

Reach Deaf Services
Employees Code of Conduct

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1.0 Policy Statement

At Reach Deaf Services, we are committed to creating a respectful, inclusive, and safe environment for everyone we work with.

Our Code of Conduct outlines the standards of behaviour expected from all employees, volunteers, contractors, and representatives of Reach Deaf Services. It ensures that all interactions with people we support, families, colleagues, and the wider community are respectful, inclusive, professional, and aligned with the organisation's values and legal obligations.

Employees should be aware of and fulfil all regulatory and statutory obligations of the organisation and enforce them in a fair, responsible and consistent manner, acting within the legal authority given to them.

All staff are obliged to comply with policies and procedures, employee regulations, work rules and any standards and codes of practice adopted by the organisation. This Code of Conduct is binding on all employees (including those on leave, etc.).

Employees charged with the task of delivering services to people we support must respect the individuals with whom they work and ensure that the needs of the person are met insofar as it is legally and economically possible. Employees have a duty to deal with people we support with integrity, diligence and impartiality and

with courtesy, consideration, fairness and promptness. Employees should respect the principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment.

Employees must observe appropriate professional boundaries in their dealings with those they encounter in the course of their work on behalf of Reach Deaf Services, including their work colleagues.

Queries or concerns regarding business conduct should be directed to the employee's Line Manager in the first instance and then to Human Resources team.

2.0 Policy Purpose

The purpose of this Code is to set down the general principles and standards, which govern the professional activities and conduct of management and employees, both permanent and contract, of Reach Deaf Services (collectively referred to as employees throughout) thereby maintaining a high level of public confidence in the organisation as an employer.

3.0 Policy Scope

This Code applies to all employees (full-time, part-time, temporary), volunteers, students, contractors, agency staff and Board members when acting on behalf of the organisation.

4.0 Legislation /Other Related Policies

This Code operates in line with the following Irish legislation and statutory guidance:

- Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015
- Equal Status Acts 2000–2018
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
- Irish Sign Language Act 2017
- Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR
- Protected Disclosures Act 2014 (as amended 2022)
- Organisation of Working Time Act 1997
- Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977–2015
- Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts 1973–2005
- Workplace Relations Commission Codes of Practice, including:
 - Code of Practice on Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures (S.I. No. 146/2000)

- Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work (S.I. No. 674/2020)
- Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment and Harassment at Work

5.0 Core Principles and Core Values

All staff are expected to uphold the following principles & values:

- **Respect-** Treat all people we support, colleagues, and stakeholders with dignity and fairness.
- **Inclusion-** Promote accessibility and equality, particularly for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, including recognising and facilitating the use of Irish Sign Language (ISL), and ensuring that all communication is accessible, inclusive, and responsive to language and communication needs.
- **Integrity-** Act honestly, transparently, and ethically at all times.
- **Professionalism-** Maintain high standards in conduct, communication, and deliver high-quality, reliable services.
- **Confidentiality-** Protect sensitive information and respect privacy. Maintain strict confidentiality, except where disclosure is required by law or safeguarding purposes.
- **Accessibility-** Ensure all communications are delivered in Irish Sign Language (ISL) or in the person's preferred format (e.g ISL, plain English, Visual aids) and consult with interpreting or communication services where needed to ensure accessibility.
- **Accountability-** Reports concerns, risks, or safeguarding issues in accordance with organisational policy.
- **Equality-** Promote equality and equal opportunities for all the individuals we support, working collaboratively with Deaf Education Services to prepare and equip them for life, while leading by example and advancing Deaf awareness.
- **Independence-** Empower people we support with the appropriate skills to live self-directed lives.

6.0 Standards of Conduct & Behaviours

6.1 Dignity and Respect at Work

In line with Irish law, we are committed to:

- Providing a workplace and service environment free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

- Employees must treat all colleagues and people we support with dignity and respect.

6.2 Equality, Diversity and Non-Discrimination

Employees must not discriminate on any of the **nine protected grounds**:

- Gender
- Civil status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Age
- Disability (including Deaf identity)
- Race
- Membership of the Traveller community

Reasonable accommodations must be supported in line with legal obligations ensuring equal access to services and supporting the diverse needs of our community.

6.3 Safeguarding and Duty of Care

The safety and wellbeing of the people we support is a core priority.

- All staff and representatives must comply with safeguarding and “Trust in Care” principles.
- Protecting the welfare and safety of all the people we support, especially those who may be vulnerable.
- Follow all internal safeguarding, protection procedures and training.
- Any concerns regarding abuse, neglect, misconduct or exploitation must be reported immediately.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries at all times
- Promote a culture of care, trust, and accountability.

6.4 Professional Behaviour

Employees and representatives are expected to:

- Perform duties competently and responsibly, maintaining high standards of behaviour, accountability, and service delivery.
- Follow organisational policies, procedures and SOPs to avoid misconduct.
- Maintain reliability, punctuality and accountability.
- Conduct themselves professionally and ethically.
- Communicate respectfully with colleagues, people we support, and stakeholders.

6.5 Confidentiality and Data Protection

All confidential information relating to the people we support, employees, and organisational matters must be handled securely and responsibly.

Employees and representatives must:

- Comply with GDPR, Irish Data Protection legislation, and with our organisation's Employee Data Protection Policy.
- We are committed to handling personal data responsibly and in line with data protection laws.
- Process personal data lawfully, fairly, and securely.
- Confidential information must be protected, and sensitive information must not be disclosed without authorisation.
- Breaches must be reported immediately.
- Privacy and confidentiality must be respected at all times.

6.6 Use of IT and Organisational Resources

All employees and representatives are expected to use organisational technology responsibly. This includes:

- Use systems in line with organisational policies.
- Avoid misuse of email, internet, or devices.
- Do not access or share inappropriate content or post content on social media that could damage the organisation's reputation.
- Maintaining professionalism online.
- Protecting confidential information.

- Avoiding inappropriate or offensive content.
- Ensure the safe handling of all work equipment.

6.7 Health, Safety and Workplace Conduct

Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to a safe and healthy environment under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005:

Employees must:

- Take reasonable care for their own safety and others.
- Follow all health and safety procedures.
- Report hazards and incidents or unsafe practices promptly.
- Behave responsibly within the workplace.
- Support the physical and emotional wellbeing of others.
- Adhere to the Drugs and Alcohol Policy at all times.

6.8 Conflicts of Interest

All employees and representatives of Reach Deaf Services must:

- Declare any personal or financial interests that may conflict with duties.
- Do not accept gifts or benefits that could influence decisions.
- Declare any potential conflict of interest before the recruitment process.

6.9 Equality and Human Rights

Reach Deaf Services is committed to equality and human rights in accordance with Irish legislation and best practice standards.

We do not tolerate:

- Discrimination
- Harassment
- Victimisation
- Abuse of power

- Any behaviour that undermines dignity or inclusion

We strive to ensure equal opportunity and fair treatment for all.

6.10. Accessibility Commitment

As an organisation supporting Deaf individuals and communities, we are committed to accessible communication and inclusive services.

We expect all staff of Reach Deaf Services to

- Promote Irish Sign Language (ISL) accessibility.
- Provide inclusive communication supports.
- Ensure our services and digital platforms remain accessible to all.

6.11 Protected Disclosures (Whistleblowing)

Under the Protected Disclosures Act:

- Employees are encouraged to speak up if something is not right, may report wrongdoing without fear of penalisation.
- They can report wrongdoings without fear of penalisation, this can include legal breaches, misconduct, or risks to safety etc.
- Confidentiality will be maintained.

6.12 Reporting Misconduct

Any concerns relating to misconduct, safeguarding, discrimination, or breaches of this Code should be reported to their Line Manager and through the appropriate organisational procedures.

All concerns will be addressed fairly, respectfully, and confidentially.

Employees are required to report:

- Breaches of this Code
- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination
- Safeguarding concerns
- Health and safety risks amongst others

Failure to report serious issues may itself be treated as misconduct.

7.0 Breach of Code

Failure to comply and adhere with this code may result in disciplinary action in accordance with organisational policies/procedures, relevant Irish employment legislation and principles of fair process up to and including dismissal.

8.0 Review and Compliance

This Code will be reviewed periodically if there are legislation changes and every 2 years to ensure compliance with:

- Changes in Irish legislation
- Updated WRC guidance
- Organisational needs

9.0 Acknowledgement

Together, we are committed to creating a positive, inclusive, and empowering environment for the Deaf community and all those we support.

All employees must confirm they have read, understood, and agree to comply with this Code.

10.0 Implementation

- This Code of Conduct will be implemented across all areas of the organisation.
- All staff will receive a copy of this Code upon induction and are required to confirm that they have read, understood, and agree to adhere to it.
- The Code will be reinforced through ongoing supervision, team meetings, and training.
Managers are responsible for promoting adherence to the Code and addressing any concerns or breaches in line with organisational policies and procedures.
- Failure to comply with this Code may result in disciplinary action in accordance with organisational procedures.

11.0 Audit and Evaluation

- Compliance with this Code of Conduct will be monitored on an ongoing basis.
- The organisation will review the implementation of this Code through supervision, incident reviews, and feedback from staff and individuals we support.

Any breaches or concerns will be recorded, reviewed, and used to inform continuous improvement.

- This Code will formally be reviewed at least every 2 years or 3 years, or sooner if required due to changes in legislation, standards, organisational practice, or in response to employee survey outcomes.