

# LASK

## Touch Policy (inclusive of Positive Handling policy)

LASK is committed to the best quality care and highest standards of safeguarding for children. Our Touch policy should be read with regard to the following:

- **Safeguarding Policy**
- **Behaviour Management policy**
- **Special Educational Needs Policy**
- **Exclusion Policy**
- **Health and Safety Policy (inclusive of risk assessment procedure)**
- **Complaints Policy**

### Aims and Objectives

- To create, maintain and monitor a physically and emotionally secure environment for children and adults.
- **To ensure safeguarding of children is paramount at all times.**
- Ensuring all physical touch and any related documentation, policies and monitoring complies with the latest agreed best practice.
- Ensure that all physical touch is **reasonable**, **proportionate** and **necessary**.
- Ensure that children in distress receive appropriate comfort including physical touch if appropriate.
- Make decisions on what is deemed 'appropriate' as a staff team and with continued regard for legal frameworks, and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- Create, maintain and monitor a culture of agreed practice.
- To ensure that any touch or positive physical intervention is conducted in view of at least one other staff member and that staff are made aware of their own personal risk assessment when working with children.
- To ensure any allegation or complaint is dealt with in line with our complaints policy, Safeguarding Children policy and procedures, with due regard for the law and its processes.
- Ensure children are aware of their right to refuse the offer of touch as a physical response to distress and ensure staff only use appropriate touch in line with the child's own wishes and feelings of security.

### Definition

LASK defines 'touch' as a physical response to trauma, distress and human emotional need that would comfort, protect and enhance secure relationships. We believe to deny a child physical reassurance is against the needs of the child and their healthy emotional development in accordance with neurobiological research (See A & B in references). Staff also acknowledge that for some children a physical response may be an essential way of communicating if there is little or no spoken language, or a sensory impairment that makes communication difficult. To this end, staff will respond to children in distress/emotional need, including a need to share happy emotions, with appropriate touch.

## Appropriate Touch

All staff are aware of the definition of appropriate touch; noted here as touch that is not invasive, humiliating, erotic or causing physical or emotional discomfort. Agreed places for appropriate touch in order to comfort or congratulate a child are: back, arms, shoulders and hands. Staff at LASK have given consideration to the inclusion of 'hands' in this policy. The holding of a child's hand in accordance with a child's request verbally or non-verbally, is a response to an emotional need. As shaking hands is a widely used friendly greeting; holding hands a common appropriate parental response to emotional need, it has been deemed appropriate for use in our club. This particularly applies to younger children seeking comfort and reassurance during separation of their primary carer.

Staff at LASK acknowledge the growing culture that believes it is safer to refrain from any touch due to anxieties that allegations of abuse may be made and that indeed instances of abuse do occur in the world. Staff are also aware of, and highly skilled in, the use of other methods of comfort, de-escalation, and the control of undesirable behaviour. However, our staff team believes that providing a good quality emotional environment may sometimes require the use of touch. Children need to be educated in what constitutes appropriate touch, so that they can recognize the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. This helps each child to respond appropriately to others and to seek help in threatening situations.

## Positive Handling

Our commitment to safe, positive handling includes:

- Monitoring and evaluating our responses to challenging behaviour, with particular regard to monitoring the use and effectiveness of any positive physical interventions.
- Reviewing any positive handling plans that may be in place for individual children at agreed intervals that allow for swift adaptations to be made to meet the child's needs
- An acknowledgement of our duty of care to all children and that sometimes it may be necessary to use a positive handling technique to safeguard a child/dren in crisis; or the children, adults or property at risk from a child/dren in crisis.
- All positive physical interventions are for the **minimum** amount of time, using the **lightest** possible hold and are **reasonable, proportionate** and **necessary**.
- All positive physical interventions are recorded and stored in line with the data protection act, and parents/carers are made aware of the use of such interventions if/when they occur. It is the responsibility of the staff member to report incidents directly to the Manager, Supervisor or Head teacher. A decision will be made about who will contact the parents.
- Physical intervention is **never** given for non compliance.
- All physical intervention conducted in a crisis situation will be the result of staff risk assessing the potential harm to the child/dren in crisis and the children, adults or property around them.
- Staff always respond in a timely manner to situations of crisis where there is a real danger of harm to the individual in crisis and others around them.
- Any repeated behaviours and incidents are thoroughly investigated to source triggers for challenging behaviour and seek every possible alternative to positive physical handling.
- Children and staff are given time to reflect before any debrief discussions are undertaken.
- To ensure staff are well trained in safe, positive, physical handling techniques, including interventions for challenging situations are reviewed regularly.
- To de-escalate conflict and challenging situations to avoid the use of positive physical interventions wherever possible, ensuring that any interventions used in these circumstances are recorded by the member of staff and reported immediately to the Manager.
- To seek immediate, appropriate professional advice in circumstances where our positive physical handling techniques and this policy, fails to encompass the needs of a child.

If a child is exhibiting violence and/or acute levels of distress it may be appropriate and in the best interests of the child and their peers to remove the 'audience' and take the peer group somewhere safe and quiet till the crisis is over.

The wellbeing of all our children is paramount. We acknowledge that during positive physical interventions a child may be hurt. Minor bruising or marks may occur during the process of positive physical intervention. Whilst this is always avoided wherever possible, this outcome is preferable to more severe physical harm to the child in crisis resulting from their behaviour, or serious harm occurring to another individual as a result of the incident. The best possible outcome is always strived for.

Staff are expected to make judgement calls based on the situation in hand. They are instructed to consider the following questions:

Can I de-escalate this situation without the use of physical intervention?

Is physical intervention in the child's best interests?

Do I have to take any action; is there a real and imminent danger to be addressed?

Do I need assistance?

Why is the action I'm about to take necessary?

This policy was adopted by LASK	Date: 06/04/2014
To be reviewed: April 2022	Signed: Patrick Franks