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Code of Conduct

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Code of Conduct
People Services

Victim Support
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Contents

1. Introduction.....	5
1.1 Definitions	5
2. Guidelines.....	6
3. Expectations of conduct	7
✓ Be diligent.....	7
✓ Be inclusive	7
✓ Protect people.....	7
✓ Be patient, courteous, considerate and respectful	7
✓ Always consider your impact upon others	8
✓ Work collaboratively with others - our differences can be our strengths.....	8
4. Expectations of conduct in detail	9
4.1 Compliance	9
4.1.1 Our frameworks	9
4.1.2 Your role	9
4.2 Confidentiality	9
4.3 Respect for and looking after others.....	10
4.3.1 Inappropriate behaviour	10
4.3.2 Domestic abuse.....	10
4.3.3 Safeguarding.....	10
4.3.4 Working with others	11
4.3.5 Managing others.....	11
4.3.6 Raising concerns.....	11
4.3.7 Looking after our resources	12
4.4 Financial & other conflicts of interest.....	12
4.4.1 Personal relationships	12

OFFICIAL

4.4.2	Gifts & hospitality	13
4.5	Appropriate dress	13
4.6	Communications.....	14
4.6.1	Media contact	14
4.6.2	Social media	14
4.6.3	Covert recordings	14
4.7	Other employment.....	14
5.	Equality, diversity, inclusion & equal opportunities	15
6.	Status of this code	16
	Appendix 1 - Declaration of Interests Form.....	17

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1. Introduction

Victim Support is committed to setting and maintaining high standards of personal and professional practice, conduct and integrity. This Code of Conduct clarifies the minimum standards, values and behaviours that are expected of every employee and volunteer. It forms a part of the contractual relationship between Victim Support and its employees and part of volunteer agreements. Everyone at Victim Support is expected to embrace and abide by these standards.

Any conduct contrary to this code will be dealt with in accordance with the disciplinary procedures issued in conjunction with the employee's contract of employment or the volunteer agreement.

1.1 Definitions

All those who work or volunteer with Victim Support are expected to comply with our Behavioural Competency Framework and in addition everything we do is underpinned by our values which drive our organisational culture; what sort of organisation we are, what we stand for and how we behave. We are;

Empowering

We work with people to shape the support that they receive, to develop their resilience and the skills to achieve their rights.

We treat everyone with dignity and respect.

We will ensure that the way we run VS at every level is informed by people with lived experiences of crime and harm and we will continue to develop the ways we involve and consult service users.

Inclusive

VS is committed to ensuring that all of our services are equitable and accessible to all; that our employees and volunteers reflect the diversity of the communities we serve, and that equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded across our organisation

We will continue to develop channels to engage and consult with staff and volunteers to ensure their experience and voice is heard in the running of VS and the delivery of our services via the Staff Consultation Forum and the Volunteer Panel.

Collaborative

We will work together locally in a positive Multi Agency approach to best meet the needs of individual people affected by crime

We will work closely with other like-minded organisations nationally and locally to campaign for improvements in the CJS and to develop our respective and collective organisational strength

The environment affects us all now and for the future. We will work together and with other organisations to make VS a healthy place to work and visit. We are committed to continually improving our environmental performance, promoting the well-being of our teams and ensuring that we minimise any adverse environmental impact from our activities.

Independent

We are an independent charity. This enables us to work alongside people to represent their interests, access the services they need, exercise their rights and support them to speak out.

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2. Guidelines

This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with Victim Support's Policies, Procedures and Guidance, with particular reference to:

- EDI Policy
- Safeguarding Policies
- Disclosure & Barring Service Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- IT Security Policy
- Staff and Volunteer Domestic abuse policy and guidance
- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy (and Dignity at Work Procedure)
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Receipt of Gifts & Hospitality Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Volunteer Handbook
- Volunteer Management Handbook

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3. Expectations of conduct

To deliver on our values, we expect all staff and volunteers to:

✓ **Be diligent**

You are expected to carry out your duties in a professional, responsible and conscientious manner and be accountable for your actions and decisions.

✓ **Be inclusive**

We welcome and support people of all backgrounds and identities. This includes, but is not limited to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, social and economic class, educational level, colour, immigration status, sex, age, size, family status, political belief, religion or belief, and mental and physical ability. We will not tolerate discrimination or inappropriate behaviour on the grounds of protected characteristics¹ and remain committed to improving the accessibility and inclusiveness of our services.

✓ **Protect people**

We believe that the prevention and protection of all from crime and its impacts, but especially the most vulnerable, is important, and that it is a matter of personal integrity to always act, and that ignoring or tolerating any form of abuse is never an option.

You must always conduct yourself in a manner which promotes and safeguards the interests and wellbeing of service users, and which will also promote co-operation and harmonious relations amongst colleagues.

✓ **Be patient, courteous, considerate and respectful**

We all depend on each other to provide the best services that we can. Your decisions will affect service users and colleagues, and you should take those consequences into account when making decisions.

We won't all agree all the time, but disagreement is no excuse for disrespectful behaviour. We will all experience frustration from time to time, but we cannot allow that frustration to become personal attacks. An environment where people feel uncomfortable or threatened is not a productive or creative one.

¹ Protected characteristics - these are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010 which includes age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. "Protection" relates to protection from discrimination.

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✓ **Always consider your impact upon others**

Always conduct yourself professionally. Be kind to others and treat all with dignity. Do not insult or put others down. Harassment and exclusionary behaviour aren't acceptable. This includes, but is not limited to: - Threats of violence. - Discriminatory jokes and language. - Sharing sexually explicit or violent material via electronic devices or other means. - Personal insults, especially those relating to protected characteristics - Unwelcome sexual attention. - Advocating for, or encouraging, any of the above behaviour.

In general, if someone asks you to stop something, then stop. When we disagree, try to understand why. Differences of opinion and disagreements are mostly unavoidable. What is important is that we resolve disagreements and differing views constructively.

You are expected to be courteous and responsive in dealing with other people, whether they are work colleagues, service users, partner agencies, contractors, service providers, or any other person in contact with the charity.

✓ **Work collaboratively with others - our differences can be our strengths**

We can find strength in diversity. Different people have different perspectives on issues, and that can be valuable for solving problems or generating new ideas and innovation. Being unable to understand why someone holds a viewpoint doesn't mean that they're wrong. Don't forget that we all make mistakes, and blaming each other doesn't get us anywhere.

Instead, focus on resolving issues, learning from mistakes and innovation.

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4. Expectations of conduct in detail

4.1 Compliance

4.1.1 Our frameworks

You are expected to act in accordance with all Victim Support policies, procedures, guidance including our Quality Management systems that are relevant to your role at all times in order to support our objectives and strategy.

4.1.2 Your role

You are required to behave in accordance with your Role description, the VS Behavioural competency Framework and our values. You have a personal responsibility to:

- Act within the law and any statutory or regulatory codes relevant to Victim Support practices and your role, and where relevant, of partner organisations.
- Maintain your knowledge of and act in accordance of all Victim Support policies, procedures and guidance relevant to your employment/engagement and role.
- Maintain training appropriate to your role, including mandatory Foundation Learning and enhance your skills and expertise and keep up to date with developments and knowledge associated with your area of work.
- Maintain UKCRB clearance, police clearance and/or or professional accreditations required for your role.
- Take responsibility for your actions, ensuring the appropriate use of information, exercising diligence and duty of care obligations and avoiding conflicts of interest.
- Notify Victim Support immediately of any change of circumstances which may prevent you from carrying out, or jeopardise your ability to carry out, the activities set out within Role Descriptions;
- Be loyal to, and positively promote, the reputation, integrity, aims and values of Victim Support and its partners and funders, avoiding any act which may bring Victim Support into disrepute or result in the disclosure of confidential information;
- Take every reasonable precaution to maintain your own wellbeing and avoid causing harm to yourself and to others, be proactive about health and safety issues, and actively demonstrate compliance with all health and safety requirements.

4.2 Confidentiality

You may have access to sensitive, private and confidential information relating to the work of Victim Support or the Charity as an entity within the course of your work. You must not, either during or at the end of your employment/engagement

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as a volunteer, disclose any sensitive, private or confidential information or make other use of it, unless you are expressly authorised to do so by Victim Support management.

All notes, documents and other confidential information about the charity's business which are acquired, received or made by you during your employment or volunteer engagement remain Victim Support's property.

4.3 Respect for and looking after others

4.3.1 Inappropriate behaviour

Victim Support has a zero-tolerance approach to violence at work, either perpetrated by colleagues or against colleagues, and appropriate action will be taken in all cases to uphold this commitment.

The following types of behaviour are completely unacceptable:

- the use of swearing and personal insults about colleagues, service users or members of the public;
- Physical assaults and violent physical acts including door-slamming or throwing objects;
- Threatening and/or shouting at colleagues, service users or members of the public.

4.3.2 Domestic abuse

Victim Support are committed to providing high quality and comprehensive support to staff and volunteers experiencing domestic abuse. Colleagues aware or concerned that domestic violence is affecting staff or volunteers should raise their concerns in line with the staff and volunteer domestic abuse policy and guidance and be confident in the knowledge that these will be addressed sensitively, supportively and appropriately. Allegations of domestic violence against staff and volunteers will be taken very seriously and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

4.3.3 Safeguarding

All staff and volunteers who work in roles that have the potential for unsupervised contact with children or persons with vulnerabilities must maintain valid UK Criminal Records Bureau clearance at all times in order to commence or continue to work in such roles. Any changes that may potentially affect existing clearance must be immediately brought to the attention of management.

Any safeguarding concerns must be brought to immediate attention or line managers or Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO's).

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4.3.4 Working with others

You are personally responsible for your own behaviour, attitudes and working relationships and must attain the same high standards with all people regardless of their age, sex, gender identity/ trans status, sexual orientation, race, disability or religion, respecting their privacy and personal choice of lifestyles, customs, values and spiritual beliefs.

You are responsible for finding a way of working constructively with all colleagues and to seek help if finding this difficult

You are responsible for establishing effective communication, which forms the basis of all working/volunteering relationships. To ensure communications are effective:

- each employee/volunteer needs to establish for themselves, and agree with colleagues, what they need to know about and what is not relevant to them;
- employee/volunteers have a responsibility not to divulge information inappropriately;
- each employee/volunteer has a responsibility to tell colleagues who need to know (e.g. managers, partners) what they are doing and when;
- employees/volunteers must always explain to the appropriate colleague/manager if, for any reason, they are unable to do what they said they would do, when they said they would do it;
- it is each employee/volunteer's responsibility to ensure that they comply with the communication systems developed in the workplace - such as reading official communications and using office diaries.
- All are required to understand that whilst important to develop a friendly working environment, banter and making jokes at colleagues' expense should be treated with great care. There is a fine line between friendly banter and bullying in the workplace. Bullying will not be tolerated, and will lead to appropriate management action.

4.3.5 Managing others

If you supervise others, you have a special responsibility to treat employees and volunteers fairly, to communicate clearly to ensure that they understand what is expected and to provide support and development as required.

4.3.6 Raising concerns

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to behave appropriately and to refuse to tolerate inappropriate behaviour in the workplace. In the first instance this may involve them challenging the colleague involved and asking them to stop the behaviour. If this does not work, or is not felt to be appropriate, the issue should be reported to an appropriate manager.

All staff and volunteers should note and abide by the following:

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- where an employee/volunteer has a concern about a colleague which is related to serious professional misconduct, including dangerous or illegal behaviour, these concerns must always be reported urgently and directly to their manager, another senior manager or AD People Services;
- under no circumstances is it appropriate to discuss complaints about a colleague with anyone other than that colleague and/or the appropriate manager
- all complaints about colleagues which cannot be settled informally will be dealt with through Victim Support's Grievance Procedure or Volunteer Complaints Procedure as appropriate.

4.3.7 Looking after our resources

You should treat our equipment, materials, facilities and finance with appropriate care and secure them against theft and misuse. In addition, you should not remove any of Victim Support's property from its premises without proper authorisation.

You should report any damage to, loss of, or evidence of theft of Victim Support property immediately to your manager.

4.4 Financial & other conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interest may arise where your personal, financial or family interests and/or loyalties conflict with those of Victim Support.

Conflicts of interest can also arise if the interest does not apply to you, but to someone close to you, such as someone you live with, your partner, someone related to you, or a close personal friend or business partner.

You must disclose any financial or other conflict of interest you may have in any transaction, proposed transaction or any other activity, between Victim Support and a third party or service user as soon as possible (*see the [Declaration of Interest Form - Appendix 1 to this Code of Conduct](#)*).

4.4.1 Personal relationships

Colleagues within Victim Support

Conflicts of interest can arise when staff or volunteers make or take part in decisions that affect another person they are related to or have a close personal relationship with.

You must not be involved in recruitment or selection, or any other action or decision that may, beneficially or otherwise, affect someone with whom you have close personal relationship. You must disclose any such conflicts of interest to your line manager immediately as and when they arise.

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Service users

You must maintain professional and personal boundaries when dealing with Victim Support service users, and you should not form any personal relationship that could compromise your work/volunteering or the reputation of Victim Support. In the event that you are concerned that professional and personal boundaries are becoming compromised, you must disclose this to your manager immediately.

Partner organisations/ Funders

Conflicts of interest can arise when staff or volunteers may have previous experience and relationships from working with partners and/or Funders of Victim Support. You must maintain personal and professional boundaries and behave in an ethical way at all times being mindful of the different relationship that you now have with the Partner organisation and/or Funder. You should ensure that your manager is aware from any potential conflicts arising from such a situation. In the event that you believe that your previous experience and/or relationship is impacting upon your role with Victim support, you must disclose this to your manager immediately.

4.4.2 Gifts & hospitality

You must not accept gifts, rewards or hospitality from any organisation or person with whom you have contact in the course of your work/volunteering if it would put you under an obligation, or even risk giving that impression.

The Receipt of Gifts and Hospitality Policy must be complied with. If in doubt about what you can or can't accept, politely refuse the offer or seek advice from your manager.

4.5 Appropriate dress

The way you dress makes a significant impression on others. Your appearance, including your clothing, should convey a positive and professional image of the charity.

You should dress neatly and appropriately at work. You may need to dress more smartly for formal occasions when representing or appearing on behalf of Victim Support, for example when meeting funders or partner agencies, being in court or at public meetings.

Cultural diversity is something to be valued, and this means we recognise there will be different styles of dress. You must not wear clothing with slogans or messages that others might find offensive or that are overtly political or inconsistent with Victim Support's values.

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4.6 Communications

4.6.1 Media contact

You should not communicate with the press, television, radio or other media organisations about the charity or its work without authorisation from an appropriate senior manager or our Communications Team.

If commenting publicly as a private citizen you must avoid doing or saying anything that affects the charity negatively.

4.6.2 Social media

You should ensure that you act in accordance with the Social Media Policy when publishing or making comment on social media that directly refers to Victim Support or can be linked to your employment/volunteering with the organisation.

4.6.3 Covert recordings

Covert recordings are made without the prior knowledge or consent of participants. You must not make covert recordings of conversations with any device, including mobile telephones, digital camera or voice memo recorder.

4.7 Other employment

You must not undertake any other employment, or engage in any outside activity which might conflict with the carrying out of your duties or adversely affect Victim Support, without the prior written permission of your manager. Victim Support reserves the right to withdraw its consent at its discretion.

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5. Equality, diversity, inclusion & equal opportunities

This Code applies to all employees and volunteers within VS regardless of race, colour, ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/trans status, marriage or civil partnership status, disability, religion or belief. It will also not discriminate on grounds of trade union membership or political activities, pregnancy or maternity leave, socio-economic status, responsibility for dependents, part-time status or fixed-term contract status or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

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6. Status of this code

This Code of Conduct is not a contractual term of employment or volunteer agreement. It is intended to act as a general framework only. It may be varied in any way and at any time where Victim Support deems this to be necessary.

However, failure to comply with the standards and requirements set out in this Code is likely to result in disciplinary or appropriate management action which may result in termination of employment or volunteering agreement.

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Appendix 1 - Declaration of Interests Form

Name	
Position	
Department	
Work location	
Work Tel No	
Interests declared	

Signed.....

Date.....

Please return this form to your Service Director or Assistant Director (for Support Services staff) as appropriate.

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