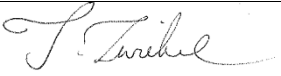


# ***Sunbeams***

## **APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT POLICY**

## Document Control Sheet

Document Title	Sunbeams Appropriate Physical Contact (Safe Touch) Policy
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Approved By	Jessica Zwiebel, Safeguarding Officer and Trustee
Signature	

## Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Description of Change	Approved By
1.0	May 2018	DSL	Initial release establishing appropriate boundaries and safe touch principles.	Board of Trustees
2.0	May 2019	DSL	Review	Board of Trustees
3.0	May 2020	DSL	Review	Board of Trustees
4.0	May 2021	DSL	Review	Board of Trustees
5.0	May 2022	DSL	Review	Board of Trustees
6.0	May 2023	DSL	Review	Board of Trustees
7.0	May 2024	DSL	Review	Board of Trustees
8.0	May 2025	DSL	Comprehensive annual review; strengthened guidance on boundaries and consent; alignment with national standards.	Board of Trustees

## **1. Purpose and Scope**

Sunbeams aim to provide a warm, respectful, and culturally sensitive environment where every person feels safe and valued.

This policy sets out clear expectations around physical contact between staff, mentors, and young people to safeguard everyone involved.

It applies across all Sunbeams activities — 1:1 mentoring, group programmes, off-site trips, and events.

## **2. Guiding Principles**

- The welfare of the child or young person is always the paramount concern (*Children Act 1989 & 2004*).
- Physical contact must only ever be used to meet the needs of the child — never to satisfy the adult's needs.
- All touch must be appropriate, proportionate, and time limited.
- Sunbeams maintains a “hands-off” approach with safeguarded exceptions.
- All contact must respect the cultural and religious sensitivities of the Orthodox Jewish community, including modesty standards and gender boundaries.
- When in doubt, staff and volunteers should avoid contact and seek guidance from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

## **3. The General Rule**

Across adolescent and mentoring programmes, Sunbeams follows a no-touch approach except where necessary for safety, care, or reassurance in clearly defined situations.

This protects both the young person and the mentor from misunderstanding or discomfort.

## **4. Acceptable Physical Contact**

Physical contact may be appropriate where it is:

- Necessary for safety – e.g. preventing a fall, guiding a child away from danger.
- Required for first aid or medical assistance – performed preferably by a qualified First Aider.
- Part of an agreed care plan – where a young person with additional needs requires physical support.
- Child-led reassurance – for example, a brief hug or light touch initiated by the child in distress, if culturally appropriate and accepted by both.
- Instructional or activity-related – e.g. guiding a hand in art or craft, helping with safety equipment, only when necessary and explained first.

## **5. Unacceptable Physical Contact**

The following are never permitted:

- Any form of sexualised, intrusive, or intimate contact.
- Touching areas covered by modest clothing or private parts.
- Prolonged hugging, lap-sitting, or playful tickling.
- Physical punishment, shaking, or restraint (except to prevent immediate harm).
- Touch that is secretive, unnecessary, or could be misinterpreted.

## **6. Special Circumstances**

### **a. Special Educational Needs or Disabilities**

Where a young person needs personal or physical assistance, this must be detailed in a written care plan signed by parents/carers and agreed with the DSL before sessions begin. All staff involved must be trained and aware of boundaries in that plan.

### **b. Accidents and First Aid**

Physical contact may be required to give emergency support. Wherever possible:

- Obtain verbal consent before touching.
- Use gloves for first aid.
- Record the incident in the Incident/Accident Book.
- Inform parents and the DSL as soon as possible.

### **c. Emotional Distress (Young Children)**

In younger groups, limited physical reassurance may be used to calm a child (e.g. gentle hand on shoulder or brief hug initiated by the child).

Staff must remain aware that trauma or previous experiences may make any touch distressing; always check for comfort and consent.

### **d. Behaviour or Safety Intervention**

Where a child's behaviour presents immediate danger to themselves or others, minimal and proportionate physical intervention may be used to prevent harm, following guidance in the Safeguarding and Health & Safety Policies. Every such incident must be reported and recorded.

## **7. Consent and Communication**

- Always explain what you intend to do and ask permission before physical contact.
- Respect the young person's right to say no or step away.
- Observe body language for discomfort and stop immediately if unsure.
- Cultural boundaries (e.g. gender separation) must always be honoured.

## **8. Recording and Reporting**

Any instance of significant or prolonged contact must be:

1. Reported to the DSL as soon as possible.

2. Recorded in the Incident/Accident Book with date, time, location, reason, and action taken.
3. Shared with parents or carers where appropriate.

If a young person becomes upset, makes a disclosure, or expresses concern after touch has occurred, staff must follow the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy immediately.

## **9. Training and Supervision**

- All mentors and staff receive guidance on appropriate physical contact during induction and annual safeguarding training.
- Refresher discussions take place during supervision and team meetings to ensure consistent understanding.

## **10. Monitoring and Review**

- The DSL monitors all incident logs relating to physical contact.
- Patterns or concerns are reviewed termly and reported to Trustees.
- This policy is reviewed annually or earlier if national guidance changes or an incident arises.

## **11. Summary for Staff and Volunteers**

- Keep to a hands-off approach unless contact is clearly necessary and appropriate.
- Seek consent and explain before touch.
- Respect cultural and personal boundaries.
- Report and record any contact that might cause concern.
- When unsure — ask the DSL before acting.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: Trustee

Date: \_\_\_\_\_