



Professional Boundaries

Policy and Procedure

Notice to employees using a paper copy of this policy
The company Policies folder on the shared drive holds the most recent version of this document and all employees must ensure that they are using the most recent guidance.

Document Control

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Introduction

All Staff have a responsibility to provide personal, effective and safe services to our clients within their care. Whilst it is recognised that it is important staff must establish a rapport with people we support and provide friendly and caring services, they are responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate professional and personal boundaries between themselves, the people we support and their families, in order to maintain a safe environment.

All interactions between the people we support and their families and clinical and non-clinical staff must be seen in terms of a professional relationship. Staff must recognise and understand that they are in a position of power. This power must not be abused at any time.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- clarify the roles of staff providing direct or indirect care to service user;
- clarify the expectations of service users and their families; and
- clarify the division between the professional and personal relationships between service users and staff to enable consistent approaches to service users

Scope

This policy will apply to all staff at Libertatem Healthcare Group.

Roles and Responsibility's

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors are responsible for ensuring that the processes are in place to ensure that staff are aware of this policy and adhere to its requirements. The Directors will ensure the effective implementation and embedding of the policy through education and monitoring activity; and will ensure that the policy is maintained and updated accordingly in line with any organisational changes or legislative changes

Managers

The managers will ensuring this policy is disseminated effectively to the care and support staff.

They will also

- Facilitating regular and specific training and updating staff in relation to this policy
- Ensure that the topic of maintaining good professional/therapeutic relationships, personal and professional boundaries are discussed as required at peer group meetings.
- Ensure that all staff understand how and why abuse occurs and have a clear understanding of how boundaries are breached, as well as how to manage challenging behaviours on the part of the service user.
- Ensure staff for whom they are responsible are able to access regular clinical supervision as appropriate to their needs and that active engagement with these processes is monitored..

- In the event of a possible boundary violation, takes this seriously and investigates all allegations and complaints.

Staff

Staff responsibilities include the following:-

- Have awareness and comply with the policy.
- Maintain good professional/therapeutic relationships and appropriate professional boundaries with each and every service user.
- Take individual accountability for the promotion and protection of the interests of service users in their care, irrespective of race, disability, gender, age, religion, belief and spirituality, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and gender reassignment.
- Develop knowledge and understanding of good therapeutic relationships, personal and professional boundaries and refresh this regularly.
- Increase level of self-awareness and the impact they have on the service user and therapeutic process.
- Alert the Line Manager immediately they perceive there to be a risk of potential breakdown of boundaries in the relationship, an actual breakdown or an inability to establish the relationship appropriately in the first place, being mindful of the need to maintain service user confidentially.
- Ensure that they are working within an agreed framework of care and adhering to the personal care plans.
- All staff should be able to explain/ sign post service users to report incidents of professional boundary violations made by staff (in accordance with the safeguarding policies). Service users should be assured that any report that they make will be investigated.

Policy

The only appropriate relationship between a service user and a worker is a professional one that focuses upon the assessed, legitimate needs of the service user.

The rights and needs of the people we support should be respected at all times. However, Libertatem Healthcare Group acknowledge, the relationship between the person we support and worker is not one of equal balance.

All Staff must recognise and understand that they are in a position of power. This power must not be abused at any time. It is essential, therefore, that all interactions between the people we support, their families and staff must be seen in terms of a professional relationship. Because there is a potential for positions of power to be abused and professional boundaries broken.

The relationship between staff and service users is a therapeutic caring relationship that must focus solely upon meeting the social care and/or clinical needs of the service user. It is not established to build personal or social contacts for staff and it is not just about having a 'good relationship' with a service user. A safe and effective relationship between staff and patients must be professional, therapeutic and purposeful, with understood limits.

Libertatem Healthcare must make it clear that the responsibility to maintain such boundaries rests with individual members of staff. Failure to meet this responsibility will be investigated and may be dealt with under the Company's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Socialising outside the professional relationship will constitute a breach of the professional and personal boundary. Staff are reminded that this includes befriending service users on a social networking site.

Staff must ensure that professional relationships are not misread or confused with friendship or other personal relationships. This is essential in order to protect service users at a time when they may be vulnerable. It is also to protect staff from any risk of potential false allegations.

Workers may, on occasions, develop strong feelings for a particular service user, family member(s) or carers. These feelings in themselves are neither abnormal nor wrong but will compromise the professional relationship if they are acted upon improperly. If workers feel that they are developing an attraction or an overly familiar relationship with a service user they must disclose such feelings at the earliest stage possible to their line manager.

If a member of staff is in any doubt they should seek advice from their Line Manager or refer to their Professional Code of Conduct for additional guidance on professional and personal boundaries.

Reporting Concerns in Relation to a Possible Breach of Boundaries

If a member of staff suspects a possible breach of personal and professional boundaries on the part of a work colleague, they should report this to their Line Manager as a matter of urgency.

This can be undertaken by contact by telephoning the office (anytime of the day or night) or by completing a safeguarding form online.

Prompt action is of paramount importance in order to safeguard the interests of both the service user and the member of staff concerned. All staff have a professional duty to take action to ensure the people in their care are protected and failure to take such action could amount to professional misconduct on their part.

Breaches of personal and professional boundaries would normally be dealt with under the company's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. The relevant Line Manager will carry out an initial fact-finding investigation to determine immediate actions required.

Depending on the circumstances, the police may need to be alerted, as well as the regulatory body, if the member of staff is a healthcare professional.

Where a vulnerable adult or a child is involved in the breach, the relevant Safeguarding Adults Policy or Safeguarding Children Policy must be adhered to. Provided concerns in relation to work colleagues are reported in a timely manner and in good faith, if they are subsequently discovered to be without substance or unfounded, they will not result in any detriment to the staff member who has brought the concern to the managers attention.

Unacceptable Practices

Breaches of Sexual Boundaries

In order to maintain professional boundaries and the trust of service users, staff must never display sexualised behaviours towards a service user. Sexualised behaviours can be defined as 'acts, words or behaviour designed or intended to arouse or gratify sexual impulses and desires'. Sexualised behaviours can include, but are not limited to sexual advances.

Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality

Staff must not accept personal gifts or hospitality from service users or the service user's family/relatives, which may be interpreted as being given by the service user in return for preferential treatment. Where such gifts are offered, particularly where it is difficult to refuse a gift, then staff must discuss this with their Line Manager.

Inappropriate Personal Disclosure

Staff must not divulge any personal or intimate information about themselves or other staff members to service users or their families. This applies especially to factual or sensitive information.

Provision of Substances to Service Users which are not prescribed

No staff member should provide or administer substances to service users which are not prescribed.

Misuse of Money/Property

Staff must adhere to the policy for handling of service users' money. Staff must not borrow from or lend money or property to service users, carers or relatives.

Misuse of Service Users' Facilities and Property

Staff must not use service users' facilities or property for their own use.

Examples of these are as follows:

- washing machines/ironing boards/dryers etc.
- television/videos
- eating service users' food
- service user's telephone unless for an emergency
- cooking facilities

Unless this has been specifically agreed (for example live in care workers).

Abuse of Power/Creating a Dependence

Staff have a responsibility to discourage over-reliance of the person we support on one worker and to encourage and enable the individual towards independence where this is possible. The care and support plan should be referred to for advice and support as required.

Socialising outside the Therapeutic/caring Relationship

If an activity is not part of an agreed and designated care plan, then the staff member must not attempt to socialise with a service user or their family such as inviting them to their home or befriending them on a social networking site.

Training

All staff will complete mandatory training that explores the role of maintaining safe professional boundaries within the safeguarding principles of both adults and children.

This will be renewed every 3 years as per training policy.