

Pony Partnerships CIC



Behaviour, Engagement, and Attendance Policy 2026-2027

Name of Organisation: Pony Partnerships CIC

Venue/Address: All venues

Date of Review: 1 September 2026

Date of Next Review: 31 August 2027

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1. Policy Statement

Pony Partnerships CIC is committed to providing a safe, respectful, inclusive, and supportive environment in which children, young people and adults can participate in therapeutic, learning, enrichment, and wellbeing activities.

We recognise that behaviour, engagement, and attendance are connected and may be affected by:

- unmet need;
- anxiety or distress;
- trauma;
- neurodivergence;
- disability;
- sensory or communication needs;
- health or medical needs;
- family or transport circumstances;
- safeguarding concerns;
- barriers within the environment or provision.

Our approach intends to be relational, trauma-informed, restorative, and strengths-based. We seek to understand what behaviour or disengagement may communicate while maintaining clear boundaries that protect participants, animals, staff, and the wider community.

2. Purpose

This policy sets out how Pony Partnerships will:

- support safe and meaningful participation;
- communicate clear and accessible expectations;
- identify and reduce barriers to engagement and attendance;
- respond to distress and safety concerns calmly and proportionately;
- manage serious incidents and restrictive interventions;
- meet agreed attendance and reporting requirements;
- safeguard people and animals.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy;
- Equine Facilitated Learning;
- Equine Enrichment;
- group provision;
- wellbeing and community activities;
- commissioned non-educational placements;
- commissioned Alternative Provision and education-related support.

It applies to:

- participants;
- parents and carers;
- directors;
- staff;
- associates;
- volunteers;
- students and trainees;
- visitors and contractors.

4. Legal and Regulatory Context

This policy has been developed in relation to relevant UK legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice.

Pony Partnerships CIC is not a school. It adopts relevant safeguarding and restrictive-intervention principles proportionately within its child-facing and commissioned education-related services.

Where Pony Partnerships provides commissioned Alternative Provision or education-related support, the commissioning organisation retains its own statutory safeguarding, attendance, and educational duties.

The Department for Education's restrictive-intervention guidance applies directly to schools from 1 April 2026, and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 applies directly to schools and colleges from 1 September 2026. Pony Partnerships uses relevant principles from these documents as recognised good practice where appropriate.

5. Our Approach

Pony Partnerships promotes:

- relational safety;
- kindness, dignity, and respect;
- clear and predictable boundaries;
- co-regulation and support with distress;
- choice and autonomy;
- reasonable adjustments;
- accessible communication;
- restorative responses;
- safeguarding;
- respect for animals and the environment.

Behaviour is understood as communication. Staff will consider what may be contributing to distress, withdrawal, avoidance, or reduced engagement rather than responding only to the behaviour that can be

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seen.

Engagement may look different for different people. Participation through observation, reduced communication, use of a quiet space or a modified activity may be appropriate where this supports safety and access.

Bullying, harassment, discrimination, harmful sexual behaviour, abuse, and violence will be taken seriously and addressed promptly.

6. Expectations

Participants will be supported to:

- treat others with dignity and respect;
- follow essential safety instructions;
- respect animal choice, welfare, and personal space;
- protect the privacy of others;
- use equipment and facilities safely;
- remain within agreed areas;
- seek support where needed.

Expectations must be communicated in a way that reflects the participants:

- age;
- communication style;
- developmental needs;
- neurodivergence;
- disability;
- understanding;
- individual support arrangements.

Failure to meet an expectation must not automatically be treated as deliberate misconduct. Staff must consider whether additional explanation, support or adjustment is required.

7. Engagement and Attendance

Attendance must be recorded for all planned sessions.

For therapeutic, enrichment and non-educational services, attendance is understood primarily as an indicator of access, engagement, and wellbeing rather than compliance.

Where attendance or engagement changes, staff will seek to understand possible barriers. These may include:

- physical or mental health needs;
- allergy or medical needs;
- anxiety or distress;
- neurodivergence or disability;
- family or caring circumstances;
- transport or housing difficulties;
- safeguarding concerns;
- placement suitability.

Absence linked to medical needs, allergy, disability, or healthcare appointments must not be described as

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non-compliance.

Where a participant does not attend, staff must follow the agreed absence procedure and record:

- the absence;
- any reason provided;
- contact or action taken;
- any safeguarding concern.

For commissioned Alternative Provision or education-related support, attendance will be recorded and shared in accordance with the placement agreement.

Repeated absence, unexplained absence, or a significant change in engagement must be considered in the context of wellbeing and safeguarding.

8. Supporting Distress and Safety

Where a participant becomes distressed, withdrawn, overwhelmed or dysregulated, staff should:

- reduce immediate demands;
- use calm, clear, and minimal language;
- offer time, space, and choice where safe;
- support co-regulation;
- move to a quieter or safer area where appropriate;
- avoid forcing eye contact, verbal communication, or compliance;
- consider sensory, emotional, trauma, medical and safeguarding factors;
- maintain safe supervision;
- reduce or remove animal involvement where the participant or animal is unsettled;
- seek additional support where required.

Where behaviour creates a safety concern, responses may include:

- reassurance;
- changing, pausing, or stopping the activity;
- increasing physical space;
- moving away from animals;
- using agreed support strategies;
- contacting a parent, carer, or commissioner;
- seeking safeguarding advice;
- reviewing the placement.

The Session Lead may adapt, pause, or stop a session where participant safety or animal welfare cannot be maintained.

Responses must focus on:

- safety;
- understanding;
- repair;
- learning;
- wellbeing.

Physical punishment, humiliation, intimidation, ridicule, and degrading treatment must never be used.

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9. Serious Concerns

Additional action may be required where there is:

- aggression, violence, or a credible threat of serious harm;
- bullying, harassment, or discriminatory abuse;
- child-on-child abuse;
- harmful sexual behaviour;
- sexual harassment or sexual violence;
- possession or threatened use of a weapon;
- significant or deliberate property damage;
- unsafe behaviour involving animals;
- deliberate exposure to a known allergen;
- unsafe food sharing involving known allergy risk;
- harmful online behaviour affecting participants or provision;
- a serious safeguarding concern;
- repeated safety concerns that cannot be managed through current arrangements.

Where staff reasonably believe that a participant may have an item that presents a safety, safeguarding or serious welfare risk, staff must follow the Search, Prohibited Items and Confiscation Procedure.

Staff should normally seek the participant's cooperation and ask them to hand over the item voluntarily. Pony Partnerships staff must not assume that they hold the statutory search powers available to authorised school staff.

Where cooperation is not given and a serious or immediate risk remains, staff must prioritise safety, inform the Session Lead and DSL where appropriate, and contact the police where necessary.

Any action must be proportionate and take account of the participant's age, communication, disability, SEND, trauma history and other relevant needs.

All children involved in child-on-child abuse must be considered from a safeguarding perspective. The child who has been harmed and the child who has caused or may have caused harm may both require support, boundaries, and safeguarding action.

Incidents must be reported and recorded under the relevant organisational procedure.

10. Restrictive Intervention

Pony Partnerships is committed to preventing the need for restrictive intervention through:

- safe relationships;
- individual planning;
- reasonable adjustments;
- early support;
- environmental adaptation;
- de-escalation;
- withdrawal from an unsafe activity.

Restrictive intervention may only be used as a last resort where it is:

- lawful;
- necessary;
- proportionate;

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- required to prevent serious and immediate harm.

The least restrictive option must be used for the shortest possible time.

Restrictive intervention must never be used:

- as punishment;
- to force participation;
- to enforce compliance;
- because a participant refuses an activity;
- for staff convenience;
- where reducing demands, changing the activity or moving away can keep people safe.

Planned physical intervention may only be carried out by a person who:

- has received appropriate training;
- has been authorised by Pony Partnerships;
- is acting within an agreed individual risk assessment or support plan.

Any restrictive intervention must be:

- reported immediately;
- recorded on the same day;
- reviewed;
- communicated to the parent, carer or commissioner as required;
- followed by appropriate support for the participant and staff.

Any injury, distress or safeguarding concern arising from the intervention must also be recorded and addressed.

Pony Partnerships CIC does not use seclusion as a planned therapeutic, behavioural or educational intervention. A participant may choose to use a quiet or separate space but must remain free to leave unless an immediate emergency makes temporary restriction necessary to prevent serious harm.

11. Mobile Phones and Personal Devices

Personal devices are not normally used during sessions unless agreed as:

- a reasonable adjustment;
- communication aid;
- medical or allergy-related requirement;
- wellbeing support;
- agreed placement activity.

Any permitted use must not compromise safety, privacy, professional boundaries, participation, or animal welfare.

Where use of a device creates a significant safety, safeguarding or privacy concern, staff may require the participant to stop using it and may request temporary handover in accordance with the Search, Prohibited Items and Confiscation Procedure.

12. Placement Review, Pause or Ending

Where concerns continue, Pony Partnerships may arrange a review with the participant, parent, carer,

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commissioner, or relevant professionals.

The review may consider:

- unmet or changed support needs;
- reasonable adjustments;
- medical or allergy arrangements;
- risk assessment changes;
- staffing or supervision;
- session format;
- placement suitability;
- additional professional support.

A session or placement may be paused immediately where safety cannot be maintained.

For commissioned provision, any permanent change or ending must normally be agreed with the authorised commissioner. This does not prevent Pony Partnerships from stopping an activity or temporarily pausing delivery where immediate safety or animal welfare requires it.

Decisions and reasons must be recorded and communicated through agreed channels.

13. Safeguarding

Behaviour, attendance, and engagement may indicate:

- abuse or neglect;
- exploitation;
- mental health risk;
- unmet medical need;
- domestic abuse;
- peer conflict;
- unsafe care;
- other safeguarding concerns.

Unmet or unsupported allergy, medical or emergency-medication needs may also indicate a welfare or safeguarding concern.

Safeguarding considerations take priority over behavioural or attendance management.

Staff must report concerns promptly to the DSL or DDSL and must not investigate safeguarding concerns themselves.

14. Recording and Monitoring

Pony Partnerships will maintain appropriate records of:

- attendance and absence;
- significant incidents;
- accidents and first aid;
- near misses;
- safeguarding concerns;
- restrictive interventions;
- abuse, aggression and violence;
- serious allergy-related safety concerns;

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- placement reviews;
- commissioner communication;
- action taken to support participation.

Records must be:

- factual;
- proportionate;
- completed promptly;
- confidential;
- securely stored.

Patterns in attendance, incidents, restrictive intervention, or safety concerns must be reviewed to identify changes required to support, risk assessment, staffing, training, or provision.

15. Responsibilities

- Board of Directors: responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place and that this policy is reviewed.
- CEO/Manager: responsible for implementing the policy and overseeing significant incidents, placement decisions, and organisational learning.
- Clinical Lead: provides oversight where behaviour, engagement or intervention affects therapeutic or clinical provision.
- DSL/DDSL: oversees safeguarding concerns arising from behaviour, attendance, or engagement.
- Session Lead: responsible for:
 - safe session delivery;
 - dynamic risk assessment;
 - responding to distress and safety concerns;
 - deciding when to adapt, pause or stop activity;
 - ensuring required records and reports are completed.
- Staff, Associates and Volunteers: must:
 - model respectful behaviour;
 - maintain safe and professional boundaries;
 - follow agreed plans and risk assessments;
 - make reasonable adjustments;
 - report and record concerns;
 - follow safeguarding and incident procedures;
 - work within their training and competence.
- Participants: will be supported to understand and follow the expectations relevant to their service and needs.
- Parents, Carers and Commissioners are expected to:
 - provide accurate and current information;
 - notify Pony Partnerships of relevant changes;
 - work collaboratively to support safe participation;
 - follow agreed attendance, communication, and handover arrangements.

16. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where:

- legislation or statutory guidance changes;
- a serious incident identifies learning;

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- restrictive intervention is used;
- commissioning requirements change;
- attendance or engagement patterns identify wider concerns;
- organisational practice changes;
- the Board requests a review.

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