



OUTREACH • BARN • FARM • POST 16

Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy

Policy Note

For the purposes of this policy, *Orchard Therapeutic Services (OTF), Orchard Therapeutic Outreach (OTO), Orchard Therapeutic Barn OTB), Orchard Therapeutic Active (OTA)* will together be referred to as **“the Services”**

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, trustees, and contractors of the Services, as well as anyone representing Orchard Therapeutic Services, Orchard Therapeutic Outreach, Orchard Therapeutic Barn or Orchard Therapeutic Active in an official capacity.

Key Principles

Principle	How this applies to Behaviour Management
I have confidence that the adults who support me understand me, are skilled and work effectively together to meet my needs.	Behaviour is understood as communication. Staff are trained in Thrive, PACE, restorative and de-escalation approaches to ensure students feel safe, understood and supported.
I receive high-quality, tailored support that sustains my health and wellbeing.	Supporting young people to maintain a reasonable standard of behaviour that reduces the risk or impact on the welfare and protection of themselves and others promotes their wellbeing.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

Policy Aims

At Orchard Therapeutic Farm we aim to create a calm, safe and supportive environment where positive behaviour is promoted through strong relationships, emotional development and consistent practice. We recognise that behaviour is a form of communication and that many of our students require explicit support to develop regulation, self-awareness and pro-social skills.

This policy aims to:

- Create a positive culture that promotes emotional safety, belonging and positive behaviour.
- Establish a consistent, relational and restorative approach to behaviour management.
- Integrate the Thrive approach to support social and emotional development.
- Ensure high expectations are maintained while being developmentally appropriate.
- Provide clarity around expectations, support strategies and consequences.
- We strive to support students to become responsible, resilient and reflective individuals who:
 - Make positive choices and learn from mistakes.
 - Value themselves, others and their environment.
 - Develop emotional regulation, independence and confidence.
 - Contribute positively to the Centre community.

Rationale and Thrive-Informed Approach

OTF works with students who may have experienced trauma, disrupted attachment, loss or unmet developmental needs. Thrive provides a whole-setting framework that supports early identification of emotional developmental gaps and delivers targeted, reparative interventions.

Our behaviour approach is therefore:

- **Relational** – prioritising safe, trusting relationships.
- **Developmental** – responding to emotional age rather than chronological age.
- **Therapeutic** – supporting regulation before reflection.
- **Restorative** – focusing on repair, responsibility and reintegration.

Legislation, statutory requirements and statutory guidance

This policy is informed by current DfE guidance, the Equality Act 2010, Keeping Children Safe in Education, SEND Code of Practice, and national guidance on behaviour, restraint and safeguarding.

Definitions of Behaviour

Behaviour that may be challenging

- Low-level disruption
- Difficulty following reasonable instructions
- Emotional dysregulation
- Avoidance or disengagement

Behaviour that is considered serious

- Repeated breaches of expectations
- Bullying or discriminatory behaviour
- Physical aggression
- Sexualised or harmful behaviour
- Damage to property or theft
- Possession of prohibited items

All behaviour is considered within context, developmental capacity and individual need.

Bullying

The Government defines bullying as: “Behaviour by an individual or, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual either physically or emotionally.” It can take a number of forms including, but not limited to, physical, emotional, prejudice based, sexual, cyber, direct or indirect verbal.

Details of our approach to preventing and addressing bullying can be found in our Anti Bullying Policy.

Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone has a responsibility to abide by the Code of Conduct and undertake their roles whilst at the centres. Roles and Responsibilities to promote positive behaviour are defined below:

Centre Leadership

- Ensure Thrive and restorative practice are embedded across the Centre.
- Ensure staff are trained and supported.
- Monitor behaviour trends and effectiveness of interventions.

- Ensure consistency, fairness and safeguarding alignment.

All Staff

- Model calm, respectful and regulated behaviour.
- Use Thrive-informed strategies and PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy).
- Record incidents and reflect in debriefs.
- Participate in training, supervision and restorative processes.

Students

- Are supported to understand expectations.
- Are encouraged to ask for help and engage in restorative reflection.
- Are involved (where appropriate) in their own behaviour planning.

Parents/Carers and Referrers

- Work in partnership with the Centre.
- Share relevant information.
- Engage in reviews and restorative planning.

Code of conduct

To realise our values, everyone working at, attending, visiting Orchard Therapeutic Services Centre is expected to behave in accordance with the following **Code of Conduct**:

- Take personal responsibility to make sure their behaviour ensures the Orchard Therapeutic Services Centre values are observed.
- Treat everyone with respect, irrespective of differences or protected characteristics
- Respect personal space, and the environment
- Listen to each other.

Young Person Expectations and Centre Rules and values:

At OTF, expectations and rules are rooted in our shared values of **Explore, Engage and Empower**. These values guide how young people are supported to behave, learn and relate to others within the Centre. Expectations are taught explicitly, revisited regularly and adapted to each young person's developmental stage, emotional needs and understanding.

Young people are supported and encouraged to:

- **Explore:** by trying new experiences, activities and ways of learning, even when they feel unfamiliar, recognising that curiosity and exploration support personal growth.
- **Engage:** positively with learning, activities and relationships, showing curiosity, asking questions and taking part in ways that feel safe and manageable for them.

- **Empower:** themselves by making safe and thoughtful choices, taking increasing responsibility for their actions, and reflecting on how their behaviour impacts themselves, others, animals and the environment.
- Demonstrate respect for themselves, other people, property, animals and the natural environment.
- Use support from adults to help regulate emotions, solve problems and repair relationships when things go wrong.

Rules within the Centre are kept clear, predictable and purposeful. They are designed to promote safety, belonging and positive relationships rather than compliance alone. Where expectations are not met, adults respond in a calm, relational and restorative way, supporting young people to understand what happened, what the impact was, and how things can be put right.

Positive Language and Personal Responsibility

Staff use positive, non-shaming language and focus on repairing relationships and rebuilding regulation. Students are supported to understand the impact of their behaviour and to make amends where appropriate.

Responding to behaviour

Staff are responsible for setting the tone and context for positive behaviour. They will:

- Create and maintain a stimulating environment that encourages students to create positive relationships and be engaged.
- Develop a positive relationship with students, which may include:
 - Establishing clear routines
 - Communicating expectations of behaviour in ways other than verbally
 - Highlighting and promoting positive behaviour
 - Concluding the day positively and starting the next day afresh
 - Having a plan for dealing with low-level disruption
 - Using positive reinforcement
 - Working as part of the team to develop consistent approaches to promoting positive behaviour and dealing with disruption/incidents.

Behaviour management approaches

Orchard Therapeutic Services is committed to educational practices and adopts a Thrive aligned framework of Protect, Relate, Regulate and Reflect.

PROTECT

- Increased 'safety cues' in all aspects of the day; 'meet and greet' at the classroom door and an open-door policy for informal discussions with parents/ carers.

- Staff trained in 'PACE' modes of interaction (Hughes 2015); being warm empathic, playful and curious (proven to shift children out of flight/fright/freeze positions).
- Staff ensure that interactions with children are socially engaging and not socially defensive, to decrease the likelihood of children relating defensively (flight/fright/freeze).
- OTF is committed to cease all use of harsh voices, shouting, put downs, criticism and shaming (proven to be damaging psychologically and neurologically).
- Staff 'interactively repair' occasions when they themselves move into defensiveness.
- Pedagogic interventions that help staff to get to know children better on an individual basis e.g. 'I wish my teacher knew'. (What matters to them, who matters to them, their dreams, hopes). This is key to enabling children to feel safe enough to talk, if they wish, about painful life experiences, which are interfering with their ability to learn and their quality of life.
- Vulnerable children have easy and daily access to at least one named, emotionally available adult, and know when and where to find that adult. If the child does not wish to connect with the allocated adult, an alternative adult is found.
- OTF staff adjust expectations around vulnerable children to correspond with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress. This includes removing vulnerable and traumatised children in a kind and non-judgmental way from situations they are not managing well (e.g. children who are continually triggered into alarm states in the main playground can access a calmer, smaller areas with emotionally regulating adults).
- Provision of a clear, confidential and non-shaming system of self-referral for children's help/talk time. The nurturing of staff in such a way that they feel truly valued and emotionally regulated and in so doing to support them to interact throughout the day with positive social engagement rather than defensiveness.

RELATE

- A whole commitment to enabling children to see themselves, their relationships and the world positively, rather than through a lens of threat, danger or self-blame.
- Vulnerable children provided with repeated relational opportunities (with emotionally available adults) to make the shift from 'blocked trust' (not feeling psychologically safe with anyone) to trust, and from self-help to 'help seeking'.

REGULATE

- Relational interventions specifically designed to bring down stress hormone levels (e.g. from toxic to tolerable) in vulnerable children, enabling them to feel calm, soothed and safe. This is to support learning, quality of life and protect against stress-induced physical and mental illness, now and in later life.

- Evidence-based interventions that aim to repair psychological damage and brain damage caused by traumatic life experiences, through emotionally regulating, playful, enriched adult-child interactions.
- The emotional well-being and regulating of staff are treated as a priority to prevent burnout, stress related absence, or leaving the profession through stress-related illness, secondary trauma and/or feeling undervalued, blamed or shamed.

REFLECT

- Staff training and development and training in the art of good listening, dialogue, empathy and understanding (instead of asking a series of questions/ giving lectures).
- Provision of skills and resources to support parents and staff in meaning empathetic conversations with vulnerable children who want to talk about their lives. This is to empower children to better manage their home situations and life in general.
- Within the context of an established and trusted relationship with a member of staff (working alliance), children are given the means and opportunity to symbolise painful life experiences through images as well as words, as a key part of 'working through' these experiences and memory re-consolidation. Means include the provision of different modes of expression, e.g. art/play/drama/ music/sand/emotion worksheets/emotion cards.
- PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and psycho education as preventative input, informed by current research psychological and neuroscience) on mental health, mental ill health (full range of specific conditions), relationships (including parenting) emotions, social media and tools for how to 'do life well'. Curricular content enables children to make informed choices about how they relate to others, how they live their lives, and how they treat their brains, bodies and minds.
- Staff development and training to help children move from 'behaving' their trauma/painful life experiences, to reflecting on those experiences, to reflecting on those experiences. Staff learn to do this through empathetic conversation, addressing children's negative self-referencing and helping them develop positive, coherent narratives about their lives.
- A behaviour policy based not on punishment, sanctions, resolution and interactive repair (e.g. restorative conversations).

Supporting Positive Behaviour – A pluralist approach

A pluralist approach to behaviour management in a special needs provision recognizes and respects the diversity of students' needs, backgrounds, and abilities. It emphasises the importance of tailoring strategies and interventions to meet the unique requirements of each student. Here are key principles of a pluralist approach to behaviour management in a special needs provision:

- **Individualised Plans:** Pluralism in behaviour management starts with the understanding that no single approach works for all students. Special needs provisions create individualised behaviour management plans for each student, taking into account their specific disabilities, strengths, and challenges.

- **Assessment and Diagnosis:** In a pluralist approach, thorough assessment and diagnosis are essential. Educators and specialists work collaboratively to understand the underlying causes of a student's challenging behaviour, whether it's related to a learning disability, sensory issues, communication difficulties, or other factors.
- **Inclusion of Multiple Perspectives:** A pluralist approach values input from various professionals, including teachers, therapists, psychologists, and parents. It recognizes that each stakeholder can contribute unique insights into a student's behaviour and how best to address it.
- **Multimodal Interventions:** Special needs provisions employ a variety of intervention strategies, such as behaviour modification, positive behaviour support, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and sensory integration techniques. These interventions are chosen based on the student's needs and may evolve as the student progresses.
- **Communication and Collaboration:** Effective communication and collaboration among all stakeholders are fundamental. Teachers, therapists, and parents regularly share information and collaborate to ensure consistency in behaviour management strategies across different settings, such as home and school.
- **Strength-Based Approaches:** Pluralism in behaviour management emphasizes identifying and building upon a student's strengths rather than solely focusing on deficits. This approach fosters self-esteem and motivation.
- **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Continuous data collection and analysis help educators track progress and adjust interventions as needed. This approach ensures that behaviour management strategies are evidence-based and effective.
- **Support for Emotional Regulation:** Special needs provision often incorporate emotional regulation techniques and mindfulness practices to help students better manage their emotions, reducing the likelihood of challenging behaviours.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** A pluralist approach places a strong emphasis on positive reinforcement and rewards to motivate students toward desired behaviours. This can include praise, tokens, or other incentives tailored to each student's preferences.
- **Crisis Management and De-escalation:** Special needs provision equip staff with strategies for crisis management and de-escalation techniques to ensure the safety of students and staff in situations of extreme behaviour.

Responding to positive Behaviour

Positive behaviour is recognised through:

- Verbal praise and affirmation.
- Recognition shared with parents/carers.
- Certificates, responsibilities and privileges.
- Individualised rewards aligned to student needs.

At the Orchard Therapeutic Services we believe it is important to focus on and celebrate positive choices and promote positive behaviour using praise, recognition, building self-esteem and an individual's sense of worth. Specific recognition systems and the code of practice and rules will be pertinent and bespoke to each learner, whilst adopting the core values and principles of the Orchard Therapeutic Services.

Positive reinforcement will be applied clearly and fairly to reinforce the routines, expectations, and norms of the centre's behaviour culture.

Positive reinforcement System

The reward system at Orchard Therapeutic Services Centre encourages and recognises students who follow the centre's behaviour expectations, and those who go above and beyond to personify the ethos of the centre.

At Orchard Therapeutic Services Centre, we believe it is important to focus on and celebrate positive choices and promote positive behaviour using praise, recognition, thus building students' self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

Our pluralist approach places a strong emphasis on positive reinforcement and rewards to motivate students toward desired behaviours. This can include praise, tokens, or other incentives tailored to each student's preferences. There are several ways in which students' positive behaviour can be recognised, e.g. staff can award certificates for subject based achievements, or for students' achievements outside the curriculum.

Sanctions and responding to negative behaviour

Sanctions/consequences are used to develop and reinforce pupils' understanding of the consequences of their own actions to aid self-regulation. Positive reinforcement and sanctions/consequences are a means by which the centre encourages positive behaviour and sets expectations.

Sanctions are used to support learning, responsibility and regulation, not punishment. Responses are:

- Proportionate and consistent.
- Adapted for SEND and emotional development.
- Focused on repair and restoration.

Examples include:

- Verbal reminders.
- Reflection time with support.
- Restorative meetings.
- Time-limited removal from activities if required for safety.

Permanent exclusion is avoided wherever possible.

The sanctions/consequences used may vary from time to time but will be characterised by certain features:

- It must be clear why the sanction/consequence is being applied.
- It must be made clear what changes in behaviour are required to avoid further consequences.
- There needs to be a clear distinction between minor and major offences.
- It should be the behaviour rather than the pupil that is sanctioned.

- It must be as instantaneous as possible.

A child's Behaviour Support Plan/Risk Assessment will consider the child's capacity to understand right from wrong.

At Orchard Therapeutic Services we believe that it is vital to outline the centres' rules and expectations for all pupils so that they are clear about the boundaries set around their behaviour. This clarity engenders a sense of fair play as well as making pupils feel safe.

Students are developing and learning their way in the world. We need to help them make the right choices and support the development of their ethical compass. As a part of this learning process, sometimes mistakes will be made. We need to help students make informed and positive choices but if poor choices are made, where deliberate or intentional, consequences need to be implemented. It is the duty of all staff within a centre to support students and strive to understand the underlying reasons for behaviour, whilst recognising that individuals should be supported in taking responsibility for their actions. The consequences and stages of approach will be included within each centre's local procedure again adhering to the Orchard Therapeutic Services Centre core values and the use of a pluralist approach.

When an individual's behaviour falls below the standard that can reasonably be expected of them, staff will respond to restore a calm and safe environment, and to prevent recurrence of behaviour deemed challenging.

Staff will endeavour to create a predictable environment by always challenging behaviour that falls short of the standards, and by responding in a consistent, fair and proportionate manner, so students know with certainty that behaviour deemed challenging will always be addressed.

De-escalation techniques will be used to help prevent further behaviour issues arising, such as the use of prearranged scripts and phrases.

All students will be treated equitably under the policy, with any factors that contributed to the behavioural incident identified and considered. When giving behaviour sanctions, staff will also consider what support could be offered to an individual to help them to meet behaviour standards in the future.

The centre may use 1 or more of the following sanctions in response to unacceptable behaviour:

- A verbal reminder of the expectations of behaviour
- Using strike system – Strike 1 = Verbal Warning, Strike 2 = Another Verbal Warning, Strike 3 = Contact Parents/Sent home if safe to do so.
- Referring the individual to a senior member of staff
- A day of reflection may be used if a serious incident/physical altercation occurs.

Personal circumstances of the student will be considered when choosing sanctions and decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, but with regard to the impact on perceived fairness and the impact of their peers.

Minor Incidents

All incidents of minor or major unsettled behaviour are recorded on the Centre Information

Management System.

Major Incidents May include:

- Physical abuse/assault on persons
- Serious verbal and non-verbal threatening or abusive behaviour
- Serious damage to property including vandalism or graffiti.
- Carrying a weapon or using or threatening to use centre equipment or any other item as a weapon.
- Drug and alcohol possession and/or abuse
- Fire-setting or threatening behaviour with matches or cigarette lighters
- Sexualised behaviour and language
- Unsafe behaviour towards self (self-harm)
- Repeated absconding
- Significant or repeated incidents of Bullying
- Repetitive minor incidents which collectively disrupt the learning environment
- Racist Incidents

The centre manager or SLT MUST always be consulted following a major incident.

Possible sanctions/consequences for major incidents can include, a period of reflection or a termination of contract/placement.

Where there is damage to property any pupil(s) involved or responsible will be expected to account for their actions and to work with a staff member on making some form of reparation. Serious damage to property and consistent minor damaging of property may result in parents/carers being billed or when the incident is of a severe nature.

Restorative practices will follow most incidents to clarify to pupils why their behaviour was wrong and the impact their actions may have had.

A day of reflection

We recognise that pupils attending Orchard Therapeutic Services Centre may have experienced permanent exclusion from one or more educational settings already. It is therefore our policy that permanent exclusion should be avoided wherever possible. Our aim is that no pupil is permanently excluded from the centre.

The centre reserves the right to give a fixed-term exclusion peremptorily for a more serious breach of centre discipline including:

- Intentional physical aggression towards another pupil or staff
- Bullying
- Sexual harassment
- Possession of illegal substances including alcohol, tobacco or drugs
- Racist or similar incidents
- Theft

- Possession of a weapon
- Meditated and/or involves the use of an offensive weapon, dealing with drugs, arson.

Physical Intervention

Restrictive physical intervention is always considered to be a **last resort**, and may only ever be considered when there is:

- Damage to property, others or self.
- An offence being, or highly likely to be, committed.
- No alternative method of mitigating these risks.

Restrictive physical intervention where used must be reasonable, proportionate, and use no more force than is necessary. Physical interventions may take the form of an emergency intervention, or a planned intervention.

The agreed approach to physical intervention used by the centre is Positive Handling Training. Staff should be adequately trained and competent to use physical intervention (to be updated on yearly basis) and must adhere to all safety measures.

Staff must only use physical intervention if they have been trained unless it is an emergency to prevent harm to the young person or others.

Emergency intervention

Students could be at risk due to an unexpected incident, or response to a new or unexpected situation.

Staff may intervene to maintain the safety and wellbeing of the student or themselves if they choose to do so. For example, a member of staff may physically intervene to prevent a student from harming themselves or causing harm to others.

Staff must report all unplanned interventions to the Senior Leadership Team.

The centre should assess the incident as soon as possible and a behaviour support plan/risk assessment will be drawn up or updated to reflect this.

If it is judged that the intervention may be required again, this must be drawn up as part of a positive support plan and then will become a planned intervention.

Planned intervention

A physical or restrictive intervention may be planned for if it has been judged as likely to occur following assessment, or other indication such as behaviour history or incident report.

A planned physical intervention may only be in place if it is in the context of an existing support plan. This should include a risk assessment covering the potential risks of making use of physical intervention.

A support plan that consists only of a physical intervention or restrictive practice will be deemed inappropriate.

A planned physical intervention should consist of:

- Guidelines for minimising the risk of the occurrence of the behaviour and de-escalating or diffusing a potential incident.
- Procedure for physical intervention detailing how staff can intervene.
- Strategy for disengaging or bringing an intervention to an end.
- Strategy for ensuring that student has not sustained injury or other adverse effect.
- Strategy to debrief those involved and consider any lessons learned.

Students have the fundamental right of freedom of movement and liberty, and this will be central to all strategies that involve or are considered to involve the use of a restrictive measure.

All interventions in all contexts must be appropriate to the incident, be a proportionate response to the incident, use a proportionate degree of force, be the least restrictive option available, be respectful to the student and be used for no longer than is necessary to prevent harm to the student or to others.

Where restrictive physical intervention is used a meeting will be held and recorded within 48 working hours (wherever reasonably practicable) to review the incident and identify steps to implement risk reduction measures and avoid subsequent use wherever possible.

The use of restrictive physical intervention will be recorded and monitored through the governance process and at the Incident and Safeguarding Committee.

Positive touch:

DFE 00295-2013 offers examples of appropriate use:

- Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school.
- When comforting a distressed pupil; · When a pupil is being congratulated or praised.
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument.
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching.
- To give first aid or medical support (administering an EPI pen or insulin injection).

What Constitutes Inappropriate/Unsafe Touch?

- Physical intervention should never be used as a form of punishment
- Touch that is instigated to meet a need in the adult is not deemed appropriate or safe e.g. to reassure the adult or make the adult feel better.
- Touch that replicates an element of a traumatic experience for a child/young person
- Any physical intervention that the child experiences as unwanted, uncomfortable or invasive (except in the use of restrictive physical intervention where safety is paramount)
- It is not acceptable to kiss pupils. Occasionally younger children or children with complex needs may initiate a kiss between themselves and a member of staff as a genuine, instinctual demonstration of affection. It is the role of staff to support children to understand safe touch and develop appropriate boundaries to keep themselves safe. Staff should withdraw from the situation, gently reminding the child of their role and appropriate people to demonstrate their affection to in this way.
- It is never appropriate to touch children/young people in the following areas; genitals, chest/breast or bottom unless providing intimate care.

- As the child becomes calm, the hold can be relaxed to a more comforting physical intervention.
- It is critical that relational repair is facilitated between adult and child. This may not be immediate, but it is crucial that the same adults are involved.
- The child should be involved in the creation of a supportive holding plan, with the opportunity to practice/ rehearse what will happen and when so they are fully prepared.
- Communication of the plan with the child, parents and all school staff is imperative so there is clear understanding of the process.
- All instances of supportive holding (RPI) should be recorded at the earliest opportunity, in line with local authority guidance. It is strongly recommended as good practice that incidents are shared and discussed with parents.
- All staff involved in an incident of supportive holding (RPI) should be given recovery time and attend a debrief with an emotionally available and supportive member of staff. Incidents can be emotionally and physically exhausting and distressing and it is important staff are supported in this process.

When to Avoid Supportive Holding:

- The child is bigger and/or stronger than you are.
- Only one adult is present.
- The adult has been triggered by the child's behaviour and is dysregulated. It is impossible to contain and calm a dysregulated child when the adult is not calm and steady. Their dysregulation is likely to communicate itself to the child and further exacerbate their sense of threat and danger.
- Where the purpose of the hold is to obtain submission/dominance over the child rather than to keep them safe.

Safeguarding

The centre recognises that changes in behaviour may be an indicator that a student needs help or protection.

We will consider whether an individual's behaviour may be linked to them suffering, or being likely to suffer, significant harm.

Where this may be the case, we will follow our child protection and safeguarding policy, and consider whether pastoral support, an early help intervention or a referral to social care is appropriate. Where behaviours indicate a safeguarding concern, these will be logged and the records linked.

Please refer to our safeguarding policies for more information.

Searching, screening and confiscation.

Searching, screening and confiscation in our centres is conducted in line with the DfE's [latest guidance on searching, screening and confiscation](#). Searching and screening students in our centre will follow the same general principles.

Any prohibited items found in a student's possession will be confiscated. These items will not be returned to the individual. We will also confiscate any item which is harmful or detrimental to

centre discipline and safety. These items will be returned to students after discussion with senior leaders and parents/carers, if appropriate.

Searching a student

Searches will only be carried out by a member of staff who has been authorised to do so by the Senior Leadership Team.

Subject to the exception below, the authorised member of staff carrying out the search will be of the same sex as the student, and there will be another member of staff present as a witness to the search.

An authorised member of staff of a different sex to the student can carry out a search without another member of staff as a witness if:

- The authorised member of staff carrying out the search reasonably believes there is risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if the search is not carried out as a matter of urgency; **and**
- In the time available, it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out by a member of staff who is the same sex as the student; **or**
- It is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out in the presence of another member of staff.

When an authorised member of staff conducts a search without a witness, they should immediately report this to another member of staff and ensure a written record of the search is kept.

If the authorised member of staff considers a search to be necessary, but is not required urgently, they will seek the advice of the centre manager or designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) who may have more information about the student. During this time the individual will be supervised and kept away from other students/young people.

A search can be carried out if the authorised member of staff has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the student is in possession of a prohibited item or any item identified in the centre's rules for which a search can be made, or if the student has agreed.

An appropriate location for the search will be found. Where possible, this will be away from other students/young people. The search will only take place on the centre's premises or where the member of staff has lawful control or charge of the student, for example on a centre trip.

Before carrying out a search the authorised member of staff will:

- Assess whether there is an urgent need for a search.
- Assess whether not doing the search would put other students/young people or staff at risk.
- Consider whether the search would pose a safeguarding risk to the student.
- Explain to the student why they are being searched.
- Explain to the student what a search entails – e.g. I will ask you to turn out your pockets.
- Explain how and where the search will be carried out.
- Give the student the opportunity to ask questions.
- Seek the student's co-operation.

If the student refuses to agree to a search, the member of staff can give an appropriate behaviour sanction.

If they still refuse to co-operate, the member of staff will contact the centre lead, to try and determine why the student is refusing to comply.

The authorised member of staff will then decide whether to use reasonable force to search the student. This decision will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration whether conducting the search will prevent the student harming themselves or others, damaging property or from causing disorder.

The authorised member of staff can use reasonable force to search for any prohibited items but not to search for items that are only identified in the centre's rules. The authorised member of staff may use a metal detector to assist with the search.

An authorised member of staff may search a student's outer clothing, pockets, possessions, drawers, cupboards, or lockers.

Outer clothing includes:

- Any item of clothing that is not worn immediately over a garment that is being worn wholly next to the skin or being worn as underwear (e.g. a jumper or jacket being worn over a t-shirt) Hats, scarves, gloves, shoes, boots.

Searching student's possessions

Possessions means any items that the student has or appears to have control of, including:

- Drawers
- Cupboards
- Lockers
- Bags

A student's possessions can be searched for any item if the student agrees to the search. If the student does not agree to the search, staff can still carry out a search for prohibited items, items identified in the centre's rules.

An authorised member of staff can search a student's possessions when the student and another member of staff are present.

If there is a serious risk of harm if the search is not conducted immediately, or it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff, the search can be carried out by a single authorised member of staff.

Informing the designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

The staff member who carried out the search should inform the DSL without delay:

- Of any incidents where the member of staff had reasonable grounds to suspect a student was in possession of a prohibited item.
- If they believe that a search has revealed a safeguarding risk

All searches for prohibited items, including incidents where no items were found, will be recorded.

Informing parents/carers

Parents/carers will always be informed of any search for a prohibited item. A member of staff will tell the parents/carers as soon as is reasonably practicable:

- What happened
- What was found, if anything?
- What has been confiscated, if anything?
- What action the centre has taken, including any sanctions that have been applied to their child

Support after a search

Irrespective of whether any items are found as the result of any search, the centre will consider whether the student may be suffering or likely to suffer harm and whether any specific support is needed (due to the reasons for the search, the search itself, or the outcome of the search).

If this is the case, staff will follow the centre's safeguarding policy and speak to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). The DSL will consider if pastoral support, an early help intervention or a referral to students' social care is appropriate.

Off-Centre behaviour deemed challenging

Sanctions may be applied where a student has challenging behaviour off-centre when representing the centre or as part of a residential activity. This means behaviour deemed challenging when the individual is:

- Taking part in any centre-organised or centre-related activity (e.g. trips and visits)
- Travelling to or from centre
- In any way identifiable as a student at one of our centres. Sanctions may also be applied where a student has misbehaved off-centre, at any time, whether or not the conditions above apply, if the behaviour deemed challenging:
 - Could have repercussions for the orderly running of the centre.
 - Poses a threat to another student.
 - Could adversely affect the reputation of Orchard Therapeutic Services

Sanctions will only be given out on centre premises or elsewhere when the student is under the lawful control of a staff member (e.g. on a centre-organised trip).

Online behaviour deemed challenging

The centre can issue behaviour sanctions to students for online behaviour deemed challenging when:

- It poses a threat or causes harm to another student.
- It could have repercussions for the orderly running of the centre.
- It adversely affects the reputation of Orchard Therapeutic Services
- The student is identifiable as a member of Orchard Therapeutic Services

Sanctions will only be given out on centre premises or elsewhere when the student is under the lawful control of a staff member.

Suspected criminal behaviour

If a student is suspected of criminal behaviour, the centre will make an initial assessment of whether to report the incident to the police.

When establishing the facts, the centre will endeavour to preserve any relevant evidence to hand over to the police.

If a decision is made to report the matter to the police, the centre manager will make the report and inform the CEO.

The centre will not interfere with any police action taken. However, the centre may continue to follow its own investigation procedure and enforce sanctions if it does not conflict with police action.

If a report to the police is made, the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) will make a tandem report to students' social care, where appropriate.

Zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment and sexual violence

The centre will ensure that all incidents of sexual harassment and/or violence are met with a suitable response, and never ignored.

Students are encouraged to report anything that makes them uncomfortable, no matter how 'small' they feel it might be. The centre's response will be:

- Proportionate
- Considered
- Supportive
- Decided on a case-by-case basis.

The centre has procedures in place to respond to any allegations or concerns regarding a student's safety or wellbeing. These include clear processes for:

- Responding to a report
- Carrying out risk assessments, where appropriate, to help determine whether to:
 - Manage the incident internally.
 - Refer to early help.

 - Refer to students' social care.

 - Report to the police

Please refer to our child protection and safeguarding policies for more information.

Malicious allegations

Where a student makes an allegation against a member of staff and that allegation is shown to have been deliberately invented or malicious, the centre will consider whether to discipline the individual in accordance with this policy.

Where a student makes an allegation of sexual violence or sexual harassment against another student and that allegation is shown to have been deliberately invented or malicious, the centre will consider whether to discipline the student in accordance with this policy.

In all cases where an allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the centre (in collaboration with the local authority designated officer (LADO), where relevant) will consider whether the student who made the allegation is in need of help, or the allegation may have been a cry for help. If so, a referral to social care may be appropriate.

The centre will also consider the pastoral needs of staff, students or young people accused of misconduct.

Please refer to our child protection and safeguarding policies.

Recording, Reporting and Review

Where an incident involving a behaviour of concern has occurred, or restrictive physical intervention has been used these should be recorded on the Management Information System within 24 hours, wherever possible. It is expected that copies of relevant documentation will be made available to parents/carers and that information is shared following a serious incident. The incident report remains an important legal document and should be treated as such.

- Behaviour incidents are recorded promptly.
- Behaviour plans and risk assessments are reviewed regularly.
- The policy is reviewed annually or as required.

SEND

Recognising the impact of SEN on behaviour

Orchard Therapeutic Services understands and recognises that behaviour may be impacted by a special educational need or disability (SEND). All the young people we work with are recognised as having a SEN.

When incidents of behaviour deemed challenging arise, we will consider them in relation to an individual's SEN, although we recognise that not every incident of behaviour deemed challenging will be connected to their SEN. Decisions on whether a SEN had an impact on an incident of behaviour deemed challenging will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Local procedures and centre specific rules, rewards, sanctions and strategies take into account the SEN of their cohort. When dealing with behaviour deemed challenging from individuals, especially where their SEN affects their behaviour, the centre will balance their legal duties when making decisions about enforcing the behaviour policy. The legal duties include:

- Taking reasonable steps to avoid causing any substantial disadvantage to a disabled student caused by the centre's policies or practices ([Equality Act 2010](#))
- Using our best endeavours to meet the needs of individuals with SEND ([Students and Families Act 2014](#))
- If a student has an education, health and care (EHC) plan, the provisions set out in that plan must be secured and the centre must co-operate with the local authority and other bodies.

Risk assessment: meeting individual needs

Each student's Individual Risk Assessment will consider management and mitigation of known and probable behavioural risks, and these will be aligned with their individual behaviour support plan

where a plan is deemed necessary. Individual Risk Assessments are reviewed regularly in accordance with local procedures.

Positive behaviour management and support plans: meeting individual needs

Each student has an individual plan (student profile) which includes positive behaviour management and support strategies to meet their assessed needs.

This plan is regularly reviewed and updated in consultation with the student and the key partners in their care and/or education, in accordance with local procedures. (This will be no less than three times per year (termly) and following significant incidents).

Individual plans are collaborative and are intended to enable and encourage each student to take responsibility for their own behaviour, and to develop socially aware behaviours in accordance with their age and understanding.

Each student should have access to their own plan in a format which is understandable and meaningful to them.

Individual plans (student profiles) include the following key information:

- Any pertinent diagnoses
- Vulnerabilities
- Communication needs
- Risk behaviours
- Triggers
- Strategies for success (active, proactive, and reactive approaches and de-escalation techniques)
- Physical Intervention techniques

Adapting sanctions for students with SEND

When considering a behavioural sanction centre will consider:

- Whether the student was unable to understand the rule or instruction?
- Whether the student was unable to act differently at the time because of their SEND?
- Whether the student is likely to behave aggressively due to their SEND?

The centre will then assess if it is appropriate to use a sanction and if so, whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made to the sanction.

Students with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

The provisions set out in the EHC Plan must be secured and the centre will co-operate with the local authority and other bodies.

If the centre has a concern about the behaviour of a student with an EHC plan, it will contact the local authority to discuss the issue. If appropriate, the centre may request an emergency review of the EHC plan.

Supporting young people with their behaviour- Restorative Approach

Following a sanction or negative behaviour, the centre will consider strategies to help the student to understand how to improve their behaviour and meet the expectations of the centre such as through restorative meetings.

What are the key elements of Restorative Approaches?

Restorative Approaches are value-based and needs-led. They can be seen as part of a broader ethos or culture that identifies strong, mutually respectful relationships and a cohesive community as the foundations on which good teaching and learning can flourish. In such a community young people are given a lot of responsibility for decision-making on issues that affect their lives, their learning and their experience.

What is being restored?

This depends on the context and on the needs of those involved. What is being restored is often something between the people involved such as:

- Effective communication;
- Relationship, and even friendship;
- Empathy and understanding for the other's perspective;
- Respect;
- Understanding the impact of one's own behaviour on others;
- Reparation for material loss or damage.

However, something may also be restored within an individual – for example:

- A sense of security;
- Self-confidence;
- Self-respect;
- Dignity.

Overall, the process often results in the restoration of someone's sense of belonging to a community (e.g. class, provision, peer group or family).

Authoritarian Approaches <i>The focus is on:</i>	Restorative Approaches <i>The focus is on:</i>
Rule-breaking	Harm done to individuals
Blame or guilt	Responsibility and problem-solving
Adversarial processes	Dialogue and negotiation
Punishment to deter	Repair, apology and reparation
Impersonal processes	Interpersonal processes
<i>and, as a result;</i>	<i>and, as a result;</i>
The needs of those affected are often ignored	The needs of those affected are addressed
The unmet needs behind the behaviour are ignored	The unmet needs behind the behaviour are addressed
Accountability = being punished	Accountability = putting things right

Restorative approaches are based on four key features:

- RESPECT: for everyone by listening to other opinions and learning to value them
- RESPONSIBILITY: taking responsibility for your own actions

- REPAIR: developing the skills within our community so that its individual members have the necessary skills to identify solutions that repair harm and ensure behaviours are not repeated
- RE-INTEGRATION: working through a structured, supportive process that aims to solve the problem and allows young people to remain in the provision.

Those affected are invited to share:

1. What has happened.
2. What the impact has been on those involved: i.e. who has been affected and in what ways they have been affected.
3. What needs to happen to put things right or to make things better in the future.

To facilitate such a process requires the ability to:

- establish a respectful rapport with people;
- listen and respond calmly, empathically and without interruption or judgment to all sides of an issue;
- inspire a sense of safety and trust;
- encourage people to express their thoughts, feelings and needs appropriately;
- appreciate the impact of people’s thoughts, feelings, beliefs and unmet needs on their behaviours;
- encourage those involved in the problem to find their own solutions.

This learning framework can be used in a wide range of contexts:

- A one way conversation, with one person listening and asking questions and the other talking;
- A two-way conversation, with both people taking turns to ask and answer questions;
- A small meeting when one impartial person - a facilitator - poses questions to two people who have had a difficulty, or where harm has been done, and who want to repair their relationship;
- A larger, facilitated meeting involving children, parents/carers, colleagues or others who have an important role to play (sometimes called a ‘Restorative Conference’);
- A facilitated circle involving part or all of a class, a staff team or a group of residents.

Transition

Inducting incoming students

The centre will support incoming students to meet behaviour standards by offering an induction process to familiarise them with the behaviour policy and the wider centre culture. All students will complete an induction booklet to be completed with the Therapeutic practitioner.

Training

The Orchard Therapeutic Services Centre will ensure that staff have access to, attend and participate in such training as is necessary for them to deliver effective positive behaviour management and support to the students in their care. This will include:

- Communication skills

- Orchard Therapeutic Services Centre approved physical intervention training (Positive Handling Training)
- Any specific training requirements identified in relation to individually assessed needs.

Monitoring arrangements

Monitoring and evaluating behaviour

The centre will collect data on the following:

- Behavioural incidents, including removal from learning sessions.
- Attendance, termination of placements and days of reflection
- The use of Restrictive Physical Intervention
- Use of off-centre directions and managed moves
- Incidents of searching, screening and confiscation
- Anonymous surveys for staff, pupils, and other stakeholders on their perceptions and experiences of the centre behaviour culture

The data will be analysed at least 3 times per year through the governance

process the data will be analysed from a variety of perspectives including:

- At and centre level
- By age
- At the level of individual members of staff
- By time of day/week/term
- By protected characteristic

The centre will use the results of this analysis to make sure it is meeting its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Monitoring this policy

This behaviour policy will be reviewed and agreed by the centre manager and CEO annually.

Local Procedures will be reviewed by the centre lead at least annually, or more frequently, if needed, to address findings from the regular monitoring of the behaviour data (as per section 13.1). At each review, the local procedures will be approved by the Education Director.

Key success indicators

Our centres will endeavour to demonstrate:

- Clear, high, and consistent expectations that everyone, irrespective of differences or protected characteristics, feels safe, secure and has respect and empathy for one another and diversities are embraced and appreciated.
- Staff, students, young people and parents/carers, view behaviour as everyone's responsibility and mutual respect and positive behaviours are an expectation for all.
- A positive environment where students exhibit a sense of pride of being part of Orchard Therapeutic Services Centre.
- Collaborative working relationships with parents/carers and stakeholders promoting positive behaviour with effective two-way or multi-disciplinary partnerships.

- Students understand the impact of their behaviour and adapt this behaviour in future, making more positive and informed choices.
- Proactive support and guidance to help students learn from their mistakes and take ownership from them.
- Clear and fair behaviour expectations, rewards and sanctions are communicated and implemented consistently.
- Individual risk assessments and behaviour support plans are developed where required which are reviewed to reduce and support behaviours of concern.
- Robust recording and reporting of behaviours of concern, which enables analysis of individual and trends in behaviour to reduce incidents and the use of physical intervention wherever possible.

Monitoring of Wellbeing at Orchard Therapeutic Services

Orchard Therapeutic Services recognise that leaders who have empathy are more likely to create an ethos and culture that supports wellbeing. Leadership with empathy is proven to increase staff engagement, innovation, retention and overall wellbeing.

Orchard Therapeutic Services values all staff both personally and for their professional skills and qualities. Through the implementation of this policy, we aim to ensure that all adults know that leaders are invested in them and will demonstrate this through the personal and professional support given. We value the views of all staff and will seek to ensure that their views are sought at every opportunity. Orchard Therapeutic Services as an employer has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees as far as is reasonably practicable. It is also required to have in place measures to mitigate, as far as possible, factors that could harm employees' physical and mental wellbeing, which includes work-related stress.

Orchard Therapeutic Services identifies the below factors can effect wellbeing, behaviour and performance:

- Demands: workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- Support: the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- Relationships: promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- Role: such as whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
- Change: such as how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated within the organisation.

Our approach to staff well-being is based on the teachings of Trauma Informed Schools UK (TISUK). It is underpinned by educational practices which protect, relate, regulate, reflect.

PROTECT

Our priority is to ensure that adults are physically and psychologically safe. That they are supported by policies and practice that mitigates the possibility of them experiencing physical harm at work or as a direct result of their work and that they have opportunities to engage in warm, empathic relationships with adults they trust. At OTF, we support and promote those relationships and we

create a warm and calm environment that is consistent, accepting and optimises social engagement. We do not place adults in situations that they cannot manage. Specifically:

- All adults are taught about the impact of toxic stress and the ways in which OTF seeks to reduce this.
- Regular training to ensure that all adults have a comprehensive understanding of PACE (Hughes) 2016), awareness of Social Engagement Theory (Porges 2017) and Panksepp's Emotional Systems (2012).
- Adults are therefore able to engage in PACEFUL relationships with each other and increase social engagement.
- Ensuring that there are emotionally available adults who undertake the role of wellbeing champions, and that staff know who they are and where to find them.
- There is a no shouting, no shaming policy. Raised or hostile voices are not tolerated.
- All adults receive regular feedback about their work, and this is given positively, supporting professional development. Feedback is non-shaming and not harsh or critical.
- Adults are encouraged to take breaks and there are pleasant spaces for staff to relax and restore.
- Leaders will actively promote new and innovative ways of reducing workload.
- Senior Leaders check in with staff daily and demonstrate genuine interest in their work and personal lives.
- Use of adult only spaces and time to reflect is encouraged, in particular when staff have experienced challenging.

RELATE

- At Orchard Therapeutic Services, our understanding of RELATE is underpinned by the knowledge that the ability to form meaningful relationships is fundamental to mental health and happiness. We understand that relationships are crucial in promoting the optimal development of the frontal lobes of the brain associated with the executive functions key to emotional regulation, emotional intelligence, planning, problem solving and ultimately, learning. The opportunity to engage in meaningful relationships with other colleagues is central to the health and well-being of all staff.

Specifically:

- All adults interact with each other from a position of social engagement not social defence.
- All adults know about the key relational skills and in particular the ability to listen with empathy and they use these when supporting each other.
- Leaders will seek opportunities for staff to engage in meaningful enjoyable, social activities designed to promote relationship.
- Leaders promote an open-door policy ensuring that all staff are valued and have regular contact with them.
- Leaders will ensure that staff are celebrated for their successes and contributions.
- Adults are encouraged to express their emotions and are not shamed or undermined when acknowledging their anxieties or stressors.
- Adults have daily opportunities to engage with each other in environments that are supportive and pleasant.

- Leaders will ensure that there is clear communication between staff and management with regards to all areas.

REGULATE

We know that leaving adults in a state of toxic stress can result in physical ill health as well as making it impossible to engage productively in the activities taking place around them. We have a duty to support adults at OTF to ensure that they are not left in toxic stress. We know that one of the most powerful ways to do this is to create an environment in which adults can be listened to, attuned to and validated and to experience high levels of empathy.

Specifically:

- Ensuring that job descriptions and person specifications are clear in order to ensure that the 'right' person is recruited for the job.
- Promoting training and development procedures to ensure that individuals have the necessary skills and competencies to undertake the tasks/duties required of them.
- Ensuring that interactions are emotionally regulating, PACEFUL and designed to reduce stress levels.
- Ensuring that adults do not engage in socially defensive behaviour with each other
- Providing and valuing staff-only spaces, designed to promote regulation and reflection
- Ensuring that adults are aware of each other's needs and support each other through rich, trusting, relational experiences.
- Ensuring that strategies and policies are implemented to effectively manage and, where necessary, reduce employee stress. This includes preventing unnecessary stress and ensuring that any work-based stress employees experience is at a productive, healthy level • Encouraging staff to be fully involved in the decisions at OTF through staff forums in which staff can talk freely about any issues which impact on their ability to carry out their jobs.

REFLECT

At Orchard Therapeutic Services, we believe that adults need to be able to reflect on their feelings in order to fully understand them. Reflection enables us to make sense of our life and have a coherent narrative that makes sense of what we are feeling and what has happened to us. There are times following troubling incidents that adults need to be helped to reflect in order to make sense of what has happened, of their response and if necessary, to repair ruptures in relationships that may have resulted. Adults also need opportunities to share with leaders, in a safe space, the stressors from work.

At Orchard Therapeutic Services, we facilitate this in ways which support adults to feel valued and not blamed.

Specifically:

- All staff and leaders, are trained in the art of active listening with a particular focus on empathy and acceptance of the feelings of others.
- Leaders provide regular opportunities for staff to engage in reflective listening with each other, enabling adults to talk confidently about work stressors and significant events.
- Staff have access to free counselling services provided by OTF or are signposted to free counselling services.
- Key staff have supervision.

- Orchard Therapeutic Services will measure its performance in relation to stress management and employee well-being, such as: sickness absence data, staff turnover, exit interviews, number of referrals to Occupational Health, numbers of grievance and harassment cases.
- Leaders will seek the views of employees on the effectiveness of OTF'S Wellbeing Policy and stress management arrangements using staff surveys and other appropriate questionnaires.

See also Appendix A- Suicide prevention policy

Parents/carers

Tutors will communicate with parents/carers about behaviour, they may do this by phone or email. There will be occasions when a member of the Behaviour Team may also call a parent/carer to discuss strategies and support they can offer.

Specialist staff

The team at Orchard Therapeutic Services have within them a Behavioural Lead, DSL, DDSL and Youth Mental Health First Aider that all work together to support students and staff with managing behaviour across the centre.

Appendix A

Orchard Therapeutic Services – Suicide Prevention Policy.

Suicide is the biggest killer of young people, male and female under the age of 35 in the UK.

We know from research carried out by Young Mind that 2000 young people take their own lives while on CAMHS waiting list. More than one in four young people, 26 per cent, said they have tried to take their own life because of having to wait for mental health support (Young Minds, 2022). It is vital for Orchard Therapeutic Services to have an approach to suicide prevention and ongoing support for both the child/young person and practitioners.

Many suicide prevention policies focus on “spot the signs”. We have listed common signs within the policy because it’s important that all child professionals and parents know what these signs are. That said, often there are no signs.

In our view, any endeavor to prevent this terrible tragedy of a child or young person taking their own life must do far more than just “spotting the signs”. Abraham Maslow identified emotional needs in 1943, but he didn’t have the neuroscience to back up the research, but we have the research now!

If one or more of these emotional needs remain unmet, the child or young person will not flourish and will experience considerable suffering and emotional distress. When this happens for a duration, thoughts of ending one’s life can all too easily ensue.

The tsunami of evidence-based research in psychology, medicine, public health, education and neuroscience has shown us four categories of reasons why children, young people and adults take their own lives.

Reason one: Loneliness/isolation/not belonging

Reason two: Traumatic loss/rejection

Reason three: Social defeat/worthlessness/shame

Reason four: Hopelessness/meaninglessness

Signs (although often there are no signs) – Adapted from NHS, Mind, Sane, CALM, Papyrus, Young minds and Samaritans

- Change in usual behaviour
- Giving away possessions
- Withdrawing socially, avoiding friends and family
- Acting impulsivity
- Self-harming
- Increased drug use or alcohol use
- Uncharacteristically angry a lot of the time
- Physical changes, sleeping too little, sleeping too much, self-neglect
- Not eating, a change of appetite, weight loss or weight gain
- Seeing no way to resolve fears, anxieties or problems
- Exhaustion, not being able to cope with routine everyday events
- Comments about feeling worthless or e.g. “it would be better for everyone if I wasn’t here”, “I’d be better off dead”.
- Very down all the time. Comments such as “I just can’t take it anymore”, “I just want to die”, “They’d be better off without me”.
- Changes happening after a painful event (e.g. being rejected/parents separating)
- Struggling to communicate

Asking about suicide saves lives.

If you have an uneasy feeling about something is not ok, trust your intuition and ask.

“Evidence shows that talking about suicide does not make it more likely to happen – it reduces the stigma and is often the first step in a person’s recovery. By using the word suicide, you are reassuring the young person that it’s OK to talk openly about their thoughts of suicide with you. They may feel real relief that someone is willing to hear their darkest thoughts.” – Papyrus

Conversation starters if you suspect suicidal ideation (PACE)

“Are you thinking about suicide”,

“Sometimes, when people are in pain like you, they think about suicide. I wonder if you have ever thought about it?”

“I wonder if you are saying that you want to end your life/ if you want to die?”

“It sounds like you’re thinking about suicide, is that right?”

“It sounds like life feels so so hard for you right now. I wonder if it’s so bad sometimes, that you think of wanting to die?”

If they say yes, empathise and help them to talk more.

“So hard and so painful for you at the moment...can you say more?”

“Can you help me understand how you came to this point?”

“Things must be so painful for you to feel like there is no way out. That things won’t get better. Will you help me to understand more about your thinking and feelings about that”

“I am so sorry you’re feeling this way. Can you say more about what’s making you want to die?”

“How can I help? I’m here for you now.”

Actions points

Always remember the disclaimer you told to the child/young person at the beginning of your work together i.e. that anything you say is normally confidential. But if there were concerns that they or someone else is at risk, you must tell someone. This includes if you think they are in danger of suicide.

When the child/young person makes a statement about wanting to kill themselves, it should always be taken seriously - even if there are repeated, previous occurrences of such statements.

All incidents should be logged onto the OTF’s safeguarding platform CPOMS.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (Bobby Lynch) must be informed. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will then coordinate the concern logs and information, which will be used to evidence the increased safeguarding risk for the child/young person and support referral to external services such as Children’s Social Care/or CAHMS. Working collaboratively with the Designated Safeguarding Lead also widens the “team around the child” as well as being supportive for the practitioner. Practitioners need support when working alongside a child/young person in such distress, so having a wider team to call upon provides vital wellbeing support.

Wherever possible, the OTF must share the information with parents or, if this is not possible, that the protocol to involve health and social care is followed and escalated to “Safeguarding” through the Multi Agency Referral Unit or similar in locality).

To support the child/young person and practitioner:

- Continued work with the child/young person following any referrals is a must. Otherwise, it could be another attachment rupture.
- Supervision on an increased ratio must be in place for the practitioner (e.g. now twice a term instead of once), by a psychotherapist. Working with a child/young person can be incredibly challenging, so support for the practitioner must be coordinated.
- Increased contact time with the child/young person (e.g. checking in with them every day for 10 minutes at the beginning and end of the day) in addition to your talk time sessions.
- Consider other ways to support the child/young person when not at OTF. If OTF has text/email systems in place and you are happy to support a child/young person in this way, develop a plan and policy with senior leaders to enable this to happen. Ensure you tell the child and young person you may not be able to respond immediately. Only use the OTF devices to contact the child/young person. This can be a lifeline for some children/young people.