



## Prince's Trust

### Weapons policy

This is a Prince's Trust policy for staff, volunteers, secondees, delivery partners and young people. It must be adhered to by all, where applicable. It should be read alongside the Weapons policy guidance which outlines how to implement the policy.

Author	Graham Stark/ Emma Nicholson
Date approved by SMT	August 2008
Version	Version 3 (Updated September 2009)

Summary of changes since last version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ In response to an incident on Team, more emphasis is now made on risk assessing everyday objects that are potentially dangerous items, and monitoring of challenging behaviours.</li><li>→ Clearer division of responsibility between the Trust and its delivery partners – shortened Policy, more in depth Guidance (separate document)</li></ul>
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### Policy Statement:

No weapons are allowed on The Prince's Trust programmes. (Weapons are defined as anything that is carried intended to cause harm.) Given our client group and the fact everyday objects can be turned into weapons, comprehensive risk assessments should be made and potentially dangerous items (e.g. kitchen knives, scissors etc) monitored and kept secured and locked away after use. To avoid any situation arising, challenging behaviours should be addressed and dealt with as soon as possible.

NB: If anyone is suspected of carrying a weapon they cannot be searched, unless by police, an unlawful search may well constitute an assault.

*Actions to take are clearly stated in the Weapons Policy Guidance and should be read in conjunction with this policy. It is attached below.*

Delivery Partners should have their own policy on weapons. Their policy must meet as a minimum standard the criteria laid down in this policy. The Weapons Policy Guidance document should be shared with Delivery Partners to help promote good practice.

## **Why we have this policy**

All staff, volunteers, secondees and participants in Trust activities should expect to take part in a safe environment, free from fear and intimidation. The Prince's Trust has a duty of care to young people, staff and volunteers and will seek to mitigate any risk to that safe environment. There is no justifiable reason for weapons to be carried at any time by any person involved in The Trust's activities.

### **Duty of care checklist:**

Before participating or running a programme, every member of staff, volunteer or secondee should know they have appropriate support and information in case of emergencies. They should:

- ✓ Feel supported by clear line management and know who to call upon when needed.
- ✓ Know if going on residential there are three competent adults available. Two to be present at the residential and one on call in case of an emergency. One of whom must be a member of Prince's Trust staff; the others can be volunteers, secondees or delivery partner staff.
- ✓ Have contacts with local police should further support be needed.
- ✓ Have read this policy and guidance and feel confident of the issues and actions to take.
- ✓ Have received training on the programme and in health and safety. Training in challenging behaviours, although optional, is a good idea.
- ✓ Be fully aware of health and safety procedures, the health and safety toolkit and its risk assessments on dangerous weapons and how to report an accident or incident.

## Who the policy applies to

All The Prince's Trust staff including secondees, voluntary staff and young people participating in Trust activities.

Guidance to implementing policy found Trustnet/Strategy & Policy/young people

Links to Government strategies/ policies/ legislation see Trustnet/Strategy & Policy/external affairs.

For further information contact Graham Stark.



**Prince's Trust**

## Weapons policy - guidance

To be read alongside Weapons policy

<b>Author</b>	<b>Graham Stark/ Emma Nicholson</b>
<b>Version</b>	<b>Version 3 (updated September 09)</b>

### Purpose of guidance

This guidance is to be read in conjunction with the Weapons policy (above). It aims to give staff, volunteers and secondees advice on how to prevent a situation arising with weapons and actions to take should it happen.

To promote best practice this guidance should be shared with delivery partners, who must have their own weapons policy that as a minimum meets the criteria set out in The Prince's Trust weapons policy.

## **Context**

This policy is needed as The Trust works with young people who are both victims and perpetrators of crime and we must do as much as possible to guarantee the safety of all those involved in Prince's Trust activities. Health and safety incidences involving weapons are rare on Trust activities and the vast majority of young people do not carry weapons. The very small numbers of incidents that have arisen are usually when a young person has used an everyday item to cause harm.

However there is some evidence from the police, independent surveys, the youth service and young people themselves that young people are increasingly likely to carry weapons. They do so for self-protection, to intimidate others or to gain 'respect'. Evidence also shows that gun crime in particular is more likely in some parts of the country than others. Almost two-thirds of all non-air weapon offences in England and Wales occur in just three police force areas: Metropolitan (Greater London), Greater Manchester and West Midlands.

## **Details**

### **Definitions of weapons**

For these purposes, a *weapon* is defined as any item:

- made or adapted for the purpose of causing injury or incapacity (e.g. flick-knife, firearm (including air-weapons), throwing star, CS gas or 'Mace' spray etc.), or;
- having the appearance of the above (e.g. an imitation or replica firearm)

A *dangerous item* is defined as an item:

- whether with a legitimate use or not, which a member of staff believes that a participant may have with them for the purpose of causing injury, or;
- which a participant may have with them for an innocent purpose, but which a member of staff believes could be readily used as a weapon

Examples of dangerous items could include a kitchen knife, hammer or screwdriver, or a small folding pen-knife.

For the purpose of this policy, reference to an 'item' includes both categories as defined above, unless otherwise stated.

*The senior member of staff present will be the sole arbiter as to whether or not an item constitutes a risk.*

Knives and pointed weapons constitute the most common threat. There will be normally no reason for any person to have with them any bladed or sharply pointed object other than in specific circumstances (such as meal preparation), when suitable equipment will be provided.

**Preventative action by staff, volunteers and secondees (all of the actions taken should be recorded)**

The emphasis is on prevention. This will be achieved by making it clear, at the outset of any Trust programme or activity that participants are forbidden to have weapons of any kind. This must take the form of an explicit and unambiguous warning that a breach of this rule will lead to the individual's exclusion from the activity.

There should also be a clear policy that young people are expected to treat everyone with respect and that violence will not be tolerated. It is likely at some stage there will be tensions between young people, staff or volunteers and it is essential that really challenging behaviours are dealt with as soon as possible to prevent anything escalating. This can range from sending someone home to cool off, to holding a session for the protagonists to come to an understanding, to excluding young people permanently from the programme.

The health and safety toolkit provides advice and procedures on making risk assessments which should be made on any potentially dangerous items that will be used on the programme and

preventative strategies put in place accordingly. All dangerous items should be kept in a secure place. They should be accounted for after use.

The Trust may find itself in breach of its ordinary duty of care obligations, if it fails to take steps to minimise reasonably foreseeable risks.

### **Making it Clear**

What is expected of young people should be made clear from the outset of the programme.

- The warning about carrying weapons should be delivered at the same time as the similar non-negotiable injunction against the possession of illegal drugs.
- Staff should emphasise that there is no need for weapons to be carried, the dangers that can arise when they are, and the fact that (in many circumstances) their possession is illegal and that The Trust may become liable in consequence.
- How to treat one another with respect should also be outlined and that any violent behaviour will not be tolerated.

### **Signing up to the Rules**

Participation in Trust activities must be dependent on agreement to abide by Trust rules, whether set by The Trust or agreed jointly by participants. These should be documented.

Participants should sign to show that they have been made aware of the rules and agree to abide by them.

### **Reinforcing the Message**

To reinforce and help maintain the message, the Trust should publish suitable posters. Staff, volunteers and partners must ensure that these are displayed prominently in Team rooms etc. They will draw participants' attention to their presence and importance.

### **Acting on Suspicion - Assessing Risk**

The following advice is dependent on the member of staff or volunteer having assessed the potential risk to themselves and other people. They should secure the assistance of at least two colleagues. If for any reason the staff member, volunteer or secondee considers the potential risk to be such that they cannot safely deal with it, they should contact the police. *The personal*

*safety of all persons must take precedence and if there is any doubt that certain actions or interventions might jeopardise this and there is an honestly held belief that an item of concern is in existence, police should be called.* In urgent cases (particularly if there is any suspicion that a firearm may be involved) they should call 999.

#### **Action (all actions taken should be recorded)**

If a member of staff, volunteer or secondee suspects that a participant has with them a weapon or dangerous item, they should ask them if it is the case and for them to give it up (in the presence of colleagues as above). They should warn them that failure to co-operate will lead to their exclusion from the activity.

- If the participant denies that they have an item, but the staff member suspects otherwise, *they should be required to leave the activity.*
- Similarly, if the participant agrees they have an item but *declines to give it up, they should be required to leave the activity. (depending upon the circumstances and the type of item concerned, consideration should be given to calling the police)*
- If the participant gives up the item, further action will depend on the nature of the item and their reasons for having it. *In the overwhelming majority of cases*, the staff member, volunteer or secondee should retain custody of the item, *and if appropriate, seek advice from the police.* (If the article is given up willingly for permanent retention or disposal, a receipt should be provided to the person as well as securing an agreement to disposal from the person.)
- They should ascertain whether the person is willing for them to give up the item permanently, and encourage them to do so. If it is given up, they should take steps for it to be promptly disposed of safely. In cases of doubt, advice on proper disposal can be sought from the police.

- If a dangerous item with a legitimate and innocent purpose has been retained as a precaution, *consideration should be given to retaining and disposing of it, depending upon value and wishes of the owner. If it was considered dangerous on that occasion, it may be better not to allow the same situation to develop on another occasion. However, if it is not illegal to possess it under normal circumstances, there is no legal power of retention, and if the person is adamant about its return, then it should be returned to the person at the conclusion of the activities.* They should be *told* not to bring the item with them again.
- As stated, as a general rule staff volunteers /secondees have no right to retain items against the will of their owners. There may however be an exception in serious circumstances where the nature of the weapon (e.g. a firearm) or the person's behaviour makes it likely that a serious offence is likely to have been committed or is imminent. In those cases the police should be contacted, if necessary urgently.
- In other, less serious cases, it may be appropriate to return the item (*after careful consideration and risk assessment of a repeat situation*) to the owner but with a warning not to return with it. In some cases, it may be appropriate for them to be permanently excluded. (Make sure other members of staff are present.)
- In serious cases (including any involving a firearm), or in any case of doubt, the police should be contacted for advice at an early stage.
- In all cases staff, volunteers/ secondees should safeguard their position by making a written record of circumstances and immediately reporting the facts to a supervisor, in person or by telephone.

## Searching

Staff members, volunteers or secondees should not conduct searches, even if invited to do so. Apart from any adverse impact on trust between staff and participants, they have no legal authority, and an unlawful search may well constitute an assault. Searching carries personal

risks for the searcher, such as the possibility of injury from assault or needle-stick, or allegations of assault or indecency.

### **Minimising Risks**

On many Trust activities, participants will need access to items that are potentially capable of causing injury. Obvious examples include kitchen knives for use during food preparation, and tools used during Team challenges. Trust staff, volunteers, secondees should be aware of the potential of these items to cause harm, and take reasonable steps to limit their availability to those times when their use is necessary. This may be achieved by locking away sharp cutlery and tools when no longer required.

### **Training**

The law on weapons is complex. Whilst it is not necessary for Trust staff to have a detailed knowledge about the law concerning weapons, it may be helpful for them to have some training in recognising, handling and disposing of weapons that may come to their notice. This is something that could be explored with your local police force.

Policy found Trustnet/Strategy & Policy/young people

Links to Government strategies/ policies/ legislation see Trustnet/Strategy & Policy/external affairs.

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