

# Code of Ethics for People Working with Children and Young People

---

## Code of Ethics for People Working with Children and Young People

### Introduction

An international working party was set up to consider the need for a Code of Ethics or Code of Practice, and the resulting report was approved by the Federal Council and published by FICE. It proposed a short Code to be adopted by everyone working with children and young people, and then offered a variety of material which official organisations, agencies and services might use in drawing up their own Codes, since it was felt that the process of preparing a Code helps those involved to identify with it. **The Code was accepted by the Federal Council meeting on October 8 to 10, 1997 in Erfurt (Germany).** ISSN 1015 78 75

The working group who prepared the Code of Ethics: David Lane (Chairman and Co-ordinator), Maurice Blanchard, Frits de Keyser, Helene Kupffer, Leo Ligthart, Martha Mattingly, Henrik Nielsen, Charles Pragnell, Robert Soisson, and Wolfgang Trede.

*Note: In the English-language version, the term “childcare” is used in this Report to cover all types of activities in the field of work with children and young people, and it is not intended that it should exclude work with young people or work seen as social education. The term “profession/al” is also widely used throughout the Report. It is not intended that this term should be seen as elitist or limiting, but that it should be interpreted broadly to include all people who work with children.*

### Contents

[Part I. Preamble: Introducing the Code](#)

[Part II. Seven International Ethical Principles for People Working with Children and Young People](#)

[Part III. Putting a National Code of Ethics Together](#)

[Part IV. Possible Contents of National Codes](#)

[Part I: Preamble: Introducing the Code](#)

#### What is a Code of Ethics?

A Code of Ethics describes the standards of practice expected of the group of people to whom it refers. Codes of Ethics are seen as one of the hall-marks of a profession, because the people who form the profession are often in positions of power (perhaps because of their specialist knowledge or because their profession has been given powers by law) and those whom they serve are dependent upon the competence and integrity of the professionals. Members of the profession are expected to commit themselves to meeting the needs of their clients, and not to exploit their positions of power.

Codes of Ethics, therefore, set out the standards of practice expected of professional people, and in consequence they are sometimes known as Codes of Practice. Codes are often based on the general principles which underpin the work of the profession. However, there is limited value in Codes if they cannot be applied in practice, and general principles are abstract and vague. It is therefore important that Codes should be specific, capable of implementation and verifiable, so that their application in practice can be seen, monitored, checked and evaluated.

#### Why have Codes of Ethics?

There are four main reasons for having Codes of Ethics:

1. Codes define the overall aims of the profession, the ideals to which childcare workers aspire, so that they provide a sense of direction. Even if the aims that these general principles describe are idealistic and represent an ultimate goal beyond the standards

usually found in day to day practice, they provide a context for the objectives described in other standards.

2. Codes may describe good standard childcare practice above the minimum acceptable, but nonetheless achievable in day-to-day work. In this respect, they provide guidance and help for childcare workers, helping them to become aware of the standards they should realistically be able to achieve, and acting as a quality assurance mechanism.

3. Codes lay down the minimum standards of conduct which are considered acceptable, and which no childcare workers should breach if they are to be considered professional or remain in the work. People who work directly with children and young people have privileged access to them and may be in positions of power over them; they therefore have ethical and practical responsibilities for their welfare. In this respect, Codes may be seen as regulatory, and may be used for disciplinary purposes if it is felt that their standards are breached.

4. The process of drawing up or studying Codes of Ethics involves childcare workers in learning to think and reason about their professional aims. In some countries there is a tradition of working to written laws and regulations, while in other countries issues are dealt with through discussion and dialogue, with very little recorded guidance. Whatever ways are customary, the process of discussing such matters helps people at all levels to think further about what they are trying to achieve and about the ways in which they should be working towards their aims.

The fundamental purpose of setting up Codes of Ethics, underlying those listed above, is to encourage the highest standards of care for children and young people, and the ultimate test of their effectiveness is whether they have an impact on practice.

In the contents of a Code of Ethics for childcare workers, therefore, the emphasis should be upon the needs of children and their families, and upon the ways in which those needs may best be met. Codes should spell out why children and meeting their needs are important, strengthening the motivation of childcare workers to carry out their work effectively and reinforcing their professional values, such as respect, care and concern for the children and families with whom they work.

[Top](#)

### **Which Code is best?**

Over recent years, a number of FICE members have devised Codes of Ethics. All of them were of course devised to meet the needs of a particular Section or country or agency, and they reflect the thinking of the place and time when they were put together. None of them is ideal, to be replicated in all other countries, though there is something to be learnt from each of them.

The reason why none is an ideal Code is not because they were in any way badly prepared. The fact is that the setting of standards is an ongoing process which never ends. There are always ways in which we can improve, not only in our practice, but in our understanding of what we are doing and in the way we describe good practice in our Codes of Ethics.

The very process of drawing up Codes helps to make us aware of shortfalls or areas in which we can improve, and sensitises us more to the needs of children. It may be argued, (especially in the current stage of the development of the childcare profession), that the

process of drawing up Codes is more important than any Code in its agreed or authorised wording, because the process helps to train us and develops our professional thinking.

Indeed, no Code, however good, ever reaches a perfect finished state. There is always room for improvement or for the reconsideration of issues in the light of new thinking or of changes in professional practice or of developments in the wider society.

### **Who is responsible for drawing up a Code of Ethics?**

If any Code is to be effective, it needs to be owned by the whole workforce. The ideas and values implicit in the Code need to be understood and internalised, so that they are reflected in the everyday practice of all childcare workers. A Code should not be seen simply as a set of rules imposed by other people, but should be accepted by childcare workers as their own thinking. If the ideas contained in the Code are not accepted in this way, then further debate is needed, to ensure that the Code reflects what childcare practitioners actually think and do.

Furthermore, if there is no agreement generally about what is acceptable, the discussion needs to continue until the issues are resolved. Through this process, the realities of the situation should be made clear, and the issues which are met in childcare will be shared more widely with other people in the community, and the solutions which are reached will be more firmly based.

Ideally, professional workers should feel themselves so committed to the standards of practice laid down in their Code that no formal regulation should be necessary. However, to ensure that standards are implemented, it may be felt necessary to endorse the Code through legislation or government regulation. The approach taken will, however, vary from one country to another, depending upon the type of systems used to regulate professions, and it is for professional organisations to take a lead in order to ensure that unworkable standards are not imposed upon them.

### **What are the problems concerning drawing up Codes of Ethics?**

A major problem in drawing up Codes of Ethics is the need to ensure that language is used carefully to mean what people intend to say. Often there are no really appropriate terms to reflect the concepts which need to be communicated, and new terms or definitions have to be created. There are also cultural problems both between and within countries, which lead different groups of people to understand language in different ways. Translating between languages adds to the problem, and presents FICE with particular difficulties in drawing up an internationally acceptable Code.

There is also the temptation to use the jargon that reflects professional thinking at the time. There is an argument for trying to avoid terms which are only understood within the profession or service, since Codes should be able to be understood by the public and by young people who wish to study or make use of them. However, there are times when words have to be used in special ways to carry specific meanings, and it is unlikely that all jargon can be avoided.

However, these problems can all be addressed through careful discussion, and this process helps to ensure a deeper understanding of the differing approaches to children and childcare found throughout the world.

The main problem in drawing up Codes of Ethics, however, is probably the danger that standards may become fixed and may be accepted as being unchangeable. If that happens,

the Code may serve to stifle thought and become rigid, rather than as a flexible tool to be adjusted to serve the changing patterns of services provided to meet the differing needs of children and young people.

### **What are the problems in implementing a Code of Ethics?**

However good a Code of Ethics is, it can only act as a guide to help childcare workers and their managers to find solutions to the problems they face, when it is implemented in practice. Every problem one faces is slightly different from others one has dealt with before, and they cannot be solved by treating the Code as a rule book.

Sometimes there may be a conflict between two principles which are both important. The needs of children in the care of childcare workers may need to be balanced against the needs of other children in their families, for instance. Again, it may not be possible to resolve some problems without sharing confidences and thus breaching confidentiality. Or again, judgements may sometimes have to be made about the comparative needs of colleagues and those for whom they care; a mischievous complaint by a child, for example, can destroy a childcare worker's career.

It is often when there are serious conflicts between principles that Codes of Ethics address the key questions facing society, and resolving such dilemmas can be very difficult, demanding clear thinking and honesty in facing the issues. This may be seen when people working with children feel that they have to challenge the law.

On this point there are differences between countries, depending upon their cultures, legal and political circumstances and the stage of development of the profession. In some countries, it is felt that the Code should be consistent with or based upon the law of the land. In other countries, the Code may be seen as a way of asserting the responsibilities taken on by an independent profession for its own standards, separate from the powers of the law and the views of the government. In some countries, people may feel that they have to oppose bad law-making or the injurious application of the law, in order to retain their professional integrity and to meet the needs of children and young people. In such circumstances, a Code of Ethics can strengthen the resolve of workers to face difficult situations.

At times it is also possible that childcare workers may feel that they need to challenge aspects of established or traditional culture because of the harm that they feel is done to children. Examples in recent times in which such challenges have been made include campaigns to abolish corporal punishment and female circumcision and to control child labour. Such issues may be highly contentious, and childcare workers need to ensure that they are working from a sound and carefully considered ethical basis in challenging the community's traditions.

However, by contrast, perhaps the greatest problem which a Code of Ethics may face is that it may be put on a shelf and forgotten. The issues it contains are of real importance in setting high standards, and the contents of a Code of Ethics should be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that they continue to reflect good practice, and that they inform the training which staff receive.

[Top](#)

## **Part II: Seven International Ethical Principles for People Working with Children and Young People**

It is the professional responsibility of each childcare worker to:

1. Value and respect each child or young person as an individual in his/her own right, in his/her role as a member of his/her family, and in his/her role as a member of the community s/he lives in;
2. Respect the relationship of the child or young person to his/her parents, his/her siblings, other members of his/her family and other significant persons, taking account of his/her natural ties and interdependent rights and responsibilities;
3. Facilitate the optimal growth and development of each individual child or young person to achieve his or her potential in all aspects of functioning;
4. Help each child or young person for whom he or she bears responsibility by preventing problems where possible, by offering protection where necessary, and by providing care and rehabilitation to counteract or resolve the problems faced;
5. Use information appropriately, respecting the privacy of children and young people, maintaining confidentiality where necessary, respecting the right of children and young people to be informed of matters concerning themselves, and avoiding the misuse of personal information;
6. Oppose at all times any form of discrimination, oppression or exploitation of children and young people, and preserve their rights;
7. Maintain personal and professional integrity, develop skills and knowledge in order to work with competence, work co-operatively with colleagues, monitor the quality of services, and contribute to the development of the service and of policy and thinking in the field of childcare.

All other standards expected of childcare workers stem from these seven clauses.

### **Part III: Putting a National Code of Ethics Together**

To prepare a Code of Ethics, it is necessary to ask and answer a number of questions. These flow logically from one to another, and if they are not answered, there will be weaknesses in the resulting Code. In this section, the questions are posed, but answers are not given, as they are for people preparing Codes to decide, in the context of the laws, culture, economy and professional thinking of each country.

#### **1. What is the Code of Ethics for?**

Why is a Code needed? It is important to be clear about what people preparing Codes wants to achieve from the start. There are many possible reasons, depending upon the circumstances prevalent in the country and its services for children at the time. In particular the contents of the Code and the way it is used will be influenced by the stage of development of the childcare profession.

It may be that there is a wish to set higher professional standards, with the Code as teaching material. There may, for example, be a current issue where there are differing views as to the best professional practice, and guidance may be needed. Employers might wish to establish agreed standards, which can be used to assess whether their staff are performing at an acceptable level; if so, there might be opposition from trades unions, who might see a

Code as putting their members at risk. Again, there may have been abuse of children in care, so that the profession wishes to re-establish its credibility and public image.

Whatever the aims, they need to be discussed fully and made explicit first of all, if the Code is to reflect the issues which it is meant to help resolve.

## **2. Who is the Code for?**

Who are the groups of childcare workers for whom the Code is intended? Which other groups of staff might it apply to? Is it intended that the Code should cover volunteer workers as well as paid staff? Which groups will definitely not be covered by the Code, perhaps because they have their own professional codes and regulatory systems?

Again, clear thinking is needed about the target group or groups for the Code, since this will affect the contents of the Code and may influence the language in which the Code is written. The questions carry implications for the shape of the childcare profession if it is seen as a profession.

Every country has its own legislation, its own pattern of services and its own training systems for staff. In many countries, but not all, there is a formal system for the recognition and registration of childcare workers. In some countries, there are different systems in the different provinces or states which make up the nation. In some countries, childcare workers are not recognised as an identifiable professional group.

In some developing countries, all the country's energy has to be applied to the running of the services and the preparation of Codes of Ethics is a low priority.

In the face of this variety, it is important that people preparing Codes are clear about the shape of the childcare profession in their country.

## **3. In what context must the Code be developed?**

Is there a legal framework within which the Code must be set? Is it likely that the Code will be used in relation to registration, with staff having to sign to indicate the agreement to abide by the Code? Is the Code likely to be used by employers for disciplinary action against staff?

In some countries it is felt to be necessary for the Code of Ethics for childcare workers to fit in with legislation and Government policy. In others, the independent standing of the profession is felt to be important, so that it is capable of taking a critical stance in relation to the Government. Each country needs to consider its own circumstances in this respect.

Are there other professions working in parallel or overlapping fields such as teaching, psychology or nursing, which may already have Codes? If so, do the Codes need to be similar, or consistent? Will it help to use identical wording, or do the distinctions between the professions need to be emphasised?

Again, the situation will be different in each country, and answers have to be found which suit the needs and existing systems in each country.

## **4. Who needs to be involved in the development of the Code?**

The process of developing a Code of Ethics needs to involve as wide a range of people as possible, for two reasons.

First, the Code will be soundly based if the views and thinking of a large number of people have been taken into account, and it will reflect the real issues to be found in childcare if they include people who work directly with children.

Secondly, the involvement of childcare workers in the process helps to alert them to the importance of the Code and to the issues it contains. The process itself therefore helps to develop professional awareness of standards of practice, and can act as a form of training.

What mechanisms are there for consulting people widely and for creating a debate about the subject? What role can people preparing Codes of FICE play? How are childcare workers themselves best involved? How are children and young people in care best consulted, to ensure that their view of the practice which is most helpful to them is included? Who are the key figures who will influence the Code's acceptance in practice?

These questions need to be carefully considered if the Code is to be accepted, as it is easy to stir up opposition to new ideas if influential people are ignored, whether they are senior figures in the profession, trade union leaders or people who control the professional media.

[Top](#)

## **5. What process is needed to prepare the Code?**

Thought needs to be given from the start about the best way of managing the preparation of the Code.

What stages are needed for drafting the Code? At what stage should there be the circulation of a Discussion Draft for debate throughout the service? How will the final text be agreed and authorised? Who will pay for the work to be undertaken in drafting, circulation and printing?

## **6. What should the format of the Code be?**

It is possible to have very short Codes, with only a few clauses, but these risk being too general. On the other hand, if Codes are too long, they are unlikely to be read and used.

In Section 1 above there is discussion about the problem of jargon, and the language used needs to be considered carefully. Are there special definitions for words, which need to be agreed from the start? Are there terms which may be ambiguous, or to which different groups may give different meanings?

It is also necessary to decide on the grammatical format for the Code, since this will carry different messages, depending on normal usage in the language being used. For example, it is possible to write descriptively, "A childcare worker does this", or exhortatively, "A childcare worker should do this", or by using instructions, "A childcare worker must do this". The first makes a statement and assumes that people will agree, the second encourages people to act as described, while third tells people what they must do. Whatever format is selected, it should be followed consistently throughout the Code.

Again, it is helpful to sort out such matters at an early stage to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. For example, there may be different implications between having a Code of Ethics and a Code of Practice, or different perceptions of the terms by childcare workers, even if they are meant to be the same thing.

## 7. Agreeing the Code

If the Code is to be effective, planning needs to be undertaken at an early stage concerning the way that the Code will be finalised, adopted and implemented.

Before the text is finally agreed, it is important to check the text to see whether it is:

- \* internally consistent, as late changes may reflect different thinking from the ideas underlying earlier drafts;
- \* consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- \* consistent with national laws and regulations (except where non-compliance is justifiable in the best interests of children), and
- \* consistent with good professional practice and FICE policies.

It is important to note that where there are inconsistencies between the Code of Ethics and some other document, (a law, for example), it may be that the Code of Ethics represents best practice and that it is the other document that should be changed in order to achieve professional change. People will always find ways of improving the text where they are wanting to provide the best services possible for the children and young people in their care, and it is lack of comment rather than criticism and ongoing discussion that should be a cause for concern.

## Part IV. Possible Contents of National Codes

This section is intended to provide a source of ideas for National FICE Sections which wish to draw up their own Codes. The list is not intended to be a model to be adopted in its entirety, since each country will have differing needs and some clauses will be suited to some countries and not to others.

The clauses are listed in six groups, in order to give the material some structure. It is possible to divide the contents in a number of ways, but the structure used below is broadly in line with the systems used in a number of countries. This structure starts from the childcare worker's personal responsibilities, and then progressively expands the field of accountability. These six main groups are in some cases broken down into subgroups where there is a lot of material.

### The six groups are as follows:

- A. Responsibility for Self
- B. Responsibility to Children, Young People and their Families
- C. Responsibility to Colleagues
- D. Responsibility to Employers
- E. Responsibility to the Profession
- F Responsibility to Society

The clauses below have been drawn from a large number of Codes, and may overlap in some instances. In all cases, it is assumed that the clauses are preceded by the wording, "It is the responsibility of a person who works with children ... "

[Top](#)

### A : Responsibility for Self

People who work with children and young people have personal responsibilities concerning themselves:

1. To maintain and improve professional competence



- to develop and utilise their skills, knowledge and experience as fully as possible;
- to undertake training and educational programmes in order to remain up to date on professional issues and relevant legislation, to re-examine attitudes and to renew motivation;
- to accept supervision, counselling and career appraisals, in order to ensure ongoing competent service.

## 2. To maintain standards

- to maintain high personal standards of professional conduct, avoiding any acts which may bring the profession or service into disrepute or which may diminish the trust or confidence of the public;
- to pursue a commitment to quality in services offered and in interpersonal relationships on an ongoing basis;
- to recognise how personal values, opinions, experiences and biases can affect personal judgement;
- to present attitudes and a personal manner which will not give unnecessary offence to service users or colleagues, and to maintain an appropriate personal appearance;
- to behave reliably, for example by being punctual, fulfilling obligations and maintaining expectations of communication;
- to maintain appropriate boundaries between personal and professional relationships;
- to avoid placing oneself in positions where one is open to face allegations about misconduct;
- to acknowledge limitations in knowledge and competence, and to decline any duties or responsibilities if unable to perform them in a safe and skilled manner;
- to seek advice as necessary;
- to follow conscience where it is felt that to do otherwise would be wrong and to report to a responsible person any conscientious objection which may affect professional practice;
- to refuse any gift, favour or hospitality which might be interpreted as influential in obtaining preferential consideration;
- to ensure that professional practice is not influenced by commercial considerations;
- to ensure that the welfare of service users is not endangered by any activity on the part of the professional as a member of a group or organisation.

## 3. To maintain physical and emotional well-being

- to be self-aware in relation to values and their implications for practice;
- to be aware of personal growth and need for development;
- to maintain personal physical and mental fitness at the level required to meet service users' needs;
- to maintain an approach to work which is balanced, optimistic, patient, mature, self-controlled and constant in coping with failure;
- to avoid using drugs or alcohol prior to or during work;
- to maintain standards of safety through the use of appropriate equipment, clothing and procedures.

## **B : Responsibility to Children, Young People and their Families**

People working with children and young people have a responsibility for the services they offer directly to the children and young people in their care, and for the services offered to the families and other carers relating to the children and young people:

1. To promote the rights of children and young people

- to recognise, respect and advocate for the rights of children, young people and their families in relation to them both as individuals and as groups of service users;
- to involve children and young people and their families in decision-making affecting their lives;
- to foster self-determination on the part of service users;
- to enable children and young people to learn to play a role as adult citizens;
- to be able to account to service users for the services offered;
- to give priority to meeting the needs and well-being of children, young people and their families in devising and monitoring programmes;
- to act as advocate in the service users best interests;
- to support the rights of children with special needs to participate, as far as their abilities permit, in all activities available to other children;
- to respect the privacy of service users;
- to maintain confidentiality concerning information obtained in the course of professional services, and make disclosures only with the consent of service users, where required by the order of a court or where clearly justifiable in the wider public interest.

## 2. To promote the welfare of children and young people as individual persons

- to develop positive and empowering relationships with children and young people within appropriate professional boundaries;
- to foster the development of children and young people in order to achieve their full individual potential;
- to take account of the individual circumstances and needs of children and young people in designing programmes to meet their psychological, social, cultural and spiritual needs;
- to take account of the developmental stage, understanding, capacity and age of children and young people when designing or providing programmes;
- to assess and meet the needs of each child and young person on an individual basis;
- to base services upon current knowledge in the field of child development and related disciplines and upon the particular circumstances of each child;
- to create and maintain safe and healthy settings that foster childrens physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development.

## 3. To ensure clear boundaries between professional and personal relationships

- to ensure that service users explicitly understand the boundaries between professional and personal relationships;
- to maintain an appropriate professional distance, avoiding dependency relationships where they are not part of a planned programme of care;
- to relate to service users appropriately;
- to avoid sexual intimacy with service users;
- to avoid non-work friendships with children and young people with whom one is working which are not known to colleagues;
- to avoid language which is inappropriate or which might be misconstrued;
- to respect the physical and emotional privacy of children and young people.

## 4. To cooperate with others in meeting the needs of children and young people

- to recognise service users' membership of their families and communities;
- to facilitate the participation of significant others in services to meet the needs of children and young people, and to develop partnerships with them in providing care where appropriate;

- to encourage collaborative participation in sharing responsibility between professionals, children and young people, their families and the wider community;
  - to support the families of children and young people in care and to enable them to maintain their family ties;
  - to administer medication prescribed by lawful prescribing practitioners in accordance with prescribed directions and only for medical purposes, seeking advice as and when necessary.
- 5. To counteract bad childcare practice**
- to avoid participation in practices which are disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, intimidating, psychologically damaging or physically harmful to service users;
  - to protect children from abuse and neglect;
  - to endeavour to prevent the inappropriate placement of children and young people or the termination of services, when such action is being taken for financial reasons and leads to less appropriate ways of meeting their identified needs, to report the abuse and neglect of children so that action may be taken;
  - to avoid commissioning or assisting an infringement of the law by service users and to avoid active collusion with service users in the evasion of the consequences of illegal acts (except in those cases where it can be justified as a matter of conscience that the law is in the wrong);
  - to avoid condoning or participating in behaviour on the part of children and young people which is unwise or dangerous;
  - to ensure that services are non-discriminatory towards service users with regard to race, colour, ethnicity, national origin, national ancestry, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, abilities and disabilities, medical condition, political belief or affiliation, or socio-economic status;
  - to avoid sharing secrets with a child or young person to the exclusion of colleagues;
  - to consider the implications of acceptance for the child, other children and the family, when they offer gratuities or benefits to the childcare worker.

[Top](#)

### **C : Responsibility to Colleagues**

People who work with children and young people have a responsibility towards their immediate colleagues and other professionals with whom they need to collaborate in the interests of those for whom they are responsible:

#### **1. To promote good practice**

- to establish and maintain relationships of trust and cooperation with colleagues;
- to treat colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness and good faith;
- to accord colleagues due recognition of professional achievement;
- to respect the relationships of colleagues with service users and their families;
- to foster a culture in which quality of practice is pursued in all activities and relationships jointly with other colleagues;
- to act as a team member, supporting other members of the team by maintaining consistent standards and by offering and receiving support, especially in crises;
- to keep colleagues fully informed of all matters to which they should have access;
- to communicate promptly and to maintain obligations to colleagues in responding by letter, telephone or other means of communication;
- to assist colleagues to develop their professional competence through supervision, training and other forms of support;
- to observe confidentiality in respect of discussions with colleagues about their professional problems and difficulties, except where there is an overriding concern and responsibility for service users;

- to refer service users to colleagues, including members of other professions, when their skills and knowledge are required to meet the needs of service users.
2. To counteract bad practice
- to draw bad practice and shortfalls in professional standards to the attention of colleagues where appropriate in order to enable them to improve their practice;
  - to attempt to resolve differences of opinion with colleagues either directly or within the team;
  - to report to a responsible person where it appears that the health or safety of colleagues are at risk.

### **D : Responsibility to Employers**

People who work with children have a responsibility to the statutory authority, voluntary body or private organisation or proprietor employing them:

1. To support the employer

- to fulfil contractual obligations and duties;
- to contribute to the fulfilment of the professional aims of the agency;
- to assist the agency in providing the highest quality of service, taking account of changing personal, interpersonal and societal circumstances;
- to maintain loyalty to the agency;
- to distinguish clearly between statements made on behalf of the agency and personal views and judgements;
- to contribute to the development of the agency in order to meet the needs of the service users more effectively.

2. To maintain an independent professional stance within the agency

- to endeavour to ensure that adequate and appropriate resources are made available to meet the needs of service users, to ensure that resources are equitably allocated and to draw to the attention of a responsible person any shortfalls in services and the resources required to provide them;
- to report to a responsible person any circumstances in which safe and appropriate services cannot be provided, or in which acceptable standards of practice may be jeopardised;
- to report any bad practice or unacceptable aspects of services in order to maintain high standards of service and to protect the reputation of the agency.

### **E : Responsibility to the Profession**

People who work with children and young people are accountable to their profession, and in some countries this accountability is reflected in the processes of professional and other statutory bodies which set standards and regulate the profession:

1. To establish professional standards

- to promote high professional standards of practice, developing new working methods to meet changing needs;
- to ensure that mechanisms exist for ongoing quality assurance;
- to support the implementation of the Code of Ethics.

2. To extend professional knowledge and skills

- to contribute to the extension of professional knowledge, theory and practice by supporting or undertaking research programmes, ensuring that they are designed, conducted and reported in accordance with sound scholastic standards and research ethics;
- to apply the results of research in practice for the benefit of service users;
- to develop and implement high quality programmes of professional training and education for all levels of people working with children and young people;
- to learn from the work of colleagues in other agencies and other countries.

### 3. To promote good working relationships

- to seek arbitration or mediation when conflicts with colleagues cannot be resolved informally;
- to report bad practice and violations of the Code of Ethics;
- to contribute to the development of professional bodies and organisations;
- to promote cooperation with members of other professions with a view to the best interests of service users;
- to manage and administer services in a manner geared primarily to meet the needs of service users.

### **F : Responsibility to Society**

People who work with children and young people have a responsibility to the community as a whole in the way it contributes to the upbringing of society's future citizens:

#### 1. To provide information and promote understanding

- to keep the public informed about the needs of people and the services provided to meet them;
- to provide a positive image of the identity of children and young people in the public care, and of ways in which society may contribute to meeting their needs;
- to counteract prejudice and discrimination against children and young people in the public care;
- to promote understanding and facilitate the acceptance of diversity in society;
- to encourage informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions;
- to take political action where the needs of children and young people and their families make it necessary.

#### 2. To meet the needs of children and young people in the context of the wider society

- to provide services for people with needs on behalf of the community;
- to foster the integration of children and young people into their immediate community and into society as a whole so that they may play a full part as responsible adult citizens;
- to work towards greater social acknowledgement of children's rights;
- to support policies and laws that promote the well-being of children and young people and their families, and to oppose or seek to modify those that do not;
- to respect human rights in general.

**Erfurt, Germany**

**October 10, 1997**

**For further information about FICE and information on Codes of Ethics, please contact the General Secretariat.**

Find the Code of Ethics in [Hebrew](#) and in [Russian](#) languages.

