



## **Module 4 : Code of Conduct / Child Protection**

- Why it is important to arrive early to all of your booked events
- How to make sure that you appear professional at all times
- What is in the code of conduct laid out by Equity
- How to adhere to child protection standards

### **In this module you will learn:**

- Why it is important to arrive early to all of your booked events
- Why appearance matters
- How to make sure that you appear professional at all times
- What is in the code of conduct laid out by Equity
- How to adhere to child protection standards
- How to protect yourself from claims against you

### **4.1: Introduction**



**Just because you are working for yourself doesn't mean that you shouldn't adhere to a strict code of conduct.**

If anything, you should have even higher standards when you are working for your own company. As you are the sole employee of your balloon modelling company, you will be the one and only impression that clients are given, so make sure that you make it count.

If you sign up to become a member of Equity, the trade union which represents all performers, then you will have to abide by the code of conduct which they set out for all children's entertainers on their books.

### **Equity Code of Conduct**

The Equity code of conduct states that children's entertainers should be reliable. They should arrive to booked events at the right time and be in the right place. It goes on to state that children's entertainers should be clear when taking bookings and always provide a booking confirmation in writing and a receipt where possible.

It says that entertainers should be knowledgeable about both children and about their stagecraft and that they should be responsible by making sure that there is another adult who is in charge of the children in the room at all times. Equity says that you should be safe, with a public liability insurance policy which covers you to the tune of £10 million and props which are maintained and not likely to break easily. They expect you to offer quality services at a reasonable price and to commit to always being professional whilst on the job.

This code covers all of the essential points but in order to be truly professional in your line of work then you should make sure that you always aim to go above and beyond the standards that it lays out.

You should create your own more detailed code of conduct which includes the following elements:

## **4.2: Look presentable**



**Even if you are just arriving to your third or fourth show of the day, you always need to make sure that you look clean, tidy and presentable.**

Appearances make up a huge part of first impressions, and showing that you take pride in how you

look will prove that you take pride in all other elements of your work as well.

## **FACT**



According to studies you only have 7 seconds to make a first impression

*Source: Forbes 2013*

## **4.3: Arrive Early**



**When you take bookings, ensure that you have plenty of time between shows so that you can arrive early to all of your events.**

You will need time to see the venue where you will be performing, especially if you have never been there before, so that you can familiarise yourself with your surroundings.

You will also need time to set up any equipment before you begin and talk to the person who has booked you to see if they have any last minute information, advice or requests.

## 4.4: Be professional



**In any line of work it is important to retain a high level of professionalism and to always be polite to those around you.**

This is even more important in a business such as this one where most of your bookings will be taken from people hearing about you through personal recommendations.

## 4.5: Be clear



**Make sure that all of your communication with clients is clear and cannot be interpreted in any other way.**

Taking an extra few minutes to make sure that the email you are writing is factually correct and all the details are accurate could save you time in the long run and avoid anyone misinterpreting what you have said. Sending written booking confirmations and receipts for each and every one of the events at which you perform will also help you to keep your own records straight.

## 4.6: Watch your language



**Remember that the way in which you perform for children and the way in which you perform for adults will differ enormously.**

Comments that would be funny for adult audiences could be seen as inappropriate if made in front of children. Make sure that your act is squeaky clean if there will be children in the audience and make sure that your humour is suitable for their age group. Don't swear and don't single out any of the children in a teasing manner. You will be acting as a role model for impressionable, young people and they could try and copy anything that you do. Make sure that everything that you say and do is

safe for them to try and repeat at home.

## **4.7: Other Considerations**

Adhering to child protection measures is as much about protecting yourself as it is about protecting the young people placed in your care.

Since the vast majority of people who choose to work with children would never intentionally cause them any harm, it is easy to think that liability insurance isn't necessary. However, accidents do happen, and in many instances cannot be avoided.

It is extremely important to get your insurance in order to protect yourself and your bank account. As a self-employed balloon modeller, a claim brought against you would mean the end of your company and could completely ruin you financially.

As a balloon modeller, it is very likely that the majority of your bookings will be for children's parties and you will therefore spend much of your working life in the company of children. When working with children in any capacity, it is absolutely essential to follow child protection procedure in order to not only protect the children but to also protect yourself and your business from any accusations or claims.

It is generally accepted that people working in construction, maintenance and manual labour will need to have insurance as it is quite likely that a claim will be made against them at some point during their working life. But it is less commonly known that people who regularly work with children are ranked highly in the list of professions which are most likely to be issued with a compensation claim.

### **Take steps to avoid false claims and misunderstandings**

Try to avoid being left in a room alone with a small group of children. If this were to happen and an allegation were to be made against you then you wouldn't have any witnesses to back you up.

Don't encourage the children to touch you and try to keep them from giving you hugs or from grabbing on to your arms or legs.

Don't pick the children up and try to maintain a reasonable distance from them. These steps might seem over the top, but if you make it a policy that you don't make physical contact with the children then your actions cannot be misunderstood. This way you will protect the children in your care, as well as protecting yourself from any potentially compromising situations.

### **Dealing with Illness**

Don't go to work if you are ill. Children can be more susceptible to catching colds and viruses than adults are and it would be unfair to infect everyone else in the room. You shouldn't fall into the trap of thinking that you should power through your symptoms and attend the booking in order to protect your reputation and to receive payment for the job.

If you think you are going down with something, try to inform your client as soon as possible that you will not be able to attend the event. If you give them plenty of notice then they might be able to find a replacement.

Cancelling a show due to illness will not affect your reputation (providing that you don't do it all the time) and people would usually much prefer you to stay at home and recover instead of making all of their children ill. If you are under the weather then you will not be on top form with your performance and you could compromise the quality of the show that you deliver. This would have seriously negative effects on your reputation as a balloon modeller and a children's entertainer.

## **Risk Assessments**

Children do not necessarily react rationally to situations and will not see hazards in the same way that adults do. It is therefore the responsibility of the adults around them to make sure that they are kept safe and happy.

As a children's entertainer, you will be put in a position with a duty of care towards the children who make up your audiences. People will be more happy to recommend your services if they see that you act in a responsible way towards their children.

The best things that you can do in order to protect the children in your care are to draw up comprehensive risk assessments and to invest in comprehensive public liability insurance. Details on how to do both of these things will be covered in modules later on in the course.

## **Module Summary**

### **Lessons Learned**

Professionalism is key in the balloon modelling business, so you should always arrive early for appointments, clean, tidy and ready to work; cancel the engagement in good time if you're unwell.

You may want to join Equity, a trade union representing performers, and should ensure that you communicate clearly with clients, issuing booking confirmations and receipts, and keeping copies for your own records. Protect yourself from child protection claims by taking out public liability insurance and drawing up risk assessments; always maintain an appropriate tone and level of humour for the age group you're performing to, avoiding picking children up or coming into physical contact with them.

[Tweet "I just completed Module 4 of the Balloon Modelling Academy Diploma Course"]

