



Autism Angels Essence Policy
(Also including Admissions and Behavioural Procedures)

1 Our View

Here at Autism Angels we believe in today's society that children are being born with the possibilities of more traumas than have ever been noticed before. We understand that the mother's responses to the outside world can impact her unborn child particularly if she is anxious, stressed or emotional about something. And with the world moving at such a pace now it is becoming increasingly difficult for most people to 'keep up'. This, in our opinion, puts an enormous strain not only on parents but their children, born or not.

Taking this idea into account, it is imperative that our approach sees beyond any labels, behaviours and stories that often accompany a family on their arrival and mostly the child that is the reason for their visit in the first place.

This is why, in our experience, that we believe in the Essence of a being and don't get stuck on any 'behaviours' that we see and only see these as a means to seek help, understanding and relief from the pain they have been carrying.

We believe that under any actions that are being done, that each individual only seeks to feel safe, feel that they belong and that they have something to offer this world and are of value.

It is from this belief that our work begins. Everyone is of value, everyone has something to offer and everyone belongs to this world and when you learn to take care of yourself you will feel safe too.

The team starts from a unique point of lived experience of trauma and healing. I say unique because not all people seek to heal from their past and although this is an ongoing self-commitment, their lived experiences of how to overcome, bounce back and give back. In my opinion, nothing tops lived experience for understanding, not only the pain but also the belief that it can be healed.

This policy aims to give a brief, but hopefully insightful introduction to how we work and why it has the impact it does on our children, families and wider community.

Step One – Taster Visit to Farm

Each person that wants to work with us must first book a Taster at the Farm. This is so the family can meet us, see where we are, see if our environment is the best fit for them. It is also to see if the child can connect with us and if they will be safe in our environment. Connection is at the heart of our work and it is critical that the child connects with us and the environment or one of the animals. There has to be a want from the child, not just the parents or school. This is often a critical missed step when placing children. Our experience has shown us that the correct environment can make up to 80% of the success moving forward.

Step Two – Choosing the best service for the child

The team can see straight away which service will best suit the child and also the impact a new child will have on other children. This is another crucial step in setting things up for success.

Services offered:

Privates

Well-being Days

Alternative Provision

Saturday Clubs

Social Events and Fundraisers

All children are considered at this point and options are given to parents and schools that we feel will meet the needs of all attending.

Step Three – Imprinting & Chosen Service

How we introduce the child and family on their first day is critical. It can't look, sound or feel anything like their past experiences or where any trauma has arisen. This is where the highly skilled team work on connection with the child so they can learn about their individual needs, hopes and fears. Finding out what the child naturally loves, dreams about and wants to do, regardless of the current reality is an important part in

supporting the child back to their 'true' selves and away from old patterns of trying to fit in, pleasing others, masking, shutting down or any other survival behaviours.

If we feel we need to support parents too then they will be asked to stay and work alongside us so we are all working from the same page. This is of high value for the parents as it helps them come back to themselves too and realise the importance of staying true to their hopes and dreams and modelling this for their children. Once the whole family is on the same page, the healing process starts to take place, stresses and anxieties are reduced and a feeling of belonging paves a way forward that works for the whole family.

Step Four – Goals and Aspirations

When a solid connection has developed we begin to look at what is on the child's heart, often in our environment it is being outside in nature, being with the animals or the options based, low demand approach to education.

Only when a child feels safe, listened to and understood can they then begin to learn again. It is through this period of connection that personal contracts are made and discussions had around beliefs, values and a purpose driven life.

Our Team are expected to 'model' these practices for themselves, not just teach them as we believe that children do as we do, not as we say the majority of the time, another thing we share with parents.

The Team are all on their own healing journey so know firsthand the complexity of overcoming and building resilience but also the importance of living true to one-self, doing what you love and giving back, which are all values we practice and share with our community.

Step Five – Success

We measure success at Autism Angels through the lens of the heart first and foremost, examples being personal happiness, health and well-being, relationship with self and others, self-value & worth, mindfulness, kindness to self & others, empathy & compassion with self & others.

Starting with looking after our own needs first means we can reduce anxieties, resentment, stress, PDA, shutdown, emotional meltdowns, burnout etc. and focus on a life of purpose and giving back as we believe each individual has their own unique genius that if followed is a gift back to this world. There is nothing more inspiring than watching someone share their genius with the world.

When did we stop believing 1. In ourselves 2. You can be happy & doing something you love 3. You can make a living from it?

Our children are then set up for life following their own values, beliefs, own unique purpose, independent thinkers and giving back.

Code of Conduct

Whilst our children have often come from challenging situations and emotions are encouraged and expected we contract around harm to self or others and the animals right from the start.

No harm to self

No harm to others

No harm to the animals

This contract is then worked with throughout the whole community and the children work with it as a basis for their friendships and know that they can reach out to a parent or member of a the Team if the contract has been broken.

We encourage our children to fully express themselves and see their behaviours and actions as ways of communicating with us.

If a child is struggling then everyone starts to move around the farm. The child struggling can join the group or take some time to work things through with a team member.

Movement and freedom to move can reduce anxieties for everyone but also isn't exclusive making a child feel on their own but supported while they work through things.

It also helps the other children learn new ways of working through things and how we all have triggers and challenges to heal. We treat other how we would like to be treated.

Some children need space, others need support. We do what is in alignment with the child's needs at the time.

Animals are removed and environments are made safe if a child is really struggling. Parents are only called if we feel their support would be helpful to work through any issues remaining or if a child needs support to speak to their parents.

If the child has a connection with any team members or peers then they are made available to support.

All team members are available on the phone to support too.

We don't send children home.

We don't do detentions.

We don't buy into blame, shame, guilt or that someone is bad.

Children can go home if this is the best option for their mental health and well-being or they are ill.

Roles and Responsibilities

This is a whole community approach with everyone working on their own personal development.

Children are taught how to look after themselves and each other.

The team model personal responsibility, kindness, team work, health and well-being, how to put authentic boundaries in and support the children and parents to do the same.

Each team member is responsible for their own well-being and safety and they model this for the families.

The children are encouraged to communicate their needs at any given time. We are more interested in them speaking up than how it is done, especially when they first arrive. We fine tune the how as we go on.

Children do not need to put their hands up to speak, they can eat, drink, go to the toilet and rest whenever they need to. They don't need to ask us but inform us that this is what they are doing.

We encourage them to listen to their bodies and respond to them for their best well-being outcomes.

We call everyone by their first names or chosen name.

Each person is expected to look after themselves and each other the best they know how at this time.

They are expected to look after their areas as we are a team and want to be here.

They are expected to look at the animals and their well-being if they want to work with them or ride the horses.

Kindness is expected but pleasing others is not. We support the children to move away from pleasing others, masking and move towards their authentic self, independent thought and speaking up.

We have a high value of the truth, speaking it and recognising when we have bought into an untruth either about ourselves or another.

Every individual is encouraged to speak their truth and pace their own boundaries in. Children are not encouraged to 'tell the teacher' on another person.

Success and Mistakes

We measure success through the overall happiness of the child and their mental and physical well-being.

The more the child is in alignment with their true selves, speak up, are honest with themselves and others, hold their boundaries and honour their commitments to themselves first the more they are successful.

Mis-takes are encouraged so intrinsic learning can take place.

There is no negative sanction when mis-takes have been made, in fact the opposite, the child is encouraged to get the learning and then teach it to someone else.

The children can work towards certificates and rosettes however we have found that training a newer student is of a much higher value for our children.

Children can also work towards becoming a volunteer and team member which many do. They feel like they belong.

Children are encouraged to share their success with us and from home on our WhatsApp Groups and Proud Moments on the board at the end of each day.

They also set their own goals and monitor them each time they are at the farm, setting steps for each visit.

They will learn to praise themselves and each other and celebrate in their own way

Bullying

We do not tolerate bullying in any way.

In our experience, the bullying we experience is from the child to themselves. With this in mind we aim to raise self-worth and esteem, support the child to gain skills in an area they love, share these skills, support others so we can limit self-bullying.

By supporting each child to find their value and belief in themselves we aim to reduce any self-bullying or as much as humanly possible.

If we see a child being un-kind to another we see this as an internal reflection of their inner world and support is put in place for that child. We see it more as a cry for help than a behaviour that needs punishing.

This is where forgiveness comes in and where children learn to forgive others mis-takes, see it for what it is really about. They can also take the learning to further their own self-development, self-value and kindness to self and others.

If any un kindness is repeated then private sessions can be added to the childs week for extra support and parents can be asked to attend so we can ascertain the route of the pain and how to move forward together.

On-line, Racist or Gender Bullying

We do not tolerate keyboard warriors and if a situation needs to be worked through we can work through it at the farm with the children involved and make parents aware. Back to our contact of harm to self or others. We can support the family units to work through the root cause of the issue.

We base our relationships on trust and evidence of being trustworthy.

We do not tolerate bullying around any kind of differences.

We see bullying as a deeper internal struggle that would need support either from private sessions or seeking further support alongside our work.

We would also want to work alongside parents to get to the root cause.

Team Training

The team are trained in a unique methodology based in equality for all, we are all one, we all belong and we are all of value.

See manual for training models

See accreditation for team training

Each person is encouraged to be their authentic self, holding their own boundaries and taking personal responsibility for their words and actions.

These concepts are taught to the children too.

Team members are also encouraged to seek more training in areas of interest to them.

All team members have safeguarding and first aid training.

Mental health training, trauma, polyvagal theory and breath work are all used to support the children and families.

Legal and Equality

Please see our Equality and diversity policy.

Reasonable Force

We do not use force with any child. Each child is supported to make safe choices for themselves, in word and actions.

Children are encouraged to move or children are asked to move away from others and take responsibility for their own safety.

Should there be a situation where a situation has escalated then children, animals and environments are made safe so the child is free to express themselves.

We use a term 'Lock Down' which means remove others and reduce risk in environments.

Team members are to keep themselves safe

If harm to self or others comes into play then a light touch with warning before can be used. Any dangerous objects are removed as soon as possible.

Children are encouraged to let out their pain. They can run, punch something, scream and shout. The team will even say, its best out, let it out.

The team will endeavour to do their best to find the most appropriate person to support the child, in the best environment for the child.

Parents are rung as a support NOT a sanction if needed.

Incident reports are written up and shared where necessary.

Parents and the child are supported in a way that best meets the needs at the time.

Risk assessments are written and the team will have a full de-brief about moving forward and what learning has come for anyone involved. What would we do differently? Did we miss any whispers? Did we have enough information from parents/school?

Supervision is given.

This policy is a work in progress. Each day we are learning about trauma and behaviours that deepen our understandings and can better support our community. It is hard to get on paper the enormity of what we do to support the children and families that attend the farm as each situation and child is so unique.

We have tried to give you an essence of our beliefs around behaviours and what we feel they are really about. It's from this place that we aim to nurture each child to their unique genius, as we say, that brings them personal joy, gives them meaning and purpose and gives back to the world.

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