

Introduction

The Accordience Group is committed to fostering inclusivity in the PR and communications industry and recognises the importance of providing young people with insights and opportunities. Through work experience programs, we aim to support and encourage young people while ensuring their safety and wellbeing.

Due to their age and limited experience, young people may be less aware of workplace risks. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure their social and physical wellbeing during placements. This policy outlines key areas of legal responsibility, working environment requirements, supervision protocols, health and safety measures, and safeguarding procedures.

Scope

This policy sets out Accordience Group's commitment to safeguarding and explains our duty to protect children and young people who engage with our business from harm. It applies to all employees across Accordience Group, including permanent, freelance, fixed-term, and temporary staff.

Most young people taking part in their school's work experience programme are aged 14 to 17. For the purposes of this policy, 'young people' or 'children' refers to any person under the age of 18.

Legal Framework

This policy is based on relevant UK legislation, including:

- The Children and Young Persons Act 1963.
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014.
- The Department for Education's child protection guidance.
- Additional policies and legislation specific to England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Core Principles

We believe that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial origin, religious beliefs, or sexual identity, have the right to protection from harm.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

We recognise that some children may be particularly vulnerable due to past experiences, dependency levels, communication needs, or other factors. Additional safeguards may be required in such cases.

Responsibilities of the Agency

At the outset of any work involving children, all agencies within the Accordience Group will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risks throughout the process.
- Identify a designated safeguarding lead if necessary.
- Engage in responsible recruitment of chaperones and individuals with child supervision duties.
- Ensure children are supervised at all times.

Working Environment

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- Their welfare will always be prioritised.
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be provided instead of negative criticism.
- Bullying of children will not be tolerated.
- Staff must act as positive role models and address inappropriate behaviour immediately.
- The Accordience Group will remain up to date with health and safety and child protection legislation.
- Employees will receive relevant training on safeguarding practices.
- Child attendance records and emergency contact details will be securely maintained.

Supervision & Contact

- A designated supervisor must be assigned to each child or young person.
- One-on-one situations should be avoided unless written parental consent is obtained.
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, risk minimisation measures must be implemented (e.g., working in public areas / an open plan office).
- Individuals requiring unsupervised contact may be subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Handling Disclosures & Suspicion of Abuse

If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of an agency within the Accordience Group, take the following action;

- The concern should be reported immediately to the designated safeguarding lead or senior management.
- If the designated safeguarding lead is implicated, the matter must be escalated to local child protection services.
- A written record of the concern, including dates, times, and details, should be securely documented.

If a Child Discloses Abuse:

- Remain calm, listen carefully, and take the allegation seriously.
- Allow the child to speak freely without leading questions.
- Do not promise confidentiality - explain that the information must be shared with those who can help.
- Report the disclosure promptly and document the conversation accurately.

Health & Safety

- Employees must ensure children understand health and safety procedures.
- Appropriate clothing and footwear should be advised for work placements.
- Any injuries must be recorded in the agency's accident book and reviewed by the designated safeguarding lead.

Photography & Personal Information

- Parental/guardian permission is required before taking or using images of children for promotional purposes.
- Personal information shared by a young person that raises safeguarding concerns should be reported to the relevant People Team or the designated safeguarding lead.

Chaperones

- Chaperones must be appointed for child supervision in the absence of a parent/guardian.
- They must provide appropriate care and ensure the child's welfare.
- Chaperones should have photographic identification and references unless already known to the agency.
- If one-on-one supervision is required, a DBS check should be obtained.
- Chaperones must ensure children remain safe at all times, including when traveling to and from facilities.

Implementation & Review

- The People Team is responsible for ensuring adherence to this policy.
- All managers are accountable for its application in their teams.
- Employees must comply with the policy as part of their professional responsibilities.
- Violations of this policy will be addressed under Accordience Group's disciplinary procedures.
- This policy is subject to annual review to ensure compliance with legal and regulatory updates.

This safeguarding policy does not form part of an employment contract and may be amended at any time to reflect changes in law, business requirements, or best practices.

