

# **SES KITE**

## **Residential Accommodation**

### **Working Alone Policy and Practice**

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## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>CONTEXT</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>SHARED VALUES OF SES STAFF WORKING ALONE</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>BENEFITS OF WORKING ALONE WITH VULNERABLE YOUNG ADULTS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR STAFF WORKING ALONE IN SES KITE HOMES</b>	
5.1	POSITIVE PERSONAL CONTACT BETWEEN CHILDREN AND STAFF	4
5.2	PROVIDING PERSONAL CARE	6
5.3	CARE AND CONTROL	6
5.4	PLANNED 1:1 WORKING AGREED AS PART OF CASEWORK	7
5.5	ATTENDING MEETINGS/APPOINTMENTS WITH A YOUNG ADULT	7
5.6	ACCESSING LEARNING, COMMUNITY OR LEISURE ACTIVITIES	7
5.7	RESPECTING PRIVACY / MAINTAINING SAFETY WITHIN THE HOME	7
5.8	APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATON AND CONTACT BETWEEN STAFF AND YOUNG ADULTS	8
5.9	ADMINISTERING AND STORAGE OF MEDICATION	9
5.10	GIFTS, REWARDS, FAVOURITISM AND EXCLUSION	9
<b>6</b>	<b>RECORDING AND RECORD KEEPING</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>RISK OF WORKING ALONE AND MITIGATION</b>	
7.1	ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF	10
7.2	COMMUNICATION STRUCTURES AND TEAM WORK	10
7.3	RISK ASSESSMENT	11
7.4	STAFF CODE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE	11
7.5	STAFF WELLBEING	11
<b>8</b>	<b>STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>SAFEGUARDING AND YOUNG ADULT PROTECTION TRAINING</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO OF OTHER POLICY AND PRACTICE DOCUMENTATION THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SAFEGUARDING PROCESS</b>	<b>12</b>

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

SES Kite provides homes for vulnerable young adults and understands that working alone for sustained periods of time is an essential part of the delivering the vision. Underpinning all staff and young adult relationships is a philosophy of trust, enabling the environment's ethos to be domestic alongside planned high quality personalised care and learning. SES understand that:

- It is the company's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children and young adults.
- Children and young adults who are and feel safe make more successful learners and citizens.
- All professionals should make sure their approach is young adult centered and consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the young adult.

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all young adults and our staff team. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where young adults are respected and valued.

The natural and normalised environment created by working alone with young adults creates the conditions for long term risk reduction.

## **2 CONTEXT**

Tower Hill is located within Suffolk and works within guidelines issued by the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership Adults Board. Specialist Education Services will give every assistance to agencies to enable them to carry out their statutory vulnerable young adult protection responsibilities.

All SES staff, whether working in our children's homes, schools or young adult homes, will have periods of time when they are working 1:1 with children, young people and young adults. To ensure a naturalised domestic living situation one to one working is not only in reality unavoidable, it is also necessary to meet the complex needs of young people and young adults who have suffered a level of deprivation in respect of quality of attention and care from staff adults.

We believe that a huge amount of invaluable work goes on in informal and planned 1:1 situation; eliminating vulnerability for staff and young adults then becomes a matter of clarity of policy and professional practice.

The overriding principle is that wherever possible the young adult should feel that there is an appropriate naturalness about any situation unless there is a need through assessed risk to behave otherwise.

Staff working alone with young adults within SES Kite homes do so within the context of a professional team, led by the Young Adult Residential Support Manager. This professional team structure provides the framework for safeguarding staff and young adults.

### 3 **SHARED VALUES OF SES STAFF WORKING ALONE**

SES Kite put great care and detail in our recruitment process, with emphasis on appointing the right people who are excited by our philosophy and innovative practice. We believe that the following core values are essential for staff to possess in order to be successful in working with our young adults:

- Resilience
- Calm
- Responsible
- Independent
- Resourcefulness
- Timeliness
- Honesty
- Humility
- Reliability
- Self Reliance

These qualities are reinforced through training and professional development.

### 4 **BENEFITS OF WORKING ALONE WITH VULNERABLE YOUNG ADULTS**

As already stated, in order to create a naturalised domestic living situation, one to one working is essential to meet the complex needs of young adults who have previously suffered a level of deprivation in respect of quality of attention and care from staff adults. **Working alone with young adults provides the platform for staff to deliver the SES Kite vision, creating the conditions for life long success in adulthood.**

There are other proven benefits for staff working alone including:

- the rewarding nature of being able to provide personalised care and support for young people;
- the opportunity to build and sustain relationships with the young people they support;
- witnessing the positive effects that regular and consistent one-to-one care and support can have on the young people they support, particularly around happiness and general demeanour.

Many staff who experience working alone report that they are more self-efficient and productive, have greater autonomy, possess the opportunity to develop their own decision-making skills and experience a greater level of independence.

At SES Kite staff can experience the above benefits within the context of a professional and supportive staff team.

## 5 SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR STAFF WORKING ALONE IN SES KITE HOMES

### 5.1 POSITIVE PERSONAL CONTACT BETWEEN CHILDREN AND STAFF

At all SES establishments there is clear and unequivocal expression of normal, positive, physical contact between staff adults and between staff adults and children or young adults. This is not physical contact that in any way seeks to establish authority over a child or young adult, but that which expresses 'parental' affection, to provide comfort, ease distress and signal care as would be expected between good parents and their children.

*"The parent/carer-child connection is the most powerful mental health intervention known to mankind" (Bessel Van Der Kolk)*

*"The more healthy relationships a child (young adult) has, the more likely he will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love" (Bruce Perry)*

To provide effective and trusting therapeutic relationships, staff adults working alone must be able to provide positive, physical contact for the young adults. To deny this would be tantamount to emotional deprivation and we believe that normal adult/child/young adult physical contact is a critical therapeutic factor in children and young adult's care plans to a greater or lesser degree. A risk adverse approach would create a lack of trust between staff and young adults, and inevitably raise the risk of developing inappropriate behaviours for young adults in the long term.

Every staff adult needs to appreciate the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch, and to be aware of touch which poses as therapeutic, but which is actually being used to satisfy the practitioner's need for contact rather than that of the young adults. Naturally staff adults have to be fully cognisant of touch that is invasive or which could be confusing, re-traumatising, or experienced as stimulating in any way whatsoever. Should any such touch be used, it would be deemed as the most serious breach of professional boundaries warranting disciplinary action.

Bearing in mind the specific context, the following guiding principles should apply:

- Specific programmes involving therapeutic physical contact will be considered through the PAN (Portfolio of Achievement and Need) process;
- Given that a high proportion of vulnerable young adults with social, emotional and mental health complexities may have experienced sexual and/or physical abuse, staff need to ensure that any physical contact is not misinterpreted;
- If at any time a young adult demonstrates verbally or otherwise that they are not comfortable with physical contact staff should respond immediately by ceasing that contact;
- There should be no general expectations of privacy for the physical expression of affection or comfort, although this may be appropriate in exceptional circumstances (e.g. bereavement);
- Staff need to be aware that different cultural factors may apply;
- Age and maturity are factors to be considered in deciding appropriate physical contact:

- Where a member of staff feels that it would be inappropriate to respond to a young adult seeking physical comfort, the reasons for denying this should be clearly explained to the young adult. The young adult should be comforted verbally as necessary;
- Young adults should be counselled with regard to socially appropriate/inappropriate times/places/situations to seek physical comfort;
- Appropriate physical contact should be a focus of discussions with families and placing authorities;
- If an embrace takes place, care should be taken to make it a 'sideways' cuddle wherever possible, sensitively and tactfully handled;
- The issue of personal contact in general should be raised in interviews and induction training for staff and discussed in staff development and supervision;
- Physical contact of any kind initiated by staff should be no more than is necessary to fulfil its purpose. For example, in comforting a young adult in distress, such physical comfort should be the minimum necessary to assist the young adult to regain composure and calm.

The following are examples of physical contact, which are unacceptable:

- Play fighting between staff and young adult,
- Over affectionate cuddles,
- Kissing, and
- Any contact likely to be interpreted as sexual in nature,

The kind of physical contacts likely to be acceptable include:

- Planned physical contact which is part of a bespoke therapeutic intervention,
- Holding a hand in situations which might present fear or anxiety,
- Putting an arm around the shoulder of a young adult in distress,
- Patting a young adult on the back to display approval, and
- Reinforcing a verbal request to calm down with a physical prompt such as a hand on a shoulder.

*(The list is intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive)*

**Any positive, physical contact initiated by a young adult that is considered out of character should be recorded and reported in order to safeguard both the staff adult and young adult.** Typical physical and verbal behaviours for a young adult should be outlined in their daily care, risk assessments and development and learning documents. If a member of staff is concerned that the young adult has formed an infatuation with them, this must be reported without delay to the YARSM or the first port of call. Any behaviour considered sexualised in nature, e.g. touching private areas (bottom, breasts) must be immediately addressed and reported to the YARSM or first port of call.

When inappropriate physical contact is initiated by a young adult staff should seek to disengage from the situation as soon as is possible. In seeking to disengage, staff may need to signal their disapproval of the inappropriate contact. This should be done consistently, i.e. irrespective of which young adult has initiated it and on *all* occasions of inappropriateness. It is possible to disengage from such physical contact without signalling rejection of the young adult or their affectionate intentions.

There may be some young adults for whom any physical contact is particularly unwelcome. For example, some young adults may be particularly sensitive to physical contact because of their cultural background or because they have been abused. It is important that all staff have an awareness of these young adults. Staff should bear in mind that even innocent and well-intentioned physical contact could be misconstrued. If staff believe their intentions have been misconstrued they should immediately seek to discuss this with the YARSM.

***(For further guidance staff must read 'The SES Way Policy and Practice', 'SES Kite Safeguarding and Vulnerable young Adult Policy and Practice' as well as 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those Working with Children and Young People in Education Settings 2019)***

## 5.2 PROVIDING PERSONAL CARE

There may be occasions when staff are involved in the intimate care of young adults because of the young adult's level of functioning:

- It may be necessary for staff to supervise the running of a bath with particular regard to temperature and safety. If a young adult asks for help when bathing this should take the form of verbal instruction, prior to the young adult going into the shower or bath.
- Some young adults may ask for help in washing their hair and this is acceptable providing that it is done over a sink or bath side. Any other bodily contact is not appropriate. Staff should never have any contact with a young adult that may compromise them and allow misinterpretation of their intentions. If staff are in any doubt about the appropriateness of their actions they should seek advice from the YARSM.
- Physical examinations of young adults are an extremely sensitive area. Unless there is a medical emergency, any physical examination must be completed with two staff present. Some young adults may understandably not want an 'audience' of more than one staff adult and would prefer such examinations, (e.g. a rash on the upper part of the thigh), to happen in private with a staff adult they know and trust. This is permissible where a second adult is aware and on hand to offer immediate assistance. Staff adults should base their approach on their previous knowledge of the young adults and safeguard themselves by alerting the YARSM to when such examinations are taking place. Intimate examinations should, under no circumstances, be carried out by members of staff, but should be done by medical practitioners.
- In the case of a distressed young adult seeking physical contact this should be kept to the minimum necessary to fulfil the purpose of the young adult regaining composure and calm.

## 5.2 CARE AND CONTROL

Detailed advice concerning positive management of behaviour, physical intervention and restrictive physical intervention is contained in other comprehensive policy and practice documentation and is a substantial component of staff induction and training. To this end the Team Teach Approach is used for staff training purposes. This training complies with statutory guidance and has

been awarded a National Training Award. It is affiliated to The General Services Association and has been accredited by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (in 2006, 2009 and 2012) and more recently The Institute of Conflict Management in 2015.

In reality, when working alone staff are highly unlikely to utilise restrictive physical intervention unless there is an immediate risk to personal safety or the young adult is likely to suffer significant harm. SES Kite staff are trained in personal safety techniques; in a crisis situation the involvement of external agencies may be necessary to maintain safety within the community.

***(See also the “Positive Management of Behaviour Policy and Practice” document)***

### 5.3 PLANNED 1:1 WORKING AGREED AS A PART OF CASEWORK

This type of working can only take place when a casework decision has been made via a PAN Meeting to offer or instigate 1:1 work, e.g. a bespoke therapy session. 1:1 time may be agreed as part of a wider behavioural programme, e.g. as part of assisting a settle routine where dedicated adult attention (as illustrated by story reading) is required. Any decisions of this kind are taken the staff team, usually with a manager’s or consultant support. They will be clearly planned and time related with a review procedure built in.

### 5.4 ATTENDING MEETINGS/APPOINTMENT WITH A YOUNG ADULT

There may be occasions when staff will be asked to take a young adult to a meeting or an appointment. Staff should make sure they are aware of the following:

- Carry the home’s mobile phone with the contact number for colleague and young adults available
- Ensure staff are aware of risk assessments and any current contextual information
- Follow the procedures for using their own vehicle for transporting young adults

### 5.5 ACCESSING LEARNING, COMMUNITY OR LEISURE ACTIVITIES

In order to address issues of institutionalisation and learn for future living, it is good practice for young adults to access learning, community and leisure facilities. In order to minimise risks the following guidance should be observed.

- Carry the home’s mobile phone with the contact number for colleague and young adults available
- Staff should ensure they understand the appropriate planning documentation and risk assessments (if applicable)
- Follow the procedures for using their own vehicle for transporting young adults

### 5.6 RESPECTING PRIVACY AND MAINTAINING SAFETY WITHIN THE HOME

- Internal doors within the home (e.g. kitchen, lounge) may be left open or closed depending on the situation and in line with maintaining a domestic home environment.
- Young adults' bedrooms are their private space. Staff wishing to enter should knock on bedroom doors and wait for a response before entering. The exception to this would be in an emergency, for example, where there is immediate concern for the young adult's safety, or as part of the young adult's daily care (e.g. to support them waking up).
- Young adults have their own house keys for the main entrance doors, unless otherwise stated within individual risk assessments. Staff should lock entrance doors for home safety during the day and nighttime. This is for security reasons and not to prevent young adults from leaving (unless there are legitimate concerns identified in the young adult's risk assessment).
- There is an intruder alarm system on front and back entrance doors. This must be activated at nighttime when settling for bed; the panel is located in the house office.
- If the intruder alarms is activated during the night staff must follow the procedures outlined in the SES Access and Visitors Policy and Practice; where it is clearly not attributable to the young adults immediate police assistance should be sought.
- If staff are disturbed during the night by a young adult knocking on the house office door, they must respond appropriately, ensuring they are suitably dressed, that the disturbance is recorded in the house daily log and that the next staff adult on duty is alerted as part of the handover.
- Staff should ensure that the garden is secure by using bolts on garden gates.
- Staff should use the lockable office for their personal belongings; secured by a Yale door lock that only staff possess the key for.
- Staff must understand and adhere to the routines for bedtime and mornings as detailed in the young adult's daily care. Staff should strongly encourage a young adult to not leave the home after their settling time as detailed in the daily care; they should only prevent the young adult from doing so if it is a requirement of the daily care based upon safety (e.g. a Deprivation of Liberty Order has been issued).

## 5.7 APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATON AND CONTACT BETWEEN STAFF AND YOUNG ADULTS

- Staff have access to a house mobile for communicating with young adults when outside of the home and on duty. It is strongly suggested that staff also carry their own personal mobile phone for emergencies. However, staff must only use the house mobile for contacting young adults.
- When on activities it is likely the young adults will request staff to take digital images of them, as is normal in any family. Where possible, use of the young adults on phone is preferential. However, if staff use their own mobile for this purpose any images must be transferred to the internal network and deleted from their phone and associated cloud storage before departing at the end of their shift.
- Staff must not arrange social contact with young adults when they are not on duty, unless it is part of a pre-arranged activity that the YARSM has agreed and sanctioned.

- Staff should only contact young adults via email using their SES account (firstname.surname@specialisteducation.co.uk). On no account should they use a personal account or social media.
- The staff team have a 'what's app' group facility for maintaining communication, e.g. to provide continuity of care and activity planning). Young adults must not be invited to join this group.

## 5.8 ADMINISTERING AND STORAGE OF MEDICATION

- All medication is to be kept within the lockable cabinet in the house office that is only accessible by the staff adult. Controlled medication must be kept within the additional lock box section within the lockable cabinet.
- Staff should ensure that any personal medication is kept in their car or secured in their bags that are locked in the office.
- First aid supplies are kept in first aid boxes, located in the house office and kitchen. There are additional supplies to restock the first aid boxes within the COSHH cupboard. In addition, a mobile first aid kit is available for trips out along with 'grab bags' (including torches); these are located in the house office.

***(See “SES KITE Health and Safety Policy and Practice”)***

## 5.9 GIFTS, REWARDS, FAVOURITISM AND EXCLUSION

Staff must not accept any gift that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. Additionally, they should not provide the young adults with gifts or rewards unless this is part of an agreed and planned strategy with the professional team.

There are occasions when young adults or their families wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff e.g. at Christmas or as a thank-you and this is usually acceptable. This should be communicated to the staff team as part of regular communication. It is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value.

Any reward given to a young adult should be in accordance with agreed practice and ads part of the personalised care plan for the young adult.

Staff adults should exercise care when selecting young adults for specific activities, jobs or privileges in order to avoid perceptions of favouritism or injustice. This is especially important when caring for two young adults as staff must be careful to not create division between the young adults. Similar care should be exercised on the rare occasion when a young adult is excluded from an activity.

## **6 RECORDING AND RECORD KEEPING**

To support and safeguard both staff and young adults there are a range of reporting and recording processes in place:

- Incident recording – for missing episodes, physical intervention and other significant incidents, including (but not an exhaustive list) self harm, property damage, inappropriate sexualised behaviour);
- Accident forms for injury to young adults and staff;
- File notes for unusual or out of character behaviours;
- Young adult diaries;
- House daily log;
- Daily handovers.

These should be utilised to record all situations that staff perceive to be out of character and are of significance. Training and staff professional development will help the team to understand and identify where thresholds are reached for recording an event or specific behaviour. Significant events are likely to lead to changes to the young adults risk assessment suite that all staff must be made aware of.

## **7 RISKS OF WORKING ALONE AND MITIGATION**

Whilst there are significant benefits for staff working alone with young adults, SES recognise that staff are potentially more vulnerable in these situations. There are a range of procedures and structures in place that reduce the risk of working alone. Although risk can never be fully eliminated, it is the belief of SES that the advantages far outweigh the low risk, and that the provision of normalised domestic relationships ultimately provides greater safety for the whole community.

### **7.1 ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF**

All staff must read “**The Management of Allegations and Concerns Regarding the Professional Conduct of Adults in Relation to Vulnerable Young Adult’s Protection: Policy and Practice**”. This document gives a full and detailed explanation of policy and practice issues.

### **7.2 COMMUNICATION STRUCTURES AND TEAM WORK**

Regular communication between the professional team and subsequent team work is essential in ensuring that concerns are raised and discussed at an early stage. This enables the staff team to proactively plan an effective response to minimise any potential safeguarding risks. These include:

- Regular supervision – professional development and personal support meetings
- Weekly team meetings and debriefs of practice with YARSM, enabling; discussion of situations and to gain support and knowledge from each other’s practice and understanding;
- Daily handovers with staff adults and YARSM;
- Staff What’s App group;
- House daily log;
- Young adult daily diaries;
- Access and use of work mobile phone;
- Night time disturbance log;

- First port of call system in place for immediate advice and support;
- Annual appraisals of performance;
- Access to the broader SES family;
- Access to all SES policies and procedures on their company laptops.

### 7.3 RISK ASSESSMENT

Staff must be familiar with the key personalised documents for each young adult, including their daily care, risk assessment and development and learning.

- In addition to individual risk assessments on each young adult, the physical premises and site undergo a similar scrutiny in light of potential risk and supervision.
- The young adult risk assessment will identify areas of potential concern (including inappropriate behaviours), where supervision is difficult, and times when young adults may be more vulnerable.
- An Appropriate and Suitable Location Review is conducted each calendar year to ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that young adults are effectively safeguarded (based on Children's Home Regulations 2015, Reg.46).

### 7.4 STAFF CODE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The SES Kite Safeguarding and Young Adult Protection document (section 11) outlines the code of professional practice expected of all SES staff adults.

By adhering to this code of conduct staff can reduce the risk of allegations that could arise from working alone. In addition, a safer working environment is created through good professional practice, and staff should seek to:

- create a listening environment
- create a 'no secrets' environment
- become a 'telling' environment
- create an environment where there is respect and care demonstrated to others
- help young adults to feel confident to ask for help when they need it.

### 7.5 STAFF WELLBEING

Staff wellbeing is paramount with several professional layers of support:

- Regular Personal Support Meetings with the YARSM, or a senior leader of their choice when this is deemed inappropriate;
- Ability to request individual therapeutic supervision;
- YARSM daily support;
- Access to an employee assistance helpline, available 24/7, 365 days a year;
- Sector leading allowance of annual leave and sick pay scheme.

## **8 STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

SES has in place a series of systems and checks that assist in the safe recruitment and selection of staff. All staff are subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service check at the enhanced with barred list level. Candidates must provide proof of identity through official documents and qualifications and references are checked for authenticity.

*(See also the “Recruitment and Selection Policy and Practice” document]*

## **9 SAFEGUARDING AND YOUNG ADULT PROTECTION TRAINING**

Specialist Education Services is committed to the training and updating of staff as a priority, overseen by the LDPYAP. All staff (full-time and part-time) will have access to safeguarding training as part of their induction process and will undertake suitable refresher training annually in line with the Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 guidelines and best practice for working with adults at risk.

## **10 PORTFOLIO OF OTHER POLICY AND PRACTICE DOCUMENTATION THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SAFEGUARDING PROCESS**

In a high quality organisation there will be a wide range of policy documents and practice issues that underpin the holistic safeguarding process. No one of these documents and associated practice and procedures can in themselves illustrate the complete picture.

Some of these policies and guidance has been signposted throughout this document. Each policy referenced in the text above or the list below can be seen in detail on the establishment’s internal network.

- SES Kite The SES Way Policy and Practice
- SES Kite Safeguarding and Young Adult Protection Policy and Practice
- SES Kite Risk Assessment Policy and Practice
- SES Kite Health and Safety Policy and Practice
- SES Kite Access and Visitors Policy and Practice
- SES Recruitment and Selection Policy and Practice
- SES Positive Management of Behaviour Policy and Practice
- SES The Management of Allegations Policy and Practice