress appropriately to reflect your professional status and the fact that you are living with young students. In particular, avoid wearing nightwear in the student's company.
- Ensure that the pupil's privacy is protected at all times including in their bedroom and when using the bathroom. There must always be a lock on the bathroom door.
- Always be mindful of the responsibility you have regarding alcohol and smoking whilst living and working with under 18 years old; avoid smoking and minimize alcohol consumption in the student's company.
- Comply with UK laws regarding alcohol, drugs and smoking.

- Allegations of unprofessional conduct or improper contact or words can arise at any time. You are reminded that professionalism and vigilance are required, to ensure the safety of children in your care, and to reduce the risk of an allegation of impropriety against you or a member of staff.

### ***5. Use of Appropriate Language***

My Guardians expect that only appropriate language will be used in communication with students. Hosts and members of their families and guardianship personnel are strongly advised not to swear, blaspheme or use any sort of offensive language in front of students.

### ***6. Sexual Contact with Young People***

The Law: Abuse of the Position of Trust.

- All hosts and members of host families are in a position of trust. It is a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 for an adult (aged 18 years and over) who is in a position of trust to engage in sexual activity with any child aged under 18 years old, even if both parties consent. The offence is punishable by up to five-years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.
- Sexual activity involving a person under the age of 16 (male or female) is an indecent assault, which are both a criminal offence and a matter for which damages can be awarded. This is so, even when the younger person is alleged to have provoked or encouraged the activity.
- All members of My Guardians must take every complaint and allegation by a student seriously and the Designated Safeguarding Lead must take action. It may be necessary to involve social services and the police if there are grounds for thinking that a criminal offence has been committed.

### ***7. Communication with Students***

My Guardians host families must ensure that communication with guardianship students is open, honest and clear.

***Allegations:*** Allegations of unprofessional conduct or improper contact or words can arise at any time.

You are reminded that professionalism and vigilance are required, to ensure the safety of students in your care, and to reduce the risk of an allegation of impropriety against you or a member of staff.

You need to take particular care when dealing with a student who:

- Appears to be emotionally distressed, or generally vulnerable or who is seeking expressions of affection or approval
- Appear to hold a grudge or becomes angry or frustrated by your actions
- Acts in a sexually provocative way, or who is inclined to make exaggerated claims about himself or herself and others, or to fantasies, or one whose manner with adults is over-familiar
- If you accidentally harm or hurt a child in any way

You must immediately inform My Guardianship management if any pupil's behavior is unusual or causes concern. Some of these behaviors may be indications that a student has been, or is currently being, abused or are at risk of harm and should therefore be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Always act within the spirit of these guidelines and in the best interest of student.

### ***8. Social Contact with Students***

My Guardians host families and other personnel should not have contact with students via social media. Everyone at My Guardians is instructed not to accept invitations from students to become 'friend' via Facebook or other social media.

## ***9. Social Contact with Parents and Staff at Partner schools***

Host families are not expected to contact schools or parents, all communications should be conducted via My Guardians. Parents and schools contact numbers will be given for cases of emergency only.

## ***10. Physical Contact including Restraint***

All hosts should be aware that they may only use reasonable, appropriate and lawful means of control and contact with students so as to provide comfort if in distress and to maintain safety and good order in the home. If there is any form of physical restraint then the homestay must contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead at My Guardians as soon as it becomes possible to explain the circumstances.

## ***11. An Outright Ban on any Corporal Punishment***

Under no circumstances must physical punishment ever be used, as this is against the Law.

## ***12. Care of Distressed Students***

Appropriate physical contact when a student is in distress is acceptable, for example, hugging a student who is feeling homesick. In these situations you should always use your own professional judgment and seek permission from the student first. Always ensure the presence of another adult and explain what you are doing.

Please have in mind, that there may be particular circumstances where physical contact may be unwanted, for example, a child who has been abused may find physical contact particularly difficult.

## ***13. One-to-one Meetings with Guardianship Students:***

When accommodating guardianship student, host family should take particular care in the following ways:

- Avoid sitting or standing in close proximity to the pupil
- Avoid awkward discussions
- Avoid all physical contact and apologize straight away if there is accidental physical contact
- Avoid carrying out personal tasks which the student can do for themselves, e.g. applying sunscreen
- Avoid any conduct that could be taken as a sexual advance
- Avoid words or expressions that have any unnecessary sexual innuendo; avoid displays of affection either personally or in writing even in jest
- Avoid any form of aggression or anger. Threatening words, holding, pushing, pulling or hitting, is never acceptable
- Avoid any words or actions that are over-familiar
- Do not swear, blaspheme or use any sort of offensive language in front of students

If you are at all concerned about anything that happened during the student's stay, inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay, and make a written record that should also be signed and dated.

## ***14. Students' Entitlement to Privacy***

Host and all members of host family should ensure that the pupil's privacy is protected at all times including in their bedroom and when using the bathroom. There must always be a lock on the bathroom door.

## ***Use of CCTV in host families homes***

ICO has a Code of Practice in relation to the use of CCTVs inside and outside properties; host families using CCTV must adhere to this. There should be a clear and lawful need for the recording and host should be able to demonstrate why CCTV is appropriate to meet that need, taking into account a student's right to privacy and what the CCTV user has done to ensure the recordings are no more intrusive than they need to be and that there is a clear system to ensure any data obtained is adequately protected, in line with the usual data protection principles.

### ***15. Transporting Students***

On occasions it will be unavoidable that a single child will be transported in a member of the guardianship personnel's personal vehicle. It is prudent on such occasions to ensure that the child passenger sits on the rear seat to reduce the possibility of accidental contact, which might be misconstrued.

### ***16. Gifts and Rewards***

Occasionally students and parents may present gifts to My Guardians host families and guardianship personnel as a thank you gesture for looking and caring after them. My Guardians personnel should declare gifts and rewards received from students, if the value of gifts is over £100. This will be kept on our records.

### ***17. Use of Photographs and Videos***

Consent is sought from parents on our Guardianship Application Form for images of students to be used by My Guardians. Providing reasonable steps are taken to ensure an appropriate photograph, and to protect the full name and contact details, photography guardianship students by hosts, staff and the media are allowed, within safe practice guidelines. Host families may not use images of My Guardians students online without the consent, in writing from My Guardians.

### ***18. Professional Code of Conduct as Stated in My Guardians Safeguarding Policy***

#### ***All My Guardians personnel should***

- Place the safety and welfare of pupils above all other considerations
- Treat all children, parents and colleagues with consideration and respect
- Adhere to the principles and procedures contained in the policies in our safeguarding portfolio
- Treat each child as an individual and make adjustments to meet individual need
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of and commitment to non-discriminatory practice
- Be alert to, and report appropriately, any behavior that may indicate that a child is at risk of harm
- Never condone inappropriate behavior by children or staff
- Take responsibility for their continuing professional development

#### ***Good practice includes***

- Setting a good example by conducting ourselves appropriately
- Encouraging positive and safe behavior among pupils
- Being a good listener
- Being alert to changes in pupils' behavior
- Recognizing that challenging behavior may be an indicator of abuse
- Reading and understanding My Guardians Child Protection Policy and guidance documents on wider safeguarding issues
- Being aware that the personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of some pupils may lead to an increased risk of abuse

## *Advice on one-to-one contact with children*

Guardianship personnel should be wary of placing themselves in situations where they are open to accusations of inappropriate conduct. Essentially this involves exercising common sense.

If in conversation with a child in a room or a car, for example, a respectful distance should be observed. Guardianship personnel or a member of their household should never be alone with the child in the bedroom with a closed door. If guardianship personnel or an adult member of their family is involved in corrective and personal guidance of a child, it is advisable to take precautions: e.g., if inside the house, by leaving the door to the room open, remaining seated at a reasonable distance from the child, ensuring there is a witness when appropriate or that there is another responsible adult in the house where possible.

- It is not wise to invite a single child into a bedroom or bathroom.
- On occasions it will be unavoidable that a single child will be transported in a member of the guardianship personnel's personal vehicle. It is prudent on such occasions to ensure that the child passenger sits on the rear seat to reduce the possibility of accidental contact, which might be misconstrued.
- It is good advice not to make physical contact with a child. This is most important advice in a one-to-one situation between a member of the guardianship personnel and a child.
- Guardianship personnel should note that, in one-to-one discussions, confidentiality should not be promised to the child.
- Exclusively intimate situations with a child that could either arouse undue suspicion or lead to misinterpretation and false allegations should be avoided.

Updated January 2021

Tel +44 (0) 7919425660, email [info@myguardians.co.uk](mailto:info@myguardians.co.uk)

My Guardians Ltd is registered in England & Wales, Reg Number 8920466

Registered Office: Woodland Steep, Sevenoaks Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN159DS, UK