# Appendix 7: SAFE WORKING PRACTICES

## General

* All Staff will be aware of the BLENNZ Code of Conduct.
* A relationship between an adult and ākonga cannot be a relationship between equals. There is a potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable ākonga. Adults have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.
* Adults should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. Adults who work with ākonga must therefore act in a way that is considered to be safe practice

## Staff are Good Role Models for Children

* Staff wear clothing that is appropriate for the job, i.e., which allows them to participate in activities, be safe, be appropriate for role modelling to ākonga.
* Ākonga should not be present when Staff use the toilet and bathroom facilities for personal needs.
* Staff do not discuss “adult” topics of conversation within hearing of ākonga

## Personal Relationships

* BLENNZ believes that as far as possible, staff working with ākonga and families should keep their personal and professional lives separate, and does not encourage close personal relationships or care-taking activities outside the work environment.
* Staff should not share any personal information with ākonga. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from ākonga other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Staff should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.
* No ākonga should be in, or invited to, the home of an adult who works with them unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parents/carers and senior managers or the home has been designated by the organisation as a work place.

## Physical Interaction

* When physical contact is made with ākonga this 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. Adults should use their professional judgement at all times, observe and take note of the reaction or feelings of ākonga and use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to ākonga for the minimum amount of time necessary.
* Any sexual activity between an adult and ākonga with whom they work may be regarded as a criminal offence and will always be a matter for disciplinary action.

## Physical Restraints for Safety Reasons

* Only under extreme circumstances or an emergency situation should an adult staff member restrain ākonga to restrict them from injuring themselves or someone else. If physical restraint is required it must only be undertaken by those who have received formal training in how to safely restrain ākonga and have received prior approval from the BLENNZ Principal to do so.
* Any restraint must be reported via an incident report to the Child Protection Champion immediately with a follow up written report within 48 hours
* All inappropriate behaviour needs to be confronted in a positive manner, regardless whether it’s an adult member or ākonga to ensure that they are held accountable for their actions and be given a clear message about what is acceptable behaviour.

## Intimate Care of Ākonga

* All ākonga have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of a physical or intimate nature is required and depending on their abilities, age and maturity should be encouraged to act as independently as possible. Assistance or supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of ākonga concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.
* In circumstances where ākonga need medication regularly a health care plan should have been established to ensure the safety and protection of ākonga and the adults who are working with them. Depending upon the age and cognitive ability of ākonga, they should, where appropriate, be encouraged to self-administer medication or treatment including, for example, the use of any ointment or inhalers.
* In circumstances where ākonga need assistance with toileting, changing or other intimate care on a regular basis a formally agreed plan should be developed and agreed upon. The views of ākonga should be actively sought, wherever possible, when drawing up and reviewing the plan. The emotional responses of ākonga to the intimate care should be carefully considered and observed. Any concerns should be passed to the Child Protection Champion.
* When engaging in activities that involve intimate care of ākonga make other staff aware of the task being undertaken and explain to ākonga what is happening. Any physically or visually intrusive behaviour is to be avoided. Carefully and sensitively observe the child’s reaction and emotional responses. If any concerns arise report them to the Child Protection Champion.
* Consultation with the Child Protection Champion and parents/caregivers should take place where any variation from the agreed care plan is considered necessary. The agreed changes and reasons for the alterations should be recorded and kept on the ākonga file.
* No adults or staff, with the exception of the parents of ākonga, are to change in the same place as ākonga, shower or bathe with ākonga or assist with any personal care task which ākonga can undertake by themselves.

## Communication

* Inappropriate language or verbal admonishments can give rise to anxiety and fear in ākonga. Adults should always be mindful of using language that could be considered aggressive, threatening or demeaning.
* Communication between ākonga and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phone, text messaging, emails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites, social networking and blogs. Adults should not share any personal information with ākonga. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the ākonga other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Adults should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.
* If mobile phones are used to communicate with ākonga for the purpose of providing information regarding a BLENNZ event, service or activity or any other professional reason then it is recommended to use the parent’s number. This is a non-negotiable requirement when communicating with ākonga under the age of 14yrs or where ākonga may be vulnerable.

## Supervision of Children

* Ākonga must be safely supervised at all times. The following factors will be taken into consideration in deciding how many adults are required to safely support ākonga:
  + The number of ākonga involved in the activity
  + The age, maturity and experience of ākonga
  + Whether any of the group leaders or ākonga has a learning or physical disability or special requirements
  + Whether any ākonga have challenging behaviour
  + The particular hazards associated with the activity
  + The particular hazards associated with the environment
  + The level of qualification and experience of the leaders
  + The programme of activities
* It is the responsibility of BLENNZ staff to ensure that ākonga participating in any programme facilitated by BLENNZ are required to be signed in. Ākonga should be able to be identified and accounted for in order to ensure safe and appropriate supervision is taking place. A register not only assists with this process and reduces the likelihood that ākonga get missed or lost, but is also a health and safety requirement. In the unlikely event of an emergency e.g. a fire it is crucial that safety workers can identify who is missing.
* All volunteers and those undertaking unpaid ākonga work as part of an educational or vocational training course should be monitored by paid staff. They should not be left unsupervised with ākonga at any point.

## One-to-One Situations

* Staff working in one-to-one situations with ākonga may be more vulnerable to allegations made against them. One-to-one situations also have the potential to make ākonga more vulnerable to harm by those who seek to exploit their positions of trust.
* When in situations that require isolation, such as transporting ākonga or as an Itinerant Resource Teacher of Vision, precautions must be taken to ensure the safety of ākonga and the staff member. These include ākonga being monitored entering and leaving the environment, tracking which ākonga is with the staff member, and accountability for the length of time alone with ākonga.
* Meetings with ākonga in remote secluded areas and the use of ‘engaged’ or equivalent signs that create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy should be avoided.
* Any situation where ākonga become distressed or angry is to be reported to the BLENNZ Child Protection Champion or the Designated Child Protection Person if delivering services in another school.

## Absconding Children

* Concerns regarding ākonga who has absconded will be immediately brought to the attention of the CPC. Parents/caregivers should also be notified. Police are to be informed in instances whereby the ākonga who has absconded poses a threat of serious harm to themselves or others.

## Unaccompanied Children

* In BLENNZ facilities where staff are not providing a direct service specifically to ākonga the care of the ākonga lies with the responsibility of the parents or caregivers of the ākonga. BLENNZ staff are required to ensure that parents are made aware of this to the best of their ability e.g. through the display of signs. Where ākonga are left unaccompanied the staff member will speak to the parent or caregiver to remind them of their responsibility where possible. Should the child continue to be left unaccompanied staff will contact Oranga Tamariki on 0508 326 459.
* If by closing time ākonga under the age of 14 years is still alone staff will call the police. If the child is aged between 14-17 years it is up to the discretion of the staff member in consultation with their manager whether to call the police. This decision will depend on an assessment of the circumstances such as state of mind of the ākonga, time of day, presence of daylight, location of facility and any potential hazards etc.

## Technology

* Written parental consent must be sought for all photographs taken ākonga, whether they are intended for internal or external use. Ākonga permission should also be obtained should they be of an age and ability to provide their permission. In accordance with the Gillick Competency Principle[[1]](#footnote-1), whether or not ākonga is capable of giving the necessary consent will depend on the maturity and understanding of ākonga. Ākonga must be capable of making a reasonable assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of having their photograph taken, so the consent, if given, can be properly and fairly described as true consent. No filming or photography should take place in bedrooms during overnight stays.
* If families and whanau are being asked to assist with promotional material to be used publicly, i.e. in newspapers, promotional literature and web sites it must be established whether the ākonga/adult consents to their name accompanying the photograph. Consideration should be given to only using the first name of ākonga.

## Gifts and Rewards

* The giving of gifts or rewards to ākonga or young people should be part of an agreed policy for supporting positive behaviour or recognising particular achievements

## Transporting Ākonga

* There will be occasions when adults are expected or asked to transport ākonga as part of their duties. Adults who are expected to use their own vehicles for transporting ākonga should ensure that their vehicle is roadworthy, appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded.
* It is inappropriate for adults to offer lifts to ākonga outside of their normal working duties, unless this has been brought to the attention of the line manager and has been agreed with parents or caregivers.
* There may be occasions when ākonga require transport in an emergency situation and where not to give a lift would place the ākonga at risk. Such circumstances must always be recorded and reported to a senior manager and parents or caregivers.

## Residential Facilities, Trips, Camps and Overnight Stays

* Adults should take particular care when supervising ākonga in the residential facilities and during trips and outings, where the setting can be more informal. Adults 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.
* Where overnight stays occur, careful consideration must be given to sleeping arrangements. Ākonga, adults and parents should be informed of these prior to the ākonga staying. Parental consent for the ākonga to stay in the residence or attend overnight camps must be obtained in writing.
* During overnight stays each ākonga must be allocated their own bed, and not required to share with another individual. Wherever possible ākonga should not share rooms with people of the opposite gender. As a guideline, ākonga of more than four years difference in age should not share a bedroom.

## Parent/Caregiver Visits and Overnight Stays

* BLENNZ has a duty of care to ensure the safety of ākonga residing at their facilities. It is therefore important that any parents/caregivers/adults who may engage in short term or long term stays and/or have access to ākonga are sufficiently safety checked before their visit.
* Visitors to the residence are not to be left unsupervised with ākonga other than their own at any point. They are not to engage in any intimate care activities with ākonga other than their own.

## Home Based Services

* Staff working in one-to-one situations with ākonga may be more vulnerable to allegations made against them. When in situations that require isolation, such as working in home based services with ākonga other than the workers own, precautions must be taken to ensure the safety of ākonga and the staff member. These include a thorough safety check and assessment to deem the potential carer as fit and proper prior to the delivery of services. Anyone 17 years or above who lives in a home based service must be safety checked. The safety check must be completed before the adult is, or is likely to be present when the service is being provided.
* The carer should:
* Provide evidence that adequate health and safety procedures are in place
* Ensure the safety of ākonga in her/his care at all times;
* Hold a current First Aid certificate for ākonga and have a properly equipped First Aid Kit on hand
* Have in place and observe Fire Safety and Emergency Procedures e.g. an evacuation plan, fire-fighting blankets/equipment and smoke alarms should be in place;
* Ensure that animals/pets on the premises do not put the health, safety or welfare of ākonga at risk;
* inform parents of any accident, injury or incident involving ākonga
* Check in with the BLENNZ Service Coordinator upon arrival and exit of the home/ākonga
* Maintain records of daily activities and ākonga wellbeing
* Report any incidents to Service Coordinator and parent/caregiver of the ākonga
* Follow BLENNZ organisational Child Protection Policy procedure if any concerns around the safety of ākonga arise.

1. [Link to UK Child Protection System Legal Definition Guidelines](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/legal-definition-child-rights-law/gillick-competency-fraser-guidelines/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)