

MLCS: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE/YOUNG ADULTS

1. Introduction

i) MLCS is an outreach, advice and support service working with almost 600 young people aged 16 → 21 plus.

ii) Inevitably in such situations, staff will be working alone and/or encounter various unforeseen situations. These are facts of the job. 'Thinking on one's feet' and taking commonsense decisions based on good judgement will thus be a skill required of all workers.

iii) Working with young people for a five year period, and sometimes longer, will inevitably lead to some very close and longstanding working relationships being formed with young people. Indeed this is an inbuilt requirement of being an effective 'Personal Adviser'.

iv) Against the introductory points outlined above, MLCS will expect its workers at all times to behave in a professional manner, balancing this professionalism with an acknowledged need to come across to a young person as a human being to whom that young person can comfortably relate.

2. Basics

i) Staff will never give out to young people their home address or personal landline phone numbers. If ever a young person discovers such information, the worker should discuss with their line manager how best to deal with this.

ii) Ideally MLCS will be in a position one day to provide each of its workers with a mobile phone for work use, but at present this is not organisational policy. Staff would then use this phone number for work use "out and about" but would never divulge their own "personal" mobile number. Until this policy is achieved however staff are to be discouraged from giving young people any mobile numbers whatsoever

iii) Staff will never take a young person to their home address in any circumstances.

iv) Contact between staff and young people will only take place in 'work' hours (which includes official late working on a weekday). Any member of staff intending to work

with a young person at a weekend should first inform their/another manager that this will be happening and agree the basis for this work, including any arrangements to ensure safety etc.

v) If a member of staff encounters a young person in their 'own' time pleasantries etc should be exchanged but 'work' issues should not be discussed.

vi) Staff should be always aware of, and observe, MLCS's policy on "Staff Safety and Lone Working"

3. Staff Behaviour towards young people

i) Staff will never lend young people money, or give young people money from their 'own' pocket. Instead all monies given to young people should be in accordance with Manchester's 16 – 21 financial policy and therefore signed and accounted for.

ii) Staff will never sell young people anything, no matter how good the bargain may be to the young person.

iii) Staff may give young people things 'for free', but strict adherence should always be given to health and safety issues (especially when such gifts include electrical goods).

iv) Staff should never benefit personally from any financial advice they may give a young person.

v) Staff should only generally accept gifts from young people (and then only if this is at the young person's initiation!) at Xmas or at a time when the worker/young persons working relationship is ending. Such gifts should be 'proportionate'; if in doubt at any time what this might mean the worker should consult their manager as to whether receiving such a gift would be an appropriate thing to do. Occasionally it is acknowledged that gifts could be given for good reason outside of these times but they should always be proportionate and regular gift giving should be sensitively but politely discouraged and refused.

vi) Receiving thank you / Xmas cards from young people is acceptable. In accordance with MLCS's Policy on 'money to young people' gifts for special occasions etc can be bought for a young person (currently up to £25 in value). Such gifts should be given by the worker, but also on behalf of MLCS. Thus the gift would say 'from Fred Bloggs, and all at MLCS'. Xmas or birthday cards would be similarly signed.

vii) Staff will not be complicit in buying/giving young people things which could be illegal or harmful to their health. This will thus include alcohol, drugs and cigarettes.

viii) Staff will not use aggressive (verbal or physical) language either directly to, or in front of, young people. This will especially apply when young people themselves are irate or causing a member of staff to feel irate. Instead the worker will act as clearly and calmly as possible at all times

4. Relationship Building

i) Because of the nature of a Personal Adviser's job, it will be accepted that MLCS Workers should behave as a 'human being' towards young people, and that in so doing giving out a level of personal information or expressing certain viewpoints will be an inevitable part of developing such relationships. Without this young people could view staff mechanically and without respect.

ii) However staff should always behave towards young people in a professional way, bearing in mind the worker is always the professional service giver and the young person the service receiver.

iii) Staff will thus not bring their own needs into a conversation, nor ever leave the young person in a situation where they are worried or concerned about the staff member.

iv) Staff will never form sexual or personal relationships with a young person whilst that young person is in receipt of a service from MLCS. Should ever such a relationship develop with an ex service user, no matter what their age, this must be discussed with a MLCS Manager.

v) Staff will never tell young people that it is 'ok' to share secrets. MLCS's confidentiality and child protection procedures must be followed at all times.

vi) Staff should remain aware of the needs and issues of the client group with which we are dealing, and the possibility in all such relationship building that certain things could be misconstrued or misinterpreted. Thus whilst lone working for example is an expectation of the job, awareness should always be shown towards leaving oneself in compromising situations e.g. seeing young people in bedrooms, condoning illegal behaviour by direct or indirect response, talking in an over familiar way about personal issues etc etc. Whilst such situations could be 'sprung' on a member of staff e.g. during a home visit finding a young person taking drugs/being drunk/inappropriately dressed, and thus initially unavoidable, the staff member should find a pragmatic reason to take themselves out of that situation asap, discussing the reasons for so doing with a young person then, or a later date.

vii) Staff should be aware of the potential misconstruing of issues around actual physical contact with young people. In general therefore such contact should be avoided. However seeing someone in considerable distress or upset, it may only be human to not only be sympathetic but a light touch on the arm or shoulder may naturally indicate empathy and

fellow feeling. However once again awareness should be a key factor on the part of the worker and any such contact should be professional and in the context of a worker/young person, not friend to friend or parent to child capacity.

viii) Continuing or 'patterns' of such behaviour as in vi) above should be brought to the attention of that Workers Manager and an action plan for addressing the situation agreed.

iv) Staff should not get into situation with young people where they discuss other young people or the actions of staff. Listening to what is said may in certain circumstances be appropriate however and actions referred to the management, whistle blowing or complaints procedure process.