



Dealing with Incidents & Conflict Management Policy

updated June 2020



Kennington Youth Club recognises that its members are growing up in a world that is fast-paced, expectations and pressures are high, and conflict is seen as a common part of life, notably in ever-diverse communities, countries, and globally, and more so in the presence of social media. Conflict is wide-spread and intense.

Conflict is not new, being in existence since the dawn of time with people wanting to choose sides in arguments and have their say, however, without the confidence, skills, and knowledge to support young people to manage conflict, we are preventing young people's development and understanding, face leader burnout, and leave ourselves open to a club that is unhealthy and unsafe.

We ask that all adults are aware of their own conflict management style in regards to various situations. It is regarded that there are five conflict management styles:

1. **Avoid** – pretending that it didn't happen/ignoring.
2. **Give In** – agreeing and accepting fully what the other person has said.
3. **Stand Ground** – your view will always be most important.
4. **Compromise** – negotiate the larger points, forget the smaller points.
5. **Collaborate** – hearing all sides of the conflict and reaching a mutually agreeable conclusion for resolution.

In certain situations, leaders will employ these methods at any time. On occasions it is just and right to use Avoid whilst monitoring from a safe distance to allow young people to explore and develop their understanding of peer resolution. Where possible, we promote collaborative management.

As a rule, young people wish to please, but with the rate of brain and body development, which will not fully form for about another fifteen years, conflict can readily occur, and they can struggle to resolve situations themselves. All of our actions, reactions, thoughts, and feelings are governed by what is occurring in our brains. We can blame the amygdala, an uncontrollable element in the brain, for making us act irrational and unable to control ourselves, especially during conflict.

At Kennington Youth Club, we recognise this and seek to provide safe spaces where young people can talk and express their emotions, and ultimately, try to foster a community spirit where we work as a family to work through situations.

If conflict occurs, there will usually be one of five responses:

1. **Friend** – seek support from a more experienced person to handle the situation to reach a resolution.
2. **Fight** – respond with an argument and try to be the bigger voice and character in the situation.
3. **Flight** – run away or put distance between yourself and the situation, often seen by someone backing away.
4. **Freeze** – being rendered unable to move or assist in the situation in any way despite being fully aware of what needs doing.
5. **Flop** – not literally fainting, but being unable to move or assist in the situation in any way and being almost 'zombie-like'

It is our aim to recognise when young people are in one of these states and support them accordingly.



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Code of Conduct

Each member of Kennington Youth Club, whether a youth member or adult, is bound by their Code of Conduct. This covers respect, responsibility, behaviour and attitudes. Please refer to the Code of Conduct for members or adults respectively for full details as well as information on the Sanctions and Warnings procedure.

Dealing with Incidents and Conflicts is everybody's business!

We want all members of the leadership team to feel empowered, and offer training, support, and guidance on best practices to be used. We adopt a reconciliation approach where appropriate, where both parties involved in the conflict have the opportunity to put their point forward and the resolution is sought from their responses. Adults are encouraged to handle situations themselves but seek support from senior members of the team where it is required. We request that adults remember to separate the behaviour from the person when resolving incidents.

Spatial Awareness, Body Language, and Limitations

Adults are expected to remain aware of keeping appropriate distances from young people to allow them to respond to the situation. In some circumstances, a 'Flight' response is best for young people to allow a cooling off period and this is not possible if they feel backed into a corner. Body language is also important to us and we promote that adults keep open, neutral or positive body language throughout sessions to avoid sending confusing messages.

Adults should assess situations so that they are aware how they will leave a situation if there is a physical risk, including identifying where the nearest exit routes are.

Adults are to consider their own limitations when handling conflict situations. Any situation that could put themselves in danger should be referred to senior or more able leaders and in extreme circumstances, they should contact the emergency services. Adults will be supported if this has been deemed the appropriate action, and any necessary investigations will take place.

Language

In line with normal safeguarding practices, adults should adopt clear language that cannot be misinterpreted and put themselves at risk. Similarly, de-escalation techniques should be used to help resolve situations.

Reporting

All staff, young leaders, and volunteers are expected to report any incidents that occur to the Youth Leader, no matter how minor, in order that these can be recorded for future reference.



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Procedures we employ to support de-escalation

- Maintain a calm, reassuring, and professional attitude towards those presenting unacceptable behaviour.
- Maintain a safe distance to avoid physical contact if possible.
- Communication with those presenting unacceptable behaviour in a way that:
 - i. shows respect for them, their property, and their rights
 - ii. is free from discrimination and oppressive behaviour
- Keep the situation under review and act appropriately, ensuring the immediate safety of (in this order):
 - i. yourself
 - ii. others in the vicinity
 - iii. the young people involved in the conflict
- Take constructive action to defuse the situation which will:
 - i. not make the situation worse
 - ii. be consistent with the club policy and procedures
- Where you are unable to calm the situation down request assistance promptly if it is appropriate and feasible.
- Look for opportunities to end contact and leave the situation if the risk of violence looks set to escalate.
- If appropriate, explain clearly to the persons involved:
 - i. what you will do
 - ii. what they should do and
 - iii. the likely consequences if the situation continues
- Leave the scene of the incident if the threat to your own safety and that of other people is too great, minimising the risk of injury to yourself and other people as you leave.

Reconciliation procedure

Where it is possible to speak with all parties concerned, the following procedure is employed.

- If necessary, separate the aggrieved and get verbal statements (if minor) or written statements (if major). Forms are in the office.

Once statements have been gathered, parties can be spoken to together and reconciliation procedures followed:

- We run through this process as closely as possible (not necessarily verbatim), asking first the aggrieved/victim, then the aggressor.
 - i. What happened? How did this begin?
 - ii. What did you do? How were you feeling? What were you trying to achieve?
 - iii. What happened next?
 - iv. Who else was involved? What do you think they were thinking/feeling?
 - v. Who else might have been affected even if not directly involved?
 - vi. What have you learnt from this?
 - vii. How can you repair the damage done?

Methods such as Timeline Mapping may be employed to clarify situations. We are aware that saying 'sorry' is only the start of a resolution and try to promote to members that they should come to an agreement that benefits all of those affected. If necessary, leaders can implement and enforce a written contract.



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Reviewing an incident for recording and monitoring purposes

- Review the sequence of events leading up to the incident.
- Discuss with relevant persons whether club procedures helped or hindered the incident.
- Complete records in accordance with club requirements about:
 - i. your actions at the time of the incident
 - ii. the circumstances and severity of the incident
 - iii. the measures taken to protect yourself and other people
 - iv. action taken to try to calm the situation down
- Make recommendations to reduce the risk of further similar incidents to the management committee which will make you and other people feel safer and identify areas where you would benefit from training.
- Contribute to good practice by sharing relevant non-confidential information with other people which could help reduce incidents of violence.

Whilst the above is written with young people’s conflict in mind, the same approaches can be used between the adult team, but should also be used alongside the Complaints and Grievance Procedure.

Signed on behalf of the Management Committee:

Name..... Chairperson

Signature.....

Date.....

Name..... Youth Leader

Signature.....

Date.....

(This policy will be reviewed annually)

Document version history		Author: Roy Peach, Youth Leader	
Version	Date	Amendments	By whom
3	03/05/2019	Use of 'staff' amended to appropriate phrase where necessary to encompass all adults. Inclusion of 'any necessary investigations will take place' if emergency services are contacted to support a conflict.	Roy Peach, Youth Leader
4	11/05/2020	Minor sentence structure amendments. Minor update to reconciliation section to include Timeline Mapping.	Roy Peach, Youth Leader