



Richmond
Social Care Services CIC

House

Code of Conduct Policy
2026 - 2027

1. INTRODUCTION

All adults working with children and young people have a legal and moral duty to safeguard and promote their welfare. Under the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, and reinforced by Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026, organisations must ensure that adults working with children are competent, confident, and safe to do so.

At Richmond House Social Care Services, this Code of Conduct is mandatory for all staff and volunteers. It provides practical guidance to safeguard children, promote professional standards, and prevent behaviour that could give rise to allegations of abuse. This policy applies to all adults, including paid staff, volunteers, governors, contractors, and anyone working with children and young people, regardless of status or location. While this policy cannot cover every eventuality, staff must always seek guidance from senior colleagues if unsure about actions or decisions, particularly in circumstances not explicitly addressed here.

2. PURPOSE, SCOPE AND PRINCIPLES

This Code of Conduct provides clear expectations of professional behaviour for all Richmond House staff, including those delivering Alternative Provision (AP) at Budleigh House. Staff are role models and must maintain high standards in all aspects of their work, both on and off duty.

This policy applies to:

- All employees of Richmond House Social Care Services
- All staff in units or bases attached to Richmond House, including Alternative Provision at Budleigh House

The core principle is that safeguarding and promoting welfare is the ultimate responsibility of Richmond House, even when pupils are placed off-site in Alternative Provision.

3. SETTING AN EXAMPLE

3.1 Staff should demonstrate behaviour that promotes respect, safety, and professionalism.

3.2 Staff must avoid offensive or inappropriate language and model conduct that children and young people can emulate.

3.3 Staff must maintain professional boundaries and avoid situations that could result in allegations of abuse or unprofessional conduct.

3.4 This Code provides guidance on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Staff must always adhere to these standards.

4. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

4.1 Staff have a duty to protect children from:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect

4.2 All concerns must be reported immediately to the Registered Manager or Head of Services for Child Protection.

4.3 The safeguarding leads are:

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Jumaa Al Karaki
- **Deputy DSLs:** Hala Okasheh and Pauline Bullement

4.4 Staff must be familiar with Richmond House's Child Protection Policy and Whistleblowing Procedure. All staff are expected to read at least Part One of KCSIE 2026 in full, as Annex A has been withdrawn.

4.5 Staff must not demean or undermine children, their families, or colleagues.

4.6 Staff must take reasonable care of children under their supervision to ensure safety and welfare.

4.7 Staff must be aware of and challenge misogyny, misandry, and prejudice-based harm as safeguarding concerns, as reinforced by KCSIE 2026.

4.8 Staff must recognise that child-on-child abuse involves an escalating pattern of harmful behaviours, ranging from harassment through to serious abuse and violence, and must not dismiss harmful conduct as "banter" or "part of growing up".

5. PROMOTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Staff must follow policies and procedures that support learning, well-being, and development.

5.2 Staff must cooperate with colleagues and external agencies where necessary.

5.3 Staff must follow reasonable instructions that support children's development.

5.4 Staff must be aware of the needs of young carers and children requiring mental health support, as highlighted in KCSIE 2026.

6. HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

6.1 Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity, including handling finances and using house property responsibly.

6.2 Gifts from suppliers or associates must be declared to the Registered Manager. Token gifts from children or parents may be accepted. Staff must never give personal gifts to children, as this may be misinterpreted.

7. CONDUCT OUTSIDE WORK

7.1 Staff must avoid behaviour outside work that could damage their reputation, Richmond House's reputation, or the community's trust.

7.2 Criminal offences involving violence, illegal drugs, or sexual misconduct are unacceptable.

7.3 Staff must exercise caution online and understand the risks of technology use, including the risks posed by AI-generated deepfakes and nude imagery.

7.4 Staff may undertake other work if it does not conflict with Richmond House interests or affect their performance.

7.5 Staff must not misuse social media in ways that could discredit the House or colleagues.

7.6 Professional Conduct Outside Work – Alternative Provision Considerations:

- Staff must maintain professional boundaries at all times with current learners or service users.
- Personal relationships with pupils outside of work are strictly prohibited.
- Communication with learners must be professional and documented.
- Social media contact with pupils is forbidden.
- Any interaction outside work must be reported to a supervisor or DSL.
- Privacy of learners must be respected; photos or media may only be taken with explicit, documented consent.

- Staff must report inappropriate behaviour by colleagues immediately.
 - Violations may result in disciplinary action and/or referral to authorities.
 - Regular training will be provided on boundaries, professional conduct, and safeguarding.
-

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

8.1 Staff must only share confidential information with colleagues who have a professional role regarding the child.

8.2 Staff must not discuss confidential matters outside of appropriate channels, including with parents or peers, except in accordance with procedures.

8.3 Staff must report any safeguarding concerns immediately and never promise confidentiality to a child.

8.4 Staff must adhere to the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, ensuring that children's personal data is processed lawfully and with specific protection for children's data.

9. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

9.1 Failure to meet conduct standards may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

9.2 Informal Procedures:

- Minor misconduct may be addressed via advice, coaching, and support.
- Staff will be made aware of the improvement required, review periods, and consequences.

9.3 Formal Procedures:

- Serious or repeated breaches will follow formal procedures, potentially including suspension during investigations.

Stage 1 – First Written Warning:

- Details the complaint, required improvement, and timescale
- Retained on file for 12 months, then removed if conduct is satisfactory

Stage 2 – Final Written Warning:

- Warns that dismissal may follow if standards are not met
- Retained for 24 months, then removed if conduct is satisfactory

Stage 3 – Dismissal:

- May follow failure to meet standards post-Final Written Warning
- Right of appeal exists, with procedural fairness guaranteed

All complaints and grievances will remain confidential.

10. KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION (KCSIE 2026) – ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

Key Points for Richmond House Staff & AP Team

- **Ultimate Responsibility:** Richmond House retains full accountability for pupil welfare, including when placed in Alternative Provision.
- **Vetting Providers:** Ensure all AP providers are suitable, compliant with safeguarding, and have safer recruitment checks. All volunteers in regulated activity now require an enhanced DBS check with barred list check, regardless of supervision.
- **Information Sharing & Early Help:**
 - Share relevant safeguarding and SEN information before placement.
 - Maintain robust two-way communication.
 - Ensure continuity of existing support plans.
 - Align with the Family Help reforms introduced in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- **Attendance & Monitoring:**
 - Treat attendance with equal seriousness.
 - Monitor welfare, behaviour, and engagement, not just academic progress.
 - Be aware that being absent or missing from education can be a warning sign of safeguarding concerns, including sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or child criminal exploitation.
- **Abuse Awareness:**
 - Vigilance for all forms of abuse, including child-on-child abuse (harassment and violence), exploitation, mental health, and online safety.
 - Recognise misogyny and misandry as safeguarding concerns.
 - Be aware of harm outside the home such as exploitation.
 - Confirm all policies and reporting procedures.
- **Handling Allegations:**
 - Any allegation against AP staff must be reported to the manager and Richmond House DSL immediately.
 - DSL will contact Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as required.

Richmond House staff must be proactive, vigilant, and meticulous, ensuring pupils in Alternative Provision are safe, supported, and protected.

11. USE OF TECHNOLOGY, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND RECORDED MEDIA

11.1 General Principle

The use of technology and the recording of images or video must always be purposeful, proportionate, and in the best interests of the child. The privacy and dignity of children and young people are paramount. Staff must be aware of the risks posed by AI-generated deepfakes and nude imagery and follow the organisation's policies on online safety.

11.2 Use of Mobile Phones and Personal Devices

- Personal mobile phones must not be used for taking photographs or videos of children, young people, or any work-related activities.
- Staff must not use personal devices for official communication with parents or young people. All official communication must be conducted through designated work devices or platforms.
- Richmond House supports the implementation of mobile-phone-free policies in line with KCSIE 2026 guidance.

11.3 Use of Designated Work Devices

- Two designated work devices are provided for all work-related activities, including photography, video recording, and communication. These devices are for use by the Designated Safeguarding Leads (Hala Okasheh and Jay Al Karaki) only.
- These devices are stored securely, locked away on the Budleigh site when not in use.
- Access to these devices is restricted to authorised personnel only.
- All photos and videos recorded for work purposes must be saved directly to the secure digital media on the organisation's computer system.

11.4 Management of Recorded Images and Data

- Once photos or videos are transferred to the secure computer system, they must be erased immediately from the work mobile device.
- CCTV footage will be retained for a maximum of 14 days, after which it is automatically deleted, in line with data protection principles.
- All stored images and data are subject to the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. Access is restricted to staff with a legitimate professional need. Children merit specific protection with regard to their personal data.

11.5 Parental Consent

- Written, informed consent must be obtained from parents/carers for any photography or video recording that is not for routine operational purposes (e.g., identification, educational records). Consent forms will be reviewed annually and must clearly state:
 - The purpose of the recording.
 - How the images will be stored and who will have access.
 - The retention period for the images.
 - That images will not be used for any other purpose without further consent.

11.6 Official Communication with Parents

- Official communication with parents via WhatsApp is managed exclusively through the designated work number and device, which is linked to a home computer for monitoring purposes outside of standard business hours. This ensures continuity of care and prompt responses to urgent matters while maintaining a professional boundary.

12. POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Approved by: Richmond House Management Team

Effective: 2026 – 2027

Next Review: September 2027 or sooner if statutory guidance changes.

Document Version: Vr 08

Review Period: 2026 – 2027

Summary of Key Legislative and Guidance Updates (2026–2027)

Guidance / Legislation	Key Changes
Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026	Comes into force 1 September 2026; Annex A removed – all staff must read Part One; new guidance on child-on-child abuse (renamed to include "harassment and violence"); misogyny and misandry recognised as safeguarding concerns; AI-generated deepfakes and nude imagery addressed; mobile-phone-free policies; all volunteers in regulated activity require enhanced DBS with barred list check
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026	Updated 18 March 2026; Family Help reforms; emphasis on multi-agency accountability and harm outside the home
Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026	Education settings become safeguarding 'partners in practice' within local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
Crime and Policing Act 2026	Mandatory reporting duty for Child Sexual Abuse
Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR	Children merit specific protection regarding personal data; age of digital consent under UK GDPR Article 8

This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with Richmond House's Child Protection Policy, Whistleblowing Procedure, and other relevant safeguarding policies.