

**Maintaining Professional Boundaries Policy**

Effective: September 2010

Review: June 2013

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 To ensure Trust business is conducted in a professional and proper manner it is necessary to recognise and give guidance regarding personal and professional relationships between employees and patients as these may overlap.
- 1.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Trust Corporate Governance: 'Standards of Business Conduct for Staff'.

**2. Scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all managers, employees, contractors, agency staff, nurse bank workers, students and anyone else engaged to work in the Trust, as well as, volunteers.
- 2.2 For the purposes of this policy, a personal relationship is defined as follows:
  - A business/commercial/financial relationship
  - A family/close personal relationship
  - A sexual/romantic relationship

And includes:

- Spouse/partner/former spouse/former partner
- Parents including in-laws and step-parents
- Children, including in-laws and step-children
- Siblings
- Grandparents, grandchildren
- Aunts, uncles & cousins

**3. Purpose**

- 3.1 To highlight that employees must not, allow to develop, or use their status/position to instigate a personal relationship with a patient in their care.
- 3.2 To give guidance regarding the considerations staff must make if they are involved in a relationship with a colleague.

**4. General Principles**

- 4.1 It is unacceptable for relationships to develop between employees and patients in any way, including via electronic communication such as e-mail or social networking sites. Professionally registered staff should be mindful that they could be putting their registration at risk by undertaking or participating in such communication
- 4.2 Employees that have a personal relationship with a patient must not be involved in their care, diagnosis or accessing any of their information

- 4.3 Employees must declare their personal relationship with a patient when they attend and/or are admitted to the department in the hospital in which the employee works.
- 4.4 In the case of an employee being involved in an emergency situation with a patient they have a personal relationship with, the employee shall not be excluded from the situation unless it is safe to do so with due consideration for the health, safety and welfare of the patient concerned.
- 4.5 It is acknowledged that relationships can develop at work between employees. Where this occurs, the individuals concerned must be mindful of the impact it can have on others.
- 4.6 Relationships between employees must not be detrimental to working relationships, discharging duties and responsibilities effectively, service delivery or harmony within the workplace.
- 4.7 Corporate Governance: 'Standards of Business Conduct for Staff' must be observed at all times when involved in introducing or negotiating contracts with external companies or suppliers.
- 4.8 In addition to this policy, professionally registered employees must also observe and adhere to the requirements of their professional code of conduct when it comes to maintaining professional boundaries.

## **5. Procedure for Declaration**

- 5.1 The line manager must: deal with any declaration sensitively; maintain confidentiality at all times; and only inform others on a 'need to know' basis.
- 5.2 Employees must also abide by their own professional body's code of conduct in respect of declaring a relationship.

## **6. Breach of the Policy**

- 6.1 An employee not declaring a personal relationship as per the terms of this policy or failing to maintain clear professional boundaries, risks compromising their role and responsibilities, and/or a claim of professional misconduct. This could also affect the credibility and reputation of other members of staff, and the Trust.
- 6.2 A breach of this policy may lead to action under the Disciplinary Policy/Procedure.

## **7. Monitoring**

- 7.1 Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Director of Human Resources. The figures will be presented to the Heads of Human Resources Meeting on an annual basis who will identify appropriate action plans to address any concerns and will continue to monitor the plan until its completion.
- 7.2 Monitoring will include reporting of information from ESR to ascertain:
- The number of investigations conducted as a result of a breach of this policy.

## **8. Further Information and Guidance**

For further information regarding this policy please contact your designated Human Resources Officer.

Author: The Director of Human Resources

**THE NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST**  
**IMPACT ASSESSMENT – SCREENING FORM A**

This form must be completed and attached to any procedural document when submitted to the appropriate committee for consideration and approval.

Policy Title:	<b>Maintaining Professional Boundaries Policy</b>	Policy Author:	Miss Ceri Liddell – HR Officer (Projects)
		Yes/No?	You must provide evidence to support your response:
1.	Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:		Policy applies to all employees of the Trust. It is underpinned by Trust's overriding policy on Equal Opportunities and employment legislation
	• Race	No	}
	• Ethnic origins (including gypsies and travellers)	No	}
	• Nationality	No	}
	• Gender	No	} As above.
	• Culture	No	}
	• Religion or belief	No	}
	• Sexual orientation including lesbian, gay and bisexual people	No	}
	• Age	No	}
	• Disability – learning difficulties, physical disability, sensory impairment and mental health problems.	No	}
2.	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	No	
3.	If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?	No	
4(a).	Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative? <i>(If "yes", please answer sections 4(b) to 4(d)).</i>	No	
4(b).	If so can the impact be avoided?	No	
4(c).	What alternatives are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?	No	
4(d)	Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?	No	

<b>Comments:</b>	<b>Action Plan due (or Not Applicable):</b>

Name and Designation of Person responsible for completion of this form: Mrs Wendy Johnson – HR Manager (Projects) Date: 4 August 2010

Names & Designations of those involved in the impact assessment screening process: The Employment Policies and Procedures Consultative Group

(If any reader of this procedural document identifies a potential discriminatory impact that has not been identified on this form, please refer to the Policy Author identified above, together with any suggestions for the actions required to avoid/reduce this impact.)