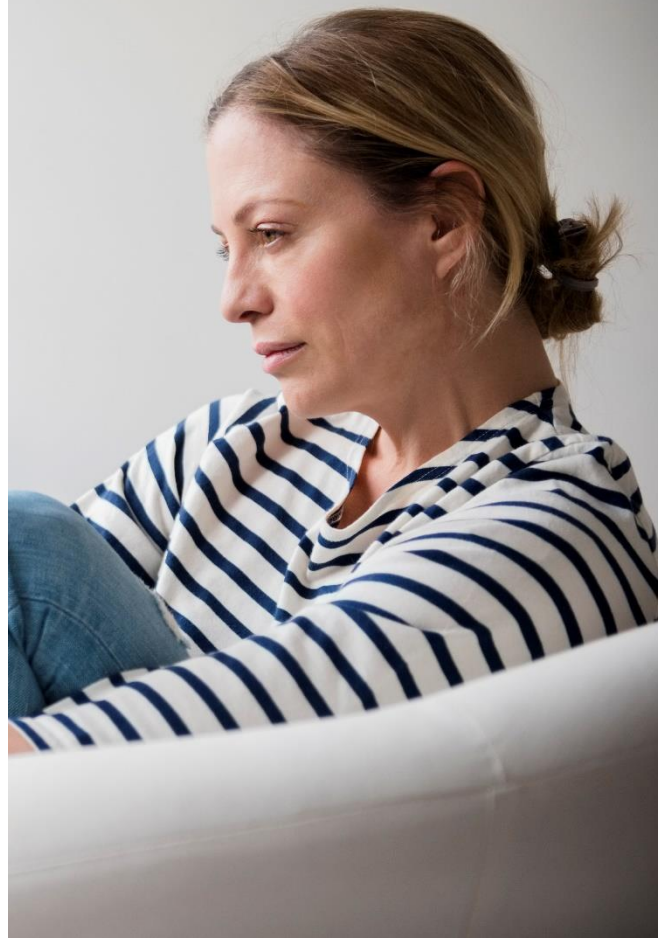


# CODE OF CONDUCT

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**FEBRUARY 2024**

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## Preamble

### 1. Introduction

Laurel House (the Organisation) is committed to trauma-informed practice across the whole organisation and providing the highest possible standards of sexual assault support to our clients. The key to successfully deliver on this commitment is to maintain a reputation for being responsive, inclusive and holistic whilst demonstrating a high level of ethical behaviour in all our Organisation's work.

Acceptable workplace behaviours contribute to positive organisational culture, employee satisfaction and motivation, help to embed shared organisational values and further Laurel House's ability to fulfill its vision.

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**“Everyone acts to prevent and respond to sexual harm.”**

(Laurel House Mission)

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### Laurel House Values

Our values underpin how we work together to achieve the positive outcomes for victim-survivors and to create a trauma informed, safe, ethical, and engaging workplace.

The Laurel House values are:

- We are curious.
- We are courageous.
- We are inclusive.
- We are collaborative.
- We are hopeful.

### 2. Policy Statement

The Laurel House Code of Conduct outlines the standards of behaviour that are required by all Laurel House People; Board members, employees, volunteers, and those people who are engaged in any capacity by Laurel House.

This Code of Conduct is consistent with the Organisation's legal employment obligations and must be read in conjunction with other Laurel House policies, procedures and guidelines.

Access to all current versions of Laurel House policies including this Code of Conduct is available on the organisation's Human Resource Information System (HRIS) LinQ.

### 3. Purpose

The intent of the Code of Conduct is to:

- Outline standards for the way we work.
- Outline the actions, behaviours and conduct expected at Laurel House.
- Support all Laurel House People to make decisions that are in keeping with the organisation’s vision, mission and values, and meet best practice standards that are expected by our clients, other stakeholders and our funders.
- Explain when the Code of Conduct applies and what will happen in the event of a breach of the Code of Conduct.
- Describe how the Organisation will make sure the Code of Conduct is effective.

### 4. Scope

The Code of Conduct applies to all Laurel House People including:

- Employees (including permanent, temporary and casual employees),
- Board members,
- Independent contractors
- Volunteers, and
- Students

This Code of Conduct also applies:

- At all Laurel House locations,
- When working at outreach locations,
- At Laurel House functions,
- Whenever you are or could be identified as a representative of Laurel House, and
- To professional and personal use of social media (see IT, Computer and Social Media Policy).

### 5. Definitions

**Laurel House People** – is the collective term for all Board members, employees, volunteers, students, and contractors engaged to undertake work on behalf of Laurel House.

**Representative** - includes but is not limited to, your dealings with clients and their families, fellow employees, other organisations, regulatory bodies, government department officials, suppliers and in social media.

**Responsible Person** – is the term used to reflect the person who should be informed or consulted on a particular matter related to the Code of Conduct. The responsible person differs depending on your role within Laurel House:

Your Role	Responsible Person
Employee, volunteer or contractor (on all matters related to the Code of Conduct other than the conduct of the CEO)	CEO
Employee (where the matter involves the conduct of the CEO)	Board Chair
CEO (on all matters related to the Code of Conduct other than the conduct of the Board Chair)	Board Chair
CEO (where the matter involves the conduct of the Board Chair)	Deputy Chair
Board Member	Board Chair

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**Senior Leadership Team** – incorporates the CEO, Counselling Leads, Business Manager and Education and Training Manager.

**Whistleblower** – is a person associated with the organisation, whether it be a governing body member, CEO, employee, contractor or volunteer, who discloses information regarding organisational wrongdoing/misconduct, and wishes to be protected against reprisal for reporting.

## 6. Key Responsibilities

Laurel House Board (Board) – is responsible for setting the direction, organisational culture, and identifying and mitigating risks that may impact on the delivery of services to clients and the wellbeing of staff. This includes the adoption and review of Laurel House’s Code of Conduct. How Board members behave and the decisions they make directly influence the organisation’s overall culture and behavioural standards. As such, Board members must also comply with the Organisation’s Code of Conduct.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – is responsible for establishing and maintaining systems and processes to ensure the Organisation and our services meet the highest possible standards, are legally compliant and align to nationally accredited standards. The CEO must also comply with the Organisation’s Code of Conduct and ensure a focus on culture and behavioural standards across the Organisation.

Senior Leadership Team – play an integral role to model and promote this Code of Conduct, and to set the tone for the conduct of all employees, volunteers and contractors. The Senior Leadership Team are responsible for:

- Making staff aware of this Code of Conduct, along with policies, procedures and other documents that relate to this Code of Conduct and their role,
- Ensuring staff are provided with access to training and support in relation to the Code of Conduct,
- Providing guidance on how to apply the Code of Conduct, and leading by example,
- Assisting staff to manage any concerns about the conduct of Laurel House staff or volunteers, and
- Complying with the Organisation’s Code of Conduct

All Laurel House People – have a role to play in creating a respectful, safe, ethical, and engaging workplace, and are required to:

- Be aware and comply with the expected behaviours expressed in this Code of Conduct,
- Understand how it relates to your position and to the performance of your duties,
- Model the values of the organisation,
- Report behaviour that may be contrary to the Code of Conduct and required standards of behaviour,
- Complete and sign the acknowledgement section of this Code of Conduct.

## 7. Related Policies

All adopted and approved Laurel House policies can be located on the LinQ software.

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- Employee Handbook
  - Risk Management Policy
  - Privacy Management Policy and Procedure
  - Performance Management Policy/Procedure
  - Conflict of Interest Policy
  - Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
  - Complaints Management Policy (To be developed)
  - IT, Communication and Social Media Policy (To be developed)
  - Work Health and Safety Policy (To be developed)
  - Use of Fleet Vehicles Policy
  - Delegation Policy and Register
  - Staff Grievance Policy (To be developed)
  - Whistleblower Policy (To be reviewed)

## Policy Details

### 1. General Expectations

This Code of Conduct and other policies describes clear expectations of workplace behaviour which set the minimum acceptable behaviours expected by all Laurel House People. Unacceptable behaviour may lead to disciplinary procedures being taken.

### 2. Relationships with Clients

Appropriate professional relationships with clients, their families and support people are to be maintained at all times. Interactions with clients should be aligned to ethical practices documented in the Clinical Governance Policy. Additionally, where relevant to your position, your interactions and relationship with clients must comply with the required professional standards of your profession (e.g. Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics for social work qualified counsellors). It is essential that all Laurel House People maintain professional boundaries between themselves and clients of Laurel House. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Not engaging in any form of sexualised conduct with a client or a client's family member during or after their involvement with Laurel House within a period of 2 years;
- Not providing clinical services to individuals with whom they have had a prior sexual relationship or a member of with their immediate family; and
- Declaring other relationships with clients to their supervisor in order to determine an appropriate approach that safeguard both parties.

### 3. Responding to Client Complaints

Laurel House welcomes all feedback received from clients including complaints and takes all complaints seriously. All Laurel House People are required to accept a complaint from a client and make it easy for a client to lodge any dissatisfaction about our services programs or staff.

All complaints will be recorded, investigated and managed in accordance with our Complaints Management Policy. The CEO is responsible for ensuring any employee who is the subject of a complaint is supported throughout the process.

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## 4. Safeguarding Children and Young People

Laurel House acknowledges and operates in accordance with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and the Laurel House Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

All Laurel House People are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people under the age of 18 years, and are expected to act in accordance with this Code of Conduct in their physical and online interactions with children and young people. This includes ensuring that:

- You act in accordance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at all times;
- You behave respectfully and ethically towards children and consider their diverse backgrounds and needs;
- You listen and respond to the views and concerns of young people, especially if they communicate verbally or non-verbally that they do not feel safe;
- You involve children in decision making about their service with Laurel House and in policies, procedures and processes that affect them wherever possible;
- You proactively identify and mitigate risks to children's safety and wellbeing;
- You respond promptly to any concerns or complaints of child harm or abuse; and
- You report all suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse.

Additionally:

- You must not engage in any unlawful activity with or in relation to a child;
- You must not engage in any activity that is likely to physically, sexually or emotionally harm a child;
- You must not unlawfully discriminate against any child or their family members;
- You must not be alone with a child other than in the delivery of counselling services;
- You must not arrange personal contact, including online contact, with a child for any purpose unrelated to the delivery of Laurel House activities (e.g. counselling, advisory panel);
- You must not take photographs or videos of a child unless the child and for children under 18 years their parent or carer consent. Where a child between the ages of 14 and 18 is considered to be 'Gillick competent' or a 'mature minor' they can consent to photographs or videos being taken without the consent of their parent or carer. Where photographs or videos are taken they should only be taken on devices owned and managed by Laurel House, and not on your personal devices; and
- You must not use inappropriate language in the presence of children, or show or provide children with access to inappropriate images or material.

If you have concerns about your role in safeguarding children, or have specific concerns about any child or young person, you should immediately speak with the relevant Responsible Person or the Organisation's Protection Officers.

## 5. Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Behaviours

Laurel House has zero tolerance of any forms of sexual exploitation, abuse and other types of harassment towards clients, other Laurel House People or members of the public.

Evidence of this type of behaviour being displayed by people employed or engaged by Laurel House will be dealt with promptly. Given Laurel House's client group are at an increased likelihood of

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experience further sexual harm, all staff must take every effort to create an environment free of exploitation, abuse or harassment.

You have a responsibility to report any incidents of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment, or the suspicion of these to the appropriate Responsible Person. As noted above, you must be particularly vigilant in safeguarding children and young people, and must be vigilant and act proactively to identify, prevent and respond to sexual violence of children and young people.

## **6. Reporting and Other Risks**

All Laurel House People are responsible to ensure that the best interests of all clients, who access our services and programs, are protected from harm, and that their wellbeing is a priority. You are required to:

- Comply with all requirements to report concerns about the safety of clients (especially children, young people and adults-at-risk) to external authorities;
- Take actions promptly to ensure that all clients are safe;
- Promptly report any concerns relating to a client to the CEO or Laurel House's Client Protection Officers; and
- Encourage feedback and be open to receiving and responding to complaints and concerns from all clients

You are also responsible in the course of undertaking your duties for being aware of, reducing and reporting other risks and incidents in the workplace irrespective of your position.

## **7. Privacy and Confidentiality**

All Laurel House People have a responsibility to protect the information that they are privy to through the course of their work or contact with the Organisation.

You must not access, disclose, or use confidential information obtained in the course of their duties. Clients and employee's personal information is protected by legislation and managed at Laurel House in accordance with our Privacy Management Plan.

## **8. Media Relations**

In the course of our work, as an influencer, advocate and commentator on social issues related to sexual violence, we proactively engage with the media including newspapers, radio, television, online media, and social networking sites.

All contact with the media is to be managed through the CEO. Media statements in relation to all operational matters will be approved by the CEO, and where matters are particularly controversial the CEO will liaise with the Board.

You are not permitted to speak to the media unless you have been expressly requested to do so by the CEO, if you are an employee, or by the Board Chair, if you are a Board member.

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## 9. Photography, visual and audio recordings

Images of individuals in photographs or video (images) are treated as personal information in circumstances the person's identity is clear or can reasonably be worked out from that image. As personal information, images and visual and audio recording should be treated in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and Laurel House's Privacy Management Plan.

Laurel House People should take a considered and conservative approach to the use of photography, visual and audio recordings. This includes:

- Considering how to convey the message without needing to use images of clients or Laurel House People;
- When taking photos, videos and audio recordings of clients, other stakeholders or members of the public, written consent should be obtained which clearly identifies the intended use of the audio-visual material. The form of written consent must be individualised to ensure access for children, people with disabilities or those with low literacy;
- Audio-visual material of clients should only be recorded using Laurel House owned and managed devices;
- Laurel House People are never to take, transmit or save photographs, videos or audio recording of clients of any age or their family members on personal cameras, devices or computers.
- When taking photos, videos and audio recordings of Laurel House People, verbal (or equivalent) consent from the person for the recording and use is sufficient. The request for permission also extends to seeking approval from all meeting attendees (if you are the facilitator) of recording online meetings. i.e., MS Teams/ Zoom meetings.
- For photographic images, visual or audio recordings held by the Organisation, you are required to obtain permission from the CEO for their use in Laurel House projects, promotion and publicity and associated consent requirements.
- Laurel House People may use their personal devices to capture photos, videos and audio recordings at Laurel House events only.

## 10. Social Media

Laurel House People must recognise that their social media presence reflects on their individual reputation and the reputation of Laurel House. In using social media including but not limited to blogs, chat rooms, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and similar online forums:

- Only authorised Laurel House People are authorised to speak on behalf of Laurel House on social media;
- You are encouraged to share Laurel House social media posts in order to increase the reach of our approved messaging;
- You may list your employment at Laurel House on your social media presence, but on departure from the Organisation you must update this immediately to reflect that you no longer work for the Organisation.
- Where you engage with Laurel House's social media using your personal accounts, the same high standards of conduct and behaviour is expected;



- In all of your social media activity (including but not limited to your engagement with Laurel House social media channels):
  - You should not make any insulting, intimidating or otherwise offensive remarks of any kind or make any criticism or disrespectful comment about current, or past employees or Board Members, or about any aspect of Laurel House’s operations;
  - You should make clear that any political or advocacy positions are yours and do not reflect the opinion of Laurel House.
- In relation to adding people to your social networks, where there is a process to approve a friendship or connection request:
  - You should not solicit or accept friend requests or connections with clients of Laurel House.
  - People in leadership roles in Laurel House (i.e. Senior Leadership and Board) should not initiate friend requests, connections or similar with employees, but are permitted to accept requests initiated by employees.

## **11. Professionalism**

In performing your duties, you are expected to:

- Treat others and be treated with respect and courtesy;
- Maintain a high standard and quality of work;
- Demonstrate your duty of care for others and yourself;
- Attend all compulsory training;
- Be open to feedback from others, and to receiving reasonable instruction from your supervisor;
- Continuously seek to improve your work performance;
- Contribute to workplace discussions that bring about continuous improvement to our services and programs;
- Exercise care, responsibility and sound judgement when carrying out your duties;
- Take reasonable care to ensure the health and safety of everyone;
- Comply with legislative requirements and Laurel House policies and procedures;
- Use appropriate, respectful and culturally safe language;
- Maintain adequate records to support any decisions made; and
- Maintain confidentiality and privacy.

## **12. Use of Laurel House Property and Resources**

You are required:

- To use Laurel House resources (equipment, vehicles and financial) responsibly, effectively, economically and sustainably and in accordance with relevant policies and guidelines;
- To ensure you have the required delegation to authorise expenditure or use of resources (see Delegation Policy and Register);
- To adhere with the IT and Computer Usage Policy;
- To conserve and efficiently use resources through reusing, recycling, energy saving and waste minimisation; and

- To maintain the integrity and security of Laurel House’s intellectual property, client organisational, and other information.

### **13. Fraud, Dishonesty, and Theft**

Intentional acts of fraud, dishonesty or theft are a breach of the Laurel House Code of Conduct. You have an obligation to:

- Act honestly, legally and ethically;
- Help prevent fraud, dishonest behaviour, theft and serious waste of money or resources occurring;
- Report any instance of fraud, dishonest behaviour, theft or serious waste of Laurel House finances or resources by any individual of which they are aware of or reasonably suspect; and
- To act at all times in accordance with Laurel House’s Code of Conduct requirements.

### **14. Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest exists when the personal interests of an employee, volunteer, Board member or contractor are inconsistent with those of Laurel House and create conflicting loyalties. As Laurel House People we must avoid situations where our personal interests conflict, or appear to conflict, with the interests of Laurel House. This means that:

- You should take reasonable steps to avoid any conflict of interest, real or apparent, in connection with your role at Laurel House;
- You should not take part in, appear to take part in or exert influence on any decision that may put your own interest in conflict with the best interest of Laurel House;
- You should not unduly use your position at Laurel House for personal benefit or to benefit relatives or close associates; and
- You must carefully consider the potential conflict of interest prior to the acceptance of secondary employment or other professional or volunteer engagements.

Conflicts of interest whether perceived, potential or actual, pose a risk to Laurel House and also to the professional integrity and reputation of individuals. However, many actual or potential conflicts of interest can be resolved in an acceptable way for both you and the Organisation. In case of a conflict of interest, you should immediately inform your responsible person (i.e. CEO or Board Chair) in order to find an appropriate solution.

### **15. Use of alcohol, illegal drugs and prescription medication.**

Laurel House People must not consume or be affected by alcohol or illicit drugs in any circumstances when performing the tasks associated with their role.

In special circumstances, however, when attending a work-related function and where the Board Chair or CEO has authorised the selling, serving or consumption of alcohol, a limited consumption may be permitted. On these occasions you are personally responsible to adhere with all legislation pertaining to driving and alcohol consumption and Organisational policies in relation to the use of fleet cars.

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You are required to ensure that you are using prescription medication in a way that has been prescribed by your medical practitioner. Where prescription medication may affect your ability to undertake your role, you are required to disclose this to your supervisor and/or the CEO, or in the case of Board members to the Board Chair.

## **16. Smoking**

Smoking on the premises at any Laurel House offices and in fleet vehicles is not permitted. Smoking is only permitted in designated areas and during breaks.

## **17. Gifts, benefits and hospitality**

No matter how well-meaning or well-intentioned a gift, the potential exists for impropriety, or the appearance of impropriety, to be present. So it is important for all Laurel House People to carefully consider the appropriateness of accepting a gift. In relation to gift giving and receiving:

- You should not solicit a gift or benefit (except when requesting donations from businesses and individuals for the purpose of fundraising for Laurel House where you have been authorised to do so);
- You should not accept a gift or benefit as an inducement to act in a certain way;
- You should not accept a gift or benefit where there could be a perception that it has been offered as an inducement to act in a certain way;
- You should not accept cash, cheques, money orders or gift vouchers;
- You should not accept a gift or benefit if you are unsure whether you should;
- You may accept small gifts of appreciation (e.g. flowers, foodstuffs, home made items) where the value is less than \$50, and the cumulative value from that giver over the previous 12 month period is no more than \$100 in total;
- You may accept token gifts that are offered in business situations to you when you are representing Laurel House (e.g. mass-produced products, samples etc);
- You may accept small gifts (where the value is less than \$50) offered to employees who speak at official functions or have assisted in other programs/activities (e.g. preparing a conference, assisting another organisation with an event);
- You may accept gifts from other Laurel House People where the gift giving is related to a special occasion (e.g. wedding, significant birthday, departure from the Organisation);
- You may not under any circumstances accept a gift or benefit where the gifts are intended to generally ingratiate the giver with the recipient for favourable treatment in the future;
- The CEO or the Board Chair may accept on behalf of the organisation ceremonial gifts or benefits that are official gifts (where the value is greater than \$50) offered by an organisation or business to Laurel House;
- The CEO or Board Chair may accept donations to the Organisation where there is no expectation of favourable treatment to that individual or organisation in the future;
- The CEO may authorise the purchase of gifts for Laurel House People and others to a limit that is described in the Delegations Register;
- You must declare all gifts or benefits received to the CEO promptly, so they can be recorded in the gifts and benefits register.

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## 18. Employee Relations

You have a responsibility to:

- Treat each other with trust, respect, honesty, fairness, sensitivity and dignity
- Accommodate and respect different opinions and perspectives and manage disagreements by rational debate.
- Not behave towards any other person in a way that could be perceived as intimidating, overbearing or as workplace bullying or sexual harassment.
- Work co-operatively and collaboratively with fellow representatives and willingly participate and engage in team-like activities (e.g., meetings).

In addition, Board Members and the Senior Leadership Team who lead, supervise or manage others have an additional responsibility to model this kind of behaviour, and to ensure that the people they supervise understand the standard of performance and behaviour that is expected of them.

## 19. Grievances

Laurel House encourages open communication and respect between all people. When feeling dissatisfied it is often best dealt with informally, raising the matter at the time or close to, before an issue escalates.

Noting this, all Laurel House People have the right to lodge a grievance or complaint relating to a matter occurring in the workplace. You can lodge your grievance in writing by email to your supervisor or to your Responsible Person, where the matter will be investigated in confidence. To properly investigate a matter further the CEO/Chair may need to speak to other Laurel House People.

## 20. Whistleblower

Laurel House is committed to creating a culture where our workforce and other stakeholders feel comfortable reporting protected concerns about the workplace, without fear of reprisal and where concerns are treated seriously.

Protected concerns include:

- Committing a criminal offence;
- Failing to comply with a legal obligation;
- Endangering the health and safety of an individual;
- Environmental damage; or
- Concealing any information relating to the above.

If you believe that the organisation or an employee is committing any form of protected concern, you should, in the first instance, report your concerns to the CEO (or where your concerns relate to the CEO to the Chair), who will treat your concerns with complete confidence. You also have the right to report wrongdoing to external government agencies. When you raise a protected concern, this will be treated in accordance with Laurel House Whistleblower Policy.

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## **21. Responsibilities after leaving Laurel House**

On the occasion you no longer are employed or engaged by Laurel House you must:

- Not disclose any official or client information after leaving Laurel House that was non-disclosable during their engagement;
- Ensure that public comments (either verbal or written) made in a private capacity are not attributed as official comment of Laurel House;
- Ensure that you no longer identify yourself as an employee, volunteer, Board Member or contractor of Laurel House; and
- Ensure that you return all Laurel House property and immediately seek to return or destroy any electronic or paper files that you may have in your home or on your personal devices.

## **22. What happens if someone breaches the Code of Conduct?**

Failure to comply with the principles or the spirit of the Code of Conduct will be considered a breach of Laurel House policy, and may trigger an investigation, where necessary and appropriate.

In most circumstances an alleged breach by a staff member, volunteer or student of the Code of Conduct will be investigated and handled in accordance with the Performance Management Policy. An investigation may result in disciplinary action, ranging from a warning and possible increased supervision or development, through to the termination of employment. For a Board Member an alleged breach will be investigated and handled in accordance with the Board Charter which may result in a range of actions to support the development of the Board member through to ending their engagement with the Laurel House Board. For a contractor, the CEO will investigate the matter and determine if it is appropriate for the contractor to continue to provide services to Laurel House.

Where a more serious breach has occurred, the CEO and/or Board Chair has the authority to instigate immediate dismissal and may initiate legal proceedings where appropriate (e.g., instances of theft or fraud).