



Frontline

Making life better
for children

Freedom and responsibility

A message from SLT and the wider leadership group

At Frontline, we talk a lot about freedom and responsibility. It's a big part of who we are and something we want everyone to understand and use to help them do their best work.

You should be able to recognise freedom and responsibility in the way we make decisions, give feedback and work together. You should also feel confident that we'll act swiftly and fairly when things don't align with our values.

Freedom and responsibility is how we stay true to our mission: trusting people to use their judgement, take ownership and do what's right for children. It's what keeps Frontline creative, caring and courageous.

Thank you for continuing to bring this culture to life every day.



1. Putting children first

Whenever we make a decision, we must ask ourselves: 'Will this help us make life better for children at risk of harm?'

Putting children first means developing great practice in services and improving systems. Changing culture and conditions in children's services requires thoughtful, decisive and child-centred leadership, at all levels.

We will include the voices of people with experience of social work and wider children's services whenever possible, and are grateful to the members of our Young People Advisory Board who support us in this work.

We will confidently celebrate the positive impact that our participants and fellows have on children. Those closest to Frontline's front line have a particular responsibility to share this important work, so everyone in the charity has a deep understanding of our collective impact.

But this approach goes beyond our programmes. For example, our staff policies should support parents and carers, helping them to spend more time with their families.



2. Making equality, diversity and inclusion **everyone's business**

To make sure we are truly putting children across England first, our workforce must reflect their diverse backgrounds, identities and experiences. Only with genuine difference – of ethnicity, lived experience, thought and skill – can we understand their needs, challenge inequity and contribute to breaking down the systemic barriers that shape their lives.

We aim to create and sustain an inclusive, enabling culture that amplifies minoritised voices, encourages critical self-reflection and provides meaningful opportunities for learning and growth. Education and awareness are essential to building a diverse, high-performing workforce. Our leadership group sets the tone for anti-racism, anti-discrimination and inclusion, but everyone at Frontline shares responsibility for deepening their knowledge and demonstrating everyday leadership in this area.

We are committed to proactively challenging the systems, structures and practices – both within our organisation and in wider society – that perpetuate racism and discrimination. Within Frontline, this includes initiatives such as mentoring for colleagues from marginalised backgrounds, embedding inclusive recruitment practices and setting ambitious diversity targets across our programmes.

Our goal is an environment which assumes good intent, where people can make mistakes and are supported to learn, but where discriminatory behaviour is addressed decisively and consistently.



3. Working as **one team**

We are all working to achieve Frontline's mission. To achieve this, we need high expectations of ourselves, each other and of those joining Frontline, alongside an environment that enables everyone to perform at their best.

We start by celebrating and showcasing success. When we know what we're doing well, it is easier to keep doing it. To keep improving, however, we must also seek out ways we can do things differently. There is room to make mistakes and be curious about our failures; that's how we learn!

At the same time, it's important that we're honest if mistakes keep happening or if someone's best isn't enough. When this happens, we need to support people to leave swiftly and with compassion, if they are not able to improve.

Giving and openly receiving feedback is key to a healthy culture and good decision making. Radical candour is a useful tool, as are many other feedback models; fundamental to each is the assumption of positive intent. Regular, honest feedback – both positive and constructive – helps build trust and makes it easier to give and receive feedback in future.

We invest in learning and connection across the organisation, including opportunities to understand each other's work through shadowing and celebratory Teams posts.



4. Making decisions based on professional judgement and evidence

Good judgement sits at the heart of freedom and responsibility. Many organisations create rules rather than trust employees' decision making. To avoid this, we need to remove unnecessary bureaucracy that limits creativity. By respecting each other's professional judgement and giving clear, honest feedback, we will build the responsibility required to give employees more freedom. Policy or process can and should exist when there is an obvious, widespread need, but we must ensure it is simple, short and clear.

Unanimous agreement is a rarity, so provided decision making draws on different perspectives and is informed by evidence, we must rely on professional judgement. We also need to understand each other's roles and know when to involve colleagues when making decisions.

Evidence is key to all good decisions, particularly those which carry risk. This is vital in children's services and all our work, because it reduces the impact of bias or limited perspective. We should focus on solutions, using knowledge and evidence to ensure we're making sound decisions, always learning and changing our approach as we get more information. Data is key to sharing our impact and celebrating our successes.

Some of our work is strictly regulated. We need to balance our freedom within our roles with the responsibility of adhering to the relevant regulation. Making an argument for and against a new process and checking this with your manager and colleagues in other teams is a good way to test your thinking.

