

# Boundaries Policy

Guidance on personal boundaries  
between staff and clients

## Boundaries policy

Title	Boundaries policy
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Author	Francesca Hill, DCEO
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Responsibility	Board of Trustees
Responsibility for development, review and implementation	Senior Leadership Team and Operational Delivery Team,
Target audience	All staff, volunteers, clients, students on placement with Mind in Bradford, visitors to Mind in Bradford, our funding bodies, job and volunteer applicants and the Board of Trustees
Accessibility	Staff: OneDrive – Shared Staff Folder – Policies & Procedures Volunteers: People HR Clients and others: Mind in Bradford website If you would like this policy in another format, such as large print or audio, please contact us on 01274 730815 or at email <a href="mailto:admin@mindinbradford.org.uk">admin@mindinbradford.org.uk</a> or speak to a member of staff
Associated policies	Complaints policy Safeguarding adults policy Safeguarding children policy All policies in the Mind in Bradford Employee Handbook; including recruitment and retention, family friendly policies and procedures, disciplinary and grievance procedures, equal opportunities and positive working,

	conduct and standard of behaviour at work, workplace wellbeing policy, whistleblowing policy
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## Purpose

Mind in Bradford has a responsibility to provide guidance for appropriate behaviour and personal boundaries between those that access Mind in Bradford services and those that provide them. This policy and guidelines state what behaviour can be expected by and of people who work in the organisation. When noting people who work within the organisation this means paid or volunteer workers.

We all need boundaries to keep us safe, to help us focus on what is important to us and to provide clear expectations and responsibilities. Boundaries are essential to having strong and healthy relationships.

This policy will focus on the boundaries of the staff toward clients however acknowledges that there are times when clients may need support and guidance with boundaries between each other and towards staff. Staff need to understand the difference between professional and personal relationships in the context of work. They are responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries between themselves and clients.

We recognise that we all have mental health needs and that everyone has the capacity to recover from mental health problems. In practice, this means that the 'dividing line' between clients and staff may be ambiguous. One of the aims of Mind in Bradford is to challenge and clarify such ambiguity and this is an additional reason for a clear policy on boundaries.

#### **This policy exists to:**

- Guide staff
- Highlight the kinds of actions that would be seen as a breach of policy
- Ensure that this issue is on the agenda and is sign-posted as an area of practice to reflect on
- Keep the issue in perspective
- Create defensible not defensive practice that supports therapeutic risk taking

## **Context**

We acknowledge the importance of relationships and do not seek to put up barriers between individuals. We also want to ensure that all individuals are safe. This policy is not designed to limit therapeutic relationships or innovative work or prevent individuals responding in an honest and authentic way. The boundaries and guidance given below are good practice for interactions between all people involved in Mind in Bradford. They are not exhaustive.

It is acknowledged that a staff member often has power over the client, and because of this the staff member is in a position of trust and has a duty of care towards the client.

Boundaries and safe working parameters are discussed through training and exploration of relationships with clients in supervision. If you discuss your work openly and honestly in supervision, there is an opportunity to explore boundaries in a safe environment and ensure that you and your clients remain safe. We know that people learn a more sophisticated understanding of boundaries through experience.

A breach in boundaries where no attempt has been made to seek information, advice, supervision or training, may be seen as misconduct and as such could be dealt with through the organisational disciplinary procedures. Mind in Bradford also works to and supports Bradford District Adult Protection Policy and Procedure.

## Scope

This policy is designed to protect all parties, that is; clients of all ages; trustees; all paid staff; volunteers and students on placement; the managers responsible for the services and the organisation as a whole.

This policy on boundaries and relationships should be read in conjunction with other policies and guidance that relate to the conduct of staff as required.

### These include:

- Performance management
- Children & Young People's Safeguarding Policy

- Adult Safeguarding Policy

## Background

Behaviour can be listed under three main headings:

1. Prohibited on all occasions
2. Allowed after discussion with Line Manager and recorded
3. Allowed at a worker's own discretion

### **1.0 Behaviour that is prohibited on all occasions**

**1.1** Behaviour that is or could be abusive. Abuse is “violation of an individual’s human and civil rights” (Department of Health, 2000). Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or

sexual transaction, or persuaded to enter into criminal activity. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

**1.2** Using your power inappropriately. Inappropriate use of power is where someone in a position of power or authority (whether 'formal' or perceived) pursues their position to the detriment of the health, safety, welfare or general well-being of an individual. This includes abusive and aggressive language or action.

**1.3** Having any relationship with a client other than one Mind in Bradford would consider professional. This would include sexual relationships during and for at least six months after the end of a working relationship. This does not include relationships/friendships that existed before the individual became a member of staff (paid or voluntary). Existing relationships should be discussed with the manager and regularly discussed at supervision to ensure they do not cause difficulties in the working environment. Any new friendships should be discussed in supervision in order to achieve clarity around boundary issues. It is never appropriate to have a non-professional relationship with a child, even when support has ended.

**1.4** Acting as godparent or guardian to a client's child or any other relationship with a client, which involves a long-term responsibility, outside the work role. As above, where such a relationship already exists when an individual becomes a member of staff, this must be discussed with the manager.

**1.5** Disclosing confidential or personal information to clients or staff regarding staff members or other clients. This includes not ensuring privacy when discussing confidential/personal information, or discussing personal information that could identify another individual in an open forum.

Note: Trustees who are clients may sometimes need exemption from this in order to fulfil their trustee role.

**1.6** Taking on a Power of Attorney role. This is distinct from advocacy or 'living wills', and being named in documents relating to how someone wishes to be treated, such as 'Crisis Cards'.

**1.7** Cashing cheques for clients, opening accounts for clients under your own name or using your own account for processing clients' money

**1.8** Providing clients with financial advice. This would include recommending insurance policies or money investment. This does not include general budgetary advice given to clients as part of the support role or directing clients to other non-profit agencies providing advice.

**1.9** Personally undertaking home improvement work for clients, except where this is an agreed role (such as maintenance staff in the Housing project). This includes making recommendations of friends/acquaintances to perform such work where there is financial or other payment for the work completed.

**1.10** Receiving gifts of money or expensive gifts for yourself or other workers. This does not include donations to the organisation, where money or gifts, which remain the property of the organisation, not individuals.

Note: See also 'Receiving small gifts' in section 2.

**1.11** Expressing disrespectful or negative views about a client.



**1.13** Opening a bank account to receive monies through work contexts.

**1.13** Giving a client your home contact details. This includes precise details of where you live or your home/personal mobile telephone number.

## **2.0 Behaviour that is allowed after discussion with a line manager and has been approved and recorded**

The line manager, in discussion with the individual will determine whether an action would be a breach of policy or not. Major issues should be discussed in supervision and recorded in supervision notes. Anything that you are not sure about or feel uncomfortable about should be discussed at the earliest opportunity with a third party if the manager is not available.

We recognise that values are subjective - what may be small/inexpensive to one person is large/expensive to another. Similarly, when placing a value on something it should be related to monetary value as opposed to the value placed on an item through time spent making it. Many considerations may be applied, so common sense and instinct should always prevail.

Care should be taken to ensure that staff do not accept any gift that may be construed as a bribe by other or lead to the giver expecting preferential treatment.

**2.1** Attending ceremonies and other formal occasions (such as weddings and funerals) of clients.

**2.2** Attending social occasions with clients. Social meetings in a restaurant, café or pub.

This does not include activities where this is an agreed part of a service (such as Befriending) and forms part of planned support; or is a planned social activity for a group of clients and staff. Where members of staff or clients independently join external social groups (such as sports teams), this should be discussed in supervision.

**2.3** Giving gifts at major festivals/events that are not purchased or donated and arranged centrally through the team manager or nominated person or giving a client a personal or inexpensive gift.

**2.4** Receiving small gifts, such as chocolates, flowers or cards may be accepted but not money. This includes gifts as a 'thank you', for birthdays or other festivals / events. It also includes shared items, such as if an individual offers round sweets they have bought for themselves. If you feel uncomfortable about receiving small gifts then this should be discussed in supervision. It is also appropriate to politely refuse gifts.

**2.5** Giving a reference, for example for employment or education for a client. The wording of the reference should be checked with support from HR and your line manager.

**2.6** Purchasing or borrowing items from or selling items to clients. This includes the purchase of homemade goods for charity. This does not include reimbursing a client for a 'shared item' (such as paying a client back if they have offered to go to the shop to buy a sandwich), which can be done at the individual's discretion, provided it is done in an open and transparent way that both parties feel comfortable with.

**2.7** Visiting a Mind in Bradford client in hospital.

**2.8** Negotiating any financial transaction between a worker and a client from which the worker may be a beneficiary.

### **3.0 Those that are allowed at a worker's own discretion**

As stated above, anything that you are not sure about or feel uncomfortable about should be discussed with a third party, preferably with your line manager.

**3.1** Giving small items to clients, such as disposable items (eg. cigarettes) on a “one off” basis to a service user that you know are unlikely to be returned.

**3.2** Disclosing personal interests such as hobbies. This also includes disclosing personal matters such as religion, politics, beliefs or sexuality, providing this is done in a manner that is respectful to the views of others.

**3.3** Physical contact with a client that would not be perceived to be threatening either by the client or yourself. These actions must, however, take into consideration the views/beliefs of different groups, as outlined in the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy. Some clients may have had personal experiences that leads them to dislike being touched. Always seek the client's approval before touching/ hugging etc. If anything arises in this way that you feel uncomfortable with, it should be reported to the project manager and recorded.

### **Policy breaches**

Any concerns regarding breach of the Policy will be escalated to the line manager in working hours and if required to the on-call manager. If required the matter will be fairly and compassionately investigated by an appropriately appointed investigator.



Your local mental health charity in Bradford, Airedale, Wharfedale and Craven

**Mind in Bradford**

Kenburgh House  
28 Manor Row  
Bradford  
BD1 4QU

T: 01274 730815

[mindinbradford.org.uk](http://mindinbradford.org.uk)

@mindinbradford



Registered charity number 1142357