

Positions of Trust

Although young people over 16 years of age can legally consent to some types of sexual activity, they may still be relatively emotionally immature. It is essential; therefore, that those who have a responsibility for them (whether in a paid role or as a volunteer) recognise this vulnerability and make sure it is not exploited. All VPC adult members of staff and volunteers, are considered to be in a position of trust in relation to cadets. It is also important that those in a position of trust have a clear understanding of the responsibilities this carries to ensure they do not abuse their position or put themselves in a position where allegations of abuse, whether justified or unfounded, could be made.

“An individual in a position of trust may be seen to have the power to advance or fail a young person. The relationship may also be distorted by fear or favour. It is therefore vital for all those in such positions of trust to understand the power this gives them over those they care for and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence.”

A position of trust can be described as one in which *“one party is in a position of power or influence over the other by virtue of their work or the nature of their activity.”*

Some examples of how a position of trust might be abused are:

1. Using their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and or a cadet's or to the detriment of the cadet or their family.
2. Using their own position of power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine a cadet.
3. Using their status or standing to form or promote relationships with a cadet which are of a sexual nature or which may become so.
4. It is **not** appropriate for adults to take photographs of children for their personal use.

For guidance in relation to cadets who turn 18 and become leaders and are in an existing relationship with a cadet in the same unit please see our guidance document which can be found [here](#).

Adult members of staff (both paid staff and volunteers) need to remain sensitive to any children who appear uncomfortable, for whatever reason and should recognise the potential for some activities to raise concerns or lead to misunderstandings.

Such a definition of a trusting relationship between an adult and a young person, on its own could be seen as spreading over a whole range of VPC activities, including day-to-day relationships between adults and cadets of any age. Care is always needed when such a relationship potentially exists, but such a wide interpretation goes beyond what is reasonably defined as a position of trust.

Such relationships also need to be defined by reference to the other party in the relationship, especially where the other party is particularly vulnerable, whether through age or in other personal circumstances. A relationship between an adult member of staff or volunteer and a cadet **cannot ever** be a relationship between equals.

There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable children. All adult members of staff or volunteers therefore have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification. All VPC adult members of staff are, therefore, in a position of trust in relation to cadets.

Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust with a child under 18, allowing a relationship to develop in a way that might lead to a sexual relationship is wrong. It would constitute an offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child (under 18), or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity. A sexual relationship itself will also be intrinsically unequal whilst in a position of trust and is therefore unacceptable. It is also inappropriate since the 'professional' position of trust would be altered. For these reasons, personal relationships between adult members of staff and cadets of any age are **not** allowed and could result in misconduct and or criminal proceedings.