

St John's Holidays for Children Trust

Helpers Manual 2025



Document Purpose

This document provides an overview of the role and responsibilities of volunteers of the SJHCT activity week (Kids Week). This document aims to cover key elements of SJHCT policy and procedure relevant to volunteers. If you have any questions regarding the manual, or would like any further information in any area, please contact the week organisers

Version History

Document Version	2025.1
Last Updated	08/05/25
Next Review Date	01/05/26



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About SJHCT

St John's Holidays for Children Trust (SJHCT) is a small, volunteer run charity which provides an annual activity holiday for children with special needs. The Trust was founded in 1975 to provide residential holidays for children with a range of disabilities. It takes its name from St John's Beaumont, a school where the holidays take place and some of the original volunteers were pupils. Kids Week, as our holidays are affectionately known, gives parents a break from childcare and is a fantastic adventure for children and volunteers alike. During the holiday we organise fun days out and activities such as swimming, bowling, and cinema trips and a visit to theme parks such as LegoLand.

Your role as ambassadors of the SJHCT

Please be aware that a charity can only keep up its support and funding and, through this, fulfil its role, if it maintains a good reputation. The reputation of a charity rests mainly on the good conduct of its volunteers. **SJHCT volunteers are responsible, caring and hard-working people who provide excellent holidays for children. We need to ensure that this fact is confirmed to people through their contact with us.**

If you are "on-site" at the School, always give the hosts a good impression of the charity; partly to reassure them that they are doing the right thing in letting us use their facilities. When "off-site" you must maintain the image and reputation of the Trust at all times, being mindful of your interactions with the children, fellow volunteers and other adults with whom you come into contact.

Trustees

The work of the Trust is directed and supported by a group of Trustees who are responsible for all aspects of the Trust's work.

Trevor Fernandes (Chairman), Anne-Catherine Buxton (Treasurer), Charlotte Newton, Christopher Daniel, Ruairi Speers and Drew Strang.



Helper Responsibilities

Below is a list showing helper responsibilities. This is expanded upon and explained in the remainder of this manual. **Importantly, Helpers are expected to ask for advice if anything remains unclear or when uncertain about any situation.**

- Helpers' primary responsibility is to the well-being of the children on the holiday, paying particular attention to their allocated child if they are given one.
- Helpers must be fit and able to care for the children at all times.
- Helpers must ensure the physical and mental well-being of the children at all times.
- Helpers should behave responsibly and safely at all times.
- Helpers will be answerable to the holiday organiser/Trustees.
- No child should be left alone, nor left with only one person of the opposite gender.
- Children's medication is the responsibility of the allocated helper and should be given to them at the beginning of the holiday and stored in a safe.
- Helpers must check and maintain a clothing list throughout the holiday. The child's clothes, personal effects and pocket money are the allocated helper's responsibility.
- Helpers are responsible for the children's personal hygiene.
- Helpers need to be fully aware of the health needs of the children, paying particular attention to the child's medical form.
- Helpers' personal belongings are their own responsibility.
- Helpers should be involved in all holiday activities.
- Helpers should note that we are guests at the holiday location and should respect the wishes of the owners and behave accordingly.
- Helpers must not enter the dormitories of children or helpers of the opposite gender.
- If helpers are asked by holiday organisers to use Trust funds they must produce receipts accordingly.
- Helpers are not allowed to smoke.
- Vaping is only allowed in the designated area – by the tennis courts at the bottom hill
- Helpers should ensure that any dangerous articles in their dormitories are inaccessible to children (e.g. razors, contact lens solutions, etc.). All medications should be stored in the medications safe along with the children's medication

Teamwork and Peer Support

In order for everyone, children and helpers, to enjoy the holiday as much as possible, it is vital that people work as a team. Although the one-to-one policy demands that your attention is focused on your allocated child's safety, well-being and happiness, it is important to recognise when others need help. Some children are much harder and more tiring to look after than others, and the helpers who are looking after these children will often need extra support or respite.

Spare helpers will often be able to do this in a more formal way, but awareness of situations where a little extra help might be needed is always appreciated. There are a huge number of extra jobs that need doing during the week in order to make a holiday run smoothly, and the holiday organiser and/or the spare helpers cannot do them all.

Remember that everyone gets tired on SJHCT holidays. All help, however small, is much appreciated and praise is a great boost to energy levels.

Family and Carer Support

Many of the children who come on SJHCT holidays are staying away from their family or carer for the first time. Children with special needs can be extra vulnerable and more prone to things going wrong than other children.

Often parents and carers of children with disabilities are therefore understandably very concerned that the children will be safe and content on the holiday. The initial meeting of helper and family is therefore of great importance. It is an opportunity for the allocated helper to provide reassurance to the parents/carers who are entrusting their child to us.

This meeting is also extremely beneficial for the helpers too. Ask the parents/carers about anything on the child's application form which may seem unclear or incomplete.

Many parents/carers give last minute advice and information about looking after their child that may have been omitted from their application form, but which can prove essential during the week that follows.

It therefore pays to listen to what is said, however trivial it may seem at the time.

Parents and carers often appreciate small but important gestures such as addressing the child directly and by his or her name.

During this short meeting the helper must be open, friendly and attentive both to the adults and the child. Take this opportunity to observe the way the parents interact with their child, in particular in terms of feeding and any administration of medication.

Contacting family / carer during the holiday

We do not encourage phone calls during the week. It is generally found that this type of contact can breed homesickness in the child, or unnecessary worry in the parent, where it would not otherwise occur.

Furthermore, a SJHCT holiday can provide a significant positive development in a child's life, by encouraging independence. Too much communication between the child and home during the week can reduce this benefit.

Checking and/or producing a clothing list

Parents are asked to provide a checklist of everything that has been packed for the child at the start of the holiday. You should check this list when unpacking and make a note of anything on the list that is not there, as well as anything not on the list that is there. It might also be helpful to note any damage that might have occurred to any clothing, equipment or toys prior to the holiday.

This is simply to ensure firstly that children go home with everything that they brought, and secondly to ensure that the Trust is not blamed unfairly, and billed for, loss of, or damage to, the child's possessions.

Looking after the child's possessions

Keep in mind that many parents and carers may not have the money available to replace or repair things easily, and therefore may be particularly anxious that everything is returned in good condition.

In light of this, it is essential that all helpers do everything they can to look after the child's possessions safely.

If any loss or damage does occur, be open and honest about it to the parents/carers. You should tell the holiday organiser first.

SJHCT provides all pocket money needed on a holiday and therefore no child will need any money of their own. This is communicated to the parents/carers before the holiday.

Importance of keeping receipts as proof of expenditure

If you need to claim back any money you have spent for the benefit of the child on day-trips, you need to keep the relevant receipts. Please check with the holiday organiser before any purchases are made.

It is helpful if you write the date and item on the receipt if it is not already printed. Hand the receipt(s) to the holiday organiser.

Basic Rules

One to one at all times

Most volunteers have a child designated to them for the whole week. As a carer you are responsible for your child's safety and well-being throughout each day, until those people on night duty take over in the evening. This involves not letting the child out of your sight at any time, especially in potentially dangerous situations, such as on visits.

The one to one policy also extends to ensuring that your child is happy and enjoying the holiday. Try to pick up on your child's moods and emotions, and their particular ways of communicating their needs and feelings.

Also, be aware of any particular likes and dislikes your child may have, and anything else, which might help you to avoid any problems and help the child to have the best holiday possible. You will be given some background information that may help with this. If you have any problems or queries, ask your holiday organiser.

Children first at all times

The SJHCT exists to provide children with a wonderful holiday. Most helpers have a wonderful holiday too, but you should remember that this (though very significant) is of secondary importance.

Throughout the week it is your responsibility to ensure that the child is safe. This requires you to be alert to potential hazards at all times.

It is also your responsibility to ensure that the child is happy and getting as much out of the holiday as possible. Remember that we deliberately tend to take children who would otherwise not go on a holiday, so we need to make sure that it is a memorable one.

This does not mean that the child needs to be extremely active the whole time. Many children like quiet situations and are happy doing what to us might seem trivial, boring or lonely activities.

However, most children get more out of the holiday if they get fully involved in the activities on offer. This means you should be fully involved and encourage your child, and others, to be so too, where appropriate.

You might sometimes need to supervise a child for a long time on an activity, which you don't personally enjoy; you might have moments of tiredness and boredom, but just keep in mind how much they are getting out of it.

Rules concerning alcohol and drugs

After a long, tiring, and possibly stressful, day, people understandably like to relax and socialise in the evening. Alcohol, excluding spirits, is allowed in the evenings when the children have gone to bed and the helpers on night duty have taken over. People on night duty are not allowed to drink any alcohol on that particular evening. Helpers should be mindful of the fact that they might be needed to act in case of emergency during the night (such as fire).

You must be able to take full part in all activities during the day, both as a carer of a child and member of a team of helpers. You should remember that your day may start very early the following morning and that patience and stamina are required to ensure your child, and others you interact with, get the most from the holiday.

No drugs, other than prescription medication, are allowed at any time on the holiday.

A child's holiday should not be adversely affected in any way by helpers' behaviours and the Trustees will take a very dim view of any such instances.

Managing own ability to care for child

Although hopefully great fun, a SJHCT holiday can be demanding. You need to be ready and able to give the children the best holiday possible. Nobody is at their best if they are excessively tired or have drunk too much. If you are ill, you should tell the holiday organiser and arrangements can be made to allow you the opportunity for some rest and recuperation.

If you take regular medication or have a medical condition that could affect you on the holiday, such as diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, significant allergies etc., please make sure that the holiday organiser has the necessary information. This information can be given in confidence.

Supporting spiritual activities on holiday

The SJHCT Trust operates as a Catholic organisation according to Catholic principles, whilst welcoming and respecting people of any, or no, faith. Helpers should respect and uphold this position.

Looking after a Child

Your child is your responsibility, but you are not alone. If you are ever in doubt about what to do, ask a more experienced helper. However busy they may seem, they can always provide support, advice and guidance.

Formal transfer of responsibility for a child

There will be times during the holiday when you may need to leave your child for a short time and for a particular reason. In these situations, it is essential that you find a spare helper (commonly referred to as a “floaters”) who can look after your child until you are able to come back. This arrangement must be done very clearly, so that there is no misunderstanding over who is looking after a child at any particular moment. Importantly, the spare helper must not already be looking after someone else’s child. With some children, the spare helper may need to know some basic information about the child before taking over, even for a short time, such as toilet arrangements.

As far as possible, a helper should be with the child designated to him or her. The transferring of children to spare helpers should only be done for specific reasons. Any longer breaks must be arranged through the holiday organiser.

Showering and washing

Although some children will be able to wash themselves independently, for others it would be dangerous to leave them alone. Find out about this at the start of the week, from the medical form and when speaking to the parents/carers. Whether your child washes independently or not, you should always stay in the room whilst the child is bathing.

Test the temperature of the water before the child gets into the shower. Remember that children tend to be much more sensitive to hot water than adults; what might seem comfortably warm to us may feel scalding to them. Please note, when there are multiple people showering, the temperature can fluctuate, so be prepared for this.

Remember that children can easily slip in showers. Some children will need physical support when standing or sitting in the shower, though they may be able to scrub themselves.

When helping a child to wash, ensure you encourage them to clean everywhere, using appropriate language for sensitive areas. If you need to wash your child, do not be embarrassed, remember, they are used to it. You may wish to wear swimwear or an old t-shirt to shower your child as you may get wet in the process.

Toileting and changing nappies or pads

At the start of the holiday, before you first meet your child, you should find out to what extent they can toilet themselves independently. Some children wear nappies or pads, some



may need help with wiping or (un)fastening clothes and some may need reminding to go regularly. Some children wet the bed and may wear nappies or pads only at night. Other children will, of course, need no help with toileting at all. If in doubt, check with the parents/career, before they leave.

Be aware that some children, especially older children, may be embarrassed by the term “nappy”, so “pads” may be a more appropriate term. If your child uses nappies or pads, familiarise yourself with how to change them properly.

Make sure that you have the following things handy (all provided by the Trust), especially on day-trips:

- Nappies/pads
- Nappy bags
- Baby wipes
- Helpers Guides
- Change of clothing
- Hand sanitiser
- Disposable gloves

It is also advisable to pack some spare underwear, and potentially a change of clothing, for the child when on day-trips, if they wear nappies/pads or are liable to wet or soil themselves.

Use of gloves and disposal of soiled nappies/pads

For reasons of health and hygiene (for you and for the child) it is essential that you use disposable gloves when changing nappies or helping with toileting. These will be available to you on the week.

All used nappies/pads should be disposed of hygienically in a closed plastic bag. Nappy bags are available; make sure you have a good supply, especially on day-trips. Nappy bags should be placed in designated bins only, which will be emptied daily.

Precautions when helping feeding/drinking

If your child needs help with feeding and/or drinking, you need to be aware of hygiene and safety at all times. Of particular importance is to avoid any open cuts you may have coming into contact with the child or their food and drink.

Precautions against sunburn

Be aware that many children burn very easily, in seemingly mild sunshine and in a very short space of time. High factor sun cream will be available. Make sure that you apply it to the child's face (including ears), and any other exposed areas. Reapply the cream after swimming or washing, or when in the sun for a long time. Encourage your child to wear a hat and drink plenty of fluid. Be aware that too much hot sun can make a child dizzy, tired or irritable.

Communication

Many of the children who come on SJHCT Trust holidays use alternative methods of communication. This may be in place of, or alongside, speech. Some might use their own methods of signing. In this case, the holiday organiser will have found out as much as possible beforehand from the parents/carers, but you will also need to pick up as much as you can as quickly as possible, so that you can respond to the child's needs and wishes.

Some children will know a degree of Makaton. See Appendix VII Basic Sign Language.

Makaton is a simple system designed mainly for children with communication difficulties. A system very similar to Makaton, called Signalong, is gaining in popularity. Both Makaton and Signalong are accompanied by speech (if possible).

Whatever your child's preferred method of communication, please do your best to pick up as much as you can, mainly by engaging them in communication right from the start.

You might feel awkward at first and have many moments of misunderstanding, but the child will appreciate that you are making an effort. A child can understandably get very frustrated (possibly leading to anger and misbehaviour) if people do not try to understand them and communicate with them. Please ask your holiday organiser if you have any further queries.

Clear Communication Principles

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out the child's preferred communication method. Make sure you have the child's attention. Switch off background noise, move to a quieter place. Use a firm, clear voice. Make sure the child knows what you are talking about; it will help them anticipate the likely vocabulary. Speak slightly more slowly than usual, but not too slowly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shout- this distorts both your face and your voice and can be physically painful to a person using a hearing aid. Over-exaggerate your lip movements. Slow your speech too much. Drop your voice at the end of a sentence. Cover your face or mouth with your hands or eat whilst speaking. Turn away or look down while speaking. Speech movements are



<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Try to use an expressive face and natural gesture.● Come to the point quickly.● Speak in sentences or phrases. Limit single words to “yes” or “no”.● Check the person has understood before continuing. Use plain, straightforward language.	<p>extremely rapid and can be easily missed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Use long sentences - get to the point.● Give up and say “It doesn’t matter”.
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Safeguarding children and young people

Taking photographs

This is strictly forbidden and not allowed. It is a legal requirement for the charity to comply with our Safeguarding and Data protection.

Prevention of bullying

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our children and helpers so they can enjoy the holiday in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable on a SJHCT holiday. If bullying does occur, all children and volunteers should be able to know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the holiday organiser or a Trustee.

[Please see Appendix IV: "Anti-Bullying Policy".](#)



Managing Children's Behaviours

If a child displays challenging behaviour, it is almost certainly not because you are a bad helper, and there is no shame at all in asking for help. You do not have to accept unpleasant behaviour. In fact, it is encouraged. Do not struggle alone. Although it is essential to put the child first, everyone should be allowed to enjoy a SJHCT Holiday.

If you are having problems, tell your holiday organiser.

Some of the children who come on the SJHCT holidays display significant behavioural difficulties. However, virtually all children who come are likely to show some difficult behaviour at some point during the week. This is perfectly natural, especially when you consider their situation. On a holiday, they are in an unfamiliar environment, with unfamiliar children and adults, away from their loved ones (in many cases for the first time).

The routines, such as sleeping arrangements, are unfamiliar to them, as may be the food. The children are in situations that may make them understandably overexcited, confused or nervous.

A child may misbehave because they feel frightened, humiliated, helpless or bored. If a child does not understand a situation or an instruction, this can also lead to difficult behaviour. If a child meets a problem, they may not be able to deal with it in an appropriate way. Not getting enough food or rest may also be an important factor.

A child's background is a hugely significant factor in influencing their behaviour. For example, a child may seem greedy on a holiday because at home they are denied the things that the holiday offers, even if that is something as basic as a square meal. A child might swear repeatedly because they have learnt it from their parents, siblings or friends and do not appreciate that it might upset others.

In more extreme examples, a child's misbehaviour may be caused by chemical imbalances in the brain that can only be corrected by medication. Being aware of the potential roots of a child's behaviour will help you as a carer to be more understanding and patient, and consequently to be more effective in giving the child a good holiday.

Even with the above factors in mind, a child's behaviour can be a mystery and seemingly impossible to deal with, even to those experienced in working with them.

Occasionally there may be a basic personality clash between helper and child. Very often it is just a case of reviewing how you are interacting with a child and trying a different approach.

It is important to distinguish a SJHCT holiday from school. We are not a correctional facility, and in any case a week is not long enough to put right significant behavioural difficulties.

Therefore, a degree of tolerance is necessary when dealing with what we might see as “bad” behaviour.

If there is one golden rule in behaviour management, it is to be positive with your child. Show them the right way to act and praise them when they do it (even the little things), rather than getting into a never-ending cycle of criticism.

Physical restraint

It is the policy of the SJHCT that physical restraint of a child should only be used in a situation where the child is in danger, or when a child is putting someone else in danger.

It should be noted that incidents of dangerous or aggressive behaviour or those in which physical restraint is needed are extremely rare on SJHCT holidays. However, we can never be certain that they will not happen, however mild-mannered the children might seem, and it is obviously better to be prepared than to rely on luck.

Pre-empting and preventing incidents should always be our main focus.

Encouraging good behaviour

- Be a good role model. Often a child’s behaviour sub-consciously mirrors our own. Be openly happy, friendly and enthusiastic; then there’s a better chance the child will be too.
- Be positive. Say what the child should do, rather than what they shouldn’t do. Praise (and reward) even little things, especially any improvements. Give attention for good behaviour, rather than bad.
- Be patient. Many children, especially those with special needs, require extra time and space to follow instructions or to carry out tasks. Frustration can cause misbehaviour.
- Be realistic. Children often misbehave naturally, don’t expect perfection...
- Be clear. Say exactly what you mean. Give reasons for instructions.
- Be consistent. Arbitrary changes of rules and routines can cause resentment.
- Be fair. Children are quick to notice injustice and are very resentful of it.
- Be calm. Shouting and confrontation is counter-productive. Be quietly persuasive.
- Be honest. Avoid making promises or threats that you can’t or won’t keep.
- Be attentive. Listen to what the child might have to say.
- Be busy. Misbehaviour can be a result of boredom.



- Be funny. Humour can diffuse a bad temper (sometimes). It's best to avoid sarcasm.

Dealing with challenging behaviour

Be understanding. Try to identify the roots of any misbehaviour. Remember that the child is in a very unusual situation on holiday.

Is the child any of the below, try the following proposed solutions:

- **Overtired?** Give them time for a nap during the day. Try a different bedtime. Do they take medication to sleep? Avoid hot sun.
- **Hungry?** Give them a snack. Try giving them familiar food (e.g. a sandwich).
- **Overexcited?** Take them to a quiet place. Distract them. Get them to take deep breaths.
- **Bored?** Find something to do! Ask them what they would like to do. Distract them.
- **Frustrated at failure?** Help them overcome the problem. Praise effort. Ensure success at something else. Make them feel helpful to you. Distract them onto another activity.
- **Embarrassed?** Praise effort. Distract onto another activity. Ensure success at something else. Reassure them.
- **Homesick?** Try to distract. Ensure they are busy, well fed and have enough sleep. Find other children to be friends. Tell the organizer if this persists. Use stories or tapes at night.
- **Lonely?** Find other children to be friends with (children from the same school?)
- **Overwhelmed?** Reassure them. Take them to a quiet place. Try "smaller" activities.
- **Frightened?** Reassure them. Take them to a quiet place. Try a different activity. Ensure success at something else. Talk about the fears. Give them a familiar toy. Prepare them mentally for the day ahead! Talk them through an activity in advance.
- **Confused?** Explain clearly, in a different way or one step at a time. Use visual clues to help understanding. Take them to a quiet place. Reassure them.
- **Does the child take medication which is designed to help their behaviour, such as Ritalin?** If so, double-check that you are keeping to their usual timings and doses for taking this medication. If necessary, plan ahead to cope with the times in the day when the medication may have worn off.

Remember:

- Sometimes it can take time for a child to process the suggestion or help you are offering so don't be too quick to offer alternatives.



- Sometimes, nothing seems to work.
- Don't get angry or upset, don't blame yourself, do get support.
- Tell your holiday organiser if misbehaviour continues or gets worse. We can use certain sanctions (punishments) if necessary, such as withdrawal of privileges.

What can be done to try to prevent or minimise the impact of incidents in which dangerous or aggressive behaviour may arise?

- Change can be difficult and can promote difficult behaviour. To minimise this, it is extremely important that you alert children to any transitions in activities in advance.
- Be aware that virtually all children have the potential to be aggressive, especially in unfamiliar situations.
- A change in behaviour can be extreme and it can be without any apparent warning.
- In frightened or aggressive moods, children can become reckless - and very strong.
- Make other helpers aware if your child shows unusual changes in behaviour.
- Be as attentive as possible to your child. Keep in mind the information given to you at the start of the holiday relating, for example, to likes, dislikes, phobias, etc.
- Familiarise yourself with the relevant sections in this manual on managing children's behaviour, including the appendix.
- Various methods may work to divert a situation away from aggression. For example, distraction (asking questions can be very effective), a firm but positive instruction or a particular sign or signal may be enough.

What should be done if aggressive behaviour does arise?

- Call for assistance from any helpers present (if possible a "floating" helper, i.e. one not looking after a specific child).
- Remember that your aim is to safeguard the child, any other children or adults, and yourself.
- Try to remain calm in your movements and speech. Tell the child in a calm voice what you want them to do and why. If you genuinely need to use some form of physical contact, try to tell the child what you are going to do, in as reassuring a voice as possible.
- Blocking a child's way may be effective.
- Try to be "side-on" rather than directly in front of the child, both to protect your own body and to avoid appearing aggressive yourself.

- Body language is important in these situations. Remember that any physical contact with a child has the potential to be misinterpreted.
- Holding hands (or lower arms) may be enough.
- One hand on the shoulder (two hands if necessary) may be enough.
- A hug or half-hug may be enough; place your arms around the child's shoulders.
- The amount of force or pressure used should only be the minimum necessary to keep the child and other people safe.
- Never take hold of a joint (such as the wrist, elbow, ankle, etc) as these are relatively weak and there is more likelihood of causing long-term damage.

What should be done after an incident of aggressive behaviour?

- All incidents in which physical restraint has been used must be reported and recorded.
- You must inform the holiday organiser and fill in an incident form and hand it to the holiday organiser.
- Your holiday organiser may decide that it would be appropriate and worthwhile for you to take a break from your child after one of these episodes.
- There is no shame in this, as they can be physically and emotionally demanding.
- Your holiday organiser may well want to have a discussion about how to prevent any similar incidents occurring, if at all possible. As with virtually all areas of a SJHCT holiday, this would be a team effort.

If you have any queries about any of the above, please consult your holiday organiser.

Physical contact / Never be alone with a child

- Due to the potential for misunderstandings and false accusations of wrongdoing, it is important for your own sake that you avoid being alone with a child.
- Remember that any physical contact with a child has the potential to be misinterpreted.
- Be aware that children are more fragile than adults, especially those with physical disabilities and particular conditions. The sort of physical "contact" that an adult would barely notice might potentially cause lasting or even permanent damage to a child.



- This is an important consideration not only with regard to any physical contact we might have with children but also to physical contact between children.
- For this reason, we must be very vigilant when children come into physical contact with each other. We must be especially alert to make sure that a child does not become rough or violent with another.
- Changes in temperament and behaviour can be sudden, unexpected and occasionally extreme.

Handling and moving

Prevention of accidents

Accidents will happen, but you should do everything you can to avoid them and respond to, report, and record any accidents in a timely fashion.

- Be vigilant and anticipate dangers, keep sharp objects (such as razors) and electrical equipment hidden, and preferably locked, away from children. Most children have a limited awareness of danger, especially in new and unfamiliar situations, and they need only a second to put themselves in a dangerous situation
- Know your child's condition, their allergies, phobias, medication, etc.
- Know where the nearest first aid kit is
- Know who on the holiday has had first aid training
- Know the procedures in event of fire
- Do not put yourself at risk
- Do not endanger yourself in the process of helping someone else
- Be hygienic. Wash hands if possible. Use disposable gloves when necessary

Restrictions in administration of medication

Administering medicine on the holiday is the responsibility of the helper. All medicines must be handed directly to the helper on the first day of the holiday. When not being used, medication must be held securely, in a central location, controlled by the holiday organiser.

It is important to remember that some children are unable to take certain medicines or receive particular treatment. This information will be recorded on the child's medical form.

There are also restrictions by law on what medication can and cannot be administered by the SJHCT. Ask the holiday organiser if you have any queries about this issue.

Incident form procedure

Any incident in which an injury, however mild, occurs to a child or helper should be recorded by a helper on an incident form and handed to the holiday organiser. Try also to inform the holiday organiser as soon as possible. This procedure is partly to cover the SJHCT in the (unlikely) event of a complaint being made after the holiday has finished.

Note that incidents in which physical restraint has been used are also recorded; [please see the section on Physical Restraint in this manual.](#)

Declaring when own health may affect child

It is very important that you make your holiday organiser aware of any illnesses or other medical factors that might affect your ability to look after your child properly.

Also, some children have particular conditions that make them especially susceptible to illness if they come into contact with them. Your holiday organiser will let you know if this is the case for your child, but you should still let the organiser know if you have had any recent illnesses that might still affect a vulnerable person.

Moving and handling

There is a difference between lifting and 'carrying' - avoid carrying children wherever possible.

- Always ask for help if you feel unable to lift any child
- Ensure that areas are clear of obstacles when lifting and moving children
- If needing to move a child from a bed to a chair or vice versa, ensure the chair is positioned as close to the bed as possible, ideally next to it, so that it is a direct transfer
- Hold the child close to your body to support their weight
- Face in the direction of the lift with knees bent when bending
- Keep back as straight as possible and move your feet as opposed to bending or twisting your spine, when moving
- For children over 15kg in weight, two people will be required to lift. One person is to hold the child under their arms, the other to support hips and lower body, usually by using an underarm hold just above the back of the knee
- A "one, two, three" command should be made by the person at the upper end of the torso, after checking with both the other person lifting and the child. Check that the child is ready to be moved and knows where they are moving to
- If you do need to carry a small child, hold them close to you and in front, one hand supporting underneath the child, the other around the back. Do not carry the child on your hip

Guidance using wheelchairs

The following information is learned much more easily through demonstration, so please ask at the start of the holiday if you are not clear about any of the procedures.

It is very important that you familiarise yourself with your child's particular wheelchair if he or she uses one. Asking the parents/carers for a demonstration during the handover at the start of the week is the best way. If you are still unsure, ask the holiday organiser.

Ensure that folding wheelchairs are fully unfolded and that any clips, buckles or catches are properly secured before use. Make sure that you know how the brakes work and remember to put a seat belt or straps properly on the child if this is required, especially on uneven terrain.

Going down a kerb or equivalent with a wheelchair

Forwards:

- Position the front wheels so that they are close to the edge of the kerb and are at the same level. Check that your immediate pathway is clear
- Pull back on the push handles/bar whilst at the same time push downwards on the foot tipping lever to balance the chair on its back wheels
- Move the chair forwards and gently lower the chair down the kerb on the back wheels
- Ensure both back wheels touch down at the same time to avoid the chair tipping over
- Gently lower the front wheels

Backwards:

- Ensure the back wheels are level and close to the edge of the kerb
- Use the push handles along with the tipping lever to tip the chair gently back towards you
- Ensure you pull both back wheels down from the kerb at the same time
- As the front wheels reach the edge of the kerb, keep your foot on the tipping lever to avoid the feet from hitting the kerb
- Once they are clear of the kerb, gently lower the front wheels onto the ground so they are level with the back wheels
- Check your pathway is still clear before turning the chair around to move

Never tip the wheelchair forwards as the child may fall out. If there is any danger of this happening, ensure that the child is properly strapped in.

Going up a kerb or equivalent with a wheelchair

Forwards:

- As the toes/front wheels reach the kerb, gently pull back on the pushing handles/bar as you push down downwards and forwards on the foot tipping lever.
- When the chair is tilted backwards just far enough for the front wheels to clear the pavement, gently push the chair forwards until the front wheels are resting on the pavement. Do not tilt the chair back further than you need to.
- When the rear wheels touch the kerb, lift up with push handles/bar and push forwards using your body weight to enable you to take the back of the chair onto the pavement.

Backwards:

- *Note - This requires more strength and is only advisable with lighter children.*
- Turn the chair around so that the back wheels are resting against the kerb.
- Pull back on the pushing handles/bar whilst also pushing downwards to balance the chair on its back wheels.
- Use your body weight and your legs to pull the chair up the kerb and onto the pavement.

Going up or down steps with a wheelchair

Steps can potentially be extremely dangerous for people in wheelchairs. Avoid taking wheelchairs up and down steps wherever possible and use any ramps provided. This is especially the case with heavier children. Seek assistance from one or two other people. Wait, if necessary, until assistance is available.

Going up steps:

- One person should follow the chair up the steps and can help to move the chair up by gripping the main frame of the chair only with direction from the person pushing the chair. The other, if there is room, should walk at side and ensure the steps remain clear of any obstacles
- Back the chair to the first step ensuring the back wheels are at the same level
- Place one foot on the first step and the other on the second



- Lean back keeping your back as straight as possible and tilt the chair using your body weight to balance the weight of the chair
- Gently pull the chair up the first step

Going down steps:

- A second person should stand in front of the chair facing the person in the chair.
- Before you reach the front step, grip the handles or push bar. Ensure back wheels are level. Gently tilt the chair onto its rear wheels and move it to the front of the top step.
- Gently roll the chair one step at a time.
- The second person should grip the main frame of the chair and help to ensure the chair doesn't move too quickly down the steps.
- A third person should walk at the side and ensure the steps remain clear of any obstacle

Raising a complaint or concern

As a helper you have a right to raise a complaint or concern about your experience with the SJHCT. If appropriate, please first speak to the holiday organiser; hopefully your issue can be dealt with promptly and satisfactorily at this level. If this does not work, please take the complaint to the chairman of the trust.

A note on appropriate language

It is important that we are aware of the potential to offend people with disabilities and others with the language that we use. Certain words and phrases, even when used “innocently”, can project or imply particular attitudes, which might upset people or reduce someone’s self-esteem.

Abuse

Child abuse is a problem of which everyone working with children should be aware.

In the SJHCT we are not looking for abuse; rather we have policies in place to deal with it if it occurs.

Ways in which abuse is manifested include:

Physical abuse: this is the use of an adult’s strength to harm a child. It includes hitting (with or without the use of an implement), slapping, punching, kicking, burning, scalding, cutting.

Emotional/Verbal abuse: this is a vague category but might include a lack of verbal contact and interaction with the child, withholding of affection, repeated and persistent criticism, rejection or belittling of the child wilfully to destroy their confidence.

Neglect: this is where the child does not receive the warmth, attention, supervision and happiness that help them to thrive. Not all parents purposefully neglect their child, and social conditions such as poor housing or not having enough money to pay for adequate clothing, food or heating may play a part in the unintentional neglect of children.

Sexual abuse: child sexual abuse is a term given to all forms of sexual behaviour with children, which abuses their trust and is against the law. The accepted definition of child sexual abuse set out in Government circulars is: “The involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the sexual taboos of family roles.”

Most child sexual abuse is revealed directly or indirectly by what the child says. There are also physical/medical signs that are indicative of abuse. However, these are not definite proof of abuse; such signs or behaviour may have other explanations. Remember that many

indicators of sexual abuse may not be apparent to us, and different things arouse suspicion for different people.

The extent to which sexual abuse exists is very difficult to gauge. It occurs in all kinds of families and across the social classes. The child usually knows the abuser.

Often, abused children are plunged into emotional uncertainty and confusion. On the one hand, they want the abuse to stop, but on the other they feel that disclosure could lead to punishment, or the break up of their family. Feelings of guilt, shame, anger, fear and responsibility can develop.

Children who are being sexually abused cannot be sure that they will be believed and may retract their disclosure for fear of the consequences. However, children rarely lie about their experiences. It is therefore important to take any disclosure of sexual abuse seriously.

If a child tells you about some abuse that has occurred

You should avoid promising to keep it a secret. This is because, in order to help the child, you may have to pass on this information, and the child's trust would then be betrayed.

Ask open-ended questions to gain basic information. Do not prompt answers that you "want" to hear. Listen to what the child actually says. Try not to look shocked.

In relation to abuse, if you have concerns about any of the children on the holiday, tell the designated Trustee as soon as possible.

You should not worry about causing trouble by raising concerns; it is important that information such as this is recorded and, if necessary, handed over to the appropriate authorities, e.g. social services.

[Please see Appendix III : Signs and Symptoms of Abuse.](#)

First Aid

It is not SJHCT Trust policy to give comprehensive first aid training, and you are not required to be familiar with resuscitation to be a helper on the holiday. However, for your own information and development you may wish to visit the website of the British Red Cross and the Resuscitation Council, as shown in the Useful Links at the back of this manual. Whenever possible, any first aid should be carried out by the holiday organiser or a trained volunteer.

Holiday helpers are required to inform the holiday organiser if a child in their care has required any first aid treatment, however minor. This should also be recorded on an incident form and handed to the holiday organiser. In the event of a possible serious illness or injury, the holiday organiser should be informed as soon as possible. However, this should not delay the calling of an ambulance if required.

[For basic first aid guidance, see Appendix VIII.](#)



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Appendix I - Tips for caring for children with autism

It is important to be aware that the terms “autism”, “autistic”, “autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)”, “autistic tendencies” and “Asperger (’s) Syndrome” can cover a vast range of behaviours and no two autistic children are the same. Consequently, if you are to be caring for a child described as autistic, it is advisable not to start with the list below, but to meet the child first and refer back to these tips if they seem helpful.


- Children with autism tend to have their own strong likes or dislikes. Find out if your child has particular aversions to anything.
- Speak clearly, keeping instructions simple, specific and taking one-step at a time. Try not to give unnecessary information.
- You may need to repeat a request or instruction. If so, use the same words again, and give time for a response. It may help to say the child’s name at the start of the sentence.
- If this still presents difficulties, try to break down what you want to say, using more basic sentences or simpler words. Photos of a peer doing a task may help (e.g. Brushing teeth).
- Many children with autism “think in pictures”, not words. Use visual clues to help illustrate what you are saying- actions, objects, photos, etc.
- Tactile clues (i.e. Something that can be touched, such as a spoon before a meal) can also help. Bear in mind, however, that some autistic children find it hard to use more than one sensory channel at a time (e.g. looking and listening –they often look elsewhere when they’re really listening!).
- Singing or whispering an instruction may help.
- Be aware that what you say may be taken literally! An autistic child may not be able to “read between the lines” of what you are saying.
- Children with autism tend to like a routine and can become distressed if this changes. Try to give advance notice of a routine, including the intended programme for the day.
- Try to warn in advance of any break in routine, with plenty of reassurance. Be aware that routines may include, for example, sitting in the same seat for meals, or doing things in a certain order.
- Children with autism are not always able to express their feelings in a way that is understandable to us. Take note of any information given about the child on this issue and take time to try to “read” your child’s emotions throughout the week.
- Loud (especially sudden) sounds or bright/fluorescent/flickering lights may cause distress to a child with autism. Fear of dreaded sounds or lights (possibly a loud dining hall) might affect behaviour, to the extent that a child might become suddenly aggressive, potentially placing themselves and others in danger. Find out what you can at the start of the holiday and be as attentive as possible to give yourself a chance of pre-empting these situations.



- Many autistic children get fixated on a particular subject. Try to work with the fixation, not against it! This may require some imagination and play-acting on your part.
- Make a fuss of good behaviour, not bad; a big “telling off” rarely works with autistic children. They often have trouble comprehending negatives; if you say, “Don’t run”, they may just hear the verb! Be positive and specific - “Good washing” rather than “Good boy, well done”, etc.
- As with any child, it is a good idea to make the most of situations in which they can display any abilities and talents they may have, to help boost the child’s confidence as well as give them a good time. Beware, however, of the popular misconception that all autistic children possess extraordinary talent or even genius; this is only true of a tiny minority, and it can burden all other autistic people with unfair and unrealistic expectations!
- Many autistic children have problems with motor control in their hands. This may mean, for example, that they need help when using cutlery.
- Make a fuss of good behaviour, not bad; a big “telling off” rarely works with autistic children.

Appendix II - Glossary of Medical Terms

Please see link to Glossary of Medical Terms:

 [2. SJHCT Helpers Manual 2025 - Glossary of Medical Terms](#)

Appendix III - Signs and symptoms of abuse

NOTE: One, two or even several of these signs and symptoms do not necessarily indicate abuse. Also, remember that children are in unfamiliar situations on the SJHCT holiday and may not display their usual behaviour. However, if you have concerns in the light of this list, tell your holiday organiser.

Signs of physical abuse:

- Unexplained injuries or burns
- Improbable excuses to explain injuries
- Bruising, especially in places not easily injured
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Untreated injuries
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Bald patches
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs covered in hot weather
- Fear of undressing
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of medical help
- Self-destructive tendencies, aggression towards others
- Running away
- Human bites

Signs of emotional / verbal abuse:

- Physical, mental and emotional development lags behind
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Over-reaction to mistakes
- Continual self-deprecation
- Sudden speech disorders
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Neurotic behaviour (e.g. rocking, hair-twisting, thumb-sucking)
- Self-mutilation
- Fear of parents being contacted



- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug/solvent abuse
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing, scavenging

Signs of sexual abuse:

- Display of affection in a sexual way (inappropriate to age)
- Highly sexualised language
- Marked tendency to cling or need reassurance
- Marked tendency to cry easily
- Regression to younger behaviour, e.g. thumb-sucking, acting like a baby
- Complaints of genital itching or pain
- Distrust of a familiar adult, or anxiety about being left with particular person
- Depression and withdrawal
- Apparent secrecy
- Wetting, day or night
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Anorexia or bulimia
- Phobias or panic attacks

Signs of neglect:

- Emaciation, constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Untreated medical problems
- Destructive tendencies
- Low self-esteem
- Neurotic behaviour (e.g. rocking, hair twisting, thumb-sucking)
- No social relationships
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing, scavenging

Appendix IV - Anti-Bullying Policy

Statement of Intent

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our children and volunteer staff so they can enjoy the holiday in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable on a SJHCT holiday. If bullying does occur, all children and volunteers should be able to know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

What Is bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding possessions, threatening gestures)
- Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic - because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber - all areas of internet , such as email and internet chat room misuse
- Mobile - threats by text messaging & calls
- Misuse of digital images

Why is it important to respond to bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Children or staff who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

Objectives of this policy

- All Trustees, Holiday Organisers, volunteers and children should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All Trustees, Holiday Organisers, volunteers and children should know what the Trust's policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.

- As an organisation we take bullying seriously. Children, parents and volunteer staff should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported and that bullying will not be tolerated.

Signs and symptoms of bullying

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and they should investigate if, for example, a child:

- doesn't want to join in on group activities
- doesn't want to travel on the bus
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money
- has money continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Procedures

- Report bullying incidents to staff.
- In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be recorded by staff on the Trust on an incident form.
- In serious cases parents should be informed and the problem will be discussed.
- An attempt will be made to help the bully/bullies change their behaviour.
- The bully/bullies may be asked to apologise. Other consequences may take place according to Trust policy.
- If possible, the children/staff will be reconciled

Prevention of Bullying

We will use accepted methods for helping children and staff to prevent bullying. These include:

- Thinking about the impact on all children.
- Addressing themes of co-operation and friendship in evening reflection.
- Including the prevention and reporting of bullying in helper training.

Appendix V - Safeguarding Policy

SJHCT believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people, by a commitment to practice which protects them.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the children is paramount.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting children's welfare.

The purpose of the policy:

- To provide protection for the children who attend SJHCT residential holidays.
- To provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm.

This policy applies to all staff, including volunteers, holiday organisers, Trustees or anyone working on behalf of SJHCT.

We will seek to safeguard children by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, and volunteers.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Providing effective management for volunteers through supervision, support and training.

Appendix VI - Useful Links -

Please note that SJHCT is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.

General medical advice

NHS Direct www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Patient UK www.patient.co.uk

First Aid

British Red Cross www.redcross.org.uk/firstaid

St John's Ambulance www.sja.org.uk

Medical Conditions

Asthma Asthma UK www.asthma.org.uk

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) - National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service www.addiss.co.uk

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (Autism) - National Autistic Society www.nas.org.uk

Autism Independent UK www.autismuk.com

Cerebral Palsy - Scope www.scope.org.uk

Cystic Fibrosis - Cystic Fibrosis Trust www.cftrust.org.uk

Diabetes - Diabetes UK www.diabetes.org.uk

Down's Syndrome - Down's Syndrome Association www.downs-syndrome.org.uk

Epilepsy - Epilepsy Action www.epilepsy.org.uk

National Society for Epilepsy www.epilepsynse.org.uk

Muscular Dystrophy - Muscular Dystrophy Campaign www.muscular-dystrophy.org

Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties - SEBDA Association www.sebda.org

Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk

Behaviour UK www.behaviouruk.com

Child protection/Safeguarding Children

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children www.nspcc.org.uk

Health and Safety Issues

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents www.rospa.com

Health and Safety Executive www.hse.gov.uk

Signing and Communication


Makaton Vocabulary Development Project www.makaton.org

Signalong www.signalong.org.uk

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) www.pecs.org.uk


Appendix VII - Sign Language Example - Basic Makaton

Please see link to Basic Makaton guidance:

 [2. SJHCT Helpers Manual 2025 - Sign Language Example - Basic Makaton](#)

Appendix VIII - Basic First Aid

Please see link to Basic First Aid guidance:

 [2. SJHCT Helpers Manual 2025 - Basic First Aid](#)