PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES POLICY
MAY 2018
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Policy title</strong></th>
<th>Personal Relationships Policy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy reference</strong></td>
<td>HR45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy category</strong></td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevant to</strong></td>
<td>All staff including locums, students, trainees and honorary staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date published</strong></td>
<td>May 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation date</strong></td>
<td>May 2018</td>
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<td><strong>Date last reviewed</strong></td>
<td>April 2018</td>
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<td><strong>Next review date</strong></td>
<td>May 2020</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Accountable director</strong></td>
<td>Director of HR &amp; OD</td>
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<td><strong>Approved by (Group):</strong></td>
<td>Joint Policy Subgroup 25 April 2018</td>
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<td>Workforce Committee 14 May 2018</td>
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<td><strong>Document history</strong></td>
<td>Date</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>May 2018</td>
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**Membership of the policy development/review team**  
Jeff Halperin and Malwina Paulus

**Consultation**  
Workforce Partnership Group

**DO NOT AMEND THIS DOCUMENT**  
Further copies of this document can be found on the Foundation Trust intranet.
1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This policy provides information, advice and guidance to all staff regarding acceptable professional and personal boundaries between individual employees and service users as well as relationships between individuals who work together.

1.2 All staff need to be aware of the fundamental importance of establishing and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries with service users and carers.

1.3 The Trust expects all employees to demonstrate at all times behaviours that are commensurate with the values and principles of the Trust and the way we as an organisation operate, as a business, towards service users, members of the public and towards each other.

1.4 Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust believes that it is a mutual benefit to the Trust and its employees to work in partnership with Staff side. This policy has been developed and agreed by management and staff side, in order to ensure staff are treated consistently and fairly.

2. **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

2.1 To ensure that staff members are aware of the Trust expectations regarding the existence and development of close personal relationships with other staff and/or patients with whom they have contact, protecting both the interests of both staff and patients.

2.2 To provide guidance as to what constitutes safe and acceptable practice in the building of positive and supportive therapeutic relationships with service users.

3. **SCOPE OF THE POLICY**

3.1 This is a Trust wide policy which applies to all employees of the rust, (including staff on honorary contracts

4. **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

4.1 Executive/Associate Directors, Senior Managers and Heads of Service are responsible for:

- Ensuring adherence to this policy and procedures in line with the guidelines set out in this policy.
- Ensure that other management staff understand their role in ensuring this policy is adhered to.
4.2 Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy and procedure/guidelines are followed and understood as appropriate to each staff member’s role and function.
- Address all relevant discussions sensitively and confidentially;
- Consistently apply this policy, taking advice as appropriate;

4.3 All Staff are responsible for:

- Adhering to this policy and following procedure/guidelines set out within the policy.
- Declaring any “personal relationships” with any work colleagues to their line managers.
- Declaring any potential breaches of this policy immediately to their manager.

5. DEFINITIONS

5.1 Personal Relationship – a relationship that goes beyond the bounds of a ‘professional’ relationship and includes being personally involved, i.e. a platonic relationship/personal friend, being sexually involved or a family member.

6. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

6.1 This policy sets out some standards of conduct to assist and protect staff whilst at work and these are set out below:

6.1 In any large organisation it is likely that some employees will be related to one another or develop a personal and/or sexual relationship, and, if they are in a close working relationship in the same workplace, the potential for conflict between personal/family loyalty and work responsibilities may arise.

6.2 The Trust requires that a high standard of care and skill in its work is achieved and in so doing requires its’ staff to conduct themselves in a manner which will ensure this. Whilst it is not the Trust’s intention to infringe upon the private lives of its staff, it does expect staff to conduct themselves in a professional manner and/or in which they do not bring the Trust and its work into disrepute.

6.3 Recruitment

6.3.1 An employee should not be involved in any aspect of the recruitment and selection process if they have a personal relationship with any candidate (see Trust’s Recruitment and Selection Policy for further details).

6.3.2 Once appointed, if an employee is found to have failed to declare a relationship on their application form with an employee who was involved in
the recruitment process or with whom they now have a line management or subordinate working relationship, this may be investigated under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and may lead to disciplinary action.

6.3.3 An employee should not be involved in any formal procedures, such as investigation panels, that involve a colleague with whom they have a personal relationship.

6.3.4 Any employee who is engaged in a close personal relationship with a colleague working in the same department or ward must declare the relationship to their manager. If the relationship is between a manager/supervisor and an employee or trainee whom he/she supervises, the relationship should be declared to a senior manager. The information declared will be recorded on the personal files of both employees and treated in strict confidence.

6.3.5 Where a manager is informed of a close personal relationship between workers they should work with all individuals concerned to identify any potential risks and conflicts of interest from both the individuals and Trust perspective. It is advised that any delivery of care that involves two people should not exclusively be conducted by staff engaged in a relationship e.g. joint visits in the community, joint administration of medication and joint assessments.

6.3.6 Wherever possible an agreement will be reached and documented as to how to respond to any potential risk or conflict of interest. Options which may be considered are as follows;

- No action necessary
- Changing shift patterns to ensure that working together is kept to a minimum
- Changing the duties of one or both of the parties
- Changing the line manager relationship in specified circumstances
- Changing any mentor / trainee relationship
- Redeployment

6.3.7 If Redeployment is considered the two members of staff affected by the personal/work relationship will be consulted about who should transfer but the Trust reserves the right to make the final decision in the event that agreement cannot be reached or if service needs are put at risk.

6.3.8 There may be situations in which the relationship is deemed to have a detrimental effect on either patient care or working relationships or when an
employee does not declare the relationship to the Trust. The Trust then reserves the right to implement disciplinary processes in line with the Trust’ Disciplinary Policy against one or both employees.

6.3.9 If an employee has a personal/intimate relationship with a colleague, s/he should not display any obvious signs of familiarity or affection in the presence of third parties. Staff must not let their relationships impact their professional life and must maintain clear boundaries and present a professional image with patients and staff at all times.

6.3.10 Employees should ensure that their relationship does not bring the reputation of the Trust into disrepute.

6.3.11 The Trust appreciates that difficulties can occur and recognises that personal relationships can be complicated. Any breach of the standards of conduct outlined on the in section 6 will be examined on a case by case basis in determining the appropriate action it may take.

6.3.12 The Trust will attempt to resolve matters informally where possible. However, the Trust reserves the right to invoke the disciplinary policy if there is a breach of any of these standards.

7. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH PATIENTS

7.1 Guiding principles

7.1.1 Staff must recognise and acknowledge that there is a power imbalance in their role with service users and carers.

7.1.2 Staff are in a position of power, often working with people who are vulnerable and unwell and who may develop a dependency and very positive feelings towards their care giver.

7.1.3 Staff may be required to request very personal information that would normally be disclosed in the context of a close personal relationship. This can encourage service users to feel a strong attachment to staff and to confuse the personal and professional.

7.1.4 It is acknowledged that service users may not be able to understand or may be too unwell to make the necessary distinctions between personal and professional relationships. However the Trust expects staff to maintain professional practice at all times.
7.1.5 Staff must be vigilant in ensuring that they maintain their professional position and do not collude with or in any way exploit this vulnerability and power imbalance. Staff must be vigilant in recognising where service users are forming close attachments. Where staff are concerned about such an attachment they should discuss their concern with their line manager and supervisor to ensure it is managed appropriately.

7.1.6 It is recognised that staff invest a great deal of themselves in their work with service users. The work is often challenging and emotionally engaging and staff must ensure that this experience of a close working relationship does not interfere with their professional judgement and risk a potential breakdown of professional boundaries.

7.1.7 It is not acceptable for members of staff to become personally involved with service users at any stage in their treatment or care. It is also unacceptable for staff to become involved with service users following their discharge from services. If any member of staff becomes involved, or envisages becoming involved, in a personal relationship with an ex-service user with whom they have worked in the past, then guidance should be sought from the service manager. Staff must be aware that any such relationship could be construed as abusive and as serious misconduct and the Trust may take disciplinary action in line with disciplinary policy.

7.1.8 It is acknowledged that patients may develop some positive feelings towards staff. In those circumstances, staff members are required to recognise professional boundaries and declare this to their line managers.

7.2 Inappropriate disclosure

7.2.1 Staff should avoid divulging personal information about themselves to service users or carers.

7.2.2 Staff must never share personal details about other staff with service users or carers.

7.2.3 Staff should never discuss other staff members with service users or carers except on issues relating to care and treatment.

7.2.4 Staff must never discuss service users with other service users or carers.

7.3 Inappropriate Influence

7.3.1 Staff should be aware of their potential to influence vulnerable and/or
impressionable service users. There must be no attempt to influence in relation to personal, moral, political or religious views. Patients who may wish to seek religious support should be referred to the Chaplain.

7.4 Physical and Sexual boundaries

When not delivering direct physical care, staff should avoid physical contact with service users. Service users may misinterpret physical contact as affection and falling outside of the therapeutic relationship. Any physical contact from staff runs the risk of being misunderstood and may lead to staff being vulnerable to allegations of inappropriate professional behaviour.

7.4.1 Any sexual contact between staff and service users is prohibited and the staff member may be liable to criminal prosecution and disciplinary procedures that may lead to dismissal.

7.4.2 Staff should never display sexualized behaviour towards a service user eg. sexual humour, verbal or non-verbal communication about sexual matters or any sexual remarks.

7.5 Contact with Service Users and Carers

7.5.1 There should be no contact between staff and service users or carers outside of their working role.

7.5.2 There should be no contact between staff and service users (or carers) via social media.

7.5.3 Staff must not visit a service user or carer at their home except as part of a therapeutic plan agreed with their line manager.

7.5.4 Staff must never invite a service user or carer to their home or arrange to meet them in a social context.

7.5.5 Staff must recognise that their role is to develop a therapeutic relationship with service users and carers and not a friendship.

7.6 Money, gifts and bequests

7.6.1 Staff must not lend or give money to service users.

7.6.2 Staff must not sell goods or services to service users and they should not receive goods or services from service users.
7.6.3 In order to avoid suspicion of influence staff must not witness wills for service users

If a member of staff is a named beneficiary in a service user’s will they must disclose this to their line manager who will seek advice from HR as to the best course of action.

7.6.4 Guidance around accepting gifts from service users can be found in the Trust's Gifts and Hospitality Policy on the Trust Intranet.

7.7 **Breach of professional boundaries with a service user**

7.7.1 If a member of staff feels that have breached or are at risk of breaching this policy then they must immediately bring this to the attention of their line manager.

7.7.2 The line manager must follow Trust policy, but a disclosure should be possible without the risk of automatic disciplinary proceedings and staff should feel supported to discuss any concerns they have in relation to a breach of policy.

7.7.3 Failure to maintain professional boundaries with service users may lead to disciplinary action being taken and dependant on the circumstances and, where appropriate, a referral to professional registration bodies being made and or referral for investigation under safeguarding procedures.

7.7.4 The line manager may consider various options including transfer of care to another worker, co-working, and/or limiting the therapeutic intervention so that clear boundaries are established to protect both the service and staff member.

7.7.5 If a staff member feels that a colleague is at risk of potential breakdown of professional boundaries then they have a duty to protect the service user and the staff member and should bring the matter to the attention of the line manager. The Trust is committed to providing support to any member of staff who raises genuine concerns. Staff are recommended to read the Trust Raising Concerns at Work Policy (2016) found on the Trust intranet.

7.7.6 If a friend or family member of staff has cause to use the Trust services then staff must inform their manager of the situation. This should be handled with sensitivity and it may be that the service user should be treated in another team.

7.7.7 The development of a relationship with an ex-service user (or carer) is discouraged and it is liable to lead to allegations of abuse or serious misconduct. If a member of staff is envisaging developing such a relationship
then this must be discussed with their line manager. In circumstances where the contact with services was a considerable time ago or minimal a discussion with the line manager may help to clarify the appropriateness of the member of staff pursuing the relationship.

8. DISSEMINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The policy will be circulated to all staff via the weekly email bulletin issued by the Communications Department. The policy will be published on both the Trust Intranet and Internet. Hard copies will be available from the Trust’s HR Department.

9. MONITORING AND AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS

See Table below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements to be monitored</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>How trust will monitor compliance</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Reporting arrangements</th>
<th>Acting on recommendations and Lead(s)</th>
<th>Change in practice and lessons to be shared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breaches/potential breaches</td>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Audit</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Workforce Committee</td>
<td>Required actions will be identified and completed in a specified timeframe</td>
<td>Required changes to practice will be identified and actioned within a specific time frame. A lead member of the team will be identified to take each change forward where appropriate. Lessons will be shared with all the relevant stakeholders</td>
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</tbody>
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11. REVIEW OF THE POLICY

The policy will be reviewed every two years by Human Resources in conjunction with staff side.

12. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust Policies:

- Disciplinary Policy
- Raising Concerns at Work Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Code of conduct for all non-registered staff in a direct care role
- Trust Values
### Appendix 1

**Equality Impact Assessment Tool**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnic origins (including gypsies and travellers)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion or belief</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation including lesbian, gay and bisexual people</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability - learning disabilities, physical disability, sensory impairment and mental health problems</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> If so can the impact be avoided?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong> What alternatives are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
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Appendix 2  Links to professional bodies

British Psychological Society (BPS)  www.bps.org.uk/

British Association of Social Workers (BASW) www.basw.co.uk/

British Association of Occupational Therapists (BAOT) www.cot.co.uk/

British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT) www.baat.org/

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) www.bacp.co.uk/

British Psychoanalytic Council (BPC) www.bpc.org.uk/

Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) www.hcpc-uk.org/

Royal College of Nursing (RCN) www.rcn.org.uk/

The Nursing and Midwifery Council www.nmc.org.uk