

PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Friendships may develop between service users and employees. Any relationship between a service user and an employee should be limited to a professional relationship. In other words, any relationship between a service user and an employee which is likely to jeopardize business relations in the Organisation is not acceptable. Employees must use their common sense to avoid any actual relationships.

Employees should not give out their home address or telephone number to the service users.

The Organisation recognises that employees who work together may form personal friendships and, in some cases, close personal relationships. The Organisation does not, as a general rule; wish to interfere with such personal friendships and relationships. However, it must also ensure that employees continue to behave in an appropriate, professional and responsible manner at work and that they continue to fulfil their job duties both diligently and effectively. These rules are therefore aimed at striking a balance between your right to a private life and the Organisation's right to protect its business interests.

The following rules apply to employees embarking on close personal relationships at work, whether the relationship is with a fellow worker, stakeholder, supplier or contractor:

- you must not allow your relationship to influence your conduct at work. Intimate behaviour during normal working hours or on the Organisation or stakeholder premises is prohibited. This includes holding hands, other close physical contact, discussions of a sexual nature or kissing
- if you embark on a relationship with another employee, you should declare this to your line manager as soon as reasonably practicable
- if you are a manager and you embark on a relationship with a more junior member of staff, you should declare this to the Service Manager as soon as reasonably practicable. This is particularly important if you are the line manager of the employee because of the risk of the junior employee being afforded more favourable treatment, or less favourable treatment if the relationship subsequently breaks down. In order to avoid a situation where you have managerial authority over a junior member of staff with whom you are having a relationship, the Organisation reserves the right to elect to transfer one or both of you to a job on different shifts, either on a temporary basis or permanently. The Organisation will first consult with both of you to try and reach an amicable agreement on transfer
- if you begin a relationship with a stakeholder, supplier or contractor and allows the potential for you to abuse your level of authority, you must declare the relationship to your line manager or the Service Manager as soon as reasonably practicable. In these circumstances, the Organisation reserves the right to elect to transfer you to a job on a different shift where you will not be able to exert undue influence over the other party, either on a temporary basis or permanently. The Organisation will first consult with you to try and reach an amicable agreement on transfer
- if a personal relationship (or the breakdown of a personal relationship) starts to affect your performance or conduct at work, then your line manager will speak to you with a

view to your previous level of performance or conduct being restored. However, if your performance or conduct fails to improve or it reverts to a problem level, the matter will become a disciplinary one

- if you are having or have had a personal relationship and you are found to have afforded either more or less favourable treatment to the other employee because of this relationship or you have exercised undue influence over a stakeholder, supplier or contractor, this is a disciplinary matter

A breach of these rules is a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under the Organisation's disciplinary procedure. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, it may amount to gross misconduct and could result in your summary dismissal.