



POLICY: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND BOUNDARIES

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Copies of this Policy may be made available in alternative formats on request.

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POLICY: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND BOUNDARIES

All reference to 'we', 'our' or 'us' in this Policy should be read as meaning Sandbourne Housing Association.

1. Purpose and aim of the Policy

- 1.1 This Policy applies to all staff and provides guidance to them in the discharge of their responsibilities. It also sets out clearly our policy on personal relationships between staff and residents, particularly those of a romantic, physical or sexual nature and provides a Code of Conduct with which staff will be required to comply.
- 1.2 This document has been designed to protect staff from any accusation of unfair treatment or abuse against residents. It also provides clear guidelines within which staff can conduct their duties in a professional manner.
- 1.3 Staff should also see 'Code of Conduct' in Employee Handbook for more information.
- 1.4 Professional boundaries - a simple definition: Professional boundaries are limits which protect a worker's professional power and their client's vulnerability.

2. Statement of Professional Conduct and Boundaries

- 2.1 The relationship between a member of staff and residents should be based on respect, mutual trust and confidence. Staff have a duty to conduct themselves in a responsible manner at all times and to protect the interests of service users.
- 2.2 Staff must maintain professional boundaries in their dealings with residents and colleagues. Staff must not act in ways that undermine the safe and supportive environment that we aim to provide, nor should they breach the special trust that endures between residents and staff.
- 2.3 It is of fundamental importance that staff respect the special trust with which they have been invested as our staff members and the wider housing related community.
- 2.4 All staff, applicants and residents are responsible for their own behaviour and for ensuring that they respect the individual's right to be treated with dignity. There is an unequal balance of power inherent in the staff/

applicant/resident relationship which can lead to an abuse of that power by a member of staff. It is for this reason that we promote a clear policy to govern those situations in which that position of responsibility may be open to conflicts of interest, so that both staff and residents feel that they can continue to work in an environment which is supportive and empowering.

2.5 We regard it as the absolute responsibility of staff to recognise and respect the boundaries and obligations of their roles.

3. Guidance

3.1 In relation to the preceding statement, we require all staff to observe the following guidelines:

3.2 Responsibility

3.2.1 All staff must recognise their personal, professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of applicants and residents, to respect the trust involved in the staff/applicant/resident relationship and to accept the constraints and obligations inherent in that responsibility.

3.3 The risks of engaging in a relationship with an applicant or resident

3.3.1 To embark on a romantic, physical or sexual or business relationship with an applicant/resident presents serious risks and conflicts of interest, including, for example, possible allegations of sexual harassment by the resident involved or charges of favouritism from other applicants/residents.

3.4 What action to take if you become involved with an applicant or resident

3.4.1 Staff must not become involved in a personal or business relationship with an applicant or resident.

4. Action that may be taken by us if staff fail to comply with this Policy

4.1 If staff leave undeclared and/or do not end a romantic, sexual or other potentially incompatible business or other association with an applicant or resident when instructed to do so, we will regard this as misconduct and staff will leave themselves open to disciplinary action.

5. Applicants and residents – rights and responsibilities

5.1 Applicants and residents have the following rights and responsibilities:

5.1.1 Applicants and residents who are, or have been, involved in a romantic, physical or sexual relationship with a member of staff, who believe that pressure was placed on them to become involved in such a relationship, or feel that they have suffered as a consequence of becoming involved in such a relationship, have the right and are encouraged to report this through safeguarding reporting arrangements. This affords the

complainant and us the opportunity to pursue either informal or formal routes in order to address their grievance.

- 5.1.2 It is recognised that applicants/residents also have a responsibility to respect the mutual trust in the staff/applicant/resident relationship.
- 5.1.3 Notwithstanding this policy, any applicant/resident who believes that they have suffered sexual or other forms of harassment also has the right of legal redress under legislation.

6. Other housing staff – professional boundaries

- 6.1 It is important that staff achieve and maintain effective professional working relationships with applicants and residents, their families and other support networks. Integrity, objectivity, equality and professionalism are key watchwords that provide a framework for the role of the staff. The following points will help support and maintain the required professional boundaries between the staff, applicants and residents.
 - 6.1.1 Staff should always remember and be aware of their responsibilities to applicants, residents, other service users and the community that is served, and ensure courteous, sufficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals
 - 6.1.2 Staff should never allow any personal relationship with applicants or residents to conflict with the duties of their employment or the best interests of any applicant, resident or service user. Staff must never allow themselves to be compromised by, or take advantage of, their relationship with applicants, residents or other service users
 - 6.1.3 Staff must not hold Power of Attorney for any applicant or resident or invite or influence an applicant, resident or other service user to make a Will or Trust under which a member of staff is named as executor, trustee or beneficiary.
 - 6.1.4 Apart from duties that may include the collection of rent and/or the collection of money for our business purposes, staff should not handle or manage any area of a resident's personal finances or valuables at any time. This directive also includes the collection of pension monies, wages or benefits.
 - 6.1.5 Staff should not give advice on the maintenance of an applicant/resident's financial situation. Should an applicant/resident require assistance with planning their finances, staff should provide them with contact details of appropriate advisory agencies.
 - 6.1.6 Under no circumstances must staff accept personal valuables from any applicant or resident or gifts of money without first declaring it to their line manager, who will determine if it should be accepted. Any gifts or hospitality received from any applicant or resident must be properly recorded.

- 6.1.7 Staff must not undertake private work or provide services for applicants or residents for payment, or for non-payment, or for 'payment in kind', such as accepting a holiday as a 'carer'.
- 6.1.8 Staff must not receive loans from applicants or residents and must not give loans from their personal or our money to applicants or residents.
- 6.1.9 Staff must never administer any medication at any time to a resident. The collection of prescriptions should not be performed even in emergency situations where no other alternative is available.
- 6.1.10 At no time should staff perform any act that could result in personal benefit either financially or in a material way from any resident or their family.
- 6.1.11 No member of staff may consume alcohol and/or illegal substances whilst on duty. Neither shall any member of staff encourage or provide the means for applicants, residents or service users to do so. In the case of alcohol, however, consumption may be permitted in moderation at special events approved by us.
- 6.1.12 Staff must also ensure that they are fit for work and not affected by alcohol and/or illegal substances.
- 6.1.13 Staff should not provide housing-related or personal care to a resident as that is outside their role.
- 6.1.14 Staff should at all times be mindful of what they do, how their actions could be interpreted by others, and whether their actions are 'reasonable' or could be seen as showing favouritism, etc.

7. Equality impact assessment/Protected characteristics (as at 8 January 2019 or later amendments/additions)

- 7.1 Neutral.

8. Consultation arrangements

- 8.1 We will consult all residents and recognised residents' bodies on any substantive changes to this Policy and their views will be taken into account by the Board before adopting it. Our staff will also be consulted on any substantive changes to this Policy and any reasonable suggestions will be taken into account before the Policy is approved by the Board.