

Conquest Centre

Relationship Policy

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Animals • Wellbeing • Nature • Connection

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RELATIONSHIP POLICY

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RELATIONSHIP POLICY

1. Aims and expectations of the Policy

Conquest Centre is committed to promoting and creating a positive and equitable learning environment where students are able to achieve in a variety of settings. Due to the variety of provision Conquest Centre offers, the varying age of students and their differing needs, Conquest Centre looks to use a common language to support students through the day. This language will be based around a Trauma Informed approach.

This Policy is to provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their responsibilities and to ensure consistent and effective practice across all activities.

Within the Trauma Informed approach Conquest Centre staff will frame conversations and expectations around 3 key words. Ready, Respectful and Safe. This is what Conquest Centre expects of the students that attend its centre. Below is an explanation of each of the 3 key words, these may be interpreted differently for each activity and / or session.

- Ready – This area will focus on the student arriving for the start of their session on time, being in an emotional place to learn, with correct clothing and ready to engage.
- Respectful – This area focuses on the student's ability to look after themselves, to interact with peers and staff, being mindful of others (including animals), looking after Conquest Centre equipment, using their manners, and how students treat the site and their interactions with the local community.
- Safe – looks at the student being physically, mentally and emotionally safe; looking after their centre, the animals, their peers and staff members. Specifically, but not exclusively looking at walking safely around the site, staying in appropriate areas, following instructions from staff and using the correct PPE where appropriate.

Underpinning all communication and interactions that staff have with students across Conquest Centre will be an understanding of the impact of trauma past and present on our students lives and all interactions will take a Trauma Informed approach.

A Trauma Informed approach acknowledges evidence-based research within health and the neurosciences that demonstrate a clear correlation between the adversities a person experiences in childhood and its potentially damaging effects on their later physical health, emotional health and social outcomes.

Trauma-informed practice is not designed to treat trauma related difficulties. Instead, it seeks to address the barriers that those affected by trauma can experience when accessing the care, support and treatment they require.

2. Definition of Trauma

Conquest Centre defines Trauma as:

- “An event, series of events or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being”.
- Trauma is not the event itself.
- It is what happens within you in response to an event that has been perceived as an out of control, frightening experience.

- It is a subjective experience.
- A normal response to an abnormal situation.
- A Trauma Informed approach reconceptualizes trauma as not 'What is wrong with you?' but 'What has happened to you?'

What type of events could be traumatic?

- Early childhood experiences.
- Single Incident Trauma.
- Complex Trauma.
- Adverse Community Environments – such as housing, family home, growing up in poverty.

3. Staff Responses

Staff will use key relational approaches to communicate with Conquest Centre's students, making sure that emotional available adults are there to support students where appropriate.

All staff interactions will be supported by the Protect/Relate/Regulate/Reflect model and will be supported by using the PACE approach (Play Acceptance Curiosity Empathy) which is a way of relating to students that support them to feel Safe, this can reduce the need for students to enter the fight mode and help reduce anxiety. Examples of the PACE approach are as follows:

- **P**lay – Playfulness, light, open, hopeful and spontaneous.
- **A**cceptance – Unconditionally accepting of all of the experiences of the student, so the students will trust staff not to be judgmental.
- **C**uriosity – Non-judgmental active interest in how students experience what happens to them in their lives.
- **E**mpathy – Felt sense of the student's feelings and needs which is actively communicated to the students. v. Affect Attunement – Meet the student's emotional intensity (positive or negative) on an energetic level, to connect with the student in their pain or joy. Mirroring the same level of energy to build a connection around the trauma and help the student understand the feelings and emotion. The student will hopefully see this as positive connection with staff helping to build the trusting and emotional available relationship.
Empathy – Recognition of how the student is experiencing the event, even if this is very different to how you are experiencing it. Staff won't try and persuade the student out of having the feeling, they will help affirm, understand and recognize what the student is feeling. This won't just be empathy, but staff will find the right words/language and tone to convey the feeling of empathy.

Containment – Staff will be able to stay thinking and feeling about the student's intense feelings without deflecting into action, distraction or getting angry. At times this will mean being able to bear the student's pain. Containment is also supported through clear structures to the day, boundaries and actions that are followed through on.

Soothing (emotional regulation) – Bringing down toxic stress to tolerable stress and the moving to states of calm. Soothing and calming the student's emotional dysregulated states will over time develop effective stress regulating systems in the brain and a more positive feeling through the student's body. This can be done through calming conversations, timeout and sensory support/items but in each case will be bespoke to the student in question.

Use of Voice and Body Language – In most cases, staff will use a calm and lowered tone of voice when managing behaviour to communicate calmness, safety and empathy to the student. Where appropriate a staff member may raise their voice. This is not in anger but with the desire to attune to and match the student's heightened emotion before de-escalating the emotion down to gain calm. All staff ensure that their body language is always open and non-confrontational.

De-escalation strategies – All staff are trained in a range of de-escalation strategies. These include – distraction, re-direction, change of face, use of humour, offering reflection or calming space and time.

Pupil Passport – To support all students, where possible, a Conquest Centre assessment will be carried out so that a pupil passport can be created for each student so key staff have an understanding of areas where they can support and what strategies they can also use to support specific students. These passports will be created by staff teams working with that particular student and will be supported by all staff working with that student.

Rewards – Rewards will be instant where possible, available to all staff to use and will be specific to each Conquest Centre group and in some cases each Conquest Centre student. These would have been created in consultation with staff, students, parents and multi-agency partners.

Consequences – Conquest Centre does not believe in sanctions or punishments. Consequences for challenging behaviour will only be used with students who are at a stage emotionally where they can exercise some control or choice over their behaviour. This will focus around staff and students working together to look at triggers and how these can be avoided in the future and what changes can be made to support the student. As well as staff reflecting on their impact on the incident and how their responses can be adapted to manage future interventions.

Conquest Centre will also look to involve parents and carers to gain their support when looking at appropriate consequences and changes to student interactions.

It is not appropriate to hold a student to account for their behaviour by implementing a consequence or sanction when they are at an emotional development stage that indicates that they are operating from the reptilian brain or brainstem during heightened emotion and revert to fight/flight or freeze at these times. As stated before, any action agreed must be carried out to support student containment. These consequences will match the action of the student and will be considered by the team working with the child and again will be specific to each Conquest Centre activity / session and in some cases individual students at Conquest Centre.

Where appropriate behaviour recovery will be allowed through the outlined relational approaches and will take place for all students at a time when they are ready, able and receptive enough to think back over what has happened. In exceptional circumstances we may need to permanently exclude a student for serious or persistent breaches of our policy. This will always be as a last resort as exclusions themselves are a trauma for young people. Where this may be necessary, then appropriate meetings and feedback will take place to support the young person going forwards.

Example consequences:

- Phone calls home to parents / carers - Mentor, Provision Leader Reparation time
- Apologise for behaviour, tidy area, talk through incident with emotionally available adult.
- Incidents to be recorded.

4. Searching and Scanning

Due to risk assessments and Conquest Centre's duty of care to keep students and staff safe it may be necessary to ask students to hand over items as agreed in the initial Conquest Centre Terms and Conditions that is signed by parents / carers. Staff that have been authorised by the Centre Manager, have the power to search students (without consent) for prohibited items such as: a) Knives and weapons. b) Alcohol. c) Illegal drugs. d) Stolen items. e) Tobacco and cigarette papers. f) Fireworks. g) Any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property will be immediately confiscated."

5. Smoking

Students are not permitted to smoke at Conquest Centre.

6. Drugs

Conquest Centre recognises that a range of responses may be required in the management of drug incidents. The centre recognises the need to balance the welfare of the individual young person and the needs of the centre. In all situations a dynamic risk assessment will be carried out to see what options can be safely taken to support the student. In all cases a referral will be suggested to external agencies to support the student and their family.

- Students under the influence of drugs – If safe to do so the student's session will be cancelled due to the health and safety considerations and will be asked to return home and the parent/carer informed. If this is not safe, then where possible, the student will be kept safe until they can be collected by a parent/carer. If appropriate, Conquest Centre will call an ambulance to give medical treatment to the student.
- Students found to have illegal drugs on them will have the drugs and any materials confiscated and these will be handed over to the Police and the issue reported to the Police and the parent/carer informed.
- Students found to be taking ILLEGAL drugs on site and or dealing drugs will be issued a fixed term exclusion and the matter passed on to the Police and the parents / carers informed.

7. Policy Review

The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for monitoring and reviewing this policy. This policy will be reviewed annually. In addition, changes to legislation, national guidance, codes of practice or government advice may trigger interim reviews.