

Boundaries Between Staff and Service Members Policy



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Title	Boundaries Between Staff and Service Members Policy
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Review schedule	This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or in line with organisational or legislative changes
Responsibility	Executive Leadership Team
Responsibility for development, review and implementation	Director of Equity and Quality
Target audience	All staff, volunteers, service members, students on placement with BDC Mind, visitors to BDC Mind, our funding bodies, job and volunteer applicants and the Board of Trustees
Accessibility	Staff: People HR volunteers: People HR service members and others: Bradford District and Craven Mind 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 admin@mindinbradford.org.uk or speak to a member of staff
Associated policies	Volunteer policy Complaints policy Safeguarding adults policy Safeguarding children policy BDC Mind staff handbook <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal social media guidance

Purpose and background

We have a responsibility to provide guidance for appropriate behaviour and personal boundaries between those that access BDC Mind services and those that provide them. The purpose of this policy and guidance is to ensure people understand what behaviour can be expected by and of people who work within and access BDC Mind.

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 towards service members however acknowledges that there are times when service members 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 service members.

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 service members and staff may sometimes be ambiguous. One of the aims of BDC Mind is to challenge and clarify such ambiguity and this is an additional reason for a clear policy on boundaries.

The relationship between service provider and service member is built on trust, crossing a professional boundary is a serious breach of trust.

Scope

This policy is designed to protect all parties, this includes staff, service members, volunteers, trustees, contractors, agency workers, apprentices and students.

This policy exists to:

- Guide staff
- Inform service members what they can expect from BDC Mind
- Clarify the kinds of actions that would be seen as a breach of policy
- Ensure that this issue is on the agenda and is signposted as an area of practice to reflect on
- Keep the issue in perspective
- Create practice that supports therapeutic risk taking and not practise that becomes defensive

Context

It is our responsibility to ensure that our relationships with service members and their carers remains professional. If the boundary is beginning to blur or has been crossed the professional relationship must end and be discussed with a manager immediately to ensure the continuity of the service member receiving mental health support. The reason for the end to the relationship must be discussed with the service member to ensure they are assured and supported.

We acknowledge the importance of relationships and do not seek to put up barriers between individuals, however, we need to ensure that all individuals are safe. This policy is not designed to limit therapeutic relationships, 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 BDC Mind. They are not exhaustive.

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

Boundaries and safe working parameters can be discussed through training and exploration of relationships with service members during supervision. This is an opportunity to explore boundaries and ensure that staff and service members remain safe.

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.

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

It is never appropriate to have a non-professional relationship with a child, even when support has ended. This would be seen as a safeguarding concern and would be immediately reported as such via an incident report.

1.1 Behaviour that is or could be abusive. See Safeguarding Adult and Safeguarding Children Policies. Abuse is when someone causes us harm or distress. It can take many forms, ranging from disrespect to causing someone physical or mental pain. Often the people who commit abuse are taking advantage of a special relationship.

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

wellbeing of an individual. This includes abusive and aggressive language or action.

1.3 Having any relationship with a service member other than one BDC Mind 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 to achieve clarity around boundary issues.

1.4 Acting as godparent or guardian to a service member's child or any other relationship with a service member, 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 service members or staff regarding staff members or other service members. 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 service members may sometimes need exemption from this 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 service members, opening bank/financial accounts for service members under your own name or using your own account for processing service members' money.

1.8 Providing service members with financial advice. This would include making financial recommendations or suggestions. This does not include general

budgetary advice given to service members as part of the support role or directing service members to other non-profit agencies providing advice.

1.9 Personally undertaking home improvement work for service members, except where this is an agreed role (such as maintenance staff in a 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 and giving 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 service member.

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

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

2.0 Behaviour that is accepted after discussion with a line manager and has been approved and recorded

The line manager, in discussion with the individual will seek to 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.

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 service members.

2.2 Attending social occasions with service members. 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 service members and staff. Where members of staff or service members 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 service member 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 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. The maximum value of any small gift can be no more than £10. If you receive a personal gift it is important to discuss this with your line manager. For transparency your line manager may ask you to document this and add to people HR.

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

2.6 Visiting a BDC Mind service member in hospital.

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 service members, 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 non-discriminatory and respectful to the views of others.

3.3 Physical contact with a service member that would not be perceived to be threatening or uncomfortable either by the service member 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 service members may have had personal experiences that leads them to dislike being touched. Always seek the service member’s approval before touching/hugging etc. If anything arises in this way that you feel uncomfortable with, it should be reported to you manager and recorded.

3.4 Following and inviting followers on social media.

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.

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