

Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Protocols

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## PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK

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## **1 Purpose**

- 1.1 This document describes the process for managing working arrangements in situations where employees have a close personal relationship and ensures that employees are aware of the Trust expectations regarding the existence and development of close personal relationships. Within this procedure 'a close personal relationship' covers any close family relationship including relatives, as well as ongoing intimate relationships.

## **2 Scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all areas of the Trust and all individuals employed by the Trust including contractors, voluntary workers, students, bank workers, locum and agency staff (referred to as staff members throughout the policy).
- 2.2 The policy should be applied equally to all employees ensuring that there is no discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, race, ethnicity, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion, belief, offending background, trade union activities, family circumstances or domestic/care arrangements.

## **3 General Guidance**

- 3.1 Within the organisation, it is likely that some employees will be related to one another or have/develop a close personal relationship with another staff member within the organisation.
- 3.2 Although the existence of a close personal relationship between staff members does not necessarily constitute a bar to the employment or promotion of either party, individuals must declare the relationship to their line managers.
- 3.3 Where it is unclear either whether a close personal relationship exists, and /or whether it is relevant, the Trust will consult with the individuals concerned, if in any doubt, staff members should declare such relationships.
- 3.4 This policy sets out some minimum standards of conduct with regard to close personal relationships:
- 3.4.1 Any staff member with a close personal relationship to another staff member (staff member as defined in 2.1) within the Trust must declare the relationship to their line manager.
  - 3.4.2 Disclosures of personal relationships should be kept confidential as far as is reasonably practical.
  - 3.4.3 Any staff member with a close personal relationship with an individual within an external organisation that has links to or works with the Trust, must declare the relationship if a potential conflict of interest arises, e.g., financial gain, preferential treatment.
  - 3.4.4 Bank and Agency staff must declare any close personal relationships to another staff member within the Trust to the person who engages them for a shift. This declaration will be treated confidentially as far as is reasonably practical.

- 3.4.5 Any staff member placed on the 'At Risk' register as a result of being put at risk of redundancy will be required to bring to the attention of their line manager any close personal relationship which may prevent them from accepting redeployment into an otherwise suitable position.
- 3.4.6 The Trust will aim to create management structures which do not have reporting lines between staff who have a close personal relationship.
- 3.4.7 A staff member should not be involved in any aspect of the recruitment and selection process if they have personal relationship with any candidate. Candidates will also be required, on the application form, to disclose any relevant close personal relationships with employees of the Trust.
- 3.4.8 A Staff member should not be involved in any formal procedures which might affect the employment/position of any individual with whom they have a personal relationship. (E.g., disciplinary, absence management, grievance, appraisal, etc.)
- 3.4.9 Staff members in a personal relationship should not work together in any circumstance whereby a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage may be perceived to be gained as a result of the relationship. The procedure that follows sets out how such a situation should be managed.
- 3.5 If an employee has a personal relationship with a colleague, he/she should not display any obvious signs of affection within the workplace: Intimate behavior at work is inappropriate and will be treated as a disciplinary issue.
- 3.6 Where a member of staff is in a position to confer a benefit e.g., is responsible for authorizing or countersigning a salary- related, monetary or other financial transaction (e.g., Payroll Change forms, Timesheets) made by another member of staff with whom he or she has a close relationship, the transaction must be countersigned by an independent person more senior to both of the staff having the close relationship.

#### **4 Procedure**

- 4.1 Where staff members are involved in a close personal relationship with another staff member, this should be disclosed to their line manager at the first possible opportunity.
- 4.2 If necessary, the manager will meet with both employees to discuss the options available and to reach an agreement on the most appropriate way forward.
- 4.3 In the event that an agreement cannot be reached in this way, the manager, seeking advice from HR where appropriate, will determine the most suitable option, taking into account the views and personal circumstances of all parties. The Trust retains the right to transfer one or both employees to another post/department, this will not be to the detriment of the employee's terms and conditions.
- 4.4 If it is not possible to transfer at least one of the employees (for example if no suitable vacancies exist, or if an employee refuses to transfer), the Trust reserves the right to dismiss one or both employees following the relevant policy and/or procedure (with notice in accordance with the employee's

contract). This would only be undertaken as a last resort in circumstances where no other course of action was reasonably open to the Trust.

## **5 Associated Policy and Procedural Documentation**

Standards of Business Conduct

Recruitment and Selection Procedure

Disciplinary Policy

Maintaining High Professional Standards

## **6 Monitoring and Review**

Every 3 years.